

Agenda Item 41.

TITLE	Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 29 th October 2020
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Director of Place and Growth - Chris Trail
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser.

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To obtain Executive approval to consult on Wokingham Borough Council's Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024.

The draft strategy sets out the Council's vision for housing in Wokingham Borough from 2020 – 2024. It has four key strategic priorities:

- Address and understand our housing needs
- Support our vulnerable residents through a range of housing options
- Improve the quality, sustainability and management of the Borough's homes
- Enriching people's lives

These objectives reflect the Council's core role in relation to housing supply, housing need and demand, managing and influencing quality. Whilst the Council has a broad role as the strategic housing authority, we are placing special emphasis on the key priorities within the strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approve consultation on the Wokingham Borough Council's Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing plays a huge role in the health, environmental and economic well-being of everyone who lives in the borough. The draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2024 will act as a framework strategy under which other housing strategies such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy will sit. As such the strategy format is different to other Council strategies, with this format being more accessible and user friendly so it can be used as a framework document.

The Council has a responsibility to address and understand the housing needs of all its residents and the strategy outlines the Council's role within the wider housing agenda. The draft housing strategy outlines how the Council will achieve its responsibilities. A detailed action plan will accompany the final strategy and will be updated on an annual basis. The action plan will give more detail on some of the key objectives to be delivered during the strategy period. The strategy is aligned to the Community Vision 2020 – 2024 of which housing plays a key integral role. Some of the key challenges outlined in the Community Vision are also referenced in the housing strategy.

The draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024 has four key priorities:

1. Address and understand our housing needs
2. Support our vulnerable residents through a range of housing options
3. Improve the quality, sustainability and management of the Borough's homes
4. Enriching people's lives

The key priorities and strategy format have been discussed and agreed in principle by the Affordable Housing Implementation Group.

The expected outcomes of the strategy are:

- Delivery of more homes in the Borough – which includes 1000 addition homes over the 4 year strategy as part of the Council's 1-4-5 housing delivery programme and a further 800 affordable homes to be delivered through the Council's partnership with housing associations
- More opportunities for low cost home ownership, such as the affordable self-build programme at Wheatsheaf Close in Winnersh
- The Council helping to deliver the right homes in the right places, with housing policies informing and complementing the new local plan and making sure that infrastructure is delivered first in new housing developments
- Delivering housing and support tailored to meet identified need, by developing more specialist housing for vulnerable people based on need including those at risk of homelessness, adult social care clients, children in care and care leavers
- Improving information and guidance, by enhancing the digital advice and guidance available to residents via the Council's website and other sources
- Developing effective policies and strategies to ensure supported housing meets need through additional supporting policies such as the use of extra care for older people and move on accommodation for care leavers and vulnerable young people
- Improving the quality and management of homes both within the social housing stock and private rented sector
- Ensuring the quality and sustainability of design of all homes through energy efficiency and exploring modern methods of construction for housing delivery
- Regenerating old housing stock such as Gorse Ride in Finchampstead
- Developing more socially inclusive communities and helping to provide all tenants with a stable home for example through additional employment opportunities and skills development

Members, Officers, stakeholders and the public will have the opportunity to respond to our consultation on the draft strategy. The consultation will be sent out across the Council, to all Members, the Parish and Town Councils, the RP Partnership, TLIP, MHCLG, Homes England, partners and agencies and local charities. It will also be publicised via a press release and our social media.

As part of the consultation we will ask questions around whether they agree with the objectives set out in the strategy, what challenges they think the Borough is facing in terms of housing, and what fundamental outcomes they would like to see from delivery of the strategy.

If the Executive approve consultation on Wokingham Borough Council's Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2024, the final strategy and action plan will be considered by Executive in early 2021, after which we will publicise the strategy.

BACKGROUND

The Council's previous Housing Strategy covers the period 2015-18. In 2015, we set out five key priorities:

1. Addressing our housing needs
2. Supporting vulnerable people
3. Tackling homelessness and housing need
4. Enhancing tenant services
5. Expanding opportunities for vulnerable residents

During the previous strategy period a number of key successes were achieved, these include:

