

HILLINGDON'S HOUSING STRATEGY

Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Eddie Lavery
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Environment Housing and Regeneration
Officer Contact(s)	Debby Weller / Mark Billings / Dan Kennedy Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services
Papers with report	Appendix A: Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26, Consultation Draft

HEADLINES

Summary	This presents the draft Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 and seeks approval to commence a 10-week formal consultation process from 19 July 2021 to 26 September 2021.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Built Environment; Strong financial management.</i>
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial costs relating to this report
Relevant Select Committee	Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee
Relevant Ward(s)	All wards

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet approves the Draft Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 included at Appendix A for consultation.

Reasons for recommendation

The Housing Strategy is a key policy framework document for the Council and provides direction and priorities for housing services.

Alternative options considered / risk management

Without a Strategy, the Council would not be able to make clear its priorities in relation to housing and assist in the development and performance management of work streams, provide a framework for our work with partner organisations and support funding bids.

The development of the Housing Strategy includes consideration of the wider environment for housing including current challenges and risks for the housing sector and how they might best be addressed.

Select Committee comments

The Environment, Housing and Regeneration Select Committee were given the opportunity to feed into the development of this draft Housing Strategy at their meeting on 8 June 2021. The Committee thanked officers for the report and suggested that the [draft] Strategy include additional detail regarding how the Council could ensure landlords and tenants were aware of their responsibilities, and how to notify the Council of any issues. In addition, it was requested that future resident surveys be sent to Committee members for dissemination to their constituents.

The Select Committee will have a further opportunity, as part of the broader public consultation on the draft Strategy, to provide more formal comments to Cabinet to consider, before any final strategy is recommended to Full Council for adoption.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

1. The Housing Strategy is a key policy framework document for the Council. The strategy provides direction and priorities for housing services but is not a statutory requirement. Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26, Consultation Draft is attached at appendix A. Subject to Cabinet approval a 10 week formal consultation process will begin on Monday 19th July 2021 and end Sunday 26th September 2021. A final draft with amendments following consultation will be presented to Cabinet on 11th November 2021 and subsequently Full Council on 19th November 2021.
2. The Council has responsibilities for housing both as a landlord and in relation to its strategic housing role. This includes assessing needs and identifying priorities and planning for the delivery of affordable housing; standards of housing and management across both the social sector and the private rented sector; homelessness and housing advice, housing support and aids and adaptations. The Housing Strategy identifies key challenges and sets out priorities for the coming 5 years. It takes account of and is compliant with national policy and legislation and the London Housing Strategy 2018: Homes for London.

Housing Challenges

3. Housing challenges in 2020 were not surprisingly dominated by the immediate issues thrown up by Covid-19, the consequences of which are continuing to play out in 2021. This has disrupted the housing market, delayed development, postponed evictions and seen a huge response to bring rough sleepers in, off the streets. It has also seen many people falling into difficulties with employment, debt and rent arrears and has brought tensions to the surface which have resulted in, amongst other things, mental health challenges and an increase in domestic abuse. There has been a rapid acceleration in remote working with many more people working from home and there are noticeable impacts on the housing market with a premium being placed on outdoor space, a preference for houses over flats and for less crowded areas
4. Prior to the onset of Covid-19 there were already some significant challenges for housing strategy to address. These have not gone away and in many instances, there is an added impetus to tackle these issues as we recover from the pandemic. Building safety remains high on housing agendas in the continuing aftermath from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and there are still many difficult questions regarding the cladding scandal. The government has reiterated its determination to build back better; affordability is a continuing challenge and the need to increase the availability of affordable homes continues to grow; housing standards across sectors, social housing regulation and the ability of tenants to have their voice effectively heard remain prominent issues.
5. The government is placing clean growth and the UK's target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the heart of economic recovery. The falling cost of renewables, growing public pressure around climate change and the push for a green recovery is boosting decarbonisation plans. A drive towards decarbonising housing is gathering pace.

Current Legislative and Policy Context for Housing

6. Many of the recent and forthcoming policy and legislative changes affecting housing are related to:
 - An ongoing need for more affordable homes and the desire to Build Back Better following the pandemic
 - The impact that the Grenfell Tower tragedy has had and continues to have in relation to safety and wider housing standards, housing regulation and the relationship between landlords and tenants
 - The increasing prominence of climate change and the wider sustainability agenda
 - A further notable change is the introduction of Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Priorities

7. Normalising service delivery following the Covid-19 pandemic and addressing climate change are two driving issues which cut across the various services and priorities. In addition to these two key issues, the following five draft priorities have been identified:

- Priority one: Place Shaping
- Priority two: Increasing Access to Affordable Housing
- Priority three: Leading on Improving Housing Standards
- Priority four: Embracing the Charter for Social Housing Residents
- Priority five: Supporting Independent Living

Place Shaping

8. The place shaping priority is concerned with looking at the needs of an area as a whole. A key theme is the relationship between housing and health, which has been brought into sharper focus by Covid-19 which revealed an unequal impact related to housing circumstances. Housing is recognised as a key determinant of health outcomes. Other issues relate to the climate and sustainability agenda including issues around flooding and to designing out crime and using data to better understand local issues.

Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

9. The strategy aims to increase access to affordable housing in both the social and private rented sectors. There is a need for more affordable housing and in particular larger family homes for rent. A relatively small but steady supply of four bedroom homes is needed and a much larger regular supply of three bedroom homes. While demand for single bedroom properties is numerically the largest, supply of these homes in both the social and private sector is also more prevalent and the mismatch is therefore not as great as with larger dwellings. There is not one single initiative that will achieve the required increase in supply, but a concerted approach, looking in detail at the methods deployed and stages involved to maximise delivery by the Council and partner organisations. As well as new development, this includes making best use of existing social housing and accessing properties in the private rented sector.

Leading on Improving Housing Standards

10. The central commitment of this strategy is to address housing standards. It is proposed that there be an increase in investment in existing Council housing and in particular those elements that relate to safety, compliance and works to address climate change and fuel poverty. The strategy asserts that the Council is ambitious and seeks to set an example in responding to climate change. A Council regeneration programme is underway and further housing led regeneration is expected to follow. We are also determined to tackle poor standards in the private rented sector. We will focus efforts on higher risk properties and will consider options for introducing further licensing arrangements.

Embracing the Charter for Social Housing Residents

11. The Charter for Social Housing Residents provides an opportunity to renew our relationship with tenants and leaseholders. We are undertaking a fundamental review of how we engage and what we engage about. In doing this we will be informed by our residents, aim for open communication and take full advantage of new digital methods while taking care to ensure that vulnerable residents are not excluded.

Supporting Independent Living

12. There is a particular need in the short term around housing homeless households. This is because we aim to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, at the same time that there is an increased demand for temporary accommodation for those affected by regeneration and there is a big risk of increased private rented sector evictions. The pathway around single homeless people and rough sleepers has developed considerably with strong local partnerships having been built up and we aim to further develop the pathway, particularly in relation to those with higher support needs. There is also a specific challenge in relation to those without recourse to public funds.
13. The Strategy reasserts the Council's support for people to live independently as far as possible. In supporting vulnerable groups, housing and social care colleagues work closely and are continually developing our joint processes and procedures. Partnership arrangements continue to strengthen around safeguarding vulnerable people. We are developing joint arrangements in respect of care leavers and are working towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation in relation to domestic abuse. We will also be looking at how we can better tailor housing services for those with autism, learning disabilities and disabilities more generally. Existing Council provision for older people will be reviewed.

Aims and Actions

14. The aims and actions for each of the priorities are shown below:

Priority 1 - Place Shaping

- Assist in shaping the built environment at a local level and collaborate across health, social care and housing sectors to create healthy places and improve wellbeing.
- Improve living standards through investment in stock condition and access to affordable homes.
- Prioritise actions to address fuel poverty.
- Identify and understand conditions and the local context, including environmental concerns such as flood risks that housing in the Borough faces.
- Design and implement affordable and socially acceptable retrofit climate change adaptation measures.
- Work in partnership to identify priorities and take part in local area action.
- Take a 'Digital by Design' approach to improving service delivery.
- Improve the security of homes and their immediate surroundings.

Contribute from a housing perspective to the development of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the underpinning Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) including consideration of housing circumstances which are important social determinant of health	Review lettings arrangements to increase the proportion of lettings made to overcrowded households
Identify residential areas at risk from flooding and consider measures to reduce flood risk and increase flood resilience.	Make greater use of mapping capabilities to better understand the spatial dimension of housing issues across the Borough
Contribute from a housing perspective to local area action through both taking part in neighbourhood action and in using housing intelligence to identify need for local area action	

Priority 2 - Increasing Access to Affordable Housing

- Increase the provision of new affordable housing.
- Take forward regeneration proposals to provide more, good quality, affordable housing.
- Increase the proportion of affordable housing delivered as low cost rented housing to meet predominant housing need.
- Include within Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) provision, properties aimed at those with household incomes of £30,000 to £50,000
- Maximise the availability of larger family homes of three and four bedrooms or more to rent at affordable levels.
- Prioritise ensuring the availability of housing to facilitate the progress of regeneration projects and to avoid the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Release more under-occupied social rented properties for use by families.
- Make best use of existing housing for instance, through transfers, conversions or extensions.

