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**Consultation on**

**Housing Priorities**

for 2015/16 and beyond

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**Introduction**

Sutton Council is developing a new housing strategy for the borough. Our last housing strategy was published in 2011, since when there have been a number of national and regional developments that have had a significant impact on the housing service and the delivery of services generally by the Council.

A number of these changes were brought about by the Localism Act 2011, which gave local housing authorities the option of offering fixed term tenancies and resulted in the Council reviewing its housing allocations policy. Also, there is now a new national Right-to-Buy (RTB) policy, with the reinvestment of the income from house sales into replacement social housing, and with much higher discounts for tenants.

The new RTB scheme and changes to the way council housing is financed have led to the beginnings of a revival in council housing building, with Sutton Council recently taking a decision to start building new homes again. At the same time we have seen the introduction of numerous welfare benefit reforms and major changes for adult social care, also affecting housing, introduced through the new Care Act.

As many people will be aware, the Authority is facing substantial cuts in the funding provided by Central Government. These are having a significant impact on the delivery of the Council’s services, including housing services. Over the next four years Sutton Council needs to make savings of around £40m, this on top of substantial cuts already made.

This consultation document is a prelude to our developing a new housing strategy, which will be published next year. It sets out our vision and proposed priorities and goals for meeting housing need in the borough. To help formulate our priorities we are seeking the views of a wide range of stakeholders, including borough residents, our partner organisations and neighbouring local authorities.

**Our vision for housing**

The Council’s overall vision for the borough is “*... a community in which all can take part and take pride”*. Derived from this is our vision for housing, which is:

***“A community in which the housing needs of all households are met, now and in the future”***

To help deliver our housing vision we have identified the following five priorities:

1. **Increase the supply of affordable housing**
2. **Invest in and make best use of the borough’s existing housing stock**
3. **Promote excellent housing management standards across all types of housing**
4. **Provide housing options advice and address homelessness**
5. **Provide housing support and improve the health and wellbeing of residents**

The following pages set out the objectives or goals that we think will help us to deliver on each priority. However, to ensure that the strategy reflects the needs and views of our residents and partners, we would be grateful to receive your views and comments on these.

**Tell us your views...**

The views of our residents and other key stakeholders are important to us and will be taken into account as we develop and finalise the new housing strategy. The strategy itself and related delivery plans will provide more detail about how our priorities will be met. When the strategy is completed we will take steps to ensure that our partners’ service and business plans reflect the actions agreed and that the resources needed to deliver the desired outcomes are prioritised.

To respond to the consultation on the housing strategy, we would encourage you to complete the on-line survey.

Alternatively you can send in your comments via email or by post (see details below)

We are particularly keen to know:

* Whether you think our five priorities are the right ones? Which is most important to you? Are there others you think we should have?
* Under each of the priorities whether you think we have set the right goals? Are there others we should include?
* Whether you have any views about how the goals might be delivered? For example, do you have any views about how affordable new homes should be or how social housing should be allocated?
* Whether you have any other ideas about how we might best be able to meet housing need in the borough?

The deadline for responses is **12 December 2014**

Our addresses for submission of comments are:

By post:

Housing strategy consultation

LB Sutton

Civic Offices

St Nicholas Way

SUTTON

SM1 1EA

By email:

housingstrategyconsultation@sutton.gov.uk

If you have any questions about his document please contact Fran Massiah on 020 8770 5657 or email fran.massiah@sutton.gov.uk

**Priority A**

INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Some key facts:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3,626**Sutton’s latest planning target for new homes between 2015 and 2025. At least 40% are expected to be affordable homes (Further Alterations to the London Plan 2014) | **81**Number of affordable homes delivered in 2013/14 (A further (estimated) 668 are currently in the pipeline for delivery over the next 3 years) | **65**Number of Sutton Council properties sold under Right to Buy during 2013/14 (this compares just two sold during 2011/12) |

**Our Goals:**

1. Maximise affordable housing provision and achieve sustainable communities through the application of planning policies
2. Secure a greater number of affordable homes through being one of the Mayor’s new Housing Zones
3. Identify and make use of land and other assets to support the provision of affordable housing
4. Deliver a programme of building new council-owned homes making full use of RTB and other resources available
5. Ensure that an appropriate mix of sizes of affordable units is provided in a range of locations to best meet need
6. Ensure that new affordable housing is built to high eco-levels, high quality and that it meets required design standards
7. Support the development of Hackbridge as a district centre and sustainable suburb through the provision of affordable housing to the highest environmental standards

