

REPORT TITLE: EMERGING HOUSING STRATEGY- SCOPING REPORT

29 NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Paula Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

It is a legal requirement to adopt a housing strategy which sets out the council's primary focus and key priorities for the coming 5 years. The Strategy is closely aligned with the council's plan and the local plan.

The current strategy expires in 2023 and a review is appropriate

The council have commissioned Arc4 consultants to carry out a robust data gathering research document to assist in writing and delivering the strategy.

This paper is to inform the committee that the council is at the very beginning of the process of reviewing the existing strategy in order to draft a new strategy for the period 2023-2028 and the council wishes to obtain members initial thoughts on what should be the overarching priorities in the new strategy

The paper also outlines;

- The proposed methodology to be used, inclusive of consultation
- Proposed timetable for the delivery of the new strategy
- The proposed governance of the new strategy and the delivery plan during its life span
- Review of the priorities set in the current strategy (2017/18-2022/23)- the paper gives some examples of the Housing Service's achievements against the priorities set out in the existing strategy

To be clear, this paper is not the strategy or the agreed priorities for the strategy, it is an initial scoping document to inform members as early as possible about the proposed direction of travel to produce the strategy and to have members input and discussion on what the priorities should be.

The paper outlines a number of priorities and emerging issues that could inform the housing strategy that have been derived from the current evidence base.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Policy Committee members note general comments in the body of the report, but to provide particular comment on the proposed and emerging priorities for the Housing Strategy 2023-2028;
 - Access to decent homes for all, across all of the tenures
 - Responding to the housing need of an ageing and growing population
 - Access to a mixed tenure affordable family accommodation
 - Access to affordable energy efficient accommodation
 - Responding to the Social Housing White paper
 - Commitment to supporting persons seeking sanctuary in the district of Winchester

1 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget, Business Plan, current investment plan, General Fund (GF) and various grants that are directly received from central Government are already in place to ensure the key priorities for this Strategy are delivered. New funding streams may become available during the lifespan of this strategy
- 1.2 There are various workforce implications from the provisions of the strategy itself in addition to the impact of existing and the possibility of new legislation for example around homelessness prevention, welfare reform changes, full asylum dispersal, the Housing White paper and other government initiatives which may evolve during the lifespan of this strategy. Any increase in the new build programme will have resource implications for the service and other services such as Legal and Estates. Any changes to funding such the homeless prevention grant, the disabled facilities grant provisions will impact on the teams resources and ability to maximise the opportunities presented.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Introduction

- 2.1 The council's Housing Strategy expires in 2023. A new housing strategy and delivery plan is required for 2023-2028.
- 2.2 A housing strategy sets out the strategic objectives to achieve the council's housing vision. The strategy takes its lead from the Council's Plan and compliments other council strategies and policies. The Housing Strategy is particularly closely aligned with the council's Local Plan but the strategy has a specific focus on a narrower range of communities compared to the local plan. The Strategy aims to focus on those who are unable to exercise a reasonable degree of choice regarding their housing circumstances
- 2.3 The objectives that are set out in the 2023-28 housing strategy will be high level and provide an overarching framework for a series of more detailed plans that are formulated or refreshed to deliver the objectives on more specific housing issues. An example of these are the Preventing Homelessness Strategy, Asset Management Strategy, Private Sector Renewal Strategy, Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Empty Homes Strategy.
- 2.4 The Housing Strategy will be implemented through actions and investment of Winchester City Council in conjunction with stakeholders, the voluntary sector and partnerships.
- 2.5 The Housing Strategy will be a short strategic document with an action plan. The plan will be for 5 years. The strategy will be professionally produced in a friendly language for a non-technical audience, the strategy will reach across

tenure and will be for staff, members and residents. The strategy will focus on priorities and can't cover everything the council delivers on housing.

- 2.6 The Housing Strategy for 2023-28 will be produced in partnership with Arc4 consultants, Arc4 will conduct a full independent review of housing need and support the council with a wide consultation programme with our stakeholders.

3 **Background**

- 3.1 It has been a statutory requirement for local authorities to adopt a Housing Strategy since the Local Government Act 2003.

