

Housing Select Committee			
Report Title	Monitoring of Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020	Item No	4
Contributors	Executive Director for Customer Services, Head of Law		
Class	Part 1	Date	5 July 2017

1. Purpose of paper:

- 1.1. The Lewisham Housing Strategy was published on 25 March 2015 and designed to cover the period from 2015-2020. This report sets out to update the Committee on the actions set out on pages 30-33 of that strategy and to provide a review of the strategy at this halfway point.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1. It is recommended that Housing Select Committee review and note the updates to the Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020 detailed herein.

3. Priorities from the Housing Strategy:

- 3.1. The action plan included in the Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020 was developed according to the four priorities which guide all officer work and which are:

- Helping residents at times of severe and urgent housing need
- Building the homes our residents need
- Greater security and quality for private renters
- Promoting health and wellbeing by improving our residents' homes

- 3.2. The service priorities for the next year as outlined in the next section are derived from these overarching priorities, and the key achievements laid out thereafter are successes in regards to the Housing Strategy.

4. Service priorities 2017/18:

- 4.1. Select Committee will be aware that officers have brought a number of reports detailing the potential legislative changes that might affect the environment in which our Housing Strategy is delivered. These include changes such as fixed term tenancies, the requirement to sell high value properties, and the extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations.

- 4.2. Further details regarding the implementation of these changes have not been forthcoming, and as such officers do not currently propose a wider review of the Housing Strategy, at this stage. Instead we have looked across our strategy and identified a series of service priorities, drawn from the existing strategy, for the coming year and these are as follows.
- 4.3. Maximising the benefit of the Trailblazer programme, and other housing change programmes, to achieve digital and wider transformation across Housing Needs and No Recourse to Public Funds. This will include considering options such as a cross-service assessment hub, a new homelessness prevention service model ahead of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and opportunities to further enable customers to self-help.
- 4.4. Further growing and developing the capacity of the Housing Strategy and Programmes team to implement new approaches to housing development, both in-house and through wider partnerships. This will include shaping our current projects into a long-term programme of housing supply backed by the appropriate resources, delivery models and approaches to risk management and partnership engagement.
- 4.5. Completing the reshaping of the Private Sector Housing Agency to deliver major adaptations to the most vulnerable in a timely manner, fully roll out the licencing scheme, and grow the work of the service in mediating the worst conditions in the private rented sector.
- 4.6. Restructuring the Housing Needs service to incorporate Refugee and No Recourse to Public Fund services, and in so doing to look for financial efficiencies that might be achieved, while delivering a better service to residents.

5. Key Achievements:

Homelessness

- 5.1. The Council has embarked on an innovative and assertive approach to homelessness, using a wide range of tools to prevent homelessness where possible, to reduce the number of households in expensive, poorer quality Nightly Paid accommodation and to increase the amount of high quality, low cost temporary accommodation that the Council has at its disposal. As part of a multi-faceted approach, Lewisham has developed an award winning temporary accommodation scheme at PLACE Ladywell, converted a former care home into temporary accommodation, and provided two £20m loans to Lewisham Homes to commence a programme of property acquisitions to widen the options to address policies and practices to enable households to consider less costly options.

- 5.2. The Council was successful in its bid to become a Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer area, winning £985,000 of funding from DCLG to deliver an innovative Homelessness Prevention scheme over two years. The project brings will use service data to identify households at risk of homelessness, and will develop a range of support interventions for households at risk of homelessness to enable prevention activities to happen sooner;
- 5.3. The Council also successfully bid along with Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich for £340,000 of funding under the GLA's rough sleeping programme for a No First Night Out (NFNO) Shared Accommodation Scheme. The scheme will work with borough housing services and voluntary sector agencies to identify single people at imminent risk of rough sleeping, referring them to support services and a new NFNO Shared Accommodation Scheme. This will comprise 180 units of shared accommodation and work with over 300 people at risk of rough sleeping in South East London.
- 5.4. We have also exceeded expectations over the 2016/17 performance indicators with an increase in the speed of homeless decisions – over 70% of cases decided upon within 33 days; reduction to the number of outstanding homeless decisions from 218 to 88 and delivery of 1000 preventions - a 29% increase between 15/16 & 16/17.
- 5.5. In addition to the overall approach set out above, which has reduced the use of nightly paid accommodation by 15 per cent in the past two years, despite a London-wide housing crisis, a number of other successes should be noted including:
- The successful delivery of PLACE/Ladywell, and the multiple awards it has won;
 - The delivery of Hamilton Lodge and Canonbie hostels, a PSL portfolio of 573, and 81 new Privately Managed Accommodation, all of which provide a sustainable alternative to nightly-paid;
 - The Lewisham Homes acquisition programme, which has acquired 80 properties to date;
 - Housing moves and trading places – reducing under-occupancy.
- 5.6. In mitigating the impacts of welfare reforms, such as the benefit cap and the “bedroom tax”, excellent partnership working has supported residents through the changes. The co-ordination of support and engagement of “under-occupiers” has been successful, with nearly 100 Lewisham Homes residents supported to downsize during 2015/16 alone, and ongoing reductions in over-occupation have been seen in the following periods.

