

Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020 -2025

Overview and Scrutiny Panel **19 November 2019**

Report Author	Tim Willis, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Helen Whitehead, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Status	For Consideration
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	Policy Framework

Executive Summary:

The report provides an overview of the draft housing and homelessness strategy 2020-2025, which sets the vision for the Council's role in addressing housing supply, homelessness, standards and health and wellbeing.

The draft strategy is built around four key themes:

1. Increasing access to and supply of housing
2. Improving standards and safety in homes across all tenures
3. Enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities
4. Preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping

The draft strategy will be considered by the council's Cabinet on 16 December 2019, and if agreed, be subject to public consultation, prior to being considered for adoption by full council in early 2020.

Recommendation(s):

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are invited to:

1. Consider the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025, attached at annex 1.
2. Make comments on the draft strategy in advance of the council's Cabinet considering the draft strategy, on 16 December 2019.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

There are no increased financial implications as a result of approving the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, however key elements of the strategy create budgetary pressures on the Council across revenue and capital resources in both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. Some of these are as a result of Government policy and others are due to the Council's desire to improve housing supply for residents

Legal	<p>Once adopted, this Housing and Homelessness strategy will satisfy the requirements of Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 for local housing authorities to review homelessness and publish updated homelessness strategies every five years.</p> <p>The final strategy will also be a material consideration in the consideration of future planning applications, alongside the requirements of the councils Local Plan.</p>								
Corporate	<p>The risks are minimal as the actions are aligned to agreed corporate priorities and whereby schemes would only be progressed once resources have been identified.</p>								
Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 1093 1402 1352"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> </table> <p>An equalities impact assessment will be completed prior to consideration of the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy at Cabinet on 16 December 2019.</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,		Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	✓	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	✓
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant) ✓	
Growth	✓
Environment	✓
Communities	✓

CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant) ✓	
Delivering value for money	✓
Supporting the Workforce	
Promoting open communications	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The local housing and homelessness strategy is the council's vision for housing in its area. It sets out policies, objectives and targets on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role. It provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific

housing issues. The current housing and homelessness strategy was adopted in 2014 and expires in December 2019.

- 1.2 Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a homelessness review within the period of 5 years, beginning with the day on which our last homelessness strategy was published.
- 1.3 In conducting a review of homelessness and formulating a new strategy, housing authorities need to take into account the additional duties introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Local Authorities are encouraged to involve all relevant partners in developing a strategy and in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness, which is contained within this strategy.
- 1.4 The draft Strategy has a key role in helping to deliver the ambition that everyone should have access to an affordable, safe and well maintained home. It builds on the wider contribution that the Council and other housing providers and partners can make towards building mixed and sustainable communities and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 1.5 The draft Strategy is action focussed and sets out the priorities and actions for how the Council and its partners aim to work collaboratively to meet the ambition set out in the emerging Local Plan. The Strategy is also an opportunity to establish a new way of working to promote that the district is open for investment and innovation, and will proactively work with stakeholders to meet the housing challenge and accelerate housing delivery.
- 1.6 The housing challenges include increasing supply that local people can afford, improving standards across all sectors, promoting independent and sustainable accommodation for those that are vulnerable and preventing and responding to homelessness. The draft housing and homelessness strategy is built around four thematic priorities:

- i) Increasing access to and supply of housing,*
- ii) Improving standards and safety in homes across all tenures,*
- iii) Supporting the health and well being of our residents and communities*
- iv) Preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping*

2.0 Current Situation

- 2.1 The trends which informed the housing and homelessness strategy (2014), continue to drive the need for review and action in this new strategy. Population is increasing and housing demand, especially for affordable homes for those on low incomes, remains high. Housing costs have risen sharply when compared to median incomes and local housing allowance rates, creating an increasing affordability gap. This presents a real challenge for households seeking to buy or rent a home, and has contributed to the increasing incidence and cost of homelessness. The high cost of home ownership has also resulted in a tenure shift and a significant increase in the number of people in privately rented accommodation.
- 2.2 The housing and homelessness strategy is also accompanied by an action plan which will set out how the key priorities will be delivered. It features a range of work

streams including multi-agency and cross departmental initiatives such as tackling empty properties and preventing homelessness. The action plan will be updated annually so members, residents and stakeholders can see progress towards implementing the actions. This will also allow for any policy changes to be incorporated ensuring the strategy is kept current and relevant for the five year lifespan.

3.0 Finance

- 3.1 The housing and homelessness strategy has limited financial implications as it is intended the provision and actions will be delivered within existing budgets. However, to fully implement the housing and homelessness strategy significant investment is required from all partners and external funding agencies.
- 3.2 The options have been reviewed in collaboration with the council's finance team to assess initial risks and ensure the proposals are affordable and deliverable within existing financial restrictions. There are a number of capital funding streams, including both HRA and General Fund which the Council could explore utilising to support the implementation of the options and accelerate housing delivery.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 The housing and homelessness strategy relies on the contributions of a wide range of partner organisations for its delivery. These include MHCLG, Homes England, NHS, Kent County Council, housebuilders, landowners and housing associations. The council already coordinates a regular Housing Forum with partner organisations, and will ensure that these organisations are consulted about the housing and homelessness strategy prior to its adoption.
- 4.2 If the draft strategy is endorsed by Cabinet, it will be published for a 6 weeks consultation period, within which views will be sought from stakeholders. The final draft will then be submitted to Council in February/March 2020 for approval.
- 4.3 The ambition is to adopt the housing and homelessness strategy in March 2020.

Contact Officer:	Amena Matin, Housing Strategy & Projects Manager
Reporting to:	Bob Porter, Head of Housing and Planning

Annex List

Annex 1	Draft housing and homelessness strategy & action plan
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Corporate Consultation

Finance	Clive Bowen, Finance Manager
Legal	Estelle Culligan, Head of Legal & Democratic Services