

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	10
Date:	14 th May 2013	Status	Open
Category			
Subject:	East Midlands Declaration on Affordable Housing		
Report by:	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager		
Other Officers Involved	Planning Policy Manager		
Director	Director of Development		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Alan Tomlinson, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

REGENERATION – Developing healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities

The Declaration on Affordable Housing acknowledges the benefits that affordable housing can have on an area, and the difficulty in delivering it within the current grant regime and economic circumstances. By signing the Declaration, signatory local authorities commit their council to working constructively and collaboratively with partners and communities to maximise opportunities and resources to deliver new affordable housing.

TARGETS

None

VALUE FOR MONEY

N/a

THE REPORT

Background

- 1.1 The Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015 allocated just 4.1% of total investment to the East Midlands, which was half the share that the region received between 2008 and 2011. In response to the decrease in grant received by the area, and the decline in affordable housing delivery, East Midlands Councils formed a Task Group to look at how councils in the region could increase the delivery of affordable housing, despite the limited availability of public sector grant over the current CSR period.

- 1.2 The group was chaired by the Leader of Derbyshire Dales District Council, with membership comprising officers from a number of EM councils, as well as a representative from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the National Housing Federation. There were also two further elected member representatives, including Cllr Gordon from North East Derbyshire. The task group has delivered three outputs:
- *Investing in Opportunity*, a prospectus for new affordable housing in the East Midlands;
 - an affordable housing good practice guide, which publishes examples of good practice within the EM region; and
 - the *East Midlands Declaration on Affordable Housing*.
- 1.3 The Declaration on Affordable Housing acknowledges the benefits that affordable housing can have on an area, and the difficulty in delivering it within the current grant regime and economic circumstances. By signing the Declaration, signatory local authorities commit their council to working constructively and collaboratively with partners and communities to maximise opportunities and resources to deliver new affordable housing. The intention is that the Declaration, together with the work of the local authorities, will help to raise the profile of the region as a place to invest in new affordable housing.
- 1.4 The documents produced by the Task Group have all been endorsed by the East Midlands Councils' Executive Board. Following endorsement, EMC wrote out to all chief executives and council leaders asking them to sign up to the Declaration.
- 1.5 The Declaration represents a commitment to addressing affordable housing needs.

ISSUES/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 Bolsover District Council supports the need for new affordable housing and is fully committed to working with and supporting partners to maximise opportunities to deliver affordable housing. As such, the Council already fulfils the requirements of the Declaration, and its contents do not add anything new to work already being undertaken to facilitate and enable new affordable housing provision.
- 2.2 In 2012 the Council appointed consultants to undertake an economic viability assessment, to investigate the capacity of residential development to make a contribution to addressing affordable housing needs through planning obligations. The findings of the study confirmed that development viability in the District is generally marginal, and concluded that it likely that anything but a small minority of sites would be able to deliver any affordable housing under present market conditions. Responding to these findings and taking a positive approach to growth, the Council approved a policy which suspends the need for developers to demonstrate viability for a three year period,

helping to ensure that the five year housing supply could be delivered. Whilst the rationale for the new policy is based on sound reasoning and evidence, and this approach is very much in line with national policy, there could be slight tensions between the Council's pragmatic approach and the Declaration.

- 2.3 Furthermore, the Council is currently in the process of undertaking a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which will provide accurate and detailed information on housing need and demand, and affordability within the District. This study will form the key evidence base for a new housing strategy for the area, which will set priorities for housing. The availability of the Council's land and financial assets will be considered in terms of how they can support the delivery of the strategy. It was therefore important to consider whether the Council wishes to formally commit at this time to "seeking to make the best use of council and publicly owned land, financial resources and community assets" to deliver affordable housing, especially given the current pressures on the Council's resources, and the conflicting priorities for their use.
- 2.4 It should also be noted that although the Bolsover District authority area lies within the East Midlands, the Council, and the other local authorities within the housing market area, sit within the Homes and Communities Agency's Yorkshire and Humber funding region. This reflects the work being undertaken through the Sheffield City Region level and the need to align funding for the SCR partner authorities
- 2.5 Although the above points should be noted, following careful consideration officers support the signing of the Declaration.
- 2.6 Both North East Derbyshire and Chesterfield Councils have agreed to support the declaration and sign up to it. Bassetlaw District Council is yet to make a decision. A large proportion of East Midlands Councils have already signed the Declaration.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial: There are no financial implications.

Legal: There are no legal implications.

Human Resources: There are no anticipated implications for human resources.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Executive supports the signing of the East Midlands Declaration on Affordable Housing.

REASON FOR DECISION TO BE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

The Council already fulfils the requirements of the Declaration, and its contents do not add anything new to work already being undertaken to facilitate and enable new affordable housing provision. Despite our work to develop a new housing strategy, and the new affordable housing policy, it is not considered sufficient reason for the Council to recommend not supporting the work of East Midlands Council.

ATTACHMENTS: Y
FILE REFERENCE: *none*
SOURCE DOCUMENT: *none*

The East Midlands Declaration on Affordable Housing

We acknowledge that:

- A lack of affordable housing can have an adverse impact on local people, communities and businesses.
- The construction of new affordable housing will support local jobs, benefit the wider local economy and promote social mobility.
- Central Government grant to support the development of new affordable housing is likely to be constrained for the foreseeable future.
- New and innovative approaches to delivering affordable housing will need to be deployed if local needs are to be met.

We commit our Council from this date to work constructively with developers, housing associations and the HCA to maximise opportunities and resources to deliver well designed new affordable housing on suitable sites, through:

- ensuring robust research is undertaken to identify the scale and nature of affordable housing need;
- seeking to make best use of council and publicly owned land, capital resources and community assets in ways that encourage economic growth and the delivery of affordable housing;
- using planning powers creatively and pragmatically;
- working constructively with local communities to make the case for development and challenging local opposition with evidence where necessary;
- working collaboratively with relevant partners to identify joint opportunities for development;
- monitoring the delivery of new affordable housing against the level of established need and publishing the results on an annual basis; and
- freely sharing learning by providing EMC with relevant case studies

Leader
Council

Chief Executive
Council

Cllr Martin Hill
Chair EMC

Date:

Supported by:

