

Housing Select Committee			
Report Title	Housing Strategy Update	Item No	6
Contributors	Head of Strategic Housing		
Class	Part 1	Date	6 March 2019

1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1. This report outlines the proposed approach to writing and implementing a refreshed Housing Strategy 2020-2025.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Housing Select Committee note the report.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Housing Strategy is a key document that sets the direction for the housing division for the next 5 years, and drives the activities of the housing division that are prioritised during that time.
- 3.2. The Housing Strategy sits under the emergent Draft Corporate Strategy (which replaces the 2008 Community Strategy). This drives the direction of the overall council activity, and includes seven priorities:
- Open Lewisham
 - Tackling the housing crisis
 - Giving children and young people the best start in life
 - Building an inclusive local economy
 - Delivering & defending: Health, Social Care and Support
 - Making Lewisham greener
 - Building safer communities
- 3.3. The current Lewisham Housing Strategy was published on 25 March 2015 and was designed to cover the period from 2015-2020. As such, it is time for a new strategy document to take us from 2020-2025, and to deliver on the housing aspects of the new Corporate Strategy. This new strategy needs to respond to the housing crisis we currently face; Lewisham, along with boroughs across London, are tackling a range of challenges as a result of market pressures, housing policy developments and acute housing affordability issues.
- 3.4. The Lewisham Housing Strategy 2015-2020 was developed according to four priorities, under which are four key aims. Sitting underneath the strategy is an action plan that outlined the steps to be taken to achieve those aims. The priorities and aims were as follows:

- **Helping residents at times of severe and urgent housing need**
 - 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 maximise 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 owned re-usable 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.

3.5. As detailed at Housing Select Committee in March 2018, since the strategy was launched there have been a number of significant changes in the demand and supply of housing in Lewisham and the policy environment in which the housing strategy can be delivered against, including:

- Significant rises in the need for temporary accommodation – an increase of 15 per cent since 2014/15
- Increased reliance on the private rented sector (PRS) and worsening affordability in the PRS - median rent has gone up 20% between Q1 2014 (£1000 pcm) and Q1 2016 (£1200 pcm).
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 can be seen as the most fundamental piece of homelessness legislation in a generation, focusing on early intervention, a more holistic approach to assessment and partnership working.
- Since 2015 Lewisham Council has embarked on a significant housebuilding programme, which has become a more permanent fixture in our activities going forward with ambitious targets to build new social homes in the borough. In this time too we have been able to access increased grant funding from the GLA, and the housing revenue account borrowing cap has been lifted.
- There has been a drive from the GLA to adopt more innovative approaches in developing new homes, with Lewisham at the forefront of off-site manufacturing techniques.
- Key legislative changes in relevant to building safety and, and major reviews by Government including the Grenfell Enquiry and Hackett Review represent a step change in the approach taken to keep safe and maintain buildings.

4. Proposed approach and timeframe

4.1. The timetable below outlines the proposed approach to developing and finalising the housing strategy 2020-2025. We are committed to working with our key partners and stakeholders in the development of the refreshed strategy.

Timeline	Stage	Additional detail
February - May 2019	Workshops with internal and external stakeholders on key principles of the strategy	Officers from across the housing division; key stakeholders within the Council; Housing Select Committee and other members; key housing partners across the borough; resident groups
June - July 2019	First draft of strategy	Housing Strategy team produces draft
September 2019	Permission to consult with public	Housing Select Committee and Mayor and Cabinet
Mid September – Early November	Public Consultation	Consultation put on Lewisham public consultation website and promoted via usual channels.

December - February	Finalise strategy	Housing Strategy team
March - April	Approval and Strategy Adopted	Housing Select Committee and Mayor and Cabinet

5. Financial implications:

- 5.1. 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. Legal implications:

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. 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.
- 6.6. 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.

- 6.7. 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/>
- 6.8. 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

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1. This report seeks to update the committee on the plan for developing the new Housing Strategy. As such, there are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

8. Crime and Disorder implications

- 8.1. There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

9. Environmental implications

- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

10. Background documents:

- 10.1. The following table contains the relevant background documents:

For further information please contact Rachel Dunn, Housing Policy and Partnership Manager, on 020 8314 6213.