

Key Decision Required:	Yes	In the Forward Plan:	Yes
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CABINET

19 JULY 2018

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

A.3 DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2019-2024 – DELIVERING HOMES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE (Report prepared by Peter Russell)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present the draft Housing Strategy 2019-2014 and seek approval to go out to public consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The housing strategy has been drafted at a time of considerable change to the national housing landscape. Whilst local authorities are not required by Government to have a formal housing strategy, they are expected to adopt a strategic approach to housing in their local areas to deliver a thriving housing market and address local needs. This strategy has been developed to guide the future delivery of new homes in the district, especially affordable housing for local people. It will also guide the future management and direction of our housing service.

The strategy sets out the national and local strategic setting for housing and the demographics that have informed the development of the strategy. It sets out the social indicators that present the greatest challenges to the council such as deprivation and health inequalities in some parts of the district and homelessness.

The strategy gives detail on the local housing market and the demand for housing. It sets out how the council plans to deliver new housing in the district and the council's role as a landlord. Detail is given on the council's housing finances with relation to the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund.

The strategy identifies four key strategic housing priorities as follows:

- Delivering homes to meet the needs of local people
- Reducing and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Making the best use of and improving existing housing
- Supporting people in their homes and communities.

It is the first of these strategic housing priorities that gives the strategy its title as by the end of the strategy, it is hoped that there will be new council housing being delivered in the District for the first time in a generation.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1. agrees the content of the draft Housing Strategy.**

2. authorises the Corporate Director (Operational Services) to commence a consultation period of 6 weeks to seek the views of the public and partners on the proposed Housing Strategy.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The decisions will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020:

Our Council Our Community

Health and Housing

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

The Housing Revenue Account is predicted to have reserves of £4.36m by the end of this financial year and this will leave the housing service in a positive financial situation. It is predicted that the rent cap will be lifted in 2020/21 and if so, the council's housing finances will improve. The council is confident that it can increase expenditure on development and acquisitions using increased revenue and prudential borrowing. The Housing Investment Programme for 2019/20 is approximately £3m which contributes to improvements to council stock, disabled adaptations in council homes, and environmental and estate improvements.

Homelessness expenditure has increased following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 but this has been off-set by government grants. By the end of this financial year the Council would have received £1.008m in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant as well as £272,655 of new burdens funding since 2017/18.

The Council received an allocation of just over £2m for disabled facilities grants for 2019/20.

The Housing Strategy sets out a number of actions and priorities that ensures the council continues to be in a strong financial position whilst facilitating the development of new homes.

Risk

The Council is still awaiting the results of Government's consultations on its Housing Green Paper "A New Deal for Social Housing" and Right to Buy reform. Homelessness funding from central government is not guaranteed beyond this financial year. Funding has been received each year since 2003/04 but there is no indication of the amount the authority will receive for 2020/21 and beyond.

A key risk is that the priorities and actions in the strategy are not delivered. A robust action plan and review mechanism will be put in place. It is important that aspirations are realistic and partners engaged as necessary.

LEGAL

There is no legal requirement for the Council to produce a housing strategy but the strategy is influenced by various pieces of legislation which are set out in the document.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected /

Consultation/Public Engagement.

Crime and Disorder

The Housing Strategy emphasises the need to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping and although rough sleeping numbers remain low, the perception is that rough sleeping and street activity can make areas feel unsafe.

Equality & Diversity

The Housing Strategy emphasises the need to deliver good quality accessible accommodation to meet the needs of our elderly and less able residents and the delivery of accessible accommodation will be a priority for the council's future development and acquisitions programme. The council also commits to work other partners and commissioners to deliver specialist accommodation for older and less able residents and to create better and more tailored information for the most vulnerable homeless clients and their advocates. An Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the final version of the Housing Strategy.

Health Inequalities

All of the four strategic priorities will address health inequalities in the District. The delivery of homes, reducing homelessness and rough sleeping, improving stock in all sectors and supporting people in their homes and communities will improve health outcomes for local residents.

Area or Ward affected

All

Consultation & Public Engagement

This report is seeking approval to go out to formal consultation and the findings will inform the final version of the Housing Strategy. The four strategic priorities have been discussed with the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council and the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Presentations have also been made to the Senior Managers Forum and Tenants Panel as well as the East of England Housing Learning & Information Network which campaigns for accessible accommodation for the elderly and less able.

It is proposed to hold a consultation period of six weeks. During this period, the Council will seek the views of our partners in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors on the content of the strategy as well as the wider public. Partners will be able to request a presentation on the strategy if required.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The Council’s last Housing Strategy expired in 2009 and the delay in producing this strategy has been influenced by the uncertainty over the housing numbers required for the district and a lack of capacity in housing services following restructures since 2010. The housing numbers are now more or less agreed in the emerging Local Plan and most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Following the Peer Review conducted by the LGA in early 2018, it was recommended that a post be created in housing to facilitate strategic and policy development and an officer was appointed in August 2018.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Housing Strategy 2019-2024 – Delivering homes to meet the needs of local people.