- 3.2 The existing housing strategy expires in 2023 and needs renewing and refreshing to set out the council's key priorities for the period 2023-2028

- 3.3 The council's key housing priorities in the current strategy 2017/2018-2022/23 are outlined below, alongside some of the council's achievements:

a) **To accelerate and maximise the supply of high-quality affordable housing across the District**

- Target 1000 new homes 2021-2030
- Built – 121
- Under construction – 130
- Subject to Tender acceptance – 6

Registered Providers

2017/18	150
2018/19	193
2019/20	134
2020/21	284
2021/22	250

b) **To improve the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households**

- 385 disabled adaptations in the private sector⁵⁴ single individuals placed into accommodation through everyone in initiative, 53 sustained their placement of accommodation.
- Trinity opened a 10 bed space unit for single people who were at risk of or had experienced homelessness
- Formal process implemented for 'Move On' priority for applicants living in supported accommodation in the district.
- Review of Older Person's Housing Strategy
- Provided Units of accommodation for families fleeing Afghanistan & responded to the needs of the Ukrainian Refuges

- Established tenancy sustainment service delivering on outcomes, increased specialist staff resources (Financial Inclusion Officer, Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer), tenancy support for the private sector, assist grant for tenants in crisis, new tenant support screening service, benefit/income maximisation campaigns, cost of living crisis advice, fuel and food voucher scheme, emergency food provision, social activities programme for sheltered housing tenants, hoarding support project, collection with care arrears policy
 - Review of the preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and successful bids for rough sleepers initiative (RSI) funding
 - Administered the DWP's household support fund to assist with residents exceptional housing costs
- c) **Supporting local people accessing high quality and affordable housing which meets their needs**
- Created an open market shared ownership scheme to assist eligible households buy existing homes
 - Effectively communicate housing options to those in housing need through triage, appointments, home visits, website and hubs
 - A member of Hampshire Homechoice, a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme-this provide a fair and effective process for accessing affordable housing.
 - Provided **and assisted 194** residents with direct access to affordable private rented accommodation with the assets of our rent deposit scheme.
- d) **To make best use of housing**
- Reviewed and Implemented Aids and adaptations panel to ensure best use of stock to assist households requiring adaptations
 - HRA Asset Management Strategy approved December 2021, full operating document with supporting processes for asset options appraisal
 - Regular Asset Management Group quarterly meetings reviewing progress against Strategy priorities
 - Downsizing incentive scheme, re-use/recycle white goods and furniture scheme and a revised Lettings Policy
- e) **To engage with residents and create cohesive communities**
- Reduction in rough sleeping- commenced a weekend outreach service
 - Wellbeing and Inclusion Officer post established
 - Proactive engagement with all sheltered housing residents, summer BBQ events and activities programme at sheltered housing schemes
 - Pop up events in relation to ASB hot spots (Winnall, Kingsworthy and Hyde areas), established 2 community engagement officer posts – although not appointed to yet

- Tenant Engagement Strategy approved by Cabinet 20.11.17 Tenant Compact agreement – agreed August 2021

3.4 It is important to note since these priorities were agreed in 2017/2018 there have been global events that have made it harder for the council and its partners to achieve the priorities in the agreed timescales. These events have extended the list of challenges that were outlined in the current strategy, these events are, but not exclusive to:

- Global pandemic
- Post pandemic recovery
- Fall of Afghanistan
- War in Ukraine
- Emerging cost of living crisis

Next Steps

4 Setting the Priorities for the new housing strategy 2023-2028

4.1 The council needs to agree the priorities for the new strategy.

4.2 There are emerging issues that need to be incorporated into the new priorities that will affect the new housing strategy, these are:

- Post Covid Recovery
- War in Ukraine and Homes for Ukraine Scheme
- Full asylum seekers dispersal
- Access to affordable energy efficient accommodation
- Access to affordable and decent private rented accommodation
- Increased demand for more different size and tenure of properties
- Retrofit
- Cost of living crisis
- Respond to the 'Social Housing White Paper',

4.3 The current evidence base confirms a number of priorities for the strategy, they are as follows:

a) Priority 1- Access to Decent Homes for All (all sizes and tenures)

- There is a need for a need of 664 homes per annum with an overall need across the 20-year plan period for 13,280 homes.
- This scale of local housing need would support substantial population growth of 25,500 over the 2019-36 period in the District. In 2020/21 789 homes were built and the council has in excess of a 5-year land supply. There is a continued annual need for 220 rented affordable homes in Winchester District. There is also a need for affordable home ownership housing, identifying a need for 123 low-cost home ownership homes per annum. In In 2020/21, 38% of new homes delivered were

affordable. This is excellent performance and needs to be maintained.

