

ITEM 6

Report to Minority Communities Diversity Forum – 12 June 2008

Update on the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy and advance notification of the overarching Housing Strategy consultation process.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report which gives an overview of the progress of the BME Housing Strategy and proposals for next steps.

To note that the consultation process for the overarching Housing Strategy for Derby will be commencing during the Summer

Reasons for recommendations

The report and supporting presentation details aspects of the work undertaken by the Council and partners in relation to BME Housing issues and the next steps in this process and also advises of opportunities to contribute to the overarching Housing Strategy for the City.

Supporting information

The City's first BME Housing Strategy was launched in 2005 in recognition of the distinct issues of inequality in relation to the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic - BME - households and related gaps in housing provision. BME groups are more likely to be living in housing which is unsuitable for their requirements than white residents. Also, Pakistani and Indian households are far more likely to be overcrowded than any other group. At the same time, BME households have far lower incomes on average than white households and so are more limited in their ability to remedy their housing situation.

A large proportion of the work in the Strategy has been about collating baseline data and measuring the extent of inequalities. However, through the Strategy, a range of positive achievements have been made to reduce housing inequalities for BME residents. Examples of this are:

Warm Homes for Normanton Project

Our BME Housing Needs and Market Study, 2003 found that BME households are almost twice as likely to heat their homes less than they would like to, in order to keep fuel bills low. This is to some extent associated with lower average incomes in some BME groups, as well as with the fact that some BME groups are more likely to live in older and less energy efficient dwellings.

From April 2006 to December 2007 Derby Advice ran the Warm Homes for Normanton programme, which targeting energy efficiency and affordable warmth advice at residents in Normanton – an area with a large BME population, as well as a high proportion of older, poorer quality or less energy efficient properties.

The project wrote to every household in the area, giving them the opportunity to contact Warm Homes by using a freepost reply slip. 320 households responded, 78 of whom asked for more information on energy efficiency. 470 residents made contact with the project, over 300 people received verbal advice and/or written information, and 141 vulnerable households received home visits.

Levels of fuel poverty in Normanton have fallen significantly since the inception of the project.

BME SmartShare Project

The research and consultation which informed our first BME Housing Strategy identified the need for specialist services to prevent and tackle homelessness among vulnerable BME households, particularly single BME residents with complex needs.

Derbyshire Housing Aid and Derby City Council worked together to secure around £170,000 funding from the Government's Ethnic Minorities Innovation Fund (EMIF) to provide specialist support for BME households.

BME SmartShare was set up to help single homeless individuals from BME backgrounds with complex housing-related needs (substance misuse, homelessness on release from prison, fleeing culturally-related domestic violence).

BME SmartShare created 26 units of accommodation in six shared houses in or around Derby. Care was taken to ensure that such accommodation would appropriately meet cultural and religious aspects of housing need.

In close co-operation with statutory services (probation, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse), BME organisations and interpreting services, the programme also provided support packages helping clients to tackle underlying problems. BME Smart Share encouraged clients to develop their skills, both practical skills required to sustain a home and tenancy, and employable and job-seeking skills.

In the project involved clients in the creation of shared houses, teaching BME people who have experienced homelessness basic construction/ handyperson skills in the process.

Derbyshire Housing Aid is now developing a 'how to do it manual', in order that the project can be replicated in other parts of the country.

Equality Impact Assessments

We are undertaking Equality Impact Assessments on housing policies and strategies and have so far undertaken assessments on our Affordable Warmth Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Allocations Policy. As part of this process, we consult widely and consider potential equalities effects of all housing policies and, where adverse effects are identified, put in place measures to remedy these.

Thus far, we have carried out impact assessments on the Affordable Warmth Strategy, the Homelessness Strategy and the Allocations Policy. During the implementation of our first BME Housing Strategy, we have begun to carry out equality impact assessments on every housing-related policy or strategy which the Council develops.

Next steps

Derby City Council is currently in the process of writing our overarching Housing Strategy for the City. During the Summer of this year we will be undertaking a consultation exercise to make sure that the views of residents across the city will be taken into account. The consultation process, which will be widely advertised will include distribution of feedback forms which will outline the key priorities and issues and ask if these are appropriate; an online response option; presentations at a range of venues and a stakeholder event in September. The information and experience we have gained through working on the BME Housing Strategy will also be used to inform the overarching Strategy. The draft themes are outlined below and the draft issues are outlined in appendix 1.