<p>Continue to meet housing delivery targets and promote the delivery of affordable housing through our housing and planning policies. Subject to viability, the Council will seek 35% affordable housing on larger sites, rising to 50% on publicly owned land and schemes involving the net loss of industrial capacity</p>	<p>Be embarking on a review of the Local Plan and any change to affordable housing policies will be observed in the implementation of the Housing Strategy. The Council adheres to the requirements of the Mayor's Affordable Housing SPG (2017) and New London Plan</p>
<p>Set out a forward plan for the commitment of Right to Buy receipts to projects. To minimise risk from delayed or abortive development projects, the plan will aim to utilise each receipt at least one year ahead of the deadline for expenditure.</p>	<p>Continue a Right to Buy buy-back programme aiming to purchase in the region of 50 properties a year. In addition to ex-Council stock, the search area for properties will be expanded to include market housing in locations with existing Council dwellings. Acquisitions of individual dwellings and groups of dwellings will continue to be considered on a case by case basis</p>
<p>Continue to develop new Council owned affordable housing as well as working with registered providers and the GLA to provide new affordable homes through the Homes for Londoners programmes</p>	<p>Establish a task and finish group to consider options for future rent policy taking account of planning requirements, housing need and affordability and impact on the HRA Business Plan</p>
<p>Complete an analysis of new development options. This will include consideration and rating of regeneration options</p>	<p>Continue to seek a mix of affordable housing that provides as close as possible to 70% of affordable housing social rent / LAR and a minimum of 30% which has been viability tested at the Local Plan making level. There will continue to be some flexibility for Affordable Rent dwellings to be provided at a higher rent for the some or all of the remaining 40% where viability is an issue. This should not exceed LHA levels.</p>

	The Council's preference for the remaining 30% of housing to be delivered as intermediate housing is that it be provided through low cost home ownership products.
Target in particular, those households with incomes between £30k and £50k to support owner occupation for as wide a group of residents as possible. Where shared ownership options are provided, the Council will seek to ensure that low percentage shares are available within the mix.	Maximise the number of larger family dwellings of three bedrooms or more within affordable housing provision.
Work with PRP and voluntary sector partners to extend the use of shared housing to provide affordable housing for single homeless people	Set targets for the proportion of social housing lettings to households on the housing register for different reasons and monitor these in line with priorities
Undertake a full review of the social housing allocation policy	Determine policy for and how best to register interest for types of intermediate housing other than shared ownership for sale / part sale and for rent, especially LLR. The Council already has a register for shared ownership dwellings. The impact of First Homes and how will be administered also needs to be considered.
Continue to offer a bespoke personalised service to incentivise the release of under occupied Council housing	<p>Continue to offer fixed term tenancies. The policy will however be altered so that where a tenant has been found not to have complied with the requirements of their tenancy agreement, there will be the option to grant a tenancy for a shorter period of time than the standard five years.</p> <p>A review of the policy to consider costs and benefits, including administration costs will be scheduled for when there is sufficient experience of the implementation of tenancy reviews to draw on</p>
Consider the potential for extensions and conversions on a case by case basis as properties become void	Continue close working between the BACFT and housing colleagues to investigate housing fraud
<p>Follow policy H11 of the new London Plan with regard to build to rent housing and as part of our Local Plan Review will consider the viability of alternative approaches.</p> <p>For developments submitted to planning as build to rent from the outset with the affordable element as discounted market rent, our requirement will be that where viable this is supplied at LLR levels or lower.</p>	

Priority 3 - Leading on Improving Housing Standards

- Continue to prioritise fire safety in works to and the management of the Council's housing stock.
- Increase investment in the Council housing stock prioritising additional safety elements, compliance and works to address climate change and fuel poverty agendas.
- Be prepared to meet the requirements of the new Building Safety regime.
- Develop plans to decarbonise housing across tenures, starting with quantifying the requirements to achieve zero carbon in the Council's housing stock.
- Help low income households to reduce energy expenditure in their home.
- Maximise the number of Council owned homes with a Band C energy performance rating.
- Develop a more detailed understanding of housing conditions in the public sector and establish a road map to ensuring that Council housing stock meets good housing standards.
- Develop a more detailed understanding of housing conditions in the private sector to inform future policy options including for discretionary licensing.
- Work collaboratively across services and agencies and take a robust enforcement approach to combating rogue landlords.

