

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

CABINET

26th JUNE 2020

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

A.3 HOUSING STRATEGY 2020-2025 – DELIVERING HOMES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE

(Report prepared by Peter Russell)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To recommend to Full Council a new Housing Strategy 2020-2025 for adoption.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local authorities are not required by Government to have a formal housing strategy, but they are expected to adopt a strategic approach to housing in their local areas to deliver a thriving housing market and address local needs. Draft Housing Strategy was presented to and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting in July 2019, to enable consultation to be undertaken seeking the views of the public and partners.

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)

That Cabinet:

- 1. Recommends to Full Council a new Housing Strategy 2020-2025 and the accompanying Delivery Plan for adoption and;**
- 2. delegates authority to the Housing Portfolio Holder to monitor performance against the Delivery Plan with periodic updates being presented to Cabinet following the Strategy's adoption.**

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The decisions will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024:

Community Leadership Through Partnerships

The strategy's priorities stress the need for a partnership approach to deliver new homes, jobs and infrastructure as well as tackling homelessness, making the best use of the existing stock in all sectors and supporting residents in their communities.

Building Sustainable Communities for the Future

The strategy will play a key role in enabling and delivering new housing in all sectors in the district.

FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

Finance and other resources

The Housing Revenue Account was predicted to have reserves of £4.36m by the end of March 2020 and this will leave the housing service in a positive financial situation. The rent cap has been lifted for 2020/21 and so, in theory, the Council's housing finances should improve. The Council is confident that it can increase expenditure on acquisitions and development using the increased revenue income and prudential borrowing. The Housing Investment Programme for 2020/2021 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 just over £1m in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant as well as £272,655 of new burdens funding since 2017/18. The Homelessness Support Grant allocation for 2020/21 is £666,189.

The Council has received an allocation of just over £2m for disabled facilities grants for 2020/21.

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 acquisition and 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. Furthermore, at the time of adopting this strategy, the country is in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic which will increase costs to the Council in areas such as homelessness and impact on the delivery of housing and rent collection.

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

LEGAL

Whilst there is no statutory requirement for the Council to produce a housing strategy, it is influenced by various pieces of legislation which are set out in the document.

It is important for the Council to provide detail on the local housing market and the demand for housing, setting out how it plans to deliver new housing in the district and the Council's role as a landlord. The Council's Policy Framework, as set out in Article 4 of the Constitution provides that the plan and strategy which comprises the Housing Investment

Programme (Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Housing Strategy) must be approved or adopted by the full Council.

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 acquisitions and development 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 accompanies 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 wards covered

Consultation & Public Engagement

A draft Housing Strategy was opened for public consultation in December 2019 and a summary of the key consultation responses is written in the strategy document. Prior to going out to consultation, the four strategic priorities were discussed with the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council and the Housing Portfolio Holder. Presentations were also 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.

Prior to the consultation being undertaken on the draft Housing Strategy, a presentation

was given to the Council's Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who noted the contents of the report. No further recommendations were made to Cabinet on its content or suggested approach.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

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 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, however at the time of adopting this strategy, the council is still awaiting the confirmed decision of the Planning Inspectorate's examination of the emerging Local Plan.

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2025 – Delivering homes to meet the needs of local people.

Appendix B – Housing Strategy 2020-25 Delivery Plan