

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
CABINET MEMBER**

GOVERNMENT HOUSING STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member about the government's recently issued Housing Strategy for England.
- 1.2 The key points of the report are as follows:
 - 1.2.1 The government has published its long awaited strategy Laying the Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England.
 - 1.2.2 The Strategy sets out the governments approach to a wide range of housing issues.
 - 1.2.3 The strategy appears to have two main aims, an economic boost to create jobs and increasing social opportunities through home ownership and mobility.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The government published its long awaited Housing Strategy for England, entitled "Laying the Foundations" on 21 November.
- 2.2 In it the government sets out its ambition to "unlock the housing market, get Britain building again, and give many more people the satisfaction and security that comes from stepping over their own threshold".
- 2.3 The strategy covers a broad range of issues, starting with the case for change. It then sets out the actions to be taken to "get the housing market moving" including:
 - Supporting 95% loan to value mortgages for new build properties backed by a household indemnity fund
 - Proposals that councils should reconsider planning obligations agreed prior to April 2010 on developments that have stalled
 - A £500m Growing Places Fund to support new infrastructure to release housing and economic development
 - A new £400m Get Britain Building fund to support building firms in need of development finance with sites that have planning permission
 - Freeing up more public sector land with build now, pay later support available

- Encouraging more individuals to build their own homes with £30m for the “custom homes programme”
- Support for areas that want to deliver larger scale new development – such as our Lincolnshire Lakes project
- A recap of the importance of the New Homes Bonus, simplifying the planning policy through the draft National Planning Policy Framework, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the proposed retention of business rates.
- Support for Build to Let models to stimulate larger scale investors into the private rented sector
- A range of reforms to social housing (most of which are set out in the Localism Act) but also re-invigorating the Right to Buy with a commitment to build a new affordable home for every property sold.
- Confirmation of not just the £100m fund available to housing associations to bring empty homes back into use as affordable homes, but also the announcement of a further £50m to tackle areas with the worst concentrations of empty homes.
- a new deal for older people's housing, including £1.5 million for the Firststop information and advice service for older people

2.4 The actions listed above are the main headlines in the government’s strategy. The main thrust of the strategy is that unblocking the housing market will provide a much needed boost to employment, whilst offering those currently locked out of home ownership the opportunity of a home of their own. It recognises housing's crucial role in social mobility, health and well being and in particular that affordable housing can do more to support the social mobility aspirations of tenants and communities.

2.5 There is much detail that is also relevant to North Lincolnshire. In particular the government reaffirms its commitment to tackling homelessness originally stated in a ministerial working group report *Vision to End Rough Sleeping* in July 2011.

2.6 The future actions to tackle homelessness include the publication of a broader homelessness strategy by the ministerial working group in spring 2012 and exemptions for some homeless people to the shared accommodation rate for housing benefit. This may assist the running costs of accommodation provided for homeless people.

2.7 It is too early at this stage to be able to assess the full implications of all the initiatives in *Laying the Foundations* but several of them appear to be beneficial for North Lincolnshire. A more detailed consideration of the government’s strategy will be undertaken as the council’s Integrated Housing Strategy is formulated.

2.8 The full text of *Laying the Foundations* is available on :

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf

2.9 Further reports on the implications may be presented to the cabinet member in due course as they affect the council.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option 1 – that this report be noted.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Option one is the preferred option.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 There are no direct financial, staffing, property or IT implications arising from this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

6.1 There are no statutory, environmental, diversity or section17 implications arising directly from this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 There has been no consultation in the preparation of this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That this report is noted and that the government's Housing Strategy is taken into account during the formulation of the council's Integrated Housing Strategy.

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report

Laying the Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England available at -
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf