

Report to the Cabinet



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: **C-028-2022/23**

Date of meeting: **12 December 2022**

Portfolio: **Housing and Community – Cllr H Whitbread**

Subject: **Review of Housing Strategy 2023 - 2027**

Responsible Officer: **Jennifer Gould Interim strategic director (01992 564112)**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. That Cabinet considers and approves the draft Housing Strategy 2023-2027 for formatting and publication by 9 January 2023 (Appendix 1);**
- 2. That Cabinet considers and approves the draft Housing Strategy: Public Consultation Report (Appendix 2) and the Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) for publication in conjunction with the Housing Strategy 2023-2027 in January 2023;**
- 3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community to consider and approve the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan for 2023-2024 in January 2023 and the annual Housing Strategy Delivery Plan update thereafter for the lifetime of the Strategy;**
- 4. That Cabinet considers and approves the recommendation that the Housing Strategy for 2023-2027 is reviewed and updated no later than 2027 subject to the usual democratic process.**

Executive Summary:

The current Housing Strategy (2018-2022) is due for renewal.

Cabinet is being asked to accept the recommendations set out in this report and approve the draft Housing Strategy for 2023-2027 for formatting along with the draft Public Consultation Report, and the draft Equalities Impact Assessment for publication of the final reports in January 2023.

Although the Housing Strategy is not a statutory requirement it provides a cohesive direction of travel for cross-cutting housing related services. The aim is to reflect and facilitate the co-ordination of activities for those services that directly impact on current and projected supply of and need for affordable housing in the District.

A review of the current Housing Strategy commenced in May 2021 underpinned by a review of the Allocations Scheme, the Tenancy Policy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (which are statutory requirements). These were approved by Cabinet on 1 March 2022 to take effective in September 2022 for the period 2022-2027.

A report on the proposals for the vision priorities aims and objectives for the review of the Housing Strategy, and the outcome of the public consultation was presented to Stronger Communities Select Committee on 12 July 2022 for scrutiny. It was resolved that the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval with no changes.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable the Council to publish the Housing Strategy 2023-2027 and associated documents.

Other Options for Action:

Not to agree the recommendations contained within this report.

Report:

1. The draft Housing Strategy 2023-2027 highlights the golden thread from the Corporate Plan to Housing and Property Services, Planning Policy, Public Health, Community Safety and Social Care. In particular, the increasingly interdependent duties we have as a Local Housing Authority, a Planning Authority and a Registered Social Landlord with regards to the supply of and need for affordable housing and housing related services.
2. The draft Housing Strategy reflects our commitment to community involvement, health and wellbeing and working in partnership. All of which have been integral to this review and the proposal to agree a joint delivery plan with named partnership organisations.
3. It also seeks to provide a flexible delivery vehicle for evolving social policy, legislation and regulation as the lines between traditional departmental responsibilities within national and local government are increasingly blurred.
4. The partial release of the 2021 Census data at the time of writing means that there are some gaps in the demographic information generally relied upon to set the scene for the local context. For example, The most up-to-date information on households will be included in the strategy as soon as it becomes available and recorded in the version control for the document.
5. The report was due to be presented to Cabinet in September 2022. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities agreed for it to be moved back to December 2022 - to enable the author to cover some specialist business-critical work at short notice on behalf of a former colleague.
6. Subject to approval, the period for the Housing Strategy has been amended from 2022-2027 to 2023-2027 to accommodate a revised publication date which is now proposed to be at the start of 2023.
7. Some terminology and references used in the draft Strategy have been updated since the proposals were presented to Stronger Communities Select Committee for scrutiny. These take account of recent local and national developments and make no material difference to the priorities aims and objectives scrutinized by Stronger Communities Select Committee. Examples include reference to the cost of living beyond fuel poverty and the current draft Corporate Plan which is going through the democratic approval process.

Resource implications:

The actions proposed within the draft Housing Strategy 2023-2027 will largely be managed within existing and future service budgets. Any additional burdens associated with the introduction of the new regulatory framework are being addressed by the interim Director of Housing through the usual business planning process.

At the time of writing, the reference to 'administering or signposting to short term financial assistance for a limited number of people facing urgent hardship subject to available funds' means Discretionary Housing Payment, Essex Essential Living Fund and Warm Home Essex Fund

Legal and Governance implications:

Legal services have reviewed the report and confirmed there are no legal implications to be included.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener implications:

The technical specialist has reviewed the report on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and proposed making reference to Design out Crime and Safer Streets Funding and to add the Community Safety Partnership as a delivery partner in the delivery plan.

The Planning Policy manager advised referencing links to the Green Infrastructure Levy and the District Sustainability Guidance.

The draft strategy has been updated to reflect these proposals.

The Sustainable Transport officer has reviewed the report and made some operational comments which are being considered by the interim Director of Housing.

Planning Policy implications:

Planning Policy has reviewed the report and has suggested referring to the 'planned growth of 11,400 new dwellings in the emerging local plan' rather than 'the objectively assessed need for 12,573 homes' between 2011- 2033. These amendments have been made to the draft strategy.

Consultation undertaken:

See draft Public Consultation Outcome Report at Appendix 2

Background papers:

Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix

Risk management:

The risk of not approving the recommendations to adopt the Housing Strategy for 2022 – 2027 is the absence of a cross cutting cohesive plan to fulfil our statutory and regulatory duties in respect of housing services at a time of national socio-economic crisis.