

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: July 12 2005 July 20 2005	MEETING NAME Executive Council Assembly
Report title:		Southwark Housing Strategy 2005 - 2010	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Housing	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

EXECUTIVE

1. That the Executive recommend to Council Assembly that the new Southwark Housing Strategy 2005-2010 (appendix 1 circulated separately) be agreed.

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

2. That Council Assembly agree the new Southwark Housing Strategy 2005-2010 (appendix 1).

BACKGROUND

3. S87 Local Government Act 2003 requires all local authorities to have a housing strategy. This reflects the government's belief that a robust strategy is essential to delivery of a local authority's housing functions. The housing strategy should be the local authority's vision for housing in its area (across all tenures), setting out objectives and targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role. It provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues (guidance to Act)
4. The Act enables the Secretary of State to require local authorities to have a strategy on certain specified matters and can impose requirements on the ends the strategy must achieve. The Secretary of State can set rules around when and to whom the strategy should be submitted and these can vary depending on an authority's performance. The Act enables local authorities to include in their housing strategy other strategies or policies they are statutorily required to have (for example the homelessness strategy, required by Homelessness Act 2002). The guidance to the Act specifies that the Secretary of State will issue guidance on preparation and content of local housing strategies, but no guidance has been issued since the Act came into force. Therefore the default guidance is still the Fit For Purpose assessment criteria issued by the ODPM in 2002; this is still the guidance Government Offices are working to.

5. Southwark was awarded Fit For Purpose (FFP) for its housing strategy in 2003 – one of the first 10% nationally to achieve this. Our FFP assessment is based on two documents (1) Housing Strategy 1998-2005 Year 5 (2002/03) Update and (2) Year 5 Update, Supplementary Information. The second document successfully addressed the areas in the Year 5 Update which the Government Office for London assessed at the time as not fully meeting the FFP standard.
6. We started the process of reviewing our housing strategy in late 2003, to give time for thorough consultation and sought advice from the Government Office for London (GOL) on whether our new housing strategy would need to be submitted to them for assessment against FFP criteria. The advice was that re-assessment would only be necessary if the authority effectively tore up the housing strategy assessed as FFP and went off in a radically different direction. GOL also advised that 2005 may be a benchmark for Southwark to put a new housing strategy in place as our current strategy would be life-expired.
7. Our GOL officer has been kept informed throughout the process of developing this new five-year housing strategy. Commenting on a recent draft of the final strategy he has confirmed that the new strategy does not radically depart from the aims and objectives of the 1998-2005 housing strategy and that therefore we will not need to submit it for re-assessment. Effectively therefore we would retain our Fit For Purpose status with this 2005-2010 housing strategy. GOL also noted that should the ODPM eventually issue guidance on Fit for Purpose re-assessments, they might also amend the Fit for Purpose criteria.
8. The process of developing the new strategy started with the Housing Partnership Board setting up a Housing Strategy Review Board. This was a partnership group of tenant and leaseholder representatives, councillors, key partner organisations and council officers, which met regularly to discuss housing strategy and advise on consultation on the strategy and the annual housing conference. With the Housing Strategy Review Board (HSRB), officers identified key housing issues for the strategy and discussed them at the housing conference in October 2003. Then, with the HSRB, officers developed our draft vision, values and objectives and an outline of the strategy. We also held a workshop for strategy officers and other interested officers across council departments. This was to scope out some of the key issues for our new strategy and consultation proposals.
9. The HSRB has worked with officers through all the phases of developing the new housing strategy. There were two distinct phases in developing , the first phase being one of fairly limited but high level consultation to get broad agreement to the vision, values, objectives and priorities. Papers on proposals for the new housing strategy and the consultation programme were discussed at
 - Southwark Alliance Management Group
 - Southwark Housing Association Group
 - Southwark Homelessness Forum
 - Chief Officer Team
 - Housing Scrutiny (29 July 2004)

