

Council			
Title	Lewisham Housing Strategy		
Key Decision	Yes		Item No.
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services		
Class	Part 1	Date: 24 June 2015	

1. Summary

- 1.1. Lewisham's existing Housing Strategy was completed over five years ago. The new Housing Strategy, *Homes for Lewisham* takes account of the many changes that have taken place since then. *Homes for Lewisham* sets out the Council's policy for tackling the Housing Challenge, and to delivering housing services. The strategy outlines our key objectives and aims in this regard.
- 1.2. The following principles underpin this strategy:
 - Reducing inequality – narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens
 - Working in partnership – tackling challenges that can only be addressed through positive collaboration
 - Promoting prevention – empowering our residents with the tools to help themselves and our communities
 - Sustainability – delivering together efficiently and effectively and taking into account the long term implications on our environment
- 1.3. Due to the uncertainties of the current economic and political climate, *Homes for Lewisham* takes a flexible approach and is accompanied by a concise action plan that can be regularly reviewed.
- 1.4. The strategy is focused on meeting the housing needs and aspirations of all our residents and supports the wider goals and ambitions set out by the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To seek Full Council approval of the new Housing Strategy 2015-2020, *Homes for Lewisham*

3. Recommendations

The Council is recommended to:

- 3.1. Note the consultation undertaken and the feedback given on the new Housing Strategy

- 3.2. Note the first draft Housing Strategy was scrutinised by the Housing Select Committee on 1st October 2014 and a second draft scrutinised following public consultation on 28th January 2015
- 3.3. Note that the new Housing Strategy, attached as **Appendix 1**, was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 25 March 2015 and was referred to Full Council for approval
- 3.4. Approve *Homes for Lewisham* as the Council's Housing Strategy for 2015-2020, as set out in this report.

4. Policy context

- 4.1. Lewisham's Housing Strategy 2015-20, *Homes for Lewisham*, supports the overarching vision for the borough set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. In particular, it supports the priorities of:
 - Clean, green and liveable: where people live in high-quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment
 - Dynamic and prosperous: where people are part of vibrant localities and town centres well connected to London and beyond

5. Narrative

- 5.1. 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 longer term approach to housing management. HRA reforms have unlocked many of the previous barriers to councils building new homes directly.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. *Homes for Lewisham* responds to 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.
- 5.4. In developing this new strategy a draft for 2015-20 was prepared by officers. This considered all of the challenges and opportunities that the current and expected future economic and legislative conditions create. The draft strategy responded to these conditions 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. These four areas were:
 - Homelessness and acute housing need
 - Delivery of new homes
 - Private rented sector
 - Housing conditions and standards

- 5.5. This draft was presented at Housing Select Committee on 1st October 2014 and revised to better reflect the priorities of the Committee. The revised draft was then taken to public consultation, the results of which have informed the final draft strategy attached as **Appendix 1**. Consultation on the draft strategy began in December 2014.
- 5.6. The final draft version of the strategy was given approval by Mayor and Cabinet on 25 March 2015 and referred to Full Council.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The four key themes that emerged throughout the consultation period, where respondents felt we should build in to, or strengthen in, the final strategy, were as follows:
- Affordability
 - Sustainability, energy and climate change
 - Involving communities
 - Delivering the Housing Strategy
- 6.2. Public consultation on the draft of *Homes for Lewisham* was opened on the 3rd December 2014 and closed following the Lewisham Housing Summit on Thursday 22nd January 2015. The consultation consisted of the following:
- Online consultation from 3 December 2014 – 19 January 2015
 - Lewisham Housing Summit held on 22 January 2015
 - housingstrategy@lewisham.gov.uk mailbox was open throughout the consultation process
 - Presentation to Lewisham Homelessness Forum
 - Presentation to Lewisham Affordable Housing Group (LewAHG)

The consultation was promoted on social media and on the Lewisham website.

- 6.3. The Online consultation had a small take-up, but results were overwhelmingly positive/majority in agreement. Over 90% of respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with each of the Key Objectives outlined in the draft strategy.
- 6.4. At the Housing Summit, there were eight tables for group discussion. Each table had a key topic for facilitated discussion
- New build and regeneration (x2)
 - Private rental sector
 - Affordability
 - Housing tenures
 - Homelessness and temporary accommodation (x2)
 - Housing conditions and standards.

Some examples of the key issues were:

- New build and regeneration: there should be a levy on empty land and support innovative models of development
- Affordability: defining 'affordability'. It was strongly felt that there needed to be a distinction between the 'affordable rent' model of 80% market rent and what could be classified as 'truly affordable'; more solutions are needed for those in the 'middle'.

- Homelessness and Temporary accommodation: emphasis on prevention, including through outreach to schools and young people; fighting zero-hour contracts and ensuring a living wage; ensuring services can be flexible to be accessible.
- 6.5. Written feedback to the consultation was also received from the Lewisham Green Party, Lewisham Affordable Housing Group (LEWAHG), Public Health and the Youth Offending Service.
- 6.6. The draft Housing Strategy and feedback from consultation was reported to the Housing Select Committee on 28th January 2015 for scrutiny. Councillors supported the draft although minor changes were asked for, in particular regarding greater mention in the strategy of young people and families and the potential for licensing in the private rental sector.