- **Cohesive Communities**
- **Affordable and accessible housing**
- **Improving homes and the living environment**
- **Supporting vulnerable residents**

Following publication of the overarching Housing Strategy, we will be refreshing the BME Housing Strategy early next year and will be using the Strategy as a mechanism for driving forward the actions in the Housing Strategy relating to BME Housing issues and will again be consulting with this group.

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Appendix 1

Derby City Council Housing Strategy Priorities and key issues

1. Cohesive Communities

The aim of this priority is to ensure that housing services contribute towards the building of safe, inclusive and vibrant communities with a shared sense of belonging.

- Growing ethnic diversity requires more flexible and responsive services and provision to ensure full inclusion for all communities
- A8 migrants
 - Transitory nature
 - Pressure on private sector rental stock
 - Houses in Multiple Occupation/ Overcrowding
 - Potential for exploitation
 - Potential impact on host community
- Growing student population
 - Transitory nature
 - Impact on private rental market
- Respect agenda / impact of Anti Social Behaviour
- Perceived barriers to geographical mobility along community lines
- Crime and fear of crime
- Regulation and control of higher risk private sector rental market
- Gypsies / travellers
 - Integration of existing and future travellers onto authorised sites within the community

2. Affordable and accessible housing

The aim of this priority is to ensure that every household in Derby has access to decent and appropriate housing that they can afford

- Affordability
 - Rise in house prices outpaced rise in income
- Increasing demand pressures on social housing stock
 - Loss of social housing stock through right to buy
 - Lost stock not replaced
 - More people having to join waiting list because of increasing affordability issues
 - Social housing becoming option of choice
 - Expanding role of general needs social housing
- Underoccupation

- Significant proportion of family homes occupied by older 1 / 2 person households
 - Lack of attractive downsizing accommodation
- Lack of suitable intermediate housing
 - Lack of understanding/ effective marketing
 - Dwelling type
 - Desirability
 - Location
- Lack of developable land in Derby City
 - Growth out of city to meet Derby's housing need
- Challenges by developers to Section 106 contributions
- Not making effective use of the private sector rental market to meet housing needs
 - Lack of private lease schemes
 - Lack of private rented homes with disabled facilities
 - Communication with landlords needs to be improved
- Lack of move-on accommodation for people ready to leave supported accommodation
- Growing population and household, subsequent impact on housing demand
 - People living longer
- Choice Based Lettings systems must allow full and fair access to affordable housing for all members of the community

3. Improving homes and the living environment

The aim of this priority is to regenerate homes and neighbourhoods in a sustainable manner.

- Number of vulnerable households living in non-decent homes in the private sector
 - Low housing demand in certain areas
 - Long-term empty properties
- Buy to leave investments compromising the value of residential-led development in the city centre
- Uncoordinated approach to the continued use of adapted properties
- Climate change agenda
 - Energy efficiency of existing and new built homes
- Fuel poverty
- Resources required to enable effective regeneration of deprived areas
- Development and implementation of appropriate masterplan for areas of Rosehill and Osmaston
- Scarce resources to deal with poor housing conditions in the private sector
- High levels of deprived mono-type and mono-tenure estates
- Root causes of deprivation
 - Worklessness
 - High levels of Anti Social Behaviour

- Poor health
- Educational attainment
- Life outcomes

Higher impact private sector rented (Houses in Multiple Occupation, students, migrant workers)

4. Supporting vulnerable residents

The aim is to ensure vulnerable people receive appropriate housing and housing related support.

- Need to develop assistive technology and resource to allow people to remain independent
- Provision of appropriate supported housing and support services for vulnerable groups
- Some floating support services too inflexible/ not sufficiently specialised
- Appropriate and attractive housing choices for an ageing population people
- Lack of clarity where to go for older people's housing advice
- Homelessness
 - Move-on support required
 - Need to deal with underlying causes of homelessness, e.g.
 - i. Chaotic lifestyles
 - ii. Worklessness
 - iii. Relationship breakdown/ domestic violence
 - Use of Bed and Breakfast is not suitable as temporary accommodation
 - Over-reliance on temporary accommodation
 - Effect of rent allowance direct payments
- Need to prevent homelessness and provide suitable options
- Provision and support for high-impact homelessness groups, e.g.
 - Youth homelessness
 - Ex-offenders
- Bed blocking
- Insufficiently joined-up approach to commissioning services between housing, health and social services
- Limited options for domestic violence victims
- Need to bolster the services provided by the Home Improvement Agency and better market services.