Work with the London Fire Brigade where appropriate in the use of enforcement action against the owners of buildings that fail to undertake necessary remediation	Prioritise in the Council's works to stock programme, fire safety and health and safety more generally as well as compliance with standards, and heating and insulation
Carry out further work to improve the depth and breadth of customer insight across all high-risk buildings and the Social Housing Allocation Policy will be amended to restrict new tenancies to residents in higher risk buildings who can self-evacuate	Consider the use of 'estate regulations' as part of changes to management practices associated with fire safety and leaseholders in higher risk buildings
Introduce a specific inspection regime to cover the common areas of tower blocks including fire doors as part of a more intensive approach to the management of higher risk buildings	Establish a task and finish project to analyse the costs of day to day repairs and other costs associated with elements of disrepair to identify areas of planned work likely to make the largest 'spend to save' impact over the short and medium term. The analysis will seek to identify those aspects of planned maintenance that result in the highest costs if not undertaken promptly.
Develop the HRA Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy, incorporating a road map for good housing standards via future stock investment and redevelopment.	Develop a specification for a private sector stock condition survey/modelling which will in addition collate information to assist in gaining a wider understanding of the nature of the private rented sector in Hillingdon and assist in targeting resources.
Establish more formalised structures and processes to share knowledge and intelligence regarding the private rented sector and to develop a comprehensive,	Improve knowledge and intelligence through partnering arrangements and research opportunities to inform the development of a more detailed Private Sector Housing Strategy.

co-ordinated and disciplined approach to ensuring a well-managed sector.	
Prioritise dealing with licence applications swiftly and efficiency and identifying additional HMOs that require to be licensed	Continue to tackle poor housing conditions and facilitate improved management of high-risk properties in the private rented sector
Continue to use enforcement powers including Civil Penalties where appropriate and work with internal and external partners to take holistic and concerted action to deter those landlords who consistently provide poor standards of housing and management.	Establish a multi-disciplinary task group to gather evidence regarding the prevalence of poor conditions in different parts of the private rented sector and consider the feasibility of different discretionary licensing options.
Develop a granular understanding of the cost requirements of achieving zero carbon across the Council's housing stock and to formulate plans for those properties that are low, medium and high cost	Set out an approach to work towards decarbonising Council owned housing stock and work with others to similarly encourage decarbonisation in other housing tenures
Deliver Green Homes Grant works to improve energy efficiency for low income households	Progress plans to attract additional funding to deliver improvements at Colne Park Traveller's Site

Priority 4 - Embracing the Charter for Social Housing Residents

- Meet consumer regulation standards.
- Build up a more comprehensive profile of our tenants to inform service delivery.
- Review how we make information available to residents and what information is provided.
- Ensure that the residents' voice is heard at every level from policymaking to front line delivery
- Develop a comprehensive engagement strategy for greater meaningful engagement with Council tenants and leaseholders.
- Implement a new structure to encourage wider resident involvement, scrutiny of our services and greater accountability and transparency.
- Seek additional opportunities to improve service delivery through digitisation.

Complete an annual review of Fire Safety Management Plans across the Council housing stock	Establish a Hoarder's panel mitigate the risk of fire and serious injury
Review our structures and processes for engagement during 2021/22	Develop a comprehensive engagement strategy for Council tenants and leaseholders. Key elements will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication regarding fire and other safety issues • Involving different groups including vulnerable households and • New methods of engagement and service design including use of digital methods
Develop specific local resident engagement strategies related to higher risk buildings	Complete annual self-assessments against regulatory standards with results being reported to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Housing and Regeneration
Deploy a range of methods to capture data, including the use of housing needs surveys, encouraging self-service reporting and gathering data through interactions with tenants.	Improve customer insight and understand what our tenants and communities want, including through use of the STAR survey and through learning from complaints. A further STAR survey will be completed in Autumn 2021 and thereafter every 2 years.
Set a baseline for the Regulator of Social Housing's proposed tenant satisfaction measures	Consider residents feedback in formulating the future approach to investment in and management of shared areas to deliver attractive, safe and secure environments
Analyse complaints and review compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code on a regular basis	Identify further opportunities for improved and cost-efficient service delivery online, while identifying safeguards in relation to digital exclusion and vulnerable people.
Complete post-occupancy evaluation of new affordable housing developments	Explore how better to engage private rented sector residents

Priority 5 - Supporting Independent Living

- Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Support people to sustain tenancies.
- Increase awareness and action regarding adult safeguarding.
- Achieve sustainable housing solutions for care leavers.
- Become Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited.
- Develop housing plans to support the independence of residents with learning disabilities and/or mental health needs.
- Develop autism friendly housing services.
- Review existing dedicated housing provision for older people.
- Plan for retrofitting of existing housing to address needs for adaptations, including for dementia.
- Review the use of grants to support independent living.

