

DECISION-TAKER Cabinet	DATE 21 March 2018	ITEM NO 12
TITLE The Royal Borough of Greenwich Housing Strategy 2018-2023	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director, Housing & Safer Communities	CABINET MEMBER Housing & Anti-Poverty	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION - Key Decision - Non-Exempt	FINAL DECISION To be made at this meeting on the recommendations in this report	
- 28 Days' Notice Issued? Yes		

I **Decision required**

Cabinet is requested:

- I.1 To agree in principle the five priorities for the Housing Strategy (the Strategy) as set out in this report.
- I.2 To agree that a consultation exercise is commenced on five priorities, high level objectives and broad priority areas for the Strategy '*Homes for All: Royal Borough of Greenwich Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023*'; as set out in section 4 of this report.
- I.3 To note that following the consultation exercise and Cabinet agreement of the Strategy, officers will develop a detailed delivery plan by Autumn 2018.

2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich Strategy**

- 2.1 This report relates to the following high level objectives contained within the '*Royal Greenwich Strategy*':
 - Promote Economic Prosperity
 - Housing
 - Ensure a Healthy & Safe Living Environment
 - Social Care & Health

3. **Purpose of Report & Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Borough is experiencing a significant increase in housing pressures, as shown through a dramatic rise in the demand for social housing and homelessness applications and the similarly dramatic decrease in affordability of the private owner-occupied and rented sectors. These demand pressures are likely to be significantly exacerbated following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Universal Credit. In this context, the Housing and Safer Communities Directorate is planning to consult with residents and key stakeholders on the development of its Housing Strategy.
- 3.2 The Strategy will set out a vision and ambitious plans to: build on the Housing Service's excellent track record in preventing homelessness; increasing housing supply; enhancing the delivery of genuinely affordable housing; supporting the delivery of housing to meet the needs of vulnerable groups; improving the quality of the existing housing stock; and building communities and neighbourhoods. In so doing, the Strategy will seek to maximise the opportunities for investment to meet local housing needs; offered through changes in Government policy and the Mayor's draft London Housing Strategy. The Strategy will support the Borough's strategic priorities that tackle poverty and promote economic growth; recognising that housing has a vital role to play in achieving those strategic priorities.
- 3.3 The consultation exercise for the Strategy will focus on proposed high level objectives and broad priority areas of activity. Following the consultation exercise, Cabinet will consider approval and adoption of the Strategy. Officers will continue to develop a detailed evidence base, particularly around affordability pressures and solutions in the Borough, and this will inform a detailed delivery plan that will be agreed in the Autumn.

4. **Introduction and Background**

- 4.1 The Strategy entitled '*Homes for All: Greenwich Housing Strategy, 2018 - 2023*', will set out the Royal Borough's vision and ambition to meet the growing local housing need, especially for good quality genuinely affordable homes. In order to shape the Strategy, the Housing & Safer Communities Directorate will provide key background information, in relation to the Borough, as well as the national, regional and sub-regional context.

- 4.2 The development of the Strategy will be underpinned by an analysis of the evidence on supply and demand, including the needs of specific groups, such as working people seeking housing in the Borough and those people with support needs. The context is that the Housing Service has more than 17,000 households on the Housing Register, which represents a 44% increase in last 5 years. In addition, the Housing Service is experiencing a significant increase in homelessness demand, such that, there are now 575 homeless households in temporary accommodation; the highest number for 10 years.
- 4.3 Based on an initial analysis, five areas are proposed as priorities for action. These are: Priority 1. Ensuring the supply of genuinely affordable homes; Priority 2. Support for specific housing needs; Priority 3. Safe and high quality homes for all; Priority 4. Preventing homelessness; and Priority 5. Building excellent communities and neighbourhoods.
- 4.4 ***Priority 1. Ensuring the supply of genuinely affordable homes:*** Proposals will be developed to meet the growing need for housing that people on lower and middle incomes are currently unable to afford. The Council will develop new homes by building their own housing and also proactively facilitating housing development in partnership with others. The definition of what is “affordable” has many interpretations. The Council suggests affordability should be based on a person’s income level and a set maximum proportion of a person’s income that should be spent on housing costs. This set proportion will be used to judge the affordability of housing products and tenures against the range of net incomes in the Borough; it is not intended that any rents should vary by assessed income
- 4.5 **Action to meet the need for genuinely affordable housing will include:**
- Continuing our own Local Authority New Build (LANB) programme
 - Increasing the range and supply of affordable homes for working people
 - Encouraging new affordable private rented developments, especially ‘Build to Rent’ tenures and the use of public land that will attract development of affordable rent products, such as the London Living Rent.
 - Promote access to affordable home ownership options, including ‘Help to Buy’ product and shared equity products.
 - Delivering the ‘Woolwich Three Estates’ project. Three large estates in Woolwich are being redeveloped as part of a major regeneration programme.