10. Building on feedback from this consultation we developed the *Southwark housing strategy consultation document* which summarised the key housing issues for Southwark, and what we intend to do about them over the next five years. This consultation version of the housing strategy, with a questionnaire, was distributed to all councillors, residents groups and partners in November/December 2004. Officers attended a range of partnership and residents meetings to get input to the consultation.
11. We held a housing conference in February 2005, which was attended by over 130 delegates who discussed the strategy priorities in small groups.
12. Feedback on responses to the consultation were presented to Housing Scrutiny 7 March 2005.
13. Since then, we have published *Housing Strategy Consultation Feedback Report* which sets out the feedback received and explains how the council is responding to the feedback. This report was put on the council web site and posted to all housing conference delegates.
14. The timetable for publication of the strategy has been pushed back due to changes in how Members wish to deal with it. At the Council Assembly meeting on the 25th May, the Council decided to include the housing strategy in the council's policy framework. Therefore, the strategy will go to Council Assembly for consideration on 20th July. Briefings for members have been arranged.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

15. Executive/Council Assembly should note that Government Office's assessment of the housing strategy (FFP assessment) feeds into the overall assessment of the Housing Service as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. We are unlikely to retain Fit For Purpose without an up to date housing strategy and action plan. In addition, without a new housing strategy being put in place we
 - Will have no strategic framework to inform policy, investment and service planning for housing
 - Fail to provide direction on our housing priorities to partners and residents, this could lead to a loss of credibility and also to challenges to our planning policy as the housing strategy and housing needs assessment are key supporting evidence for housing planning policies. This could put at risk meeting targets on delivery of new affordable housing
 - Would lose credibility with residents and partners who have contributed to developing the strategy through the consultation programme; this would make it harder to engage them in the future
16. Executive/Council Assembly should also note that the new housing strategy incorporates and extends Southwark's Homelessness Strategy to 2010. The decision to re-integrate our homelessness strategy was agreed in consultation with the Homelessness Forum.

17. Executive/Council Assembly should further note that the new housing strategy includes a timetable for annual review. The strategy will be updated if there are any major changes to the policy framework. For example, we will need to address the new Southwark Community Strategy, currently being consulted on. In addition, once we have completed our stock options appraisal linked to meeting the government's decent homes standard (see chapter 5) we will need to review the implications for the overarching housing strategy. Executive agreed 5 April 2005 to consider the stock options appraisal report in September 2005. This is currently being progressed through the Options Appraisal Working Group which comprises members from all parties and representatives from Tenant and Leaseholder Councils. Executive are asked to note that at the Options Appraisal Working Group on 28 June it was agreed that the timetable be extended slightly to ensure effective consultation with and feedback from tenants and residents, enabling a decision to be made at the Executive meeting in October.
18. Drafts of the final Strategy have now been seen by the following:
 - Housing Strategy Review Board 09/05/05
 - Southwark Alliance Management Group 19/05/05
 - Government Office for London 19/05/05
 - Housing Scrutiny 29/06/05 Minutes – Appendix 2
19. A summary of the strategy will be produced and we will be printing both the summary and full document. These will also be available on the Southwark website. We aim to complete publication by early September. We will send out a summary to all the people who have been involved in the development of the strategy and all tenants and resident groups.
20. Executive/Council Assembly should note that there is still a small amount of editing and final checking to be done before the strategy is published. Also, to save paper, appendices are not included in the attached housing strategy, although a list of the appendices which will be included is on the last page of the strategy.
21. Executive/Council Assembly should note that an Equalities Impact Assessment of the strategy has been undertaken. This went to external challenge on 21 June and was positively received. The EIA will be included as an appendix to the strategy.
22. Council Assembly should note that any comments from Executive 12 July will be tabled at Council Assembly 20 July.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2005 – 2010

Appendix 2 – Housing Scrutiny minutes 29/06/05

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
<i>Housing Strategy Consultation document Housing Strategy questionnaire Responses to consultation Other background papers e.g. papers to consultative forums, Housing Strategy Review Board agendas and minutes Evidence base, including Housing Needs and Stock Condition Surveys The Equalities Impact Assessment of the Strategy</i>	<i>Housing Regeneration Initiatives Strategy & Policy Team, 9 Larcom Street</i>	<i>Ann Pettifer x51218 or Robert Weallans x51217</i>

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	<i>Rachel Sharpe, Divisional Services Manager, Strategy & Regeneration, Housing Department</i>	
Report Author	<i>Robert Weallans, Senior Project Officer (Strategy & Policy)</i>	
Version	<i>Final</i>	
Dated	<i>28/06/2005</i>	
Key Decision?	<i>Yes</i>	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	No	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
<i>List other Officers here</i>	As in paper	
Executive Member	Yes, through HSRB and EMH briefings	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	July 4 2005	