Assess current and future housing and support needs of specific client groups during 2021. The information will be substantially improved and updated as the results from the 2021 census become available	Complete further investigation into the causes and potential solutions for family and friend evictions. Map the incidence of family and friend evictions and analyse available data within the Council and held by partner agencies to inform future homelessness prevention activity
Focus rough sleeper work during 2021 on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A supported housing solution for those with higher level needs as a key priority for development of the rough sleepers housing pathway. • Continuing to build our partnership working arrangements with primary healthcare, public health and social care colleagues and other organisations with roles concerning substance misuse and mental health issues • Continuing to increase the provision of additional low support level HMOs for the single homeless pathway and floating support. 	Establish a move-on panel to track that there is effective movement through the single homelessness pathway and address barriers
Explore options to provide additional longer-term move on accommodation including the potential repurposing by a voluntary sector partner of a large building for studio flats and options for shared accommodation to be provided with Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.	Continue to monitor outcomes for all rough sleepers and separately identify 'Target 1,000' rough sleepers in the monitoring framework to assess the extent to which rehousing is being sustained and take further action if necessary.
Continue to engage constructively with safeguarding partners and assist in addressing the Safeguarding Partnership's priorities	Arrange for safeguarding refresher training to be undertaken by housing teams including tenancy management, homelessness prevention and housing allocations staff

<p>Work towards achieving accreditation by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) including identifying dedicated, trained staff within the Homelessness Prevention Team who will be responsible for assisting those affected by domestic abuse</p>	<p>Complete a joint housing and social care protocol for care leavers which will be actively monitored and reviewed annually</p>
<p>Housing services will work alongside social care to support the development of a supported accommodation plan for people with learning disabilities and/or mental health needs</p>	<p>Set up a task and finish group to develop our understanding of the housing needs of people with autism in Hillingdon, generate bespoke housing options and consider what housing services need to do to become more autism friendly</p>
<p>Complete a review of Council owned sheltered housing which will include consideration of the costs of day to day repairs; future maintenance requirements including energy efficiency implications; void performance and lettings</p>	<p>Set up a task and finish group to investigate further measures that can be taken to provide attractive downsizing options. This will include consideration of new development opportunities, across housing tenures, specifically aimed at older people. In relation to Council and PRP sectors this would need to include a rent policy that did not deter moves</p>
<p>Continue to utilise DFGs to support older and disabled residents to remain in their own homes</p>	<p>Continue to promote assistive technology such as telecare, which is available free of charge to people aged 75 and above</p>
<p>Set up a working group to consider options to better meet the housing needs of disabled people including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a specific LBH design code to meet the needs of the vast majority of people, that can be applied to both new housing provision and to inform refurbishments of existing homes • how to increase provision of evacuation lifts 	

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the recommendations of this report. The consultation process can be delivered within existing resources.

The resource implications of the final strategy will be considered as part of the Council's MTFF process which will take into consideration the various funding streams available including the Council's general fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the availability of external funding streams such as grants from the GLA and Central Government through the MHCLG.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The draft Housing Strategy sets out identifies key challenges and sets out priorities for the coming five years and has a direct bearing on the Council's vision of 'putting residents first.'

The Council will need to ensure that any policies or decisions in relation to housing take account of requirements under equalities and human rights legislation, including ensuring that policies and decisions do not discriminate against those with protected characteristics, and complying with the public sector equality duty.

Consultation carried out or required / timetable

Considerable informal consultation has been carried out across housing services and other Council services that link to housing. Subject to Cabinet approval on 8 July 2021, a formal 10 week consultation process will commence on the 19th July 2021 and end on 26th September 2021.

This will include:

- Publication of the draft Housing Strategy alongside an online survey questionnaire (Written copies/large print will be available on request)
- A variety of methods to promote completion of the survey will be used including: All staff email, Hillingdon People, Social Media
- A series of workshops with service users and their representatives, Council staff and a variety of other organisations
- An opportunity for the Environment, Housing and Regeneration Committee to provide formal comments to Cabinet on 11 November 2021.

Subject to final Cabinet approval, the Housing Strategy will be referred to the next available full Council meeting for final adoption.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed the report and concur with the financial implications set out above, that there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal applications arising from this report. Further, more detailed legal advice will be given as necessary once the outcome of the consultation is reported back to Cabinet.

Comments from other relevant service areas

Where reports span across other service areas relevant services should be consulted and brief comments included here to support the recommendation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Minutes – Environment, Housing & Regeneration Select Committee – 8 June 2021](#)