



CABINET

16 October 2013

Subject Heading:

Housing Strategy 2013-2016

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Lesley Kelly

Lead Member for Housing

CMT Lead:

Joy Hollister
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Housing

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Policy context:

The draft Housing Strategy has been prepared within the context of the Council's goals for individuals to lead active, independent lives and for the local environment to be maintained and enhanced. It also recognises the need to provide value-for-money in all council activity

Financial summary:

Approval of the Housing Strategy does not in itself incur any new revenue or capital liabilities for either the Housing Revenue Account or the general fund. Rather, as proposals in support of the Strategy come forward for consideration, the full revenue and capital implications will be made clear at the time to Cabinet, or individual members making decisions under delegated authority. Approval of the Housing Strategy will not fetter members' future decision-making on the allocation of resources

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

When should this matter be reviewed?

After at least 12 months from the date of approval of the final version of the Housing Strategy

Reviewing OSC:

Towns and Communities

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This report introduces the London Borough of Havering's draft Housing Strategy for 2013 – 2016 which comprehensively up-dates the previous Strategy. In particular, this new Housing Strategy has been drafted in the form a series of sub-strategies covering:

- homelessness
- affordable housing development
- older people's housing needs
- private sector housing
- supported housing.

Since the previous Strategy was published, there have been many changes in national policy and legislation regarding local authorities' housing powers, notably the reform of the Housing Revenue Account, new opportunities for local authorities to new build affordable homes, and welfare reform. In addition, locally, the Arm's Length Management Organisation, Homes in Havering, has been reintegrated into the Council and the provision of Decent Homes Grant has brought the completion of the Decent Homes Programme in sight.

Thus, this draft Housing Strategy builds on the progress made over the past three years and enables the Council to re-think the ways it can meet the ongoing pressures of housing demand.

This Strategy has been informed by up-to-date information on the housing needs and aspirations of Havering's residents following the commissioning of an extensive Housing Needs Study in 2012, and ongoing dialogue with colleagues across the Council and beyond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Housing Strategy and in particular the proposed key priorities for tackling homelessness, promoting new affordable housing development, meeting older people's housing needs, promoting quality in the private housing sector, and providing more supported housing to meet identified need – detailed in section 4 of this report –subject to further consultation within the Council, and with partner organisations and residents.
- 1.2 That authority be delegated to the Lead Member for Housing to consider all of the consultation responses and to make amendments to the key priorities and/or the content of the Housing Strategy, unless any amendment has financial implications in which case further recommendations will be made to Cabinet.

REPORT DETAIL

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's existing Housing Strategy is now out-of-date. The need for a new Housing Strategy has come at time when the national economy has suffered a sustained period of uncertainty affecting housing supply and demand in many different ways. At the same time, a range of supporting housing related strategies have come to the end of their term and need updating. Therefore, we have taken a new approach to producing a Housing Strategy covering the period 2013 – 2016.
- 2.2 We have produced a draft over-arching Housing Strategy which includes a full range of key sub-strategies. While part of the whole, having a series of sub-strategies means that stakeholders need only focus on the part of the overall Housing Strategy most relevant to them.

3. Context

- 3.1 There have been a number of significant national, regional and local policy changes over the past three years. Most notably, the Localism Act has

enabled the Council to reformulate the way it allocates social housing and utilises the private rented sector, while the ongoing programme of Welfare Reforms means a focus on preventing homelessness by working ever more close with partners such as Job Centre Plus.

- 3.2 With an increasing and ageing population, Havering has a number of housing related challenges to address. The median average income for Havering residents has remained stubbornly low over the last six years, when compared with London averages, with the continued buoyancy of local house prices posing even greater challenges for those wishing to buy a home.
- 3.3 As with all London Boroughs, the demand for housing in Havering that is affordable – to rent or to buy – is very high and as house prices, mortgage availability and the need for significant deposits to support home purchase, the private rented sector is seeing considerable growth; this sector has doubled in size in Havering between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.
- 3.4 The high instance of concealed households in Havering – that is, where a separate household has to live with another household, perhaps a son or daughter with a young family still living with parents – can be viewed within the context of the disproportionately high rate of under-occupancy in the private owner-occupied sector. For the first time, the Council proposes to use to encourage movement in the private sector and ensure that residents are housed in accommodation that is suitable for their needs, for example, by enabling high quality older people's accommodation for rent or purchase through shared ownership.

