

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

PLACE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

10TH SEPTEMBER 2015

Report of: **Andrea Dell, Service Manager, Policy, Scrutiny, Research & Executive Support**

Title: **Housing Inquiry Day**

Ward: **n/a**

Officer Presenting Report: **Lucy Fleming, Scrutiny Co-ordinator**

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RECOMMENDATION

That Members receive for information the draft scope detailing plans in relation to the Housing Inquiry Day that will take place on 2nd October.

The inquiry day is being jointly led by the Place and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commissions. The arrangements for the day have been signed off by Councillors Bolton and Negus as the relevant chairs.

Summary

The appended document provides details of the event on 2nd October.

The significant issues in the report are:

The outline for the Housing Inquiry Day.

Appendices:

A – Draft Scope for the Housing Inquiry Day



Bristol City Council Overview and Scrutiny – Scrutiny Inquiry Day

'How can Better Housing Delivery Secure the Best Outcomes for Bristol'

Date: 2 October 15

Venue: (The Watershed or Armada House, Central Bristol)

Introduction

There is a continuing trend regarding the rising unaffordability of housing in the West of England.¹ The problem is particularly acute in Bristol where the market is fuelled by relatively buoyant employment and geographical restrictions limiting the options for large-scale housing development. Various measures have been put in place to date to attempt to address the housing issues affecting the city, but have not managed to overcome this complex problem. There is also rising concern amongst social housing providers about the impact of the government policy on the affordability of social housing.

A new Housing Strategy for Bristol, produced by Homes4Bristol (strategic housing partnership) is due to be adopted in late 2015, which will set out aspirations and priorities for housing over the next five years. Homes4Bristol represents stakeholders from across the housing 'system', and in addition has drawn from its own expertise, background data on the system, and the housing conference held in December 2014². The Council is due to approve the Strategy in December 2015. Before this new strategy becomes policy, elected Members wish to pause and reflect on housing provision in the city in order to identify;

- Which previous measures to improve housing affordability have secured the best results?
- If some measures haven't worked then why not and what can we learn from this going forward?
- What will the impact be of emerging national government policy?
- What knowledge can we take from innovative experience elsewhere?

¹ West of England LEP Quarterly Economic Bulletin July 15 – see following link
<http://www.westofenglandlep.co.uk/about-us/economic-intelligence/reports-and-surveys>).

² See background papers for more details

The Inquiry Day will aim to pick up where the Mayor's Homes Commission³ left off by testing whether any of the findings should be revisited one year on. Crucially, it will evaluate the impact of new national policy and how Bristol should prepare for the changes that lay ahead.

The objectives of the event will be to;

1. Prepare recommendations that will improve the supply of Affordable Housing within the city; and
2. Ensure that Members understand the often multifaceted and interrelated issues affecting housing including those relating to finance, economic growth, site availability, and skills shortages within the development industry; and
3. Understand what previous initiatives have secured the best results; and
4. Work with leading housing experts to test the Housing Strategy and ensure it is fit for purpose

Context

- Recent change of government with a range of new policies being implemented over the coming term
- The draft Housing Strategy 2015 – 2020 (currently out for consultation), which will aim to achieve the following outcomes;
 - Increase the numbers of new homes
 - Deliver the best use of existing buildings
 - Intervene to prevent further decline in the supply of affordable housing
- The work of the Mayoral Homes Commission – which assessed the problems affecting housing within Bristol and made a number of recommendations aiming to improve housing delivery regarding;
 - Land and sites supply
 - Planning for housing delivery
 - Leadership and systems
 - Making best use of strategic assets
 - Funding housing delivery, subsidy and affordability
- LGA Peer challenge of Homes4Bristol – which is taking place in September 15

Outline

Policy Briefings

The Council's Policy Team will be providing a series of policy briefings on housing in advance of the Inquiry Day. All members will be invited to attend.

³ See Homes Commission findings - <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/mayor/homes-mayoral-commission>

See Appendix A for the topics of these briefings, which have been informed by conversations with members.

Inquiry Day

The Inquiry Day will take place on 2nd October 15 with the two-fold aim of;

- Taking a fresh look at the issues affecting the supply of all housing offers, particularly affordable housing, in order to identify what has not worked in the past and whether the current climate will enable previously disregarded measures to be explored; and
- Considering whether the draft Housing Strategy;
 1. Focuses on the right outcomes
 2. Demonstrates a clear understanding of national and local issues
 3. Places sufficient emphasis on the role of partners
 4. Is clear about what can be controlled/influenced locally, and what requires national policy intervention.

Background Papers

- Draft Housing Strategy 2015 to 2020
- Housing Strategy 2010 to 2015
- Affordable Housing Delivery Framework 2013 to 2018
- The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013 to 2018
- The State of the Housing Market in Bristol 2015
- The Joint Spatial Plan (including the SHMA)
- Bristol Housing Futures – A Report for the Bristol Housing Partnership
- Mayor's Vision for Bristol
- Report of the Mayoral Homes Commission
- Chartered Institute of Housing Local Housing Futures paper
- LGIU's Under Construction report
- The Elphicke-House Report From statutory provider to Housing Delivery Enabler: Review into the local authority role in housing supply
- Findings from the LGA Peer Review of Homes for Bristol (anticipated to be available in September 15)
- Details of Bristol City Council's Housing Conference held in December 2014

Internal and External Witnesses/Contributors

Contributions will be sought from the following sectors/organisations;

- The local universities
- Leading national academic figures, which must include housing finance

- Experts on innovative policies being introduced elsewhere – such as from other local authorities
- Policy think tank industry representatives – local and national – to provide the perspective of key partners such as developers
- Senior officers from Bristol City Council

The Inquiry Day will be open to all Councillors from Bristol and the invitation will be extended to key stakeholders, including;

- The Homes for Bristol Executive Board
- The West of England Planning, Housing and Communities Board
- The local MPs

Chairing

The day will be chaired by Councillors Negus and Bolton as Chairs of the Neighbourhoods and Place Scrutiny Commissions. They will be assisted by Dr Madge Dresser, University of the West of England.

Evidence Gathering

A number of questions will be submitted to the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) in order to provide details of housing approaches and experiences in other Councils.

Bristol City Council Officers will also be asked to respond to key questions in advance of the event, so that the responses can be included in the briefing packs that will be circulated to attendees.

Programme

The event will involve a combination of contributions from external experts and break out groups looking at particular topics in depth.

Next Steps

The recommendations arising from the Inquiry Day will shape the final form of the Housing Strategy, which will be considered by Cabinet in late 2015. In addition, any recommendations that fall outside of the scope of the Housing Strategy will be referred to the Mayor for consideration.

Appendix A – MEMBER BRIEFING TOPICS

1. Finance – sources of funding for new housing, the relationship between borrowing and income, and details of the Housing Revenue Account.
2. Land economics, planning and housing development – including the way the development industry works, issues such as land blocking, the role of planning and development viability
3. Welfare Reform – the impact of changes to date and implications of emerging policy on affordability of housing, and the impacts for landlords
4. Housing requirements – what the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) tells us about future need/demand
5. Landlords - the role of the private rented sector (including standards for landlords – even those with very small portfolios), and social landlords - including Bristol City Council's role as a landlord and Home Choice Bristol.
6. Other models for delivery of housing eg co-operatives and Community Land Trusts (CLTs)

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