**Priority B**

INVEST IN AND MAKE BEST USE OF THE BOROUGH’S EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

**Some key facts:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **£290,958**Average house price in Sutton (compared to the London average of £437,608)(Land Registry House Price Index -28 July 2014) | **£276.92**Average weekly rent for a two bedroom property in the private sector (compared to £157.07 for an equivalent sized housing association property and £100.15 for Council rented property)  | **1,090**Total number of applicants on the Council’s Housing Register on 30 September 2014 | **593**Total number of homes in Sutton that were let during 2013/14 for social or affordable rent from the Council or housing associations |

**Our Goals:**

1. Regenerate existing council stock where appropriate to improve the quality of social housing in the borough.
2. Achieve and improve upon the decent homes standard across the Council’s stock and invest in its long term future.
3. Carry out remodelling, adaptations to and, where appropriate, redevelopment of sheltered housing schemes to better meet the needs of older people
4. Improve energy efficiency in the borough’s housing stock across all tenures
5. Reduce under-occupation and overcrowding in the borough’s social rented stock
6. Operate efficient and effective turnaround of empty or void properties, tenant transfers and nominations within the social rented stock
7. Operate an effective housing allocations policy to ensure that households who genuinely cannot meet their housing needs in the private sector are assisted.
8. Make best use of private sector housing to meet the needs of homeless and other housing applicants
9. Work with property owners to bring empty properties back into use through the application of grants, loans or enforcement activity.

**Priority C**

PROMOTE EXCELLENT HOUSING MANAGEMENT STANDARDS ACROSS ALL TYPES OF HOUSING

**Some key facts:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **6,113**Total number of Council-owned rented homes as at 1 April 2014 | **81%**Tenant satisfaction with the overall housing management service provided as at June 2014  | **825**Council-owned homes made decent during 2013/14  | **39**Council and housing association properties brought back into use following social housing fraud investigations |

**Our goals:**

1. Ensure, through robust performance management, that the Council’s ALMO (Sutton Housing Partnership) maintains an excellent standard of service in all areas.
2. Promote excellent standards of service and, where appropriate, stock/management rationalisation within the housing association sector.
3. Work with landlords and tenants to ensure good standards of management in the private rented sector.
4. Work with social housing landlords with housing stock in the borough to ensure effective resident involvement.

**Priority D**

PROVIDE ADVICE ON HOUSING OPTIONS AND ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

**Some key facts:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1,013**Number of households who approached the Council for housing advice during 2013/14 | **325**Number of households prevented from becoming homeless in 2013/14 | **378**Number of households accepted as homeless in 2013/14, (compared to 288 in 2012/13) | **256**Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation on 30 September 2014 |

**Our goals:**

1. Provide effective and comprehensive housing advice services across all tenures to ensure that people are aware of their housing options
2. Prevent homelessness wherever possible
3. Work with private landlords to improve access to the private rented sector for low income and vulnerable households
4. Provide suitable temporary accommodation for statutory homeless households
5. Help residents adversely affected by current and future welfare benefit changes and prepare for forthcoming changes.

**Priority E**

PROVIDE HOUSING SUPPORT AND IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF RESIDENTS

**Some key facts:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **3,789**Number of adults supported by the Council during 2013/14, 80% of whom were supported to live in the community | **10%**Estimated proportion of borough households living in fuel poverty  | **49**Number of disabled people assisted to adapt their property during 2013/14 |

**Our Goals**

1. Support vulnerable households (including older people, people with disabilities and long-term conditions, people with a learning disability, people with mental health issues etc.) to find and keep a home in the community and reduce the need for care and nursing home placements.
2. Make use of assistive technology to enable older and disabled people to live independently in the community
3. To ensure that housing plays its full part in the Council fulfilling its safeguarding and other responsibilities under the Care Act 2014
4. Provide sufficient and suitable accommodation for marginalised groups such as Gypsies and Travellers who are resident in the borough.
5. Undertake initiatives in the social housing sector that support residents’ health and well being
6. Help long term unemployed vulnerable people living in the most deprived areas into employment.
7. Work with partner organisations to tackle and reduce fuel poverty across all housing tenures.