Vulnerable Tenants

- 5.7. A new operational model has been introduced into the Council's 18 sheltered housing schemes, alongside £4m in capital investment, to safeguard the service for the future. Under the new model Lewisham Homes provides a new model of provision for tenants – known as an enhanced housing management service. This approach ensures that the standard of provision is tailored to the expectations of sheltered housing tenants, that repairs and maintenance services are delivered quickly and with an enhanced focus on the specific needs of the client group, and also that activities are available for tenants to help combat loneliness and exclusion, with the innovative “Meet me at the Albany” scheme being a particularly relevant example.
- 5.8. Some other specific achievements include:
- As part of Lewisham's implementation of the National Autism strategy, work is also underway to deliver our first autism-specific development in partnership with Campaign in Lewisham for Autistic Spectrum Housing (CLASH).
 - In 2016/2017 completion of 150 medical assessments per month with 50% reduction in staffing resources.
- 5.9. The Council is working on a new model for modern extra care housing developments incorporating a mixed dependency model and a strong community focus – these are Phoenix Community Housing Association's 60 unit extra care scheme in delivery at Hazelhurst Court, Beckenham Hill and Campshill road which currently has planning consent for 51 units, 45 for social rent and 6 for shared ownership. Conrad Court is another example of a scheme the council delivered to increase the amount of supported housing in the borough, with 78 units of extra care housing having been delivered.

Housing Supply

- 5.10. The New Homes, Better Places programme is seeking to deliver 500 new homes by March 2018, and at present has produced 9 new council homes with 126 on-site and being delivered with a further 60 having gained planning consent and awaiting start on-site. This means that a total of 195 new social rented homes are now underway.
- 5.11. Affordable and innovative new models are being developed such as PLACE/Ladywell, with the second development, PLACE/Deptford, in the design phase, which are helping to maximise the impact of our delivery.
- 5.12. Lewisham Council has also allocated £200k of discretionary funding to assist in bringing long term empty homes back into use. This fund enables the authority to maximise the amount of habitable accommodation within the borough at a lower cost than many other market interventions.

- 5.13. We have identified targeted areas of the borough where re-provision of homes through estate regeneration would be the most effective way to secure the future of our homes in the borough. In 2016 the Excalibur estate regeneration was one such development to begin.
- 5.14. Heathside and Lethbridge is also well underway. This has dramatically improved the quality of these residences, with tenants already in situ, and increases in the amount of units, including social housing.
- 5.15. Following the successes of this work Deptford Southern and Milford Towers are in the early stages of re-provision, with new sites being scoped in line with the potential Bakerloo extension.

Energy and Sustainability

- 5.16. Lewisham Council's Core Strategy is compliant with the London Plan targets for energy efficiency and also has provision for an offset fund to allow developers to take a flexible approach to meeting the zero carbon standard. Lewisham has developed its own carbon offset figure of £104/tonne. The carbon offset fund is designed to be used to increase the energy efficiency of the existing buildings, including housing.
- 5.17. Officers work closely with neighbouring boroughs, energy suppliers, housing providers and other partners to develop new approaches to energy, carbon reduction, renewables and decentralised energy. The Council is assessing options on the approach going forward for decentralised energy and heat networks with a particular focus on the potential of South East London Combined Heat and Power.
- 5.18. Officers are also looking at opportunities for local energy supply offering support for low income households. Lewisham's 'Warm Homes, Healthy People' project delivers home visits to households at risk of fuel poverty. The project has been running in Lewisham since 2011/12 and has assisted over 2,000 homes in that time. The project is currently running with stop-gap funding from the Better Care Fund. The future of this work after this stop-gap funding ends is uncertain and officers are working to try and embed action on fuel poverty into wider work in health, social care and housing strategies and programmes as a way of ensuring that this area of work continues to be a focus.
- 5.19. In the last 12 months we have accessed funding for a heat network feasibility study, engagement activity on smart meters and a national review of referral networks. Officers are currently implementing plans to access the latest round of energy supplier funding for insulation and heating measures (ECO2t).

