

Agenda Item No: **Report No:**

Report Title: **Scoping report for possible future scrutiny review on “affordable housing in rural areas”**

Report To: **Scrutiny Committee** **Date:** **8 September 2011**

Lead Councillors: **Councillor Ron Maskell (Housing)**
Councillor Tom Jones (Planning)

Ward(s) Affected: **All rural wards**

Report By: **Director of Planning & Environmental Services**

Contact Officer(s)-

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Purpose of Report: To consider the scope of a possible future scrutiny review on “affordable housing in rural areas”

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To consider the proposed scope of the scrutiny review as set out in Appendix A.
- 2 If the Committee wish to proceed with a scrutiny view, to consider appointment of a Scrutiny Panel to oversee the work, and to ask officers to provide a further report setting out a proposed work programme, timescale and resources required for consideration by the Panel.

Reason for Recommendation: To provide a focussed programme of work which will enable the District Council to consider any changes to its existing policies are necessary in order to improve the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas of Lewes District.

1 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 30 June 2011, the Committee considered its future work programme for 2011 – 12. The Chair indicated that she wished to add work on affordable housing in rural areas to this year’s work programme. It was agreed that officers would report back in September 2011 with a scoping report, setting out the range of issues that could usefully be considered in such a scrutiny review.

- 1.2 A scrutiny review on affordable housing in rural areas is very timely in view of the following factors:
- Major changes to the national planning system and new policy initiatives to promote provision of affordable housing introduced by the Coalition Government.
 - Major changes to funding arrangements through the Affordable Housing Programme 2011 – 15.
 - The advent of the South Downs National Park Authority, becoming the all purpose planning authority for more than half Lewes District, from April 2011.
 - Ongoing work on the Lewes District Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, which has gathered considerable evidence on housing issues in the district, as a basis for reviewing and updating existing local planning policies.
- 1.3 These, and other factors, have been taken into account in drafting the proposed scope of a possible scrutiny review, which is attached as Appendix A. The Committee is asked to consider whether the draft scoping report adequately covers all the matters members wish to examine in any review.
- 1.4 If the Committee wish to proceed, a Scrutiny Panel will need to be appointed and officers will need to bring a further report setting out a proposed work programme, timescale and resources required, for consideration by the Panel. A review would need to involve close working with a number of external partners such as the parish councils in Lewes district; Sussex Association of Local Councils; Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS); South Downs National Park; and the Homes and Communities Agency.

2 Financial Appraisal

- 2.1 This report merely scopes out the matters that could be covered in a scrutiny review on affordable housing in rural areas: it does not seek to assess in detail the resources necessary to carry out the review, which will be a task for the Scrutiny Panel appointed to carry it out.
- 2.2 It is, however, expected that most of the cost associated with the review would be staff time, particularly in the Democratic Services, Planning and Housing Departments. There would also be some small costs in mailing out letters and e-mails to other stakeholders. In addition, there may be costs in meeting the expenses of any external individuals whom the Panel may wish to invite in for discussions and/or visiting other places to see rural affordable housing schemes to learn lessons from them.
- 2.3 There are no specific budgets set aside to conduct Scrutiny Reviews in 2011/12. Normally, reviews are expected to be carried out within existing departmental budgets with staff support from the Scrutiny & Committee Officer.

3 Environmental Implications

- 3.1 I have completed the Environmental Implications Questionnaire and there are no identified impacts, either positive or negative, on the environment as a result of the report's recommendations.

4 Risk Management Implications

- 4.1 I have completed a risk management questionnaire. No new risks will arise if the recommendations are implemented.

5 Equality Implications

- 5.1 I have completed an Equality Impact Assessment. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact assessment is not required.

6 Background Papers

- Lewes District Local Plan (2003)
- Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing (June 2011)
- Lewes District LDF: Emerging Core Strategy – report to Cabinet, 7 September 2011
- Department for Communities & Local Government, Draft Structural Reform Plan, July 2010
- “Government announce new Affordable Homes Programme”, DCLG press release, 14 July 2011.
- Building new council houses using affordable rents, letter from DCLG to local authorities Chief Executives, 28 July 2011.
- Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing, DCLG, 22 November 2010.
- Localism Bill, DCLG, 13 December 2010.
- Big Society Vanguard: One Year On – New affordable housing in Eden District; Cumbria.
- “Farmers should be able to offer affordable housing on the farm”, DCLG press release, 18 October 2010.
- English National Park Authorities Association: Position statement on affordable housing, January 2008.
- Action in Rural Sussex: Good Practice Guide “Meeting affordable housing needs in local communities.

- Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing (HARAH): A 10 stage guide to developing an affordable housing scheme for local people in a rural community 2005.

7 Appendices

A – Proposed scope of scrutiny review on provision of affordable housing in rural areas

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