# Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of: Councillor Nick Neilson  
Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report to:</th>
<th>Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>5th September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Draft Housing Strategy (HS2)</td>
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## Decision Proposal:
- **Key decision**

## Relevant Cabinet Member:
- Councillor Nick Neilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing

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## Approved for publication:
- Councillor Nick Neilson  
  Date: 17 August 2017
SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress that has been made since the draft Housing Strategy was reported to the Council’s Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11th July 2017.

Feedback is provided on the roundtable discussions that were endorsed by the Committee together with an amended draft Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

This report proposes a wide-ranging approach to consultation in order to encourage the greatest possible participation from residents and other key stakeholders from within and outside of the district.

Any feedback from the Committee will be shared as part of a report to Cabinet on the 7th September so that it is able to make an informed decision as to whether the draft Strategy and Action Plan is suitable for wider consultation and engagement.

RECOMMENDATION

That subject to the inclusion of feedback, Communities OSC recommend to Cabinet that the draft strategy and action plan is suitable for consultation.

1. BACKGROUND TO REPORT:

1.1. At their meeting on the 11th July, the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the content of the draft Housing Strategy; provided feedback on the Strategy’s key outcomes; endorsed a series of roundtables with sectors of the housing industry; accepted proposals to consult more widely with the residents and businesses of South Kesteven; and noted the proposed timeline to progress the draft Housing Strategy to adoption.

1.2. Comments received on the document have been incorporated into the refreshed Housing Strategy that is attached at Appendix 2.

The Roundtable Discussions

1.3. A series of housing roundtable discussions were held between 17th and 31st July.

1.4. Initially, six roundtable discussions were planned, involving developers, registered providers, other local authorities, landowners, landlords and lettings agents. However, no lettings agents responded to our invitation at the time so this particular roundtable was postponed.

1.5. Councillor Nick Neilson chaired the roundtable discussions, with a number of officers providing support.
1.6. An invitation was sent to all Members following the meeting of the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and three Members attended the roundtable discussions (these are detailed in Appendix 1). A fourth Member, (Councillor Bob Adams) was scheduled to attend the letting agents’ roundtable, which had to be postponed.

1.7. Six key themes arose from the five housing roundtable discussions:

- **Planning;** including the time taken to make planning decisions and the degree of uncertainty that exists throughout the planning process. Specific reference was made to the role of statutory consultees, particularly in respect of consistency and timeliness of advice received, and that of the Development Management Committee, with regards to the timeliness of decisions on applications.

- **Opportunities to work together;** reference was made to the value of the Council ‘stepping-in’ with its expertise when required. Registered Providers in particular would look for the Council to assist on large or complex sites; either by bringing the relevant parties together to remove barriers or, potentially, to fund or forward fund significant infrastructure requirements.

- **A role for the Council in the private rented market;** there is an opportunity for the Council to lease direct from landlords to maintain the provision of a high quality supply of rental properties and to provide stability in the rental market with landlords receiving a guaranteed income.

- **The need for a tailored approach;** it is recognised that issues and opportunities are very different across our four market towns and across rural areas. These diverse local markets need to be considered in the application of policies and actions.

- **The importance of land issues;** this featured in all of the roundtables and included land values, availability and the barriers that prevent it being brought forward for development.

- **A desire to meet again;** the success of the roundtables was such that all five expressed desire to continue the discussion as the Strategy moved to adoption and implementation.

**The updated Draft Housing Strategy and Action Plan**

1.8. Comments provided by the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11th July and the discussions that took place at the roundtable (including the 6 themes set out above) have all informed the re-drafted Housing Strategy (attached at Appendix 2), and draft Action Plan (attached at Appendix 3).

1.9. The Roundtable Summary attached at Appendix 1 includes reference to the outcomes contained within the draft Strategy. The roundtable discussions supported a number of the proposed outcomes:
The need for skilled workforce,
The importance of data
The role for Council in delivering social housing
Considering new ways to engage with, and provide access to housing for, under 35s
The importance of strategic partnerships in bringing forward development
The role of the rental market as an alternative to home ownership
The importance of fully-informed landowners
The need for major infrastructure to be delivered up-front

1.10. In addition to those outcomes which were supported, the housing roundtables resulted in an additional outcome being identified under the delivery theme around the need for a tailored approach to respond to the differing housing markets in our towns and villages

1.11. The use of traditional methods of construction versus modular, or off-site, construction was also discussed. Whilst there was some nervousness in the developer roundtable about the wholesale use of modular build, the landowners support the principle of optimising the right approach in the right location. This outcome therefore remains within the strategy.

1.12. The roundtable summary also includes a number of actions that resulted from the valued input of the housing industry. These are directly referenced in the Action Plan (Appendix 3).

Consultation Strategy

1.13. The Committee has previously agreed 3 key objectives for wider engagement on the draft Strategy and Action Plan
- To find out if our stakeholders agree with the issues/outcomes that have been identified
- To communicate the services and actions that may help the Council to address each of these issues/actions
- To establish if our stakeholders think that the Council’s activities are sufficient to deliver its stated outcomes.

1.14. Further engagement is planned and will include a survey, press release, articles in Council publications, direct contact with specialist service providers, strategic partners and a further event for Council Members.

1.15. Further detail is provided on the proposed approach to consultation at Appendix 4.
Timetable

1.16. The full timetable to adoption is set out below:

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revised Strategy, Action Plan and Consultation approach to Community OSC</td>
<td>5th September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy, Action Plan and Consultation Approach to Cabinet to approve for Consultation</td>
<td>7th September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultation on Draft Strategy and Action Plan</td>
<td>14th Sept, to 26th Oct 2017</td>
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<td>To include:</td>
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<td>- Re-convened Letting Agents Roundtable (date tbc)</td>
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<td>- Parish Update distributed w/c 4th September 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- SK Today distributed w/c 11th September 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Results of Consultation to Community OSC</td>
<td>7th November 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Strategy and Action Plan to be approved by Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing</td>
<td>14th November 2017</td>
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2. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1. The Council’s current Housing Strategy runs from 2013 to 2018; and the Council could continue to deliver against this strategy until the specified end date. However, Members have already been appraised of the recent, significant, changes in housing policy which have necessitated an early review of the strategy in order to ensure that the Council’s approach to strategic housing remains relevant and deliverable.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3.1. The resources required to produce the strategy are being met from within existing service area budgets.

3.2. Any other resource implications will be considered alongside the development of the Housing Strategy Action Plan and any other relevant delivery plans (such as the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan)

4. RISK AND MITIGATION

Risk has been considered as part of this report and no specific high risks have been identified.
5. **ISSUES ARISING FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS (EQUALITY, SAFEGUARDING etc.)**

5.1. There are not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report.

6. **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. There are not considered to be any direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report

7. **COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

7.1. The direct financial implications of developing and adopting the strategy will be met from existing budgets. Longer term there may be more significant financial considerations specifically for the Council as a social landlord where it would seek to support the delivery of specific outcomes. These options will be considered in due course and incorporated into future budget setting proposals

8. **COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

8.1. Since the repeal of section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 on 26 May 2015 there has been neither a statutory or regulatory provision imposing a requirement to have a Housing Strategy, however, it is nevertheless recognised as best practice to do so.

9. **COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES**

9.1. The Housing Strategy and Action Plan have been developed across, and with, a number of Business and Service Areas.

10. **APPENDICES**

10.1. Appendix 1: Roundtable Summaries
10.2. Appendix 2: Draft Housing Strategy for Consultation
10.3. Appendix 3: Draft Action Plan for Consultation
10.4. Appendix 4: Summary of Approach to Housing Strategy Engagement

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
