



## Mayor and Cabinet

### **Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-22**

**Date:** 11 November 2020

**Key decision:** Yes

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Fenella Beckman, Director for Housing Services

### **Outline and recommendations**

The purpose of this report is to present Mayor and Cabinet with the final Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2022.

Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to approve both strategies for publication.

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

December 2019	Draft Housing strategy presented to Mayor and Cabinet
15 January 2020	Draft Housing strategy presented to Housing Select Committee
January – April 2020	Draft Housing strategy subject to public consultation
15 September 2020	Both strategies presented to Housing Select Committee
11 November 2020	Both strategies to be presented to Mayor & Cabinet for final sign off

### 1. Summary

#### 1.1. Housing Strategy

- 1.2. This report gives an outline of the Housing Strategy 2020 – 2026 and the main priorities for action.
- 1.3. A draft version of this strategy was presented to Mayor and Cabinet in December 2019. Since then public consultation has taken place in addition to a number of other internal and external engagement activities. There has also been a review of the draft strategy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has influenced some of the changes.

#### 1.4. Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 1.5. This report also gives an outline of the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2022 and the main priorities for action.
- 1.6. Development of this strategy began in late 2019 but was paused due to COVID-19. The final strategy has been developed by a newly formed strategic group, representation including health, NHS and social care colleagues. This group was formed as a response to the pandemic and has offered an opportunity to deliver homelessness response from a strategic, multi-disciplinary level.
- 1.7. This strategy is being proposed as a two-year document so that a long term strategy can be established after the longer term implications of COVID-19 are fully understood.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet are asked to agree the final strategies for immediate publication.

### 3. Policy context

- 3.1. The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. It supports the achievements of the Corporate Strategy objectives:
- 3.1.1. *Tackling the housing crisis – Everyone has a decent home that is secure and affordable.*
- 3.1.2. *Giving children and young people the best start in life - Every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.*
- 3.1.3. *Delivering and defending: health, social care and support - Ensuring everyone receives the health, mental health, social care and support services they need.* The pandemic

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has brought this to the forefront of much of our work due to new enhanced partnerships with Public Health and other health colleagues. Service delivery through the COVID-19 prism must prioritise the health and wellbeing of our service users.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1. The current Housing Strategy was agreed in 2015 and expires this year in 2020. Since this strategy was developed, there have been significant changes in the housing landscape, the scale and impact of the housing crisis and rising homelessness levels. In addition, the Homelessness Reduction Act has substantially changed the way in which we carry out our statutory homeless duties.
- 4.2. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. Until now we have incorporated our homelessness strategy within the wider housing strategy. Given the increase in homelessness and rough sleeping since the inception of the previous housing strategy, we will move forward with a dedicated homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.
- 4.3. These new strategies are timely; they lay out how we in Lewisham will tackle the housing crisis. They provide direction on how we will respond, now and in the future, to the increases in homelessness in recent years as a result of the critical lack of genuinely affordable housing.

## **5. The strategies**

### **5.1. The Housing strategy 2020-26**

- 5.2. The key priorities of the Housing strategy are:
  - Delivering the homes that Lewisham needs;
  - Preventing homelessness and meeting housing need;
  - Improving the quality, standard and safety of housing;
  - Supporting our residents to live safe, independent and active lives;
  - Strengthening communities and embracing diversity.
- 5.3. The draft Housing strategy went out to public consultation between 28 January and 17 April 2020. The consultation received 225 responses from individuals and partners across the voluntary and community sectors. This is a successful response rate when looking at other boroughs; for example Hackney's 2017 Housing strategy consultation received 150 responses; the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's 2019 consultation received 95 responses and Enfield's 2019 consultation received 285 responses.
- 5.4. In addition to formal consultation, a number of other engagement activities have taken place to inform the strategy, 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; an informal residents' consultation event hosted by Lewisham Homes; two discussion events with Housing Select Committee members.
- 5.5. The consultation highlighted that the top three areas that are deemed the most important are: 'preventing homelessness and meeting housing need', 'improving the quality, standard and safety of housing' and 'delivering the homes that Lewisham needs.' A relatively small number of respondents denoted any of the proposals as 'unimportant' or 'somewhat unimportant'.
- 5.6. The consultation highlighted that our initial draft strategy did not adequately address

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young people and their needs. This has been reflected in the final document. There has also been a review of the strategy in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has influenced some of the changes, including a renewed need to review our use of shared temporary accommodation. COVID-19 has also starkly highlighted the disparity in health outcomes in BAME people; the strategy has been adapted to demonstrate that recovery work will be firmly rooted in addressing inequality.