New Delivery Models

- 5.20. PLACE/Ladywell was opened in June 2016, providing temporary homes for 24 families registered homeless and ground-floor space for community and enterprise use. Work started on the scheme in November 2015 and in a little over six months the first homeless families were able to move in.
- 5.21. All units exceed the current space standard requirements by 10%, helping us to meet an existing shortfall in both high quality temporary and two-bed accommodation whilst we develop new-build and estate regeneration programmes across the borough, and the modular construction method allows for the homes to be deconstructed, moved, and reconstructed elsewhere in the borough as necessary.
- 5.22. The design won or was shortlisted for the following awards in recognition of the innovative approach:
- Mayors Prize, NLA Awards 2016 – PLACE/Ladywell: Winner
 - Best Temporary Development, NLA Awards 2016 – PLACE/Ladywell: Winner
 - Best Specialised Housing Development, NLA Awards 2016 – Campshill Road: Shortlisted
 - Best New Place To Live, London Planning Awards 2017 - PLACE/Ladywell: Highly Commended
 - Best Housing Initiative, Local Government Chronicle Awards 2017 - PLACE/Ladywell: Winner
 - Best Homeless Initiative, UK Housing Awards 2017 - PLACE/Ladywell: Shortlisted
 - Best Innovation (under 20,000 homes), UK Housing Awards 2017 – PLACE/Ladywell: Shortlisted
- 5.23. Another example of a novel approach is a community-led development at Brasted Close uses a community land trust model which is underway to deliver affordable sale housing whereby sales values are linked to local incomes rather than the market. The Council has been working with Lewisham Citizens and London Community Land Trust (CLT) to deliver affordable homes for purchase on a garage site at the Brasted Close estate, Sydenham. Current proposals show that 14 new affordable sale properties set at local median income could be provided at the site. The projected purchase price of these properties is approximately fifty per cent of the local market value for a similar property. This development also made Lewisham the only UK local authority with two CLTs.

Private Rented Sector

- 5.24. The new Private Sector Housing Agency has made significant inroads to improving the state of the Private Rental Sector in Lewisham, regulating and

enforcing landlord's to safeguard good standards of living. Alongside this the award of the Trailblazer funding represents our commitment to a 'prevention first' approach and will enable us to use data to target those at risk of losing their PRS home earlier. In the meantime, officers have been successfully negotiating with landlords and using discretionary grants to sustain private rental arrangements and reduce the number of evictions.

- 5.25. Besson Street is a flagship development in the work to improve the PRS. It's currently at the stage of procuring to select a joint venture partner and is aiming to demonstrate the gold standard of what the PRS should look like. We will be providing a secure and affordable rental product, charging a living rent, to enable tenants to live well in the PRS.
- 5.26. London Living Rent homes will have rents set at one third of borough median household income levels, with variances based on the number of bedrooms and ward-level house prices – this not only safeguards the majority of tenants' income from having to go towards rent but is hoped to enable these renters to save towards purchasing their own homes.
- 5.27. There are a range of grants in place - both mandatory and discretionary - that support some of our most vulnerable customers to remain in their homes. Work is ongoing to build the strength of the team and ensure that budgets are spent on key priorities. A campaign will be rolled out later in the summer across the Borough to promote these grants and ensure that we targets those most in need. A restructure of the PSHA has led to a complete change of staffing. New posts are being appointed to but there are still some vacancies to fill.
- 5.28. We have undertaken an engagement session with residents and the PRS sector to create a forum for policy-makers, politicians, large private landlords, renters and their advocacy organisations were able to discuss the issues of the PRS and propose solutions.
- 5.29. There is a renewed commitment within the PSHA to tackle rogue landlords in the Borough. We have appointed 2 new officers to lead the intelligence on this work - one who is an ex-police officer to collect the intelligence and build a case file - often working with others both in Lewisham but also across our Borough boundaries - and a lawyer who will take these case files and develop them ready for prosecution. We are also bidding for government funding to support this work.
- 5.30. Highlights include:
 - Launch of the additional licensing scheme for HMOs above commercial properties
 - Unearthing the largest HMO in the borough – 17 units in Blackheath

