

HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE		
Title	Draft Housing Strategy 2015-2020	
Key Decision	Yes	Item No. 6
Ward	All Wards	
Contributors	Executive Director of Customer Services	
Class	Part 1	Date: 1 st October 2014

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out for Committee the main points contained in the first draft version of the Council's Housing Strategy for 2015 to 2020, for the Committee's consideration and comments.
- 1.2. Committee's comments will be used to update this draft version ahead of consultation with residents and partners which will take place during the autumn. A final version of the strategy, incorporating the feedback from this process will be considered by Committee in the new year ahead of final ratification by Mayor and Cabinet and Council.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To provide the Housing Select Committee (HSC) with the opportunity to consider the key themes of the draft Housing Strategy, the main priorities for action and the strategic objectives before wider consultation begins.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Committee is recommended to:
 - Review and comment on the key themes, main priorities for action and strategic objectives as set out in this first draft of the Housing Strategy for 2015-2020
 - Note the proposed process and timetable for consultation on this draft strategy
 - Note a more detailed action plan will be developed for the final strategy against which progress will be monitored against the specific issues and reported to Housing Select Committee on a regular basis

4. Policy context

- 4.1 The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. It supports the achievement of the Core Strategy strategic objectives which are identified under the themes of:
 - Regeneration and growth areas
 - Providing new homes
 - Growing the local economy
 - Environmental management
 - Building a sustainable community

4.2 The Housing Strategy supports the achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy policy objectives:

- Safer – where people feel safe and live free from crime
- Empowered and responsible – where people are actively involved in their local area and contribute to supportive communities
- Clean, green and liveable – where people live in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment
- Healthy, active and enjoyable – where people can actively participate in maintaining and improving their health and well-being
- Dynamic and prosperous – where people are part of vibrant communities and town centres, well connected to London and beyond

5. Background

5.1. The current Housing Strategy was agreed in 2010 and expires at the end of this year. It is clear that the Council and its partners have achieved a number of successes in meeting the objectives and targets that were set when that Strategy was launched five years ago. In particular these include:

- Investing in our residents homes through stock transfer, enabling 100% of housing stock transferred to meet the Decent Homes standard
- Commencing development of new Council housing, starting on site at Mercator Road
- Securing estate regeneration and new build schemes, looking for development opportunities across the borough; 52 new housing schemes are currently on site and underway
- Securing funding to develop new extra-care housing for older people and improving partnerships between Housing, Health and Social Care
- Investing £1.4m in hostel accommodation for homeless families, reducing dependence on nightly paid accommodation
- Bringing 1,000 empty homes back into use, and upgrading 3,000 existing properties
- Successfully securing £155k funding for the Rogue Landlords programme, to target criminal landlords and improve quality in the private rental sector
- Improving the Housing Options Centre and establishing the Single Homelessness Intervention and Prevention Service

5.2. There has been significant change since the publication of Lewisham's last Housing Strategy, Homes for the Future, in 2009 that make this document particularly timely. The 2012 reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reshaped the housing landscape, allowing local authorities to keep income generated through rent payments and take a more long-term approach to housing management. HRA reforms have unlocked many of the previous barriers to building new homes.

5.3. Fundamental legislative reforms and turbulent economic conditions have had profound effects upon the context in which housing services are delivered and the issues to which they need to respond. Our work as a local authority has been redefined by the changing legislative context and the consequences of welfare reform. We have strengthened partnerships between housing, health, education and employment to better support our residents and prevent homelessness and to help those who find themselves in crisis.

- 5.4. The draft strategy considers all of the challenges and opportunities that the current and expected future economic and legislative conditions create, and responds to those by proposing four organising principles, or priorities, to guide the work of the Council, and its work in support of its partners, over the coming four years.

6. The 2015-2020 Housing Strategy

- 6.1. The document summarises new legislation and policy, stating the ways in which they impact on provision and strategy. It acknowledges the centrality of working in partnership to address many of the key challenges the borough and its residents face.
- 6.2. The draft strategy proposes four objectives to guide the work of the Council and its partners and within each objective it proposes a further set of priorities. These objectives, and the priorities related to each are as follows:

Key Objective 1: Helping residents at times of housing need

Priorities

- To continue to integrate services and partnerships to prevent homelessness.
- To reduce the number of households in nightly paid accommodation
- To invest in new models of temporary accommodation in order to provide a better quality temporary home for residents whilst awaiting permanent housing
- To make best use of existing stock and work closely with all partners to address under-occupation and overcrowding
- To ensure that all households who need help with their housing are able to access excellent information and advice and a full range of housing options to resolve their housing needs To offer a range of supported housing provision and housing support services for those that need them most and which is easy and straightforward to access.
- To provide access to suitable provision in the private rented sector to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- To provide a range of sustainable housing options
- To end rough sleeping in the borough

Key Objective 2: Building the homes our residents need

Priorities

- To increase the supply of housing across all tenures and in particular to deliver at least 2,000 new affordable homes in Lewisham over the next four years, of which 500 will be new Council homes
- To work with partners to support the provision of well-designed, sustainable and energy-efficient housing of all tenures to support the housing needs of local people
- To work with the construction sector to introduce innovative new approaches that support the delivery of new affordable housing, more quickly and more cheaply without compromising our high quality standards
- To provide new homes and environments that set high standards for the quality, accessibility and sustainability of developments across Lewisham
- To work alongside residents to develop new approaches to supporting individuals and groups of residents to commission and/or build their own homes
- To play a leading role in shaping the future of the borough through housing-led regeneration

