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## **EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2011**

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### **COSP.88/11 HOUSING STRATEGY 2011-2015 AND ACTION PLAN**

The Assistant Director (Community Engagement) (Mr Gerrard) submitted report CD.23/11 which detailed the City Council's draft Housing Strategy 2011/15 and associated Action Plan.

Mr Gerrard informed Members that the Housing Strategy superseded the previous Strategy and was a key document in identifying the housing needs, challenges and solutions to be taken forward for the Carlisle district area. The Strategy comprised two elements:

- (i) the Strategy Vision which included the Council's vision, priorities and key actions (Appendix 1); and
- (ii) the Delivery Plan (Appendix 2)

Mr Gerrard advised that a Housing Needs and Demand Study had been commissioned in March 2011 with a view to providing a robust assessment of current and future housing need. He added that the City Council had a vision for Carlisle as 'Cumbria's historic, dynamic and successful University City, creating growth opportunities in a sustainable environment with skilled people and international connections in a stunning location'. In addition, the Council had two corporate priorities (local environment and economy), together with a clear and well defined corporate objective to achieve economic growth and development. The Strategy and the Housing Needs and Demand Study would support key elements of the Local Development Framework and the City's Economic Strategy.

He further outlined the Strategy's thematic priorities and issues emerging from the Housing Needs and Demand Study, details of which were provided.

The Executive had, on 31 October 2011 (EX.129/11) considered the matter and resolved:

“That the Executive had considered and approved Report CD.16/11 to go forward:

1. to be used in consultation on the Housing Strategy (2011 - 2015) and Action Plan; and
2. to be made available to Overview and Scrutiny Panels for comment.”

Mr Gerrard updated the Panel on the Carlisle Partnership Forum event which focused on Housing and Development that had taken place on 22 November 2011. The event had been very successful and had over 60 people attending from all sectors.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that the event had been very successful and informed the Panel that the information from the event would be collated and could form part of the discussions of the Panel.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments and questions:

- Would letting agents be able to advertise properties on the City Council's website alongside accredited landlords?

The Strategic and Private Sector Housing Manager (Mr Taylor) responded that consideration could be given to allowing letting agents to advertise on the website but further information on liability would have to be sought.

- A Member raised concerns that there was a danger that developers banked land until there was an upturn in the economic situation.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that any land that the City Council made available for affordable housing would be developed in line with the Homes and Communities Agency standards and would not be accumulated.

Having made a Personal and Prejudicial Interest the Performance and Development Portfolio Holder left the meeting whilst the following discussion took place:

- A Member asked for clarification with regard to the amendment to some of the legal agreements attached to low cost properties.

Mr Taylor assured the Panel that the legal agreements would still allow for affordable housing but would give owners slightly more freedom when they chose to sell the property.

- How could lenders be encouraged to join the low cost housing scheme?

Mr Taylor acknowledged that many lenders did not want to lend to people in low cost housing and there was a need for more engagement with lenders to make them aware of the benefits of low cost housing schemes.

The Performance and Development Portfolio Holder returned to the meeting.

- There had been a shortage of appropriate accommodation for students within the City, how would this issue be addressed?

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that he was very conscience that students should be welcomed into the City but that there was not enough accommodation available for them. He understood that the influx of students into a community was a delicate issue in some areas and more discussion with the University was required. He agreed that the impact on a community of students arriving had to be

acknowledged. He added that the accommodation for students was not the only issue and the University also had a shortage of suitable teaching accommodation too.

Mr Gerrard confirmed that the Council had opened a dialogue with the University regarding accommodation and other University towns would be used as best practice.

- A Member asked if the Council had been pro-active enough in applying for and securing funding from sources other than the Homes and Communities Agency.
- The report stated that 340 extra care places would be required by 2019, could the Panel have an update on how this would be achieved and the role the City Council would have as the strategic housing authority.

Mr Taylor responded that the new development at Heysham Gardens was a good example of new extra care places within the City; however, new extra care homes were very costly and took a considerable amount of time to develop so a more suitable answer to the issue may be to refurbish existing sheltered care homes and provide additional support.

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that the Heysham Gardens development had been very successful and it was a concern that extra care places took a considerable amount of time to develop. He added that Lifetime Homes would be a real advantage to the additional extra care places required.

A Member commented that there needed to be some emphasis on reinstating the 1400 empty properties that existed within the City.

- It was essential for the authority to consider housing and employment together to enable the economy to grow, what work was being undertaken to integrate the two?

The Environment and Housing Portfolio Holder agreed that employment and housing had to be considered together and it was vital that the City had the right infrastructure in place to encourage employment in the City.

- The Panel asked for an update on the Supporting People Contract tender process.

Mr Gerrard responded that two of the tenders for Supporting People contracts had been unsuccessful and one had been successful in moving into the next stage of 'mini' competitions. He explained that the Council would receive a debrief from the County Council on the outcome of the unsuccessful bids. He added that the Team were now considering the impact of the decisions on the Team and on the services they provided.

The Panel expressed their disappointment that the tenders had been unsuccessful and agreed to support the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) in any challenge that the authority made with regard to the outcome of the tenders.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Housing Strategy 2011-15 and Action Plan be welcomed and the comments of the Panel, as set out above, be referred to the Executive.

2) That the Strategic Director and the Assistant Director (Community Engagement) submit an update on the accommodation for the University of Cumbria to a future meeting of the Panel.