

Mayor and Cabinet			
Report Title	Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2026		
Key Decision		Item No.	
Ward	All		
Contributors	Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Environment		
Class	Part 1	Date:	15 th January 2020

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the key themes of the draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2026 and the main priorities for action for each theme.
- 1.2. Officers are seeking approval from Mayor and Cabinet to commence a public consultation on the proposed new Housing Strategy 2020-26, attached at appendix A. The outputs of this consultation will feed into the final draft of the Housing Strategy 2020-26, which will be brought back to Mayor and Cabinet in Spring 2020.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To seek Mayor and Cabinet agreement to go out to public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2020-26, as detailed in appendix A.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to:
 - Note any comments from Housing Select Committee on the draft strategy consultation document, tabled at the meeting
 - Note the key themes, main priorities for action and strategic objectives for the proposed Housing Strategy 2020-26 contained within the document at appendix A
 - Approve an eight week consultation, as detailed in section 7 of this report

4. Policy context

- 4.1. The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. It supports the following priorities of the Council's corporate strategy 2018-22:

- tackling the housing crisis
- building an inclusive economy
- Making Lewisham greener
- Building safer communities

5. Background

5.1. The current Housing Strategy was agreed in 2015 and expires in 2020. Since the implementation of this strategy there have been significant changes in the housing landscape that make the introduction of a new strategy timely. Fundamental legislative reforms and continuing financial constraints have had significant and lasting impacts on the context in which our housing services are delivered. A summary of the key changes and impacts are outlined below:

- Local Authorities have been given greater abilities to directly build following the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap. As a result, Councils are becoming increasingly ambitious in the building of new homes. New technologies and innovate methods of housebuilding are becoming more widely used.
- There has been a significant worsening of housing affordability and insufficient supply of genuinely affordable housing to match the demand. There is a severe and continued shortage of properties at social rent and privately rented properties at LHA rate or below, accessible to those claiming social security / benefit.
- As a result, the pressures on homelessness services and the need for temporary accommodation is increasing. Around 2200 households are currently in temporary accommodation in Lewisham, of which around 700 are in nightly paid accommodation.
- Major legislative change has been brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act. This has resulted in a significant shift in the way in which our homelessness service runs, and has increased demand on our advice and support services.
- Welfare reform measures over the last five years have negatively impacted those on low incomes, particularly in relation to the introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit.
- Grant provided by central government to support homelessness expenditure is reducing: it has been estimated that from the year preceding the HRA's introduction to 2022/23, London boroughs will spend an extra £80 million as a result of anticipated increases in homelessness and the costs of managing these services¹.
- There is a continuing and expanding responsibility being placed on Local Authorities to manage the advice and legislative change around building

¹ <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/housing-and-planning/homelessness/cost-homelessness-services-london>

safety. There remain significant uncertainties and funding gaps in necessary building safety works related to safety.

- Landlord licensing has been widely introduced across London to improve the private rented sector. There has been an increase in the powers held by local authorities to prosecute illegally acting landlords through the use of civil penalty notices.

5.2. The draft housing strategy considers all of the challenges and opportunities that the current and expected future economic and legislative conditions create. It responds to those by proposing five priorities to guide the work of the Council, and its work in support of its partners over the next 6 years.

6. **Draft Housing Strategy 2020-26**

6.1. Attached at appendix A is the consultation supporting document for the new Housing Strategy 2020-26. This outlines the approach we will take over the next 6 years to achieve progress against our vision: *that everyone has a safe, stable and affordable home where they can live an independent and prosperous life*. The new housing strategy will outline the strategic direction, key priorities and actions that will progress Lewisham towards meeting this vision.

6.2. The detail contained within the supporting document forms the basis of our proposed Housing Strategy. The document outlines the actions already underway and the approach we will take to work towards our vision. It also summarises how we will meet the Council's ambitions over the next six years.

6.3. The proposed strategy has been formulated following an extensive evidence gathering exercise and informal consultation with residents and partners across a number of events that have taken place over the last 6 months, including:

- Informal consultation events and face to face discussions with internal partners
- A consultation event attended by 30 external partners, followed up by face to face discussions
- Informal residents consultation event hosted by Lewisham Homes
- Two discussion events with the Housing Select Committee members

6.4. We recognise that in order to achieve our vision, we need to continue to develop our strong foundation of partnership working. Working in partnership is central to address the key challenges that we and our residents face.

6.5. To deliver the housing strategy we will work with a wide range of partners. This includes other council services, our housing management and registered providers, charities and local support groups, other local authorities, the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority.

- 6.6. The final strategy will be underpinned by a detailed action plan. Progress will be monitored against this action plan and reported to Housing Select Committee on a regular basis.
- 6.7. The five core themes of the draft strategy are highlighted below:
1. *Delivering the homes that Lewisham needs, by:*
 - Delivering as many social rented properties as possible; making places where people want to live; and increasing the supply of high-quality temporary accommodation.
 2. *Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need, by:*
 - Providing support as early as possible, and developing our support for residents at times of urgent need
 3. *Improving the quality, standard and safety of housing in Lewisham through:*
 - Improving standards in the private rented sector, investing in homes in Lewisham; and leading on health and safety, fire safety and tackling the climate emergency
 4. *Support our residents to lead safe, independent and active lives by:*
 - Helping residents to remain independent and promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents
 5. *Strengthening Communities and Embracing Diversity, by:*
 - Ensuring residents have a meaningful voice, and embracing diversity through our refugee resettlement programme and sanctuary borough work.
- 6.8. We will be publicly consulting on the draft strategy as detailed in section 6 of this report. The consultation questions will focus on asking residents and partners to comment on the core themes, reflect on their importance and identify any additional considerations to take into account when finalising the strategy.

7. Next steps

- 7.1. Below is the proposed timetable to approval of the new strategy

Date	Milestone
February / March 2020	8 weeks formal public consultation
May 2020	Housing Select Committee review of proposed new strategy
May / June 2020	Mayor and Cabinet and Full Council approval of final Strategy

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. This report seeks Mayor and Cabinet approval to embark on public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2020-26, as detailed in Appendix A and B of this report. The strategy sets out the council policy for tackling the housing challenge and delivery of housing services. As such, there are no direct financial implications arising from this report
- 8.2. The budget report agreed in February each year, sets out the Capital and Revenue resources available for Housing services and provision on an annual basis. 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 councils overall budget strategy for future years

9. **Legal implications**

- 9.1. The Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required by section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 9.2. Section 333D of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 provides that any local housing strategy of any London borough has to be in general conformity with the Mayor's London Housing Strategy.
- 9.3. 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.
- 9.4. 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.
- 9.5. 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.
- 9.6. 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.
- 9.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010"

- 9.8. 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/>

- 9.9. 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

10. **Equalities implications**

- 10.1. The Housing Strategy consultation document is underpinned by the principle of reducing inequality, advancing equality of opportunity, and narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens. The draft themes and actions that are outlined focus on the promotion of equal opportunities and positive impacts on reducing inequality.
- 10.2. A full equalities impact assessment will be undertaken following the consultation period, when the strategy is being finalised.

11. **Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 11.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications to this report.

12. **Background reports and report author**

- 12.1. For further information about this report please contact Rachel Dunn at rachel.dunn@lewisham.gov.uk