4. Our Key Housing Priorities and how we plan to achieve them

Each sub-strategy includes a number of key priorities and these are set out below. The key priorities are supported by a range of actions. These are explained in detail within each sub-strategy chapter of the Housing Strategy 2013-2016.

4.1 Homelessness sub-strategy

4.1.1 Our key priorities:

- review our approach in dealing with the homelessness caused by parental evictions
- research the increasing local trends of households losing their assured short hold tenancies and other rented accommodation
- reconsider the housing options available to young single homeless people in the borough
- investigate the apparent over-representation of residents from black and minority ethnic communities in the borough who become homeless
- ease homelessness pressure through the Homes and Housing Service's Private Housing Solutions Team
- establish a programme of homelessness prevention outreach work.

4.2 Affordable Housing Development sub-strategy

4.2.1 Our key priorities:

- sustain the current level of supply of affordable housing for Havering residents
- maximise inward investment in new affordable housing development
- ensure that the affordable housing products on offer are affordable to Havering residents
- provide the right size new housing to tackle under-occupation across all tenures
- enhance Havering residents' access to affordable home ownership within the borough
- develop new supported housing to meet the needs of Havering residents
- identify redundant HRA land and/or assets which can be better used to provide new homes and support estate regeneration.

4.3 Older People's Housing sub-strategy

4.3.1 Our key priorities:

- carry out a research into older people's housing needs and aspirations
- assist older people to remain in their own home and live independently
- provide assistance to anyone wishing to downsize into smaller accommodation, regardless of tenure
- reassess the level of need for Extra Care housing in the borough
- implement a Sheltered Housing modernisation programme that reflects up-to-date expectations and demand
- develop new housing suited to the needs and aspirations of older persons in all tenures.

4.4 Private Sector Housing sub-strategy

4.4.1 Our key priorities:

- improve our understanding of the local private rented sector
- continue to improve access to the private rented sector to tackle increasing housing demand
- improve private rental property standards and management practices through a new advice and support service and an updated package of training and accreditation for local landlords
- examine the potential of developing new, private rented accommodation
- help older and vulnerable people to remain safe and independent in their own homes
- identify and target poor conditions and inadequate energy efficiency in the private housing sector
- bring empty homes in the private sector back into use.

4.5 Supported Housing sub-strategy

4.5.1 Our key priorities:

- work with Adult Social Care and Children Services to develop up-to-date evidence based on accurate needs analysis to inform the design and range of future supported housing options
- establish a Supported Housing Board to further improve the range of supported housing options for all residents
- promote partnership and working with existing supported housing providers in the borough
- continue to improve the housing options for people with learning disabilities to promote independent living and assist in the delivery of efficiencies within the Adult Social Care service
- reassess the level of need for extra care housing in the borough and implement a Sheltered Housing Modernisation Programme that reflects up-to-date expectations and demand
- further develop the supported housing options for Young Persons with a particular focus on those aged between 16 and 17 years old.

5. Consultation

5.1 The draft over-arching Housing Strategy and the sub-strategies have been subject to initial consultation with partners within the Council, with some aspects also based on work with other stakeholders.

5.2 As a part of the consultation, and in order to establish our residents' housing needs and demand, the Council commissioned a major housing study which included an extensive resident survey and the analysis of the most up-to-date local data. The resultant Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2012 has been widely drawn upon in drafting this new Housing Strategy.

5.3 To date, we have consulted with our key internal and external partners including lead departments, voluntary organisations and housing associations and incorporated their comments. That said, further consultation is planned.

