

REPORT TO: CABINET POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

DATE: 13 JANUARY 2022

TITLE: HOUSING STRATEGY

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RECOMMENDED that it is recommended to Cabinet that:

A The Housing Strategy (attached as Appendix A to the report) is adopted.

BACKGROUND

1. The Strategy identifies the key priorities and issues for strategic housing in Harlow and sets out how the Council intends to address the key housing issues.
2. The Housing Strategy has been in development since October 2019 when a sub-group of the Overview Working Group was formed to undertake the detailed work required to create the strategy. Councillors Jean Clark, Simon Carter and Nancy Watson were nominated to form the subgroup. The subgroup met regularly until January 2020 reviewing background papers and considering the priorities and content of the Housing Strategy.
3. A summary of the proposed content of the Housing Strategy was consulted on between 3 February and 22 March 2020 (a seven week period). The consultation was on the Council's website and promoted on the Council's social media and sent to the Council's relevant partners and other stakeholders, including registered providers and developers. Seventeen people completed the consultation survey demonstrating broad agreement with the outlined priorities and objectives outlined in the summary document.
4. Work paused on the development of the Housing Strategy in response to Covid and the need for staff to be involved in other key Council projects.

5. The Housing Strategy is included as Appendix A of this report. The Housing Strategy incorporates the key issues that the Council will prioritise for the next five years. The Housing Strategy is based on the detailed Evidence Base that covers the issues covered in the Housing Strategy in more depth. The Evidence Base is included as Appendix B for reference.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

6. The Housing Strategy identifies strategic housing priorities for the next five years and beyond. It provides an overarching vision that promotes suitable, accessible and sustainable housing provision, across all tenures to meet the needs of all our residents.
7. The four priorities are:
 - a) Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs;
 - b) Addressing the needs of target and vulnerable groups;
 - c) Improving housing in the private sector; and
 - d) Supporting the regeneration of Harlow.
8. For each priority background information providing the context within Harlow is provided followed by a series of key actions that the Council will undertake in order to deliver against the priorities.
9. For the first priority of creating a suitable supply of housing to meet local housing needs the key issues of ensuring that affordable housing is delivered through the planning system and delivering a programme of Council Housebuilding is highlighted.
10. The needs of the homeless, people with disabilities, older people, people under 35 years and key workers are highlighted under the second priority of addressing the needs of target and vulnerable groups.
11. Under the third priority of improving housing in the private sector the issues relating to substantial growth in the private rented sector, permitted developments, and affordability issues for local residents of both purchasing a home or renting privately are highlighted.
12. The final priority demonstrates how housing can support the regeneration of Harlow. The growth ambitions of the town will be supported through the delivery of the right housing in the right place. The section links to work of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and the Town Centre Masterplan. It also demonstrates how housing can help deliver wider social benefits to the residents of the town such as supporting employment and skills opportunities, providing digital infrastructure as well as supporting net zero targets.

13. The Housing Strategy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
14. It is recommended that the Housing Strategy be referred to Cabinet for adoption.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

The adoption of this strategy will create a sound foundation for the delivery of the town's housing need for several years to come. It reflects the Council's planning policy and Harlow's place as a key component of the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town. The strategy sets out a clear structure for the delivery of the town's additional housing need and will support the activities of the Council and its partners.

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Finance

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Housing

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Communities and Environment

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Governance and Corporate Support

The strategy sets out the proposed partnership working for which there are established governance arrangements.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Housing Strategy

Appendix B – Evidence Base

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.