

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 May 2015

Report of: Head of Housing and Property

Title of Report: Housing Strategy 2015-2018

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide the City Executive Board with the final version of the Housing Strategy 2015-2018 with a detailed action plan that outlines the key priorities for the next three years, following consultation.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons, Board Member for Housing and Estate Regeneration

Policy Framework: Housing Strategy Corporate objective- Meeting Housing Needs

Recommendation: That the City Executive Board adopt the Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2018

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2015-2018 and Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Summary

Appendix 3 – Risk Register

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Introduction

1 The previous Housing Strategy, approved in April 2012, covered the period 2012 to 2015. The priorities under this strategy were to:

- Provide more affordable housing in the City to meet housing needs;
- Prevent and reduce homelessness;
- Address the housing needs of vulnerable people and communities;
- Improve housing conditions;
- Improve housing services

- Implement self-financing of the HRA
- 2 The Housing Strategy 2015-2018, and action plan, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. It has been developed to have a wider cross tenure approach to housing issues in Oxford and has termed this '*The Housing Offer*'. This follows extensive consultation subsequent to the City Executive Board report in October 2014
 - 3 The new strategy has four main priorities proposed compared with six in the previous strategy. The new priorities have been identified as:
 - Priority 1 – Increase supply and improve access to affordable housing;
 - Priority 2 – Meet the housing needs of vulnerable groups;
 - Priority 3 – Support growth of a balanced housing market; and
 - Priority 4 – Support sustainable communities

Review of the 2012-15 Housing Strategy

- 4 The 6 strategic priorities in the strategy were to be delivered through over 120 milestone actions. Progress against these has been previously reported to City Executive Board, and the new strategy reviews this also. Approximately 98% of the actions have been completed, with the two remaining proposed to carry forward into the new strategy's action plan. The following is a brief summary of some of the key objectives achieved:
 - Delivery of 113 new Council homes nearing completion
 - Barton Park strategic housing development site commenced
 - Affordable Housing Policy adopted
 - Tenancy Strategy adopted
 - New Empty Homes Strategy
 - New Homelessness Strategy
 - Households in Temporary Accommodation maintained below 120
 - New housing evidence base produced
 - No Second Night Out project delivered
 - Stock condition survey completed
 - New Housing Asset Management Strategy
 - Regeneration projects at Blackbird Leys started
 - Tower blocks major capital investment project about to start
 - HMO licensing continued successes
 - 55 'Affordable' Extra Care apartments completed at Shotover View
 - Revised Allocations Policy implemented
 - Local Offers established for tenants
 - HRA Business Plan developed

New Strategic Housing Priorities

- 5 The new strategy recognises the challenging national and local contexts, with recent reports identifying Oxford as the least affordable city in the country. It recognises that Oxford City Council has already taken a number of steps to address local housing needs, not least in through its own house building programme, but the enormity of the gap between housing supply and housing need is not under estimated. The strategy proposes 4 new strategic priorities, which are summarised below and developed further in the main body of the strategy

Priority 1 – Increase supply and improve access to affordable housing

- 6 This priority seeks to improve the supply of affordable housing to meet the housing needs of Oxford. It recognises that this cannot be entirely achieved within the current administrative boundaries of Oxford, nor through the provision of social housing alone. Actions seek to improve access to private rented accommodation, as well as exploring new models of supply. This is through direct Council investment, and also effective partnership working with partners and other agencies. This will include reviewing the range of affordable tenures: including social and intermediate rental, as well as key worker, shared equity and other options. The objectives within this priority comprise the following:
- Increase the supply of affordable housing
 - Improve access to housing
 - Improve access to the private rented sector to address homelessness

Priority 2 – Meet the housing needs of vulnerable groups

- 7 Objectives within this priority seek to ensure the maintenance and development of a range of provision for elderly persons; disabled persons; and persons vulnerable as a result of their homelessness, whether the Council may have a statutory duty to them, or not. Actions also seek to help address the health and well-being of vulnerable persons, through effective joint working with health partners and others. This will include reviewing the supply and demand of different forms of sheltered and elderly housing provision, and links with supporting services and options for people downsizing. The objectives within this priority comprise the following:
- Provide a range of housing provision for older people
 - Improve the health & wellbeing of homeless households and other vulnerable groups
 - Prevent and respond to rough sleeping
 - Prevent and respond to homelessness
 - Ensure that the provision of accessible housing meets housing needs and improves housing options for disabled people

