

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 17th November 2016

CONTACT OFFICER: Mike England
Interim Strategic Director, Regeneration, Housing and Resources

(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875300

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

HOUSING ISSUES – FUTURE APPROACH TO SCRUTINY

1. **Purpose of Report**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the approach to be adopted to the scrutiny of matters relating to Housing and in particular the allocation of responsibilities between the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to resolve that the following approach is taken:
 - a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee retains the responsibility for scrutinising the Housing Strategy and for receiving 6-monthly monitoring reports on progress against the Action Plan within the Housing Strategy.
 - b) That the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel assumes responsibility for scrutinising all other Housing matters, including performance and operational issues.
 - c) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider holding a special meeting in December 2016 or January 2017 to consider the draft Housing Strategy.
 - d) That the Committee note the indicative schedule of Housing items already suggested for consideration by the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel over the next year, as discussed in paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 of this report.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3.1 **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Addressing Housing issues is one of the key priorities in the Joint Wellbeing Strategy. The connection between health and wellbeing and good quality housing is well established. The Housing Strategy itself sets out the Council's ambition to regenerate neighbourhoods, improve the quality of housing and to contribute to the supply of new homes in Slough.

3.2 **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 2 of the Five Year Plan is that;

- There will more homes in the borough, with quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough

Housing is also closely linked to other outcomes, but in particular;

- Outcome 5; more people will take responsibility and manage their own health, care and support needs.
- Outcome 6; children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no direct financial implications of this report. Individual agenda items brought before the scrutiny process will have financial implications which will be dealt with in those reports.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal		
Property		
Human Rights		
Health and Safety		
Employment Issues		
Equalities Issues		
Community Support		
Communications		
Community Safety		
Financial		
Timetable for delivery		
Project Capacity		
Other		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications. Individual agenda items brought before the scrutiny process will have legal implications which will be dealt with in those reports. There are no Human Rights Act Implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessments will be prepared for specific items which come forward for scrutiny.

5. Supporting Information

Scope of the Council's Housing Responsibilities

5.1 The Council has a wide range of responsibilities in the Housing field. The key ones are;

- The assessment and management of housing need, including statutory responsibilities towards homeless households. At present, homelessness is on the increase, In 2015/16 the Council accepted 241 households as homeless and there are currently over 300 households in temporary accommodation;
- Encouraging ensuring the provision of new homes by the private sector, housing associations and, in Slough's case, directly ;
- Management of directly-owned accommodation. The Council has responsibility for over 7,100 tenanted and leasehold properties, held within the Housing Revenue Account. This is the Council's most valuable physical asset;
- Regulation of standards in the private rented sector. One household in four in Slough rents their home from a private landlord and this proportion is growing. Most landlords provide a good standard of accommodation but a minority are responsible for substandard and unhealthy accommodation. The Council has important powers of enforcement and regulation in this sector.

The Housing Strategy

5.2 The Council is required to have a Housing Strategy which sets out its approach to improving housing conditions in the Borough. A new Housing Strategy for Slough has been developed and a consultation draft is being considered by Cabinet on 21 November 2016. The document is structured around 5 themes;

- **Theme 1; New Housing Supply** – ensuring the right supply and mix of new homes and increasing affordable housing through the efficient use of land and capital resources.
- **Theme 2; Private Sector** - that the private housing sector provides sufficient good quality market housing through support for landlords and tenants and, where necessary, robust quality control and regulation.
- **Theme 3; Council Homes** - are managed and maintained to a high standard and the Council builds new homes for Slough residents
- **Theme 4; Homelessness and Housing Need** - that homelessness and rough sleeping are reduced through prevention
- **Theme 5; Special Needs and Vulnerable Groups** - that specialist accommodation is available for vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community particularly young people, older people, people with disabilities and those on restricted incomes.

- 5.3 Each of these themes is accompanied by an Action Plan and these are consolidated into a single Action Plan which will be used as a monitoring tool to assess progress with the Strategy.
- 5.4 The Strategy will be the subject of a widespread consultation before being brought back to Cabinet for final approval.

Proposed Allocation of Scrutiny Responsibilities

- 5.5 In view of its focus on corporate oversight of the Council's activities it is proposed that it would be appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to assume responsibility for scrutiny of the Housing Strategy. Once the Strategy is approved it is suggested that the mechanism for this would be a 6-monthly report monitoring progress against the Action Plan.
- 5.6 It is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also wish to discuss the draft Housing Strategy before it is approved. Given that the agenda for 12 January is already busy and that the meeting on 2 February is devoted to budget matters, the Committee are asked to consider whether they would wish to hold a special meeting in December 2016 or January 2017 to scrutinise the draft Housing Strategy.
- 5.7 It is proposed that all other Housing matters should be the responsibility of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel. This would include the monitoring of service performance, resident engagement and scrutiny of the operation of individual services.
- 5.8 A number of items are already planned or scheduled in for consideration by the Panel and these are set out below.

Item	Scheduled Date
Key Performance Indicators; outcome of working group.	January 2017
Garages; update on implementation of Garages Strategy	April 2017
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	April 2017
Repairs, Maintenance and Investment contract; update on mobilisation and award of contract.	May/June 2017
Key Performance Indicators quarterly updates	August 2017 November 2017 February 2018
Resident Engagement; Annual Review of co-regulation	October/November 2017

- 5.9 It is also suggested that, given its significance and the growing pressure that Slough and other councils are facing, the Panel receive a report on the homelessness position in first half of 2017.

6. Comments of Other Committees

This matter has not yet been discussed by and committees or panels.

7. **Conclusion**

The proposals should help bolster the Overview and Scrutiny's Committee as the body responsible for corporate oversight whilst also using the expertise of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services to look at individual Housing matters. In addition, it is hoped that the adoption of this proposal will not over- burden the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or obstruct their other business.

8. **Appendices Attached**

None.

9. **Background Papers**

None.