- Tackling poor housing above shops in Rushey Green – (379 Lewisham High Street, Brownhill Road, Rosenthal Road)
 - Inspecting the largest housing co-operative in the borough – Sanford Housing Co-op SE14 (100+ units)
 - Inspected every property on rogue landlord list
 - Visited over 500 properties to determine if they were HMOs
- 5.31. The Council operates a robust prevention programme aimed at reducing the number of evictions from the PRS where possible and relieving homelessness at the earliest opportunities where this is not possible. The number of preventions that the Council delivered in 2016/17 went up to 1000 from the 200 achieved in 2015/16 and officers continue to employ a ‘prevention first’ approach when engaging with clients.
- 5.32. Officers will engage with landlords where a client presents as homeless or likely to become homeless with a view to preventing homelessness in the first instance. A number of approaches are deployed dependent on the circumstances and can range from assurance and support to the use of cash incentives. We also support accredited landlords through our landlord events and through discounts to licensing fees if they are accredited. We also run landlord forums where all of the London accreditation schemes are promoted.

Partnership

- 5.33. Last year our Arms-Length Management Agreement (ALMO) with Lewisham Homes was extended to 2027 to enable us to continue to house residents in improved circumstances. Additional responsibilities for the management of Temporary Accommodation stock owned or leased by the authority were transferred to Lewisham Homes in 2016 to enable the Council to utilise the organisational expertise of a well-established and highly regarded housing provider.
- 5.34. Lewisham Homes have continued their investment in apprenticeships and graduate employment opportunities as well as developing their community investment partnership with the Albany to contribute to improving the lives of local residents beyond housing. There continue to be other avenues to involve residents such as through formal housing courses or membership of the Board.
- 5.35. The levels of decency in the stock held by Lewisham Homes is currently above 90% and we have made progress on our Decent Homes target in line with the Mayor’s manifesto commitment and are expecting to deliver 100% decent homes by the end of the 2017/18 financial year.
- 5.36. Highlights from our partnership-led developments include:

- Pocket Living completed 26 affordable homes for home ownership
- Successfully restructured Campshill Road deal with One Housing
- Enabled first autism-specific homes
- Enabled Phoenix to prepare for delivery of Hazelhurst Court
- Supported RUSS towards planning submission at Church Grove
- Enabled London CLT at Brasted Close, becoming only UK authority with two CLTs.
- Lewisham Homes achieved completions at Dacre South
- Significant process and partnership improvements with Lewisham Homes on new homes programme
- Development of homes for affordable rent – set at a ‘living rent’ level tied to medium incomes – at the Besson Street site

6. Financial implications:

- 6.1. This purpose of this report is to update members on the Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020. As such, there are no direct Financial Implications arising from this update.
- 6.2. Further detailed financial implications will be provided on each individual scheme as they develop and are reported on.

7. Legal implications:

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. 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.

7.5. 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.

7.6. 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.

7.7. 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/>

7.8. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
- Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
- Engagement and the equality duty
- Equality objectives and the equality duty
- Equality information and the equality duty

8. Background documents:

8.1. List of background documents:

Document	Date
Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020	25 March 2015
Lewisham Homes Business and Delivery Plan 2015-19	7 September 2016
Key Housing Issues, HSC Report	10 January 2017
Key Housing Issues, HSC Report	7 March 2017
Housing for Older People in Lewisham, HSC Report	6 July 2016

New Homes, Better Places Programme Update, M&C Report	11 January 2017
Update on Additional Licensing Scheme, HSC Report	7 March 2017
Implementing the National Autism Strategy in Lewisham, HCSC Report	2 December 2014
Annual Lettings Plan 2017/18, HSC Report	7 March 2017

8.2. For further information please contact Jeff Endean, Housing Strategy Manager, on 020 8314 6213