7. Final Housing Strategy

- 7.1. Based on feedback and the results from consultation, a final housing strategy was developed for consideration by Mayor and Cabinet. Mayor and Cabinet gave the strategy their approval on 25 March 2015 and referred it to Full Council.
- 7.2. The strategy proposes four objectives to guide the work of the Council and its partners and outlines our aims for each key objective. These objective and aims are as follows:

Helping residents at times of severe and urgent housing need

Our aims:

- To reduce all forms of homelessness, including rough sleeping, across Lewisham
- To reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation
- To mitigate the adverse impacts of welfare reform
- To be able to offer relevant housing options, including supported housing, to vulnerable households in order to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing

Building the homes our residents need

- To work with our communities and partners in order to maximize our ability to deliver well designed and affordable new homes for Lewisham
- To support the development of new homes that meet high standards of design, sustainability, accessibility and energy efficiency to meet the long-term needs of our residents
- To develop modern specialised or supported housing for specific client groups, including both single people and families with support needs
- To innovate and create new models of affordable and sustainable housing, for example Council owner re-deployable housing

Greater security and quality for private renters

- To improve security and affordability for households living in the private rental sector
- To improve conditions in the private rental sector in order to support the health and wellbeing of tenants
- To reduce evictions from the private rental sector
- To work together with our partners to improve conditions in the sector and target rogue landlords and the most dangerous properties

Promoting health and wellbeing by improving our residents' homes

- To work with Lewisham Homes, Regenter B3 and our Housing Association partners in order to enable further improvements to residents homes and the local environment
- Contribute to improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reducing carbon emissions to support warm, healthy homes and protect the environment
- To support independent living and reduce risks for vulnerable residents, including excess cold, flood risk and overheating
- To take a strategic approach to securing the future of our homes, looking to re-provide homes where this is the most feasible way of improving standards

7.3. The full housing strategy is attached in **Appendix 1**

8. Delivering the Housing Strategy

8.1. A section on the delivery of the strategy was added following feedback from consultation.

8.2. The delivery of the housing strategy will be subject to monitoring and review with annual updates made and reflected in the action plans for each of the four key objectives. The strategy is supported by a number of policies and service delivery plans. Lewisham's *Sustainable Communities Strategy* continues to provide the overarching vision for the borough, and the housing strategy supports the core principles identified in this strategy

8.3. Monitoring will ensure continued relevance in light of potential changes to national, regional or local policy and ensure that the strategy is able to respond to such changes. Action plans and service delivery plans will support the overarching vision of the housing strategy, and will ensure that delivery is timely, relevant and measurable in terms of making real progress on delivering the vision and aims set out in the strategy.

9. Financial implications

9.1. This report sets out the draft housing strategy, *Homes for Lewisham 2015-20*. The strategy sets out the Council's policy for tackling the Housing Challenge and for delivering housing services. The approval of the draft policy has no direct financial implications.

- 9.2. The budget report, agreed by Mayor and Cabinet on 11 February 2015, set out the capital and revenue resources available for housing services and provision for 2015/16. As the Strategy develops, the financial implications of implementing the policy will need to be contained within the resources agreed and considered as part of the Council's overall Budget Strategy for future years,

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003, requires local housing authorities to produce and adopt Housing Strategies. The local Housing Strategy must be adopted at a meeting of the Authority's Full Council. The London Borough of Lewisham's Constitution, at paragraph 4.2 of Article 4 confirms the fact that the Housing Strategy is one of a number of plans and strategies "...which make up the Council's policy framework". The local Housing Strategy, pursuant to section 28 of the Greater London Authority Act 2007, should 'be in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy' prepared by the Mayor of London.
- 10.2. Meeting the Council's statutory housing obligations is reflected in the objectives of the housing strategy: statutory homelessness duty; provision of housing advice and landlord responsibilities.
- 10.3. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It 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.
- 10.4. 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.
- 10.5. The 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.
- 10.6. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice". The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-andpolicy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>

10.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously 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. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
3. Engagement and the equality duty
4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
5. Equality information and the equality duty

11. Crime and disorder implications

11.1. The Strategy is fully aligned to the authority's prevention of crime agenda and the wider initiatives of the Local Strategic Partnership.

12. Equalities implications

12.1. *Homes for Lewisham* is underpinned by the principle of reducing inequality and narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens. The strategy focuses on the promotion of equal opportunities and overall has a positive impact on reducing inequality.

12.2. An Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA) of the draft Housing Strategy was completed and reported to Mayor and Cabinet at the time the draft report was approved. All actions identified in the EAA will be incorporated into the implementation action plan of the housing strategy and reviewed regularly.

13. Environmental implications

13.1. Sustainability is a major theme of the strategy. *Homes for Lewisham* sets out a number of priorities and strategic objectives which will deliver improved housing management, better and more sustainable design for new developments and improvements to existing homes, which will ensure they are more environmentally friendly.

13.2. Sustainability – delivering together efficiently and effectively and taking into account the long term implications on our environment is a key principle which underpins the strategy.

14. Conclusion

Lewisham's Housing Strategy sets out our key objectives and aims to address housing need, increase housing availability across all tenures, improve housing quality and sustainability and link housing with opportunities for employment and better health and educational outcomes.

Background documents and originator

Name	Date	Location
Shaping Our Future: Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008- 2020	2008	https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/aboutthecouncil/strategies/Documents/Sustainable%20Community%20Strategy%202008-2020.pdf

People, Prosperity, Place: Lewisham's Regeneration Strategy 2007-2020	2007	http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/regeneration/Pages/People-Prosperity-Place.aspx
Mayor and Cabinet Report: Lewisham Housing Strategy	2015	http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s34807/Housing%20Strategy.pdf