

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12
Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Housing Green Paper Options Stage 1
Date of Meeting: 26 June 2008
Report of: The Director of Adult Social Care and Housing
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report contains information on the ongoing process of examining the council's options in terms of the development of its social housing stock.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the report be noted.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Since local residents voted for the retention of housing stock, the council has been working hard to review its strategic housing options.
- 3.2 Current Government thinking has also moved towards strengthening the Local Authority role in housing provision.
- 3.3 This thinking is encapsulated in the Housing Green Paper. This consultation paper throws up a number of opportunities that could be of interest in meeting our strategic housing needs. Many authorities are already taking forward opportunities highlighted within the Green Paper to lever in additional investment and meet their strategic priorities.

- 3.4 In March 2008 the Housing Committee noted the range of options and opportunities offered in the Housing Green Paper. These are currently being examined in detail in order to establish whether a sustainable business case can be made for further development on order to support strategic housing and other objectives in the city.
- 3.5 officers from the Housing Strategy, Finance and Legal Departments have worked closely in an initial assessment of the Green Paper. We reported to Committee that we were seeking specialist external legal and financial advice to examine in detail whether there is a sustainable business case for taking forward any option to meet the strategic needs of the City. The objective would be to obtain best value from assets, bring in additional investment, meet housing need, promote regeneration and assist with meeting the Decent Homes standards.
- 3.6 Specialist legal and financial advice was sought in order to inform the Council on potential implications in areas such as tax, partnerships and risk. The Council did not seek general consultancy services.
- 3.7 Members were advised that it was anticipated a report back on the analysis would be made in the summer.
- 3.8 The Council has now completed the process of procuring expert advisers through competitive tender in order to support officers in undertaking a detailed analysis of the practicalities of taking forward any model and/or opportunity outlined in the Housing Green Paper.
- 3.9 PWC and Trowers and Hamlins have successfully tendered to supply this financial and legal advice.
- 3.10 These firms are now engaged on intensive time limited project work with officers to produce an initial assessment to ascertain whether a sustainable business case can be made for the development of any option within which the Council retains an interest, without any freehold transfer. The initial report back on this work is due in mid June 2008.
- 3.11 When complete, a detailed report on the analysis of options will be brought forward through the Council decision making process and the case made to enable the further development of any appropriate model.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 No consultation was undertaken in preparing this report.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications in regard to this report, although any eventual actions taken in regard to the Housing Green paper may have considerable financial implications.

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 No legal advice has been sought for this update report.

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no direct equalities implications to this report; eventual actions in regard to the Housing Green Paper will be taken with regard to equalities issues.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no direct sustainability implications to this report; eventual actions in regard to the Housing Green Paper will be taken with regard to sustainability issues.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct crime and disorder implications to this report; eventual actions in regard to the Housing Green Paper will be taken with regard to crime and disorder issues.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None in relation to this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct corporate/citywide implications to this report, but options for the use and maintenance of housing stock may form a key component of future corporate/citywide plans.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

There is none.