- Exploring the potential to develop the Council's 'Extensions & Deconversions' programme, by converting Council-owned non-residential buildings into homes
- Reviewing all Council-owned sites across the Borough, including garage sites, for development potential, including smaller sites for older people's housing
- Partnership working with housing associations, private sector landlords, developers and other housing providers
- Use powers the Council has relating to approving planning applications for new housing developments, to ensure sufficient affordable homes form part of the overall development
- Facilitating housing development through housing companies controlled or created by the Royal Borough, including Meridian Home Start
- Seeking more funding for affordable housing and greater flexibility from the Government on the Borough's ability to finance new housing developments
- Promote affordability and transparency of housing service charges levied on tenants, leaseholders and owners through a service charge affordability charter.

4.6 **Priority 2. Support for specific housing needs:** Principles of fairness will underpin our housing policies and service. We aim to ensure that all sections of the community, including homeless people and people with support needs, have access to good quality affordable housing. We will take action to eradicate the underlying causes and prevalence of poverty that adversely effects people's housing situation.

4.7 **Action to support for specific housing needs will include:**

- Meeting needs for people with disabilities and older people who have specific housing requirements and people with drug and alcohol dependencies who require support needs to sustain their accommodation
- Adopting the recommendations of the Royal Borough's 'Fairness Commission'
- Providing support and advice services to prevent homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation
- Improving the supply of good quality private rented sector accommodation available to people at risk of homelessness
- Developing partnerships and integrate services to prevent homelessness, prevent rough sleeping and better support people in housing need. This

will include working with voluntary sector agencies providing specialist housing services

- Improving access to training and employment opportunities for people in housing need or at risk of becoming homeless, including services offered by the Council's Greenwich Local Labour and Business initiative
- Supporting initiatives contained in the Learning Disabilities Housing Strategy.

4.8 **Priority 3. Safe and high quality homes for all:** We will develop initiatives to increase the standards of housing in the borough. This will include improving our own housing stock and also encouraging and enforcing safe and high quality standards in the private rented sector.

4.9 **Action to improve the safe and quality standards of housing in the Borough housing needs will include:**

- Improving the standards generally and maximising the use of our own housing stock, through a 5-year capital investment programme
- Ensuring that there are high standards in the private rented sector through the Borough's Homes in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme and Enforcement Project
- Improving access to good quality private sector accommodation and improving standards in the sector, using the Borough's 'Landlord Accreditation Scheme'
- Bringing more private sector rented properties back into use

4.10 **Priority 4. Preventing homelessness:** We will continue to build on the Royal Borough's excellent work in the prevention of homelessness.

4.11 **Action to prevent and respond to homelessness will include:**

- Working with the private rented sector to improve the availability of affordable rented properties with tenancies lasting a reasonable length of time
- Partnership working with health, social care and community services focusing on early intervention and the provision of specialist advice and support
- Reducing the long term use of temporary accommodation for homeless people
- Minimising the impact of the Government's introduction of Universal Credit on Greenwich residents, and improve access to employment opportunities for people in housing need or at risk of becoming

homeless, including services offered by the Council's Greenwich Local Labour and Business initiative

- Implementing the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

4.12 **Priority 5. Building inclusive and sustainable communities and neighbourhoods:** We believe attractive neighbourhoods play an essential part in contributing to people's quality of life.

