

LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER EXECUTIVE

25 NOVEMBER 2009

GOVERNANCE OF HOUSING IN LEICESTERSHIRE

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to propose new governance arrangements to oversee the delivery of housing outcomes and priorities in the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) taking account of issues expected to be raised in the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Background

2. At its last meeting the Executive Group received a report which noted that housing outcomes in the Leicestershire SCS were being governed in one of the following three ways:
 - By the sub-regional Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Group (HPIG);
 - By the county Vulnerable People Partnership Board (VPPB); or
 - By no clear governance arrangement. This identified governance gap exists for SCS outcomes related to provision of decent homes (sub-outcome 3.7.2), access to housing advice services (5.5.5), and developing a strategic approach to housing affordability (1.4.1).

HPIG and the VPPB are identified as key partnerships in the Leicestershire Together Governance Framework.

3. Whilst a 'red-flag' on housing is not now expected in the forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) report the Audit Commission will indicate that housing is an area of activity which will be closely scrutinised in the future. A priority for the partnership will be the development and implementation of the housing aspects of the CAA Housing Improvement Plan.

Possible Future Developments

4. There are strong drivers for a more joined up approach at both county and sub-regional level to housing delivery and improvement. There is already strong sub-regional collaboration in the form of the HPIG partnership group, New Growth Point work, collaborative work on evidence and analysis, and the activities of Prospect Leicestershire. Such collaboration could strengthen further should aspects of housing delivery become part of the Multi Area Agreement, should the strategic housing RIEP project bring about new, more efficient approaches to delivery strategic housing and planning outcomes and priorities across Leicester and Leicestershire, and if the Total Place initiative were to

impact on housing arrangements. Sub-regional/ county collaboration is also likely to feature more strongly in future CAA key lines of enquiry for strategic housing activity.

5. Given the above it would be premature to move to a fully sub-regional approach to housing delivery at the current time. Furthermore there are housing issues specific to the County (as identified in the CAA) which will require addressing before collaboration can be extended to the sub-region. It is in this context that the proposal which follows is made.

Proposed revised Housing Governance Arrangements

6. It is proposed that:
 - HPIG continues to govern those housing outcomes related to housing growth and infrastructure provision;
 - the VPPB will lead on those housing outcomes which relate to housing services for vulnerable people; and that
 - a new Leicestershire Housing Board will oversee other housing support related outcomes and lead the development and implementation of the housing aspects of the CAA Improvement Plan.

Appendix A shows this new structure, and Appendix B specifies which SCS outcomes and LAA targets will be covered by which group.

7. It is proposed that the new Leicestershire Housing Board will be a small but high-level Board with the following members:
 - An identified lead local housing authority member (who will act as chair of the Board). It would make sense for this to be the same Member who will chair the Lead Housing Members Forum group which was recently established following member-level discussions with the Audit Commission about CAA Housing issues;
 - The chair, or a representative, of the Chief Housing Officers Group;
 - The chair or a representative, of the Housing, Planning & Infrastructure Group;
 - The chair, or a senior representative, of the Vulnerable People Partnership Board.
8. The main roles of the new Housing Board will be to:
 1. Develop and oversee implementation of all housing aspects of the CAA Improvement Plan;
 2. Oversee the delivery of Leicestershire SCS outcomes for the provision of decent homes (sub-outcome 3.7.2), access to housing advice services (5.5.5), and developing a strategic approach to housing affordability (1.4.1);
 3. Negotiate with key partners the provision of resources, and prioritise available resources, to deliver the housing aspects of the CAA Improvement Plan and the relevant SCS outcomes;
 4. Monitor delivery of the Improvement Plan and the relevant SCS outcomes.

These roles will be incorporated into terms of reference for the new Board.

9. In relation to the third bullet point above it will be crucial that all partners fully understand the resources and accountability implications of a joint partnership approach to delivering improvements. An early task for the Board will be consider how best to do this.

Recommendation

10. That the Executive agrees the proposed new housing governance arrangements involving the establishment of a Leicestershire Housing Board.