



Housing Select Committee

Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-22 Review

Date: 10 March 2022

Key decision: No

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 Housing Select Committee with an update to progress of the Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2022 action plan.

Housing Select Committee is asked to note this update report.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

15 September 2020	Both strategies presented to Housing Select Committee
11 November 2020	Both strategies presented to Mayor & Cabinet for final sign off
November 2020	Both strategies published on the council website
10 March 2022	Update presented to Housing Select Committee

1. Summary

1.1. Housing Strategy

1.2. This report gives an update against the actions within the Housing Strategy 2020 – 2026.

1.3. This strategy was presented to Housing Select Committee in September 2020 and then to Mayor and Cabinet in November 2020 and approval given for publication.

1.4. Homeless & Rough Sleeping Strategy

1.5. This report also gives an update against the actions within the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2022.

1.6. This strategy was also presented to Housing Select Committee in September 2020 and then to Mayor and Cabinet in November 2020 and approval given for publication.

1.7. This strategy was introduced 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. It will be updated in 2022.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Housing Select Committee is asked to note this update report.

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 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.

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4. Background

4.1. The current Housing Strategy was agreed in 2020 and expires in 2026. Following public consultation in early 2020, revisions were made to take account of the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been further changes in the housing landscape and the scale and impact of the housing crisis, a focus on conditions of existing social homes and rising homelessness levels.

4.2. These strategies set out how we will work to tackle the housing crisis and ensure our services support our most vulnerable residents in housing need as well as ensure our residents live in safe and secure homes. These strategies also provide direction on how we will continue to respond to the increases in homelessness in recent years as a result of the critical lack of genuinely affordable housing.

4.3. **The Housing strategy 2020-26**

4.4. 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.

4.5. **The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2020-22**

4.6. 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.

4.7. It 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 develop a shorter term strategy which would be refreshed once the impact of the pandemic was better known.

4.8. 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 partnership co-developed the two-year strategy, and a longer term strategy will be developed in collaboration with this group during 2022.

5. Update

5.1. Two years into the 2020-26 Housing Strategy, good progress has been made against many of the housing strategy objectives. A full review is available as appendix 1.

5.2. Good progress has also been made against the shorter term Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2020-22. A full review is available as appendix 2.

5.3. The progress against both strategies has been heavily impacted by the covid-19

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pandemic, meaning that work priorities were changed due to newly emerging priorities and capacity challenges. In addition, the Housing Service underwent a service wide restructure, during 2021 which has had an impact on staffing.

- 5.4. Going forwards, the teams will be back to fuller capacity and workplans are being updated to take account of those actions which have not yet been fully progressed or completed.
- 5.5. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2020-22 will be updated during 2022.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. This report asks Housing Select Committee to note the update on progress of the Housing Strategy 2020-26 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2022 action plan. As such, there are no direct financial implications arising from the report.
- 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.

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. A copy of the Mayors London Housing Strategy is available on this link:-
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_lhs_london_housing_strategy.pdf
- 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.

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- 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

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1. The strategies are high-level directions to drive the council towards achieving its objectives. Whilst the strategies themselves are high-level, there are specific decisions and projects that may have an impact on any of the protected characteristics. Each of these key decisions or projects is 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 continues to ensure Housing policies and action plans drive positive changes in promoting equality and fighting injustice.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1. Actions around the climate emergency are included as part of the 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”. 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

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safe, independent and active lives". Actions and deliverables under this priority 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 was 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

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