

## Policy Development Scrutiny Committee



Date	5 May 2010
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson (Chairman) Councillor Kiran Mulholland (Vice-Chairman)  Brenda Ackers, Ben Aitken, Maxine Chew, John Davies, Leonard Davies, Howard Henshaw, Elizabeth Oades, Elaine Silverwood
Other Councillors	Trevor Fiddler, Cheryl Little, Barbara Pagett
Officers	Clare Platt, Paul Walker, David Gillett, Annie Womack
Others	

### 1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

### 2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 4 February 2010 and 16 March 2020 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

### 3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Maxine Chew for Councillor Heather Speak

### 4. Draft Fylde Housing Action Plan 2010

This item was introduced by David Gillett, Head of Housing Services, who gave a presentation to the committee.

He explained that the Fylde Coast Housing Strategy, which set out both a long term view of how the Fylde Coast's housing offer can be further improved and

short term priorities for policy and for the delivery of effective housing services, had been approved by Cabinet in September 2009. Cabinet also resolved that a Fylde Borough specific housing Action plan would be developed and reported back to the Cabinet for approval following consultation.

Throughout 2009 the initial draft had been drawn up and consulted on, then in April 2010 a more detailed draft of the Fylde action plan was considered by the LSP housing theme group. He told the committee that a short period for comments to be submitted by members of the LSP housing theme group would end on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

Mr Gillett said that he anticipated the final Fylde action plan would be presented to Cabinet for consideration and approval in June 2010.

He explained to the committee that the Fylde Housing Action plan was a key document as it not only sets out the vision for housing in Fylde but also the key priorities and plans for the Borough. The current economic climate and the uncertainty about future funding streams would mean that the plans and priorities would be subject to regular, annual review, in the light of spending decisions made at a national level.

His presentation covered the key elements of the proposed Fylde Housing Action Plan:

- Resources to support the plan, including Fylde budget, s106 monies and various forms of potential and actual external funding
- Progress on initiatives for Fylde Coast and Fylde Borough
- The Action Plan itself, focussing on three main themes and issues drawn from the Fylde Coast Housing Strategy and the specific actions planned to address them in Fylde:

**Quantity** - providing appropriate numbers of the right kinds of high quality new homes, including affordable housing for sale and to rent, to maintain sustainable community life in urban and rural settlements and to meet long-term demand for housing

**Quality** - raising the quality of the overall housing offer to support growth in the Fylde Coast economy, to raise the quality of the private rented sector, to reduce pockets of deprivation on social housing estates, to improve housing conditions for the vulnerable and tackling the issue of park homes

**People** - Helping people to access the accommodation and support they need to lead stable and prosperous lives, to provide new opportunities for those at risk of homelessness, to meet the changing requirements of older people and improving connections with agencies and services to address the lack of specialist housing for “socially excluded” groups

Mr Gillett invited questions and comments from the committee at various stages of the presentation and there was a wide-ranging selection of topics discussed including:

- The affordable warmth and thermal efficiency of local housing, particularly that of elderly people, which Mr Gillett suspected was not significantly improving but said that it could only be confirmed by a further stock condition survey; there were a significant number of properties in this area which fail the decency standards as identified in the previous stock condition survey.
- Whether the requirement for temporary accommodation available for homeless people had increased. Mr Gillett said that the number remained the same and that there had actually been a fall in the number of homeless presentations - due partly to the Invest to Save budget - but that the quality and inadequacy of temporary accommodation was a concern.
- The requirement of the Housing and Communities Agency to engage in communication and funding discussions at a sub-regional level (i.e Fylde Coast) and the potential implications for Fylde Borough Council. Mr Gillett gave his opinion that, in view of diminishing available resources, it would be better to be involved and represented at the Fylde Coast level in order to give voice to the priorities and needs of Fylde Borough.
- Whether the figures in the report relating to the numbers of housing needed per year in Fylde Borough are accurate and whether the survey done by Fordham was flawed, Mr Gillett advised the a similar figure of the annual social housing requirement was produced by the separate strategic housing market assessment report in 2008.
- Concerns about park homes from two perspectives - the first that there are vulnerable people living in poorly insulated and poor quality mobile homes, and also that others from outside the Borough give up their permanent residence to live in these homes, pay no Council Tax, access local services, may need rehousing, and increasingly become a burden to local taxpayers.
- Concerns that developers are not actually providing more housing units in Lytham St Annes, where they are actually needed. Rural areas appeared to be bearing the brunt of new developments, which were not always appropriate for the area.
- A drive to put empty homes back into use, to include vacant property above shops and businesses, and to report on progress to the committee
- The committee agreed that the issues are of such importance that there should be an annual review of the plan brought to committee.

The committee requested Mr Gillett to highlight the committee's concerns as stated in the body of the minute and to raise the following items as a matter of priority with Cabinet members when he presented the Fylde Housing Action Plan to Cabinet:

- 1) Park homes - that this is a serious and growing problem and to suggest that it is central government who will need to address this issue, and that Fylde should contact other local authorities with similar problems in order to lobby and put pressure on MPs to find a remedy
- 2) Empty homes - to recognise that the new government's programme includes a commitment to explore measures to bring empty homes into use, and to lobby our local MP for action on the matter as well as developing local initiatives.
- 3) That there should be better dialogue with developers in order to secure appropriate development where it is needed.

After a full debate, the committee RESOLVED:

- 1 To thank Mr Gillett for his presentation and to note the report.

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