Key Objective 3: Greater security and quality for private renters

Priorities

- To use advice, incentives and enforcement to provide greater stability and security for private sector tenants
- To promote transparency about letting agencies and the fees they charge enabling new tenants to avoid unreasonable fees and additional costs
- To use accreditation and incentives to develop partnerships with the best landlords in order to promote and highlight good practice
- To gather and use evidence to inform and shape options for licensing private landlords
- To encourage the development of new models of PRS accommodation in Lewisham, where these are backed by professional landlords who offer better security, affordability and service standards for tenants

Key Objective 4: Improving our residents' homes

Priorities

- To continue to work closely with Lewisham Homes and bring all affordable homes in the borough up to the Decent Homes Standard, and maintain that standard
- To extend the ALMO management agreement with Lewisham Homes and expand their roles and responsibilities
- To increase resident satisfaction with their homes as a place to live, and with their local environment
- To provide a programme of energy efficiency improvements to enable warm, healthy homes and address fuel poverty issues across all tenures of housing
- Ensure arrangements are in place to enable prompt and cost effective installation of adaptations that maintain independence and reduce risks of falls and accidents
- To ensure a sustainable and long term future for our housing provider partners

7. Further drafting

- 7.1. Committee is asked to consider these proposed objectives and priorities, as well as the broader content of the first draft of the strategy which is included here as Appendix One.
- 7.2. This draft will subsequently be updated and then made available for resident and partner consultation during the autumn, as set out below.

8. Consultation

- 8.1. It is proposed that a range of methods be employed to engage with the public and with partners during a six week period before the end of 2014. The precise dates for this have yet to be set, and will depend in part on the views of Committee on the proposed process, and on the available dates for local assemblies, as appropriate. The consultation will also be planned so as not to conflict with the on-going Budget Consultation that is currently being undertaken.
- 8.2. The proposed range of methods to be employed to consult on the draft strategy include:

- An online resident consultation to test residents views on housing generally, and also on the proposed objectives and priorities specifically
- Potentially, a short series of follow-on sessions with residents who have responded to the survey, and indicated a willingness to explore their views in more detail.
- The promotion of the on-going consultation through a range of mechanisms to include tenants and residents associations, local fora and online networks
- Attendance at a limited number of local assemblies to set out the vision for the housing strategy, the key themes and priorities, and to undertake group work sessions on the draft.
- Inviting written feedback from the Council's main housing delivery partners, and the wider range of organisations who contribute to the delivery of, or are affected by, the direction of the Council's housing policy

8.3. It is currently anticipated that the consultation period will run from late October, following the end of the Budget Consultation, until mid December. A final version of the strategy will be drafted to reflect, where relevant, the views expressed during this process ahead of final ratification by Housing Select Committee, Mayor & Cabinet and Full Council in early 2015.

9. Financial implications

9.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with the opportunity to consider the key themes of the draft Housing Strategy, the main priorities for action and the strategic objectives before wider consultation begins. As such there are no financial implications arising from this report.

9.2 As the Housing Strategy develops, the financial implications of proposed actions will need to be considered as part of the Council's overall Budget Strategy.

9.3 Officers will also be exploring external funding and partnership opportunities to take the strategy forward.

10. Legal implications

10.1. Pursuant to section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003, there is a duty to comply with the directions of the Secretary of State to produce a local housing strategy. The London Housing Strategy was published in 2010 and was subsequently updated in 2011. In December 2013 the Mayor of London published a draft new version of the London Housing Strategy and initiated a period of consultation which closed on 17th February 2014.

10.2. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) brings together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act includes a new public sector equality duty (the duty), replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 5 April 2011.

10.3. The duty consists of the 'general equality duty' which is the overarching requirement or substance of the duty, and the 'specific duties' which are intended to help performance of the general equality duty.

10.4. The duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 10.5. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are often referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty.

- 10.6. As was the case for the original separate duties, the new duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.
- 10.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
2. Equality objectives and the equality duty
3. Equality information and the equality duty
4. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
5. Engagement and the equality duty

All the guides have now been revised and are up to date. The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

- 10.8. The EHRC guidance does not have legal standing. Unlike the statutory Code of Practice on the public sector equality duty which was due to be produced by the EHRC under the Act. However, the Government has now stated that no further statutory codes under the Act will be approved. The EHRC has indicated that it will issue the draft code on the PSED as a non statutory code following further review and consultation but, like the guidance, the non statutory code will not have legal standing

11. Crime and disorder implications

- 11.1. The Strategy is fully aligned to the authority’s crime agenda and the wider initiatives of the LSP

12. Equalities implications

12.1. The new strategy will be subject to a full EIA before publication

13. Environmental implications

13.1. Sustainability is a main theme of the strategy and a commitment to supporting sustainable development runs throughout the strategic priorities.

14. Conclusion

14.1. This draft strategy identifies four priorities:

1. Building the homes our residents need
2. Improving our residents' homes
3. Helping residents at times of housing need
4. Greater security and quality for private renters

14.2. It sets out a range of aims and actions to address housing need and secure the provision of quality, sustainable housing, increase housing availability across all tenures and link housing with opportunities for employment and better health and educational outcomes.

14.3. Prior to the final draft, the strategy will be amended based on the views expressed by Committee and to reflect the results of consultation with both the general public and our housing partners.

14.4. When consultation is completed an annual implementation plan will be produced with detailed action points.

14.5. It is anticipated that the Housing Strategy will be complete by the end of January 2015 for publication in March 2015.

15. Background documents and originator

Jeff Endean
Housing Strategy and Programmes Team Manager
020 8314 6213