5.4 The final stages of the consultation will take place in October-November 2013 and will include:

- a consultation seminar with key partners,
- online consultation with the wider public on the council website
- consultation with the Housing Residents Forum.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

6. Reasons for the decision:

- 6.1 Our previous Housing Strategy 2008/9 – 2011/12 is now out-of-date. In addition, there have been a number of significant changes to services locally, and policy changes at the local, regional and national levels since its publication affecting the borough's strategic direction and priorities.
- 6.2 Despite current legislation giving the Mayor of London the lead role in housing strategy-making in London, the Secretary of State retains a power to require local housing authorities to produce and keep up-to-date a housing strategy reflecting local needs and priorities. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that its own housing strategy is in general conformity with the Mayor of London's housing strategy.
- 6.3 Thus, there is no alternative to reviewing and revising the Council's Housing Strategy.

7. Other options considered:

- 7.1 Develop bespoke approaches to housing issues as they arise rather than produce a detailed Housing Strategy – REJECTED. It is arguably self-evident that without a strategic approach to major housing issues which typically require (a) cross-service working, (b) financial investment, and/or (c) relatively long development phases, poor decision-making can result, with resultant poor use of resources. If the Council is face the housing and relating challenges in the borough, such as caring for an aging population, while at the same time making efficiencies, strategic planning is essential.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

8. Financial implications and risks:

- 8.1 The draft Housing Strategy and constituent sub-strategies have been produced in full recognition of the revenue resources already agreed by Cabinet through the MTFs process and through the review of the HRA Business Plan reported to Cabinet in February 2013 in support of the HRA revenue and capital budgets for 2013/14.

8.2 Approval of the Housing Strategy does not in itself incur any new revenue or capital liabilities for either the Housing Revenue Account or the general fund. Rather, as proposals in support of the Strategy come forward for consideration, the full revenue and capital implications will be made clear at the time to Cabinet, or individual members making decisions under delegated authority. Approval of the Housing Strategy will not fetter members' future decision-making.

8.3 If, in the course of consulting on and finalising the Strategy, actions are identified that have a revenue and/or capital implication over and above those already considered by Cabinet, these will be brought back to Cabinet for members' consideration.

9. Legal implications and risks:

9.1 Under section 87 Local Government Act 2003, there is a duty to comply with any directions given by the Secretary of State to produce a housing strategy, however, there does not appear to be any up-to-date guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government on whether Local Authorities should adopt housing strategies although in the past they have given directions to local authorities to prepare and maintain up-to-date housing strategies and involve residents and stakeholders in their preparation. It must be good practice in any event to devise a strategy and to involve all relevant stakeholders in its preparation. In devising a strategy the local authority must ensure that its strategy is in general conformity with the housing strategy prepared by the Mayor of London (s333D Greater London Authority Act 1999)

9.2 As it is proposed that the draft Strategy be subject to further consultation, such consultation must be carried out properly, which means that it must be meaningful. All relevant stakeholders must be given an opportunity to comment and enough time and information to respond intelligently. Any comments must be conscientiously taken into account before the Strategy is finalised.

9.3 In finalising the Strategy the Authority must comply with the public sector equality duty set out in s149 of the Equality Act, namely by having due regard to the need to

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

9.4 At this stage Cabinet is being asked to approve a draft Strategy and there is minimal risk in doing so. Provided the Authority complies with its public

sector equality duty and undertakes a meaningful consultation the legal risks in adopting the final Housing Strategy should also be minimised.

10. Human Resources implications and risks:

- 10.1 There are no direct HR implications or risks that have been identified at this time in relation to the recommendations made in this report. In order to support the delivery of the priorities in the new Housing Strategy, attention will need to be paid to the relevant competencies of the Council's staff that will be tasked to take forward the work required. This will be addressed through the Council's HR framework around performance management and training plans within the Homes & Housing service area.

11. Equalities implications and risks:

- 11.1 A full Equality Analysis has been carried out to inform the development and implementation of the overarching Strategy and Sub-strategies. The draft Equality Analysis is attached as Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

London Borough of Havering, Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, 2012, DCA