4.13 **Action to improve neighbourhoods and town centres, working with local residents, will include:**

- Designing and developing balanced and sustainable communities
- Promoting housing cooperatives and other models of resident collaboration (such as self build)
- Improving public open space land and recreational facilities
- Ensuring all landlords have sufficient levels of resident engagement and collaboration
- Ensuring there are sufficient and effective essential transport, health and schools infrastructure services to serve all areas of the Borough
- Promoting housing related public health issues, such as a balanced diet and sufficient exercise to help maintain good health
 - Planning safer communities and tackling anti-social behaviour

5. **Available Options**

1. Agree in principle, the five priorities for the Housing Strategy as the basis for a consultation exercise and approve the commencement of a consultation exercise on the Housing Strategy.
2. Not approve the five priorities for the Housing Strategy and defer the commencement of a consultation exercise on the Housing Strategy, pending the clarification of any specific issues highlighted in the consideration of this report.
3. Take no action.

6. **Preferred Option**

6.1 Agree in principle, the five priorities for the Housing Strategy as the basis for a consultation exercise and approve the commencement of a consultation exercise on the Housing Strategy.

7. **Reasons for Recommendations**

7.1 The Council needs to develop a Housing Strategy, so that it can agree future priorities for housing, and set a clear direction to meet the challenges it is facing. Specifically, the escalating level of demand for genuinely affordable housing. Based upon the evidence of need, the Council is proposing that there are five priorities for action in the Strategy. However, in order to develop and agree the Strategy, the Council will need to carry out extensive consultation with residents and key stakeholders, so that it can consider the feedback, including on the suggested priorities.

8. **Consultation**

8.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a consultation exercise, prior to seeking approval for the adoption and implementation of the Housing Strategy.

8.2 The Housing Service is planning to carry out extensive consultation on the Housing Strategy, including on the proposed priorities for action. Officers will consult with residents and stakeholders, through events such as: The Royal Borough's Better Together public meetings; Borough-wide Housing Panel; Homelessness Forum; Landlords' Business Club; Registered Providers' and the Voluntary Sector forums. In addition, the Housing Service will seek the views of residents through a survey questionnaire that will be available on the Royal Borough's website, with copies placed in the Borough's libraries. Officers will also obtain the views of elected Members and neighbouring boroughs and seek feedback from residents on the Strategy, through its '*Talk Housing*' quarterly newsletter.

8.3 The Council's Corporate Communications team will support the consultation process and will monitor and respond to feedback through social media. Following the consultation process, officers will provide Cabinet with an analysis of the feedback and an Equality Impact Assessment, together with key recommendations and a delivery plan for the Housing Strategy.

9. **Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications**

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The Council has a power to formulate a housing strategy. For a strategy to be effective, the Council must ensure that it is consistent with other local plans and strategies and takes account of any wider relevant regional or sub regional plans. In addition, the GLA Act 1999 specifies that statements relating to local housing policies must be in “ <i>general conformity</i> ” with the Mayor of London’s London Housing Strategy. Therefore, the Strategy should be compatible with the overall principles and objectives of the London Housing Strategy.	Azuka Onuorah, Deputy Head of Legal Services, 13 March 2018
Finance and other resources including procurement implications	Any cost implications relating to the consultation will be addressed by future reports.	Kim Sullivan Finance Manager
Equalities	The Housing Service will carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment alongside the programme of consultation. Overall the Housing Strategy is intended to benefit residents who are most in need, including groups with protected characteristics such as people with disabilities.	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager
Staffing Establishment	There are no additional staff resources required	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager

Risk Management	There are no significant risks other than the need to ensure that the strategy is consulted on with a wide range of audiences and complies with statutory requirements	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager
Environment and Sustainability	There are no issues related to environment and sustainability at this stage. However, in future reports, including those related to the Housing Investment Programme, officers will set out the environmental and sustainability aspects of our plans.	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager
Community Safety	There is impact at this stage; however, improving the standards of our existing stock and increasing access to good quality affordable housing for those in need, is likely to improve community safety.	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager
Health and Safety	There are no health and safety implications at this stage. However, the Strategy and parallel 5-year Investment Programme for the Royal Borough's housing stock will ensure that the Council meets its statutory, regulatory and policy requirements in key areas such as Fire Safety & Asbestos Management.	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager
Health and wellbeing	The Housing Strategy is likely to bring health benefits for residents, as it will improve living conditions and access to good quality affordable housing.	Louise Morris, Policy and Performance Manager

10. **Background Papers**

None Provided.

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