

CABINET RECOMMENDATION ON THE MOTION SUBMITTED TO COUNCIL ON MONDAY 27 JULY 2015

Cabinet Member: Councillor David Johncock and Councillor Mrs Julia Langley

Wards Affected: All

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RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

That the motion submitted to the Council on Monday 27 July 2015 be rejected.

Reason for Decision

Extensive work is already being undertaken to identify the need for affordable housing and to engage with relevant stakeholders and agencies on the delivery of affordable housing.

Corporate Implications

1. The identification of affordable housing need, the identification of opportunities to deliver affordable housing, the engagement with key agencies on delivering affordable housing, and the securing of affordable housing are corporate activities within the Council including planning, housing and legal functions. There is a variety of legislation and national policy that provides the context and framework within which such work takes place.

Executive Summary

2. A Motion was submitted to Council on Monday 27 July 2015, proposed by Councillor Ms Julia Wassell and seconded by Councillor Ms Andrea Baughan. The Motion stated that "This council supports the view that the release of the Reserve Sites presents a golden opportunity to substantially meet the current and future social housing needs of our district. In addition to the focus on infrastructure it is essential that another strand of work is added to identify the scale of the need for social housing and ensure that any new development is maximised to ensure the need is met. Wycombe District Council should take the lead in organising a multi-agency housing summit to be held in the autumn of 2015 to identify and discuss the needs, challenges and opportunities for housing provision in the Wycombe District."
3. In response to this motion Members should note that the Council already undertakes extensive activity in relation to affordable housing. This includes keeping the information on affordable housing need up to date, regular dialogue with key agencies and stakeholders on the delivery of affordable housing through the Wycombe Housing Forum and its sub groups, and dialogue through other planning and housing activities including ongoing engagement on the new Local Plan. The process of delivering affordable housing is a continual one and the Council, particularly through its planning negotiations on

development sites, continues to seek to maximise the affordable housing delivery, and over time delivery is likely to increase as overall levels of housing development increase.

4. Given this activity and existing level of engagement it is considered that a housing summit is not necessary or appropriate and as such it is recommended to Council that the Motion be rejected.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

5. Delivering affordable housing is one of the key areas of focus under the “Thriving Economy” theme of the Sustainable Communities Plan. Delivering more affordable homes is one of the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan.

Background and Issues

6. The Motion identifies the need to identify the scale of the need for affordable housing and to ensure that any new development is maximised to ensure that the need is met. It suggests a multi-agency summit is necessary to address the needs, challenges and opportunities.
7. The District Council already undertakes extensive activity in relation to affordable housing. This includes keeping the information on affordable housing need up to date, regular dialogue with key agencies and stakeholders on the delivery of affordable housing through the Wycombe Housing Forum and its sub groups, and dialogue through other planning and housing activities including ongoing engagement on the new Local Plan, including with private developers, registered providers, other local authorities, amenity groups and the wider public.
8. In relation to identifying housing need, the Council undertook a Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was published in January 2014 which identified the need for market and affordable housing in the District. This work is now being updated through a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment jointly commissioned by Wycombe District Council, Chiltern District Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council. This work includes input from housing specialists including the supported housing team at the County Council. It will not only indicate an overall level of affordable housing that is needed but set out more detail on the type of affordable housing required.
9. A draft of the findings will be published in the autumn and will be subject to sharing with Members and all relevant parties will be consulted on the draft report. This work will provide particularly valuable information on the longer term need for affordable housing. In addition the Council maintains its housing register. This provides a shorter term and up to date indication of the current need for affordable housing.
10. In relation to working with other agencies, there is already good multi agency dialogue on affordable housing issues taking place under the auspices of the Wycombe Housing Forum – this includes sub groups of the forum which meet on a regular basis looking at detailed issues including a development sub group with registered providers (housing associations) on how best to deliver affordable housing, and dialogue with the voluntary sector. These relationships

are key to keeping our approach to delivering affordable housing responsive and up to date. The Housing Forum is attended by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

11. Other dialogue is also taking place, such as with the public sector health providers in relation to key worker housing. In addition the Rural Forum, at its meeting in October is focusing on the issue of rural affordable housing with speakers including a rural housing enabler and from a housing association. The Rural Forum reaches a wider range of rural interests and Members are encouraged to attend. This topic is particularly relevant given recent Government announcements in relation to generating more starter homes in rural areas.
12. At the Member level, there is scope for further member engagement on housing/affordable housing issues. This includes through the Local Plan process, through member involvement on PAGs, and member involvement in the Improvement and Review Commission.
13. In terms of maximising delivery of affordable housing we already know from the work on the Local Plan that we need to deliver more housing overall in the District than in the past. We already have strong planning policies in place in our adopted Core Strategy, supported by supplementary guidance, to secure a proportion of affordable housing on suitable sites as part of our planning negotiations, namely 40% of bedspaces on greenfield sites and employment sites, 30% of bedspaces on other previously developed sites. Indeed factors relating to affordability and the ability to deliver additional affordable housing feed into determining the overall level of housing to be provided in the District.
14. The release of the reserve sites provides an opportunity to deliver additional affordable housing over the next few years.
15. Higher levels of housing generally will result in the delivery of more affordable housing. The Local Plan will identify further opportunities for new housing including affordable housing, and the mechanisms are already in place to ensure that there is a good dialogue with all the relevant agencies and stakeholders as part of preparing the plan. The Local Plan will also provide the opportunity to update our planning policies in relation to affordable housing.
16. There is good information already available on the need for affordable housing, good working relationships and ongoing dialogue established with key delivery agencies, and the prospect of increased affordable housing delivery over time as plans are brought forward for higher housing delivery across the District. As such it is not considered necessary or appropriate to hold a housing summit, as proposed in the Motion.

Consultation

17. No specific consultation has been undertaken in relation to this item. The Motion itself will be subject to debate at Council.

Options

18. The alternative option is to support the Motion but for reasons set out in this report this is not considered appropriate.

Conclusions

19. Given the existing and ongoing work on housing need identified above in the report, the existing mechanisms for dialogue on housing issues with key agencies, and the likely increased delivery of housing including affordable housing in the future means that a housing summit is not necessary and the Motion should be rejected.

Next Steps

20. The Motion will be debated at Full Council.

Background Papers

None