- (iii) There is pressure in the private rented sector from university students, key workers and households facing homelessness. This is against a backdrop of an average national increase in rent charged of 12% in the past year and properties being converted to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Air Bed and Breakfasts. Expanding this sector, making better use of the stock and assessing the impact of loss of family accommodation to HMO's and air B & B's will be a feature of the Strategy.
 - (iv) While the problem of access to suitable housing is common across this District, it is vulnerable and disadvantaged households who are most adversely affected. People with disabilities are a significant group within the District's population with some of these households having specific housing requirements, including those relating to mobility. Disability is often linked to age and therefore levels of disability are likely to increase as the population ages. As outlined above, welfare reform has implications for some people with a disability. While supported housing of various forms is provided across the District the lack of move-on accommodation hampers its effective use and means households are unable to access accommodation they need. Furthermore, there needs to be greater co-ordination between agencies groups involved in supported housing provision. The strategy needs to improve the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households and find appropriate new models.
 - (v) The Councils Homelessness strategy clearly sets out the practical ways the Council will achieve its corporate commitment to not use bed and breakfast accommodation and to ensure that no one needs to sleep rough within the Winchester district by 2023. The Housing Strategy needs to consider opportunities to increase temporary and move on accommodation. The Strategy will be prepared during huge financial pressures nationally which is likely to increase services.
- b) **Priority 2- Responding to the Housing needs of an ageing and growing population**
- (i) There is a notable growth in the population of older persons aged 65+ in Winchester District over the period to 2036 – projected to increase by 12,400 people (a 49% increase). The specific projections undertaken show an expected increase of those with dementia by 1,400 persons and with mobility problems by 3,100 persons to 2036. Some older households,

particularly those aged over 75, will require specialist housing provision. It is likely that a proportion of older people will be living with long term conditions, particularly dementia, but also conditions which affect mobility and which will require the availability of more adapted homes and the provision of significant support. It is important that the council explores flexible housing solutions, which allow people to transition from one type of housing to another in later life, as their circumstances require. The Strategy needs to carefully consider the housing offer to support this group.

- (ii) The difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in Winchester is: 5.8 years lower for men 6.4 years lower for women. The impact of a safe, warm and secure home is remarkable to health and wellbeing. It improves general health outcomes and enables people to maintain independence; it is the platform on which people can build their future. It can prevent physical and mental ill health and reduce hospital admissions; it can support us to get better more quickly and enable timely discharge from hospital. Unfortunately, not everyone has the same opportunities for good health. Those who are elderly or young, isolated, without a support network, and adults with disabilities are more likely to be affected. Investing in housing, particularly for vulnerable people, can support better health and reduce costs of other public services. Good health is an asset and the role of the City in promoting good health needs to be reflected in the Strategy

c) **Priority 3- Access to mixed tenure affordable family accommodation**

- (i) There is significant projected growth in family households in Winchester, which are expected to grow by 27% equal to 3,700 households between 2016-36. However, there are clear affordability barriers which are likely to prevent younger family households and younger households in general from buying a home. Options will be required to support younger households in the District in being able to buy a home, particular when help to buy is discontinued and First Homes may not offer affordable solutions in all of your markets. Without option, younger households may move to other areas; this could harm the economy (through affecting the ability of employers to recruit) and may lead to unsustainable longer distance commuting patterns.
- (ii) There is a need for different sizes of homes in the market and affordable sectors and potentially smaller homes for rightsizing for older households. This needs to be carefully set out in your strategy to help maintain choice.

- (iii) Winchester District has three further education establishments which should be considered – The University of Winchester, The University of Southampton (Winchester School of Art) and Sparsholt College (which also offers higher education courses). Whilst HMOs make up a small proportion of the overall housing market and provide an important housing supply for vulnerable households, those on lower incomes, students and young professional sharers. However, some locations such as Stanmore area had over 20% of properties were estimated to be HMOs. The proliferation of HMOs can also create tensions within communities. Whilst an article 4 direction has been introduced, the strategy will need to consider student accommodation and the role of HMOs.
 - (iv) The market rented sector is playing a growing and important role in the market and can also provide affordable housing. A robust policy and evidence base is required and needs to be promoted to developers. This should specify the types of locations which are considered suitable for such development, which we would consider would be in and around Winchester city as well as within the strategic allocations to ensure that there is a diverse range of housing types and tenures.
- d) **Priority 4- Access to affordable energy efficient accommodation**
- (i) The District's housing stock is generally very good, across all sectors. Homes are predominantly of post Second World War construction. Council and other affordable housing has achieved the Decent Home Standard. It is important to ensure that Council homes, and those owned by registered providers are maintained to high standards. There are, however, instances of poor property energy efficiency in some types of housing, for instance those without mains gas in rural areas, and fuel poverty for some low income households. This will need careful consideration in the strategy, particular given the challenges facing the country in terms of the cost of living.
- e) **Priority 5- Responding to the Social Housing White Paper**
- (i) The Housing Strategy will also have to have consideration to the 'The Social Housing White Paper', the *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets out measures to deliver on the Government's commitment to the Grenfell community and also its 2019 manifesto pledge to empower residents, strengthen regulation and improve the quality of social housing. The Housing service is well placed to respond to these measures, it has a strong track record of effective resident engagement and extensive and well-established performance reporting

measures. A comprehensive review of fire safety has already been completed. Delivering the priorities that arise from the white paper in partnership with residents and partner agencies will be a key objective in the new housing strategy.