Priority 3 – Support growth of a balanced housing market

- 8 As with the first priority, this priority also concentrates on improved housing supply, but this has a wider remit – on housing growth generally – than priority 1, which focuses on affordable housing. This priority area looks at alternative models of redevelopment and partnership working to bring forward new sites and regeneration schemes. As part of this commitment the Council launched its Affordable Homes programme to deliver 1,000 new affordable homes. The objectives within this priority comprise the following:
- Improve Housing Market Operation
 - Increase the supply of public sector land to deliver new homes
 - Bring forward key strategic sites to support City Deal and meet housing need

Priority 4 – Support sustainable communities

- 9 Objectives within this priority include a range of measures to improve housing, health and well-being outcomes across various communities in Oxford, and across different tenures. Actions identified in this area, include work to bring up the standards of private rented accommodation, and measures to direct significant capital investment into the Council's own housing stock and estates with the adoption of a new 'Oxford Standard' and our developing plans through the 'Great Estates' programme and the priority areas of the Leys, Barton and Rose Hill. The objectives within this priority comprise the following:
- Improve partnerships between housing, health and education providers
 - Improve the environments where people live
 - Address impact of poverty in deprived areas and improve outcomes for individuals through social and financial inclusion initiatives
 - Increase housing choice for households on average income
 - Improve communications with hard to reach households, particularly in the Private Rented Sector
 - Reduce health inequalities in the City through sustained investment in existing homes
 - Prioritise the energy efficiency of properties to increase tenant resilience to fuel poverty

Consultation Responses

- 10 There were 58 responses to the draft Housing Strategy consultation. In general, most respondents agreed that the 4 priorities drafted in the Strategy were right for meeting the challenges for Oxford over the next 3 years and beyond. In terms of the action plan, 59% agreed that the actions would meet the objectives of the Housing Strategy, with 41% stating that the actions would only partially meet the objectives
- 11 A summary of the consultation responses are listed in Appendix 2

12 As a result of the Housing Strategy consultation responses, the draft Housing Strategy that was consulted on has changed as follows:

| Comment | Change to Strategy |
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| The strategy should seek to be bolder in terms of increasing the volume of new affordable housing supply | Additional actions have been developed in the Action Plan concerning Oxford's urban growth and expansion, recognising that the housing needs of the city cannot be met from within the current city boundaries, and alternative arrangements are required going forward (in Priority 1) |
| The strategy should seek to recognise and address the difficulties of key workers obtaining affordable housing locally | The Action Plan suggests that the Council explore the development of a more strategic approach to considering the needs of key workers locally (in Priority 3) |
| An additional objective is required to ensure that the provision of accessible housing meets housing needs and housing options for disabled people are improved | <p>This objective has been added (in Priority 2) with additional actions as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the accessible housing planning policy by incorporating improvements arising from national build standards in guidance to developers – June 2016 2. Improve Council and other housing providers information bases so that gaps in accessible housing provision can be identified and support choice for disabled housing applicants through more comprehensive Allocations information – Sept 2015 3. Explore the options for increasing disabled peoples access to adapted sale properties with private sector providers– June 2016 |
| Extra Care units at Shotover were not listed under 'objectives achieved' at 2.2.4 | Bullet point added to confirm that 55 affordable extra care apartments have been completed at Shotover View |
| Comment from Oxfordshire County Council regarding consultation on cuts 5.2.1 | Changed 'consulting' to 'The County Council has consulted on cuts of £1.5m to funding for housing related support services for homeless people and substance misusers in Oxfordshire to take effect from February 2016. New services are being commissioned in partnership with the City and District councils, and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group' |
| Further detail was needed on planning policy for accessible housing | Added 5 additional paragraphs at 5.6 'The Council planning policy on accessible housing is being implemented. This requires all new housing to be built to Lifetime homes standard |

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| | <p>and for 5% of new dwellings on larger sites to be built to wheelchair standard: technical guidance is provided on achieving either the full standard or adapting new units so that it can be met when required.</p> <p>Half of the wheelchair units provided under this policy will be for market sale and with increasing housing supply in the City, this sector could make an important contribution to the Council and stakeholders work to improve choice for disabled people.</p> <p>The Council has been working with the County and District Council's to implement the Oxfordshire Physical Disability Housing Strategy which, as well as new accessible housing, highlights the need to make better use of existing adapted stock and to improve the quality of information which is available to disabled people when they are looking at their housing options.</p> <p>The Council has recently completed a stock condition survey which gives a sound basis for updating adaptations made to existing dwellings and identifying where there are gaps in provision. The Council will also be engaging with the other social housing providers in the City on this issue.</p> <p>A booklet setting out a wide range of information on housing options for disabled people across the County was produced last year and the emphasis is now on ensuring that comprehensive information about the housing stock is available when options are being considered.'</p> |
| <p>Improve stock condition, best use of Council housing stock and improve affordability</p> | <p>Actions added with respect to delivering the 2015 to 18 Housing Investment Programme as part of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and to increase tenant resilience to fuel poverty (in Priority 4)</p> |

Level of Risk

- 13 A Risk Register is attached at Appendix 3. It should be noted that risks associated with specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects or programmes.

Environmental Impact

- 14 The Housing Strategy 2015 to 2018 does not have any explicit environmental impacts in itself. Specific projects identified in the Housing Strategy Action Plan will have environmental impacts, specifically the provision of additional housing to meet housing needs. These environmental impacts associated with specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects or programmes especially where planning permission is required.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 15 Within the consultation a specific question was asked on whether consultees felt there were any perceived negative or positive impacts on any of the protected characteristics covered under the Equalities Act 2010. The majority of respondents stated that there was neither a positive or negative impact on any protected characteristics. The only characteristics that demonstrated some perceived negative impacts were Disability and Age.
- 16 In relation to Disability and Age, within the consultation questionnaire, people were allowed to expand on the issues they raised as concerns. From the characteristics that have been picked out as having slight negative impacts, this relates to access to housing in general in relation to the adaptability of homes. The age concern is related to the type of new accommodation being provided for meeting the needs of the elderly population and is there enough choice.
- 17 As a result of these comments, the Housing Strategy Action Plan proposes that the Council consider updating its Technical Advice Note (TAN) on Accessible Housing in relation to the National Wheelchair Standards Level 3, and as part of the Elderly Persons Review will look at the demand for different types of housing accommodation for elderly people and seek to ensure the type of accommodation people want to see is incorporated into new developments on a site by site basis.
- 18 The Equality Impact Assessment for this report is at Appendix 4

Financial Implications

- 19 Any financial implications for specific projects and work programmes identified in the action plan are identified and addressed in the relevant project documentation for those projects or programmes.
- 20 Included within the HRA Business Plan provision has been specifically made for the following:
- Delivery of new housing at Barton Park

- The delivery of 113 new dwellings over the coming two years, part funded by HCA grant
 - On-going repairs, maintenance and refurbishment to its stock of council dwellings, including the tower blocks
 - Management related costs in providing all landlord services to our tenants
 - Using borrowing headroom to support some of the strategic sites as part of the City Deal in relation to New Build.
- 21 In the General Fund Budget there is provision for the costs of homelessness and providing other private sector housing advice. No new financial implications are brought forward by the final version of the Housing Strategy in relation to the General Fund.

Legal Implications

- 22 The Local Government Act 2003 requires local housing authorities to have in place a Housing Strategy for the City.
- 23 Meeting the Council's statutory housing obligations is reflected in the priorities of the Housing Strategy, including statutory homelessness duties; provision of housing advice; and landlord responsibilities.
- 24 There are no further legal implications resulting from the Housing Strategy 2015-2018 and the attached action plan.

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List of background papers:None