

Committee: **Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **9th December 2019**
 Report Subject: **Local Housing Strategy Review**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr D Davies, Executive Member Regeneration and Economic Development**
 Report Submitted by: **Richard Crook, Corporate Director Regeneration and Community Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
19.11.19	26.11.19	29.11.19			09.12.19	29.01.20		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to:

- 1.1 Inform Regeneration Scrutiny Committee of the requirement to update and revise the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- 1.2 Seek the views of Scrutiny Committee prior to Executive approval, to engage in developing a new local housing strategy.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The scope of the report is to outline the key principles and requirements of the guidance from Welsh Government in preparing a Local Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 Further to this, the report highlights potential opportunity for collaborative working with other local authorities on a regional level.
- 2.3 Performance outcomes associated with the aims contained within the current Housing Strategy are outside the scope of this report and will be presented in a separate report at the end of the current financial year 2019/20, following a members briefing in the New Year.

Background

- 2.4 Within the revised guidance to local authorities in Wales, Welsh Government, state:

“The primary purpose of a Local Housing Strategy is to articulate a locally agreed direction for addressing the housing requirements, problems and opportunities of an area, taking into account national policies and priorities..... to provide a strategic vision which is capable of directing the activity of partners”.

- 2.5 Overall the LHS should set out a long term “housing vision” with housing related objectives and key target areas, based upon findings within the Local Housing Market Assessment.
- 2.6 It must be framed within the context of the overarching vision for the economic, environmental and social well-being of its area and inhabitants set out in the Authority’s corporate strategy.
- 2.7 The strategy should be framed for the next five year period, although the ‘vision’ should be longer term, within the context of the corporate strategy. The current BGCBC Housing Strategy has ran for the period 2014 – 2018. Following on from a strategy document an operational plan should set out how the objectives and targets in the strategy will be met.
- 2.8 Blaenau Gwent has a positive and proven working relationship with its strategic housing partners across the region.
- 2.9 Recently and in recognition that the population’s needs are not solely met within single county boundaries, the Gwent local authorities agreed to collectively formulate The Gwent Regional Homelessness Strategy. With Operational Plans at a local level; with the support of Welsh Government.
- 2.10 The Blaenau Gwent Housing Delivery Group has met to discuss the requirement to review the Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Strategy and consider the opportunity to pursure a regional approach, to which the officer group were supportive. Initial dialogue with housing officers within the region indicates that other authorities may be receptive to a regional approach.
- 2.11 Traditionally BGCBC has produced its own Local Housing Strategy internally, specific to the Local Authority,
- 2.12 By working collaboratively there are a number of opportunities:
 - To identify and share of exemplars of good practice and further partnership working opportunities.
 - To comprehensively consider the population’s needs and aspirations in a holistic manner.
 - To understand possible inward migration opportunities and population transience.
 - To identify and encourage residential development opportunities to meet the aspirations of the population.
 - Assit in leveraging investment and/or funding opportunities.
- 2.13 In order to undertake a Regional Housing Strategy the Gwent local authorities would need to establish an Officer Working Group, with representatives from each local authority, with an identified lead authority to commission the work.
- 2.14 The group would then consider the most effective method of developing a regional strategy. Consideration could be given to the appointment of a

single, dedicated Regional Research Officer, hosted by the lead authority, or alternatively the commissioning of external consultants.

2.15

Following the development of a draft Regional Housing Strategy and public consultation the Officer Working Group would inform regional and local action plans.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

RCSLT have considered the report and support to a regional approach (option 2).

3.1 **Option 1**

Do nothing; the decision not to proceed with carrying out a Local Housing Strategy.

3.2 **Option 2 (Preferred option)**

Endorse BGCBC to work collaboratively with Gwent wide Local Authorities to investigate the possibility of producing a Regional Housing Strategy and local (Blaenau Gwent) action plan.

3.3 **Option 3**

BGCBC to develop a Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Strategy.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 **Corporate Plan Priorities**

Economic Development and Regeneration is a priority within the 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan, with a specific focus on working with private developers and RSL partners to provide a variety of homes.

4.2 **Blaenau Gwent Well Being Plan**

In taking a strategic view to meeting the aspirations of the demographic, thus providing safe, appropriate and affordable housing to local residents will underpin the five objectives outlined within the Wellbeing plan.

4.3 **Local Development Plan**

The emerging LDP has an annual target of 117 per annum with an aspirational target of 144. A RHS would align with the emerging LDP.