- f) **Priority 6- Commitment to supporting persons seeking sanctuary in the district of Winchester**
- (i) Winchester City Council is welcoming refugees who are seeking a safe place due to the ongoing Ukraine crisis, responding to the Afghanistan resettlement Scheme and our commitment to the full asylum dispersal scheme, as our part of our commitment to supporting the principles of the City of Sanctuary Movement
 - (ii) This is likely to further create pressure in the system and access to the private rented sector
 - (iii) One of the major challenges to the successful implementation of the Housing Strategy will be the current financial climate which is likely to have an impact on development and project outcomes across the city and impact on future rents and service charges. A focus of the Strategy will be to work better with existing resources using an 'Invest to Save' model but the city need to carefully consider which priorities it is able to take forward and when
 - (iv) After the evidence base has been collated and the consultation has taken place, the priorities will be agreed to develop the strategy.

5 Methodology

5.1 The methodology that will be used to set the priorities in the strategy document will be divided into various elements

- a) Updating evidence
- (i) The evidence base will outline how the Winchester market has been performing and will outline the challenges, opportunities and weaknesses in the market and the findings will act as a baseline for the strategy in terms of opportunities and full details of the evidence base will be an appendix to the final strategy. The evidence base will review the following;
 - The strategic context for Winchester
 - The current housing offer
 - The sales market
 - The market rented sector

The affordable housing market
Affordability
Demographics and socio-economic indicators
Older people and vulnerable residents
Delivery performance and future housing targets
Challenges and Opportunities

b) Scoping the Strategy

- (i) A review will be taken of the current policy documents, examples of documents are listed below;

The council's corporate plan
The Local Plan (and any additional documents outside of the local plan)
Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Asset management Strategy
Empty Homes Strategy
Private Sector Renewal Strategy
Economic Strategies
Health and well-being strategy
Allocations policy
Tenancy Strategy

c) Consultation

- (i) The consultation will have 3 different themes;

Internal discussions with officers
Internal discussions with key members
Consultation with Stakeholders in the form of Virtual meetings, workshops and an online survey

- (ii) Internal discussions with officers and members. This will enable a better understanding of priorities and be able to integrate that into the evidence base. Consultation would be undertaken through telephone conversations and virtual meetings. Below are an example of the officers that will be consulted with;

Private Sector Housing Team
Housing Options Team
Housing Allocations
Tenancy Sustainment/supported housing teams
Landlords and Property services
New Homes
Energy efficiency Officers
Planning Team and those responsible for site allocations/strategic sites
Speak to key members and senior officers

- (iii) The plan is that these conversations will focus on challenges, priorities, barriers and potential solutions.
- (iv) Consultation with Stakeholders will take place once the potential priorities and solutions have been identified from the internal consultation and the review of the evidence base.
- (v) The proposed method of consultation for stakeholders is;

Virtual meetings with those you feel have the most relevance to the Housing Strategy

Workshops. We can organise and manage these events over a 2-3 hr period providing presentations and facilitating breakout sessions. Sessions would be written up and form part of the evidence of the housing strategy

Online survey The survey is usually themed to the potential priorities and for each theme there is a summarised account of the evidence base.

- d) The outcome of the consultation will be developed into a standalone report to accompany the evidence base of the documents for the housing strategy.

5.2 Draft timetable for Delivery of the Housing Strategy

Month	Activity
October 2022	Assemble the Data Desk top review of documents Review evidence base and identify challenges
November 2022	Lead officer to meet with CHOS and Cabinet member Arrange appointments with internal officers Agree the initial thoughts and priorities with Cabinet member and Housing's management Team Consult with stakeholders through online survey, workshops and interviews. Present initial thoughts and priorities to BHP-29.11.2022
December 2022	Consultation with stakeholders continues
January 2023	1st Draft of the strategy & feedback

	2 nd Draft of the strategy & feedback Final Draft
February 2023	Develop the delivery plan and finalise document
March 2023	Develop the delivery plan and finalise document

6 Proposed Governance for the strategy and delivery plan

6.1 The Strategies' priorities, outcomes and delivery plan will be assessed by;

- a) Standard agenda item on the monthly Housing DMT
- b) Standard item on monthly update between CHOS and Cabinet member
- c) Standard item on 1-1's between Corporate Head of Service and Service Leads
- d) Standard item on 1-1's between Service Leads and Senior Officers
- e) Consider a yearly update to members at Housing Cabinet
- f) Consider a yearly meeting with Stakeholders

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

7.1 It is a statutory requirement to have a housing Strategy

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

- CAB 2935 6th July 2017
- <https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/olddocuments/CAB2935HSG.pdf?F=CAB2935%28HSG%29.pdf&Mid=602&D=201707061630&A=1&R=0#search=%22CAB2935%22>

Other Background Documents:-

- Housing Strategy 2017/18-2022/23
- <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy-2013-14-2018-19#:~:text=The%20five%20priorities%20of%20the,housing%20which%20meet%20their%20needs.>

APPENDICES: None