#### 5.7. **The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2020-22**

5.8. The key priorities of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy are:

- Prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity with the most appropriate level of support;
- Support people to access a stable and secure home;
- Support rough sleepers to enable access to services and sustainable accommodation;
- Adapt and be agile in our service delivery to support residents impacted by COVID-19;
- Strengthen partnership working.

5.9. Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy has been more challenging as a result of the onset of the pandemic. Officers initially planned to carry out formal consultation with partners on a draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy during March and April 2020. COVID-19 prevented this from happening.

5.10. It quickly became clear as we responded to the pandemic that there were short, medium and long-term consequences for our homelessness and rough sleeping services. This caused us to pause and consider the impacts on the development of a new strategy.

5.11. As the pandemic continues, uncertainties remain around our service delivery, particularly in rough sleeper services and housing provision, and due to the ongoing service transformation of our newly remote service model.

5.12. In response to the pandemic, colleagues across Housing, Public Health, the NHS and community services formed an operational group to manage the response to COVID-19 in our pathways, shared and hostel accommodation for our most vulnerable residents. This exceptional partnership working highlighted an opportunity and drive to approach service delivery in a more joined-up way. We want to ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping is considered at a strategic level through a multi-disciplinary lens.

5.13. For these reasons, the group has co-developed the attached two-year strategy, which it is intended will be monitored by a newly formed director-led and joined-up strategic group. A longer term strategy will be developed through this group.

## **6. Financial implications**

6.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from these strategies.

6.2. There are significant costs associated with housing generally, including managing the allocations service, managing the supply and provision of council housing and providing services to those experiencing homelessness or the threat of homelessness. All of these are affected over time by demand. Development of the Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2020-22 helps to manage this demand with the resources allocated for that purpose.

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## 7. Legal implications

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. 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.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. 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.
- 7.5. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - 7.5.1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - 7.5.2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - 7.5.3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.6. 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.
- 7.7. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010
- 7.8. 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: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>
- 7.9. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:
  - 7.9.1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
  - 7.9.2. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
  - 7.9.3. Engagement and the equality duty
  - 7.9.4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
  - 7.9.5. Equality information and the equality duty

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## **8. Equalities implications**

- 8.1. The strategies being considered for adoption are high-level directions to drive the council towards achieving its objectives. Whilst the strategies themselves are high-level, upon their adoption there will be specific decisions and projects that may have an impact on any of the protected characteristics. Each of these key decisions or projects will be accompanied by evidenced-based equalities analysis assessments.
- 8.2. The strategies themselves explicitly reference some priorities and deliverables that would be specifically targeted at groups with protected characteristics; these are aimed at ensuring we are offering appropriate and effective services for people with the noted characteristics. For the purposes of illustration, one strategic deliverable is to “build a wide range of both adaptable and specialist homes to meet people’s varying needs” – this would specifically relate to the provision of homes for people with disabilities and can therefore be considered a positive impact.
- 8.3. We recognise that systemic inequalities have been highlighted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Work needs to be done towards ensuring Housing policies and action plans drive positive changes in promoting equality and fighting injustice, and this is a priority of the Housing strategy.

## **9. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 9.1. Actions around the climate emergency are included as part of the proposed Housing strategy.
- 9.2. In addition to our own actions, we will support the progress of our climate emergency action plan with other colleagues and partners.

## **10. Crime and disorder implications**

- 10.1. One of the key priorities of the Housing strategy is “strengthening communities and embracing diversity”. We anticipate that actions and deliverables under this priority will promote community cohesion.

## **11. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 11.1.1. One of the key priorities of the Housing strategy is “supporting our residents to lead safe, independent and active lives”. We anticipate that actions and deliverables under this priority will help to address the health and wellbeing of residents, through working with health services and other partners to ensure that the varied needs of service users are met.
- 11.2. Additionally, the Homeless and Rough Sleeping strategy has been developed in partnership with Public Health, NHS and community colleagues; therefore priorities under this strategy have evolved from a multi-disciplinary lens. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fact that health is a vital consideration in this strategy, particularly our service provision for rough sleepers who have a variety of complex health needs.

## **12. Report author and contact**

- 12.1. Fenella Beckman – Director of Housing Services ([Fenella.Beckman@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Fenella.Beckman@lewisham.gov.uk))

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