4.4 Further to this housing is also a Regeneration Priority to encourage inward migration.

4.5 **Regeneration**

Further to the above Housing is an identified Regeneration priority and is also a significant contributor to delivering the emerging Growth and Investment Strategy.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Do nothing; The decision not to engage in developing a Local Housing Strategy could reduce the focus and strategic vision of new residential developments for Blaenau Gwent, our approach to housing regeneration more broadly and may also generate a negative response from stakeholders.

5.2 Option 2; The primary implication associated with this option is that there would not be a specific BGCBC housing strategy; a detailed local action plan would however be developed, providing both regional and local context.

5.3 Option 3; The opportunity for Blaenau Gwent LA to investigate the development of a Regional Housing Strategy with the Gwent LA partners would be lost; dropping the collective pool of knowledge and resources to develop a housing strategy.

5.4 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.5 Do Nothing Option

There would be no short term impact to the budget, if a strategy was not produced. Without a strategic vision the impact to the longer term budget is very difficult to estimate. The lack of a housing strategy may negatively impact efforts to secure internal/external funding or investment to support development. Further to this not having a housing strategy could result in an adhoc approach to development, which may occur in areas where there is no demonstrated need or demand.

5.6 If an external consultant or dedicated officer was employed to undertake the housing strategy review there would be a financial implication. A regional approach may offer economies of scale, compared to individual authority commissions.

5.7 Indicative costs:

If a regional strategy was agreed and developed, a contribution circa £5k would be required per participating Local Authority.

A local strategy approach bespoke to BGCBC would cost circa £20k to undertake.

Internal funding would be required to meet these costs.

5.8 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.9 Option 1 Do Nothing

The main risks associated with not developing a Local Housing Strategy are:

- Limited focus of a strategic housing vision for BGCBC.

- The risk would be mitigated in part by the Housing Delivery Group along with wider internal and external partners taking a focus from the updated, Local Housing Market Assessment, the revised Local Development Plan and information collated from the Common Housing Register.

5.10 Option 2 (Preferred option)

The main risk associated with option 2 is:

- A local focus to the strategy may become diluted. A mitigating factor could be to ensure that a local focus is developed within the Operational Plan, complementing a wider regional strategic overview.

5.11 Option 3

The main risks associated with option 3 are:

- If a local housing strategy was devised without local authority partners in the wider Gwent area the opportunity of a cohesive vision at a cross boundary level would be lost. The risk would be mitigated through ensuring consideration was made to the regional context and further to this, through maintaining regional partnerships and initiatives.
- Potential opportunities at a regional level may be lost, eg. The potential for SMEs to work across defined areas.

5.12 **Legal**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5.13 **Human Resources**

Delivering agreed housing priorities including associated development, will require input from a range of officers within the Environment Directorate, including Housing Strategy, Planning Officers and Estates Officers.

Consideration to undertake the strategy review in house, however, the work involved, associated timeline and resource commitment may negatively impact broader housing strategy activity and delivery.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Following the formulation of a LHS, the outcomes and targets held within local operational plans will be reported annually to RCSLT/CLT/Scrutiny and Executive for information. This does include the target of encouraging inward migration to Blaenau Gwent.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

To effectively forward plan and ensure that resources are in place to meet future housing need and demand. Ensuring sustainable communities are maintained within Blaenau Gwent, by affording the opportunity of access to a variety of homes within the borough, through a strategic vision and partnership working with a variety of stakeholders.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The development of a RHS involves input and data from a range of internal and external partners including; regeneration, housing solutions, planning policy, estates and wider Gwent partners. Officers have made initial contact with Gwent partners to ascertain interest in possible collaboration.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The primary purpose of the document is to ensure a future strategic housing vision is formulated.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The primary purpose of the document is to ensure future housing demand is met through a variety of options which is appropriate for Blaenau Gwent as a whole.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

To ensure the collaboration of effective partnerships working with stakeholders and Gwent wide partners. Safeguarding the demand for a variety of homes is met by ensuring partnership working is maintained.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***

Delivery of the recommendations and bringing development forward, requires close integrated working e.g. regeneration, planning, estates, public protection etc.

6.8 ***EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The report is open to all and is fully inclusive.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 There is a number of agreed housing KPIs which are reported to Welsh Government. This data will be reported annually to RCSLT/CLT/Scrutiny and Executive for information.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

<https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/publications/localhouseguideforlase/index9ed2.html?lang=en>