

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 24 MARCH 2022

**TITLE:** HARLOW HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-2027

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR DAN SWORDS, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION

**LEAD OFFICER:** ANDREW BRAMIDGE, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC GROWTH AND REGENERATION (01279) 446410

**CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS:** ALISON FOX, REGENERATION PROJECTS MANAGER (01279) 446407

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**This is not a Key Decision**

**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I012131**

**RECOMMENDED that:**

**A** The Housing Strategy as set out in Appendix A to the report is approved and adopted by Cabinet.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

**A** The current housing strategy has expired and a refreshed strategy has been prepared, based on the new evidence base, to inform our future priorities.

**B** The development of new housing is a key feature for the future regeneration of the town and so this complements the Housebuilding report that is also on the March Cabinet agenda.

**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<sup>rd</sup> February and 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 went to Cabinet Policy Development Working Group on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and it was recommended to Cabinet for approval.
6. 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 and Appendix C contains the Action Plan that flows from the Strategy.
7. Since the Cabinet Policy Development Working Group meeting, the Strategy document has undergone minor amendment to correct some typographical errors and to update the document to include references to the Levelling Up White Paper and the Council New Housebuilding Programme which is also being considered by Cabinet at the March meeting. A new Foreword has been provided to the document with the change of Portfolio Holder responsibility.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

8. 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.
9. The four priorities are:
  - a) Creating a suitable supply of new housing to meet local housing needs
  - b) Address the needs of target and vulnerable groups
  - c) Improving housing in the private sector and
  - d) Supporting the regeneration of Harlow.
10. 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.
11. 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.

12. 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.
13. 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 in terms of both purchasing a home or renting privately are highlighted.
14. 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
15. The Housing Strategy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
16. It is recommended that the Housing Strategy is adopted by Cabinet.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

The Housing Strategy contains a robust evidence base to set the direction of the Council's own activities and of those in conjunction with our partners. It will provide the framework for the Council's housebuilding programme and identifies housing as central to the Council's Regeneration priorities.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration**

### **Finance**

The Strategy will help shape and influence the council's investment and financing decisions to enable aspects of the strategy to be delivered.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing**

### **Communities and Environment**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment**

### **Governance and Corporate Services**

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

**Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Housing Strategy 2022 - 2027  
Appendix B – Housing Strategy Evidence Base  
Appendix C – Housing Strategy Action Plan

## **Background Papers**

None

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None