

UPDATE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

Committee: Operational Services Committee

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1.0 ISSUE

- 1.1 The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2015 has been reviewed and updated to reflect the changes to the East Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations and Repair Policy in 2019 and in response to the findings of the 2021 Housing Stock Model Survey.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 Members are recommended to

(1) Approve the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy as set out in Appendix 1

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

- 3.1 The previous Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy was adopted in 2015. It's focus at that time was on the grant and loan assistance that was available to vulnerable persons to help them to remain in homes that were safe and suitable for their needs.
- 3.2 In 2016-17 a county-wide review of Disabled Facility Grants was carried out resulting in a Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations Agreement, between district and county councils in partnership with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 3.3 The East Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy was adopted in 2019 incorporating the key principles of the shared agreement and it contributes to the Cambridgeshire Better Care Fund Plan. Therefore, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2015 is no longer fit for purpose.
- 3.4 Housing Renewal and positively influencing the health outcomes for residents in owner occupied, tenanted or social housing properties requires a wide range of measures, in addition to grant support for adaptations and repairs. It is important to understand some of the key factors that may adversely impact the health of people in their homes in East Cambridgeshire now and in the future.

3.5 In 2021 the Building Research Establishment (BRE) was commissioned to undertake a series of modelling exercises on East Cambridgeshire District's Housing Stock. This was in place of the full Housing Stock Condition Survey. Commissioning the Housing Model rather than the Survey was a more cost-effective option whilst still complying with the Council's legal requirements to regularly review its private sector housing stock in order to write targeted, effective strategies.

3.6 Key Findings of the Housing Model 2021 are: (Glossary of terms - Appendix 2 and link to full Report - Appendix 3)

- There are 37,556 dwellings in East Cambridgeshire. 72% are owner occupied, 15% private rented and 13% social rented.
- 5,338 dwellings in the private sector have category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This equates to 16% of properties.
- 951 dwellings in the private rented sector have category 1 HHSRS hazards. This equates to 17% of properties in the private rented sector.
- The highest concentrations of all HHSRS hazards in the private sector are found in the wards of Downham, Haddenham and Woodditton.
- The highest concentrations of fuel poverty (Low Income High Costs definition) in the private sector are found in the wards of Woodditton, Haddenham and Downham; and for excess cold the highest concentrations are in Downham, Haddenham and Woodditton.
- The average SimpleSAP rating for all private sector dwellings in East Cambridgeshire is 58, which is worse than both England (60) and East of England (60). For owner occupied stock the figure is 57 and for private rented stock it is 61.
- The total cost of mitigating category 1 hazards in East Cambridgeshire's private sector stock is estimated to be £20 million – with £16.5 million in the owner-occupied sector, and £3.6 million in the private rented sector.
- 10.7% (3,487) of private sector dwellings, and 8.6% (472) of private rented dwellings in East Cambridgeshire are estimated to have an EPC rating (based on SimpleSAP) below band E.
- In the private sector stock, there are an estimated 4,680 dwellings with un-insulated cavity walls, and 3,251 dwellings with less than 100mm of loft insulation.
- Analysis of the energy efficiency variables indicates that the owner-occupied stock has the highest average figures for the majority of variables (SimpleCO2, energy and heat demand).

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 A Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy must support the range of measures by which the local authority can influence the protection of public health. Good quality housing that is affordable for its occupants contributes significantly to a person's health and quality of life.

- 4.2 East Cambridgeshire Care and Repair has a vital role to play in providing advice, support and assistance to older and disabled people and those on low incomes who need to adapt, repair, improve or maintain their homes to meet their changing needs.
- 4.3 The role of the Domestic Team in Environmental Health in tackling poor housing conditions, licensing large shared HMO's, inspecting caravan sites, promoting and supporting energy efficiency initiatives and helping those on low income who may not be able to afford to heat their homes, dealing with empty properties and those that are hoarded, in addition to undertaking pest control investigations, are all further examples of the direct influence the council has over a person's home and on their health and wellbeing.
- 4.4 If approved in a separate agenda item, the updated Housing Enforcement Policy 2022 will provide a platform for Officers to use the full range of powers available to them to address poor housing conditions in all sectors, subject to resource and considering the circumstances of each individual case, with the focus on the private rented sector where some of the worst housing conditions can be found.
- 4.5 The detailed housing stock information provided within the Housing Model Report will facilitate the delivery of more effective housing interventions, ensuring that when undertaking proactive resources are targeted and used where they are needed most. It will assist with the development of policies within the District.
- 4.6 The key objectives of this policy are to:
- Enable the elderly, vulnerable and disabled people to live in comfort and security in their homes.
 - Increase the proportion of private sector housing that is of a decent standard, with a focus on those that are occupied by vulnerable households.
 - To reduce fuel poverty.
 - To support initiatives to bring long term empty homes back into use.
 - To provide accessible information to the public to enable them to obtain assistance and advice on all matters around housing disrepair and energy efficiency.
- 4.7 It is therefore important for East Cambridgeshire to develop suitable targeted strategies, policies and schemes to tackle these issues, working proactively with different departments and partner organisations, using enforcement action, where appropriate.
- 5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- 5.1 This report has no additional financial implications.
- 5.2 The initial screening assessment did not identify the requirement to proceed to a full equality impact assessment

5.3 A Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) has found positive carbon implications arising from the update to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2022 (Appendix 4)

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2022

Appendix 2 - Glossary of terms

Appendix 3 – Housing Model Report available at

<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/East%20Cambridgeshire%20Housing%20Stock%20Modelling%20Report%20FINAL%202021.pdf>

Appendix 4 - CIA

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Housing Act 2004 Regulatory Reform Order 2006	Room SF203 The Grange, Ely	Karen See Senior Environmental Health Officer (01353) 616358 E-mail: Karen.See@eastcambs.gov.uk