

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 11 NOVEMBER 20109
title: AFFORDABLE HOUSING MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING –
UPDATE ON STATUS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Committee on the current status of the Memorandum following the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy. To propose to refresh the section within the Memorandum regarding the evidence base of affordable housing need.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To meet the identified housing need of households in the borough.
- Community Objectives – Achieving a balanced housing market.
- Corporate Priorities - None
- Other Considerations – Ensuring housing scheme benefit the local community

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 In May 2010 a report was brought to Committee recommending amendments to the Memorandum that was to be published for a consultation period of 6 weeks. Since that date the Regional Spatial Strategy has been abolished and this had implications on the proposed amendments as they were in the main, being introduced to make a reference link to the development plan policies set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Therefore there is now no point progressing these amendments other than the removal of a lower threshold for affordable units in rural areas. The threshold of 3 will be replaced with the threshold of 5 for rural schemes.

3.2 In addition there is also a need to look at the evidence base for housing need within the Memorandum. All applications for development promoted to meet local needs housing must be accompanied with the following information as set out in Policy H21 in the Districtwide Local Plan:

- Details of who the accommodation will be expected to accommodate. This should include a full survey of the extent of need and include persons who have expressed an interest in the property and how the cost of the accommodation will be matched to the income of these target groups.

- Details of the methods by which the accommodation will be sold or let, managed and retained as suitable for its original purpose.

3.3 The Policy is needed to show exactly what the requirements for affordable housing are in relation to any proposal. In response to this requirement, currently the Affordable Housing Memorandum considers 4 sources of information.

These include:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This is still a valid evidence base and provides a detailed analysis of need across the borough.
- The Housing Needs Surveys. A rolling programme is in place to maintain up to date surveys in each parish.
- The Housing Waiting List. This is a social housing waiting list maintained by Ribble Valley Homes.
- The Affordable Housing Waiting List. This is a waiting list held within the Borough Council where households interested in affordable housing other than social can register an interest.

3.4 The proposal is to improve the evidence base; firstly, by introducing a further analysis of the Housing Waiting List. The information provided by the Waiting List is valid but can be misleading in rural parishes as households registered on the list may not have a local connection and therefore would not be eligible for any development. To ensure the data is relevant an amendment is proposed. That the Housing Waiting List for social housing is used as a source of information but in rural parishes analysis of the Waiting List data will be undertaken to provide details of households registered who have a local connection to the parish.

3.5 To meet the requirement of H21 in identifying who the accommodation will be expected to accommodate, the introduction of local connection registration events are proposed. These events will give households in the parish in housing needs the opportunity to see the type of properties being developed and if the proposed scheme meets their needs, then they can register as a potential household. This provides evidence of demand for the units available rather than general need in a parish.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources - None
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The events will ensure adherence to policy H21 that any proposed schemes are appropriate for the local needs.
- Political – This further evidence will help mitigate any concerns that schemes will not be occupied by local residents.
- Reputation – By ensuring new housing schemes meet local needs will assist local communities accepting new developments.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Accept the amendments to the memorandum in terms of the threshold and housing needs evidence base. The amendments to the memorandum will be drafted and a consultation period of 6 weeks commenced.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 4567.