- Completed 1182 affordable homes during 2015/16 – 2018/19
- Generated a future pipeline of over 2000 additional affordable homes
- Started work on our first affordable self-build scheme in the Borough
- Commissioned a GRT needs evidence based study to inform the new Local Plan
- Delivered housing schemes through our housing companies such as Phoenix Avenue and Fosters extra care scheme
- Delivered an affordable rented scheme for key workers in Wokingham town centre
- Completed 2 Extra Care schemes at Fosters and the Birches in Woodley
- Completed a supported housing scheme for young people in Reading Road, to replace supported housing at Seaford Court
- Developed temporary accommodation for vulnerable adults at Foxwood and Broadway House
- Delivered a range of support services to enable vulnerable adults to live more independently
- Maintained low levels of homeless acceptances and repeat homelessness by focusing on practical responses and prevention
- Helped people access private rented housing, through schemes such as the Rent in Advance/ Deposit Loan Scheme
- Assisted 315 young people through a joined-up housing and employment advice service at "Elevate Wokingham"
- Met and maintained the Decent Homes Standard on our own housing stock
- Assisted 43 residents to set up their own business through the "Strive" enterprise programme

The draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2024 will act as a framework strategy under which other housing strategies such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy will sit. As such the strategy format is different to other Council strategies, with this format being more accessible and user friendly so it can be used as a framework document.

The Council has a responsibility to address and understand the housing needs of all its residents and the strategy outlines the Council's role within the wider housing agenda. The draft housing strategy outlines how the Council will achieve its responsibilities. An action will accompany the strategy and will be updated on an annual basis. The action plan will give more detail on some of the key objectives to be delivered during the

strategy period. The strategy is aligned to the Community Vision 2020 – 2024 of which housing plays a key integral role. Some of the key challenges outlined in the Community Vision are also referenced in the housing strategy. These include protecting the quality of the environment and sustainability of existing communities with the need for new housing, ensuring the right infrastructure is in place and that we address and manage demand for those who are ageing or have long term health conditions. Tackling issues such as social isolation, pockets of deprivation and unemployment and climate change, are also referenced within the housing strategy. We also need to understand and address the immediate and longer term impact of Covid-19 on our housing needs.

The draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024 has four key priorities:

1. Address and understand our housing needs
2. Support our vulnerable residents through a range of housing options
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BUSINESS CASE (Including Options and Evidence of Need)

The draft Housing Strategy 2020-2024 has four key priorities and their importance are outlined below:

1. Address and understand our housing needs

The population of our Borough is changing. More housing will need to be available to meet demand, with a diverse mix of homes to meet the changing needs of our growing population including a growing older population. The Borough also needs to have a range of housing types and an environment and infrastructure that supports growth, helping to retain and attract a professional workforce.

2. Support our vulnerable residents through a range of housing options

We want to support more people to live independently for longer by offering the right housing options to meet their needs, as well as high quality information and advice to help residents to make informed housing decisions. Investing in housing support for vulnerable people helps keep them healthy. Every £1 invested delivers nearly £2 of benefit through costs avoided to public services including care, health and crime costs, The Health Foundation.

3. Improve the quality, sustainability and management of the Borough's homes

Poor quality housing has a significant impact on residents' health and wellbeing. It is also linked to children's quality of life and educational attainment, due to higher rates of sickness and absence from school. A good choice of high quality and sustainable

housing will help the Borough to achieve many of its ambitions, including its vision to be carbon neutral by 2030.

4. Enriching people's lives

As well as helping to provide our residents with sustainable homes, the Council, together with our partners, has a vital role to play in improving people's life chances and reducing worklessness and a reliance on benefits. By investing in programmes and initiatives to help residents and others in housing need, we can transform lives, as well as supporting the local economy and wider community.

The expected outcomes of the strategy are:

- Delivery of more homes in the Borough – which includes 1000 addition homes over the 4 year strategy as part of the Council's 1-4-5 housing delivery programme and a further 800 affordable homes to be delivered through the Council's partnership with housing associations
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Next Steps

If the Executive approve consultation on Wokingham Borough Council's Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2024, the final strategy and action plan will be considered by Executive in early 2021, after which we will publicise the new strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	-	-	-
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	-	-	-
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	-	-	-

Other Financial Information

The capital approvals needed to enact this strategy will be sought and contained within the annual budget setting process. In addition to meeting Housing needs, the 1-4-5 programme will also provide valuable Revenue resources for the Council.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Members, Officers, stakeholders and the public will have the opportunity to respond to our consultation on the draft strategy. The consultation will be made available via the Council's website, with associated press releases, invitations to respond and social media push.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken. An initial equality impact assessment has been carried out and is included as Enclosure 2.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

The Housing Strategy will help towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 as one of the key priorities is around improving the quality, sustainability and management of the Borough's housing stock, ensuring that the Council helps to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty.

List of Background Papers

Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2024 – Enclosure 1.

Equality Impact Assessment – Enclosure 2

Housing Facts and Figures Update October 2019-March 2020 – Enclosure 3

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