

**REPORT TO:** Community Planning Implementation Group

**MEETING DATE:** 4 September 2008

**BY:** Executive Director of Community Services, East Lothian Council

**SUBJECT:** Local Housing Strategy Evaluation

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform the Community Planning Implementation Group of the key outcomes from the independently commissioned Local Housing Strategy Evaluation.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Planning Implementation Group note the recommendations arising from the LHS Evaluation
- 2.2 It is recommended that a Steering Group/Project Board is established to oversee the development and implementation of the next LHS, who would report to the Community Planning Implementation Group.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At the meeting in December 2007, the Community Planning Implementation Group approved the brief for an evaluation of the current Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2003 – 2013.
- 3.2 The main objectives were to:
- Assess the extent and nature of the impact of the East Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2003-2013.
  - Assess the extent to which the strategic objectives have been achieved.
  - Evaluate the delivery of the LHS Action Plan (revised in 2006).
  - Evaluate the monitoring and evaluation framework included in East Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2003-2013 and the subsequent LHS Action Plan 2006.
  - Evaluate the partnership process in the implementation of the LHS.
  - Collate the views of stakeholders on the implementation of the LHS.

- Highlight issues arising from the evaluation that should be considered in the development of the LHS 2009.
- 3.3 Following this meeting, the Council undertook a tendering process and the contract for the evaluation was awarded to DTZ .
- 3.4 The evaluation took the form of a desktop review of information in relation to the LHS, benchmarking with other local authorities, and consultation with key stakeholders
- 3.5 The evaluation assessed the fit of the LHS in relation to other strategic documents and makes recommendations for consideration when developing the next LHS. The following specific areas were highlighted:
- Need to consider how to incorporate the role of housing support services, following the removal of ring-fenced funding (Supporting People)
  - Incorporate responsibilities in relation to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (a standard which all local authority and housing association properties should meet by 2015)
  - Incorporate assessment of how affordable housing will be delivered in line with the Local Development Plan
  - Continue to involve tenants in the development of the strategy
  - Ensure LHS and Homelessness Strategy continue to be closely linked
  - Assess impact of changes in the micro economy on housing needs
- 3.6 The evaluation reviewed the LHS Local Investment Framework (LIF). The LIF was put in place through the LHS to inform local priorities for new affordable housing and monitor the local housing system. The following key recommendations were made:
- A model such as this can be a very effective tool if used in conjunction with local knowledge
  - Its current design, based on primary school catchment areas should be reassessed
  - The benefits of the model could be significantly enhanced if it included information about the planning system in order to link priorities with land availability
  - The number and type of indicators used should be reviewed
  - An updating framework for the model should be devised

3.7 The evaluation incorporated a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of LHS achievements, processes and Action Plan and Monitoring Framework. Key findings are:

- Generally good partnership processes in place with work required with some partners
- Good overall strategic fit and awareness of wider priorities
- Clearly stated objectives, actions, outcomes and timescales
- Staff well regarded by other partners
- Too many actions
- Lack of clarity between objectives and actions
- Lack of ownership of actions
- Lack of achievement of specific targets and unable to assess achievements against objectives
- Unrealistic/unachievable outcomes
- Monitoring framework insufficiently developed and poorly defined
- Lack of single group (steering group) with overall ownership of the LHS elements, into which other groups provide input

3.8 The evaluation concludes by identifying areas where improvement is required and which are assessed as weak or could be improved. The areas identified are as follows:

- Delivery of targets
- Monitoring Framework
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Steering Group
- Land Supply in terms of taking Structure Plan/Local Plan outcomes into account
- Local Investment Framework
- Resourcing

3.9 These areas for improvement should all be addressed through the development of the next Local Housing Strategy

3.10 To guide this process, a Steering Group/Project Board should be set up to oversee this process, reporting to the Community Planning Implementation Group.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial – There are no financial implications arising from this report

5.2 Personnel - There are no personnel implications arising from this report

#### **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 CPIG Report: LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY: PROPOSALS FOR STEERING GROUP AND BRIEF FOR EVALUATION OF THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2003-2013, 13 December 2008

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