

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to
Cabinet

on

18th September 2018

Report prepared by: Glyn Halksworth, Head of Housing &
Social Inclusion

Housing & Homelessness Strategy

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Member: Councillor Tony Cox

Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of progress to date in the development of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy and seek guidance regarding next steps.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorses:

- a) Progress to date in the development of the strategy, including its identified aims and emerging actions
- b) Proposals to jointly undertake consultation jointly with the Local Plan programme
- c) Proposals to return to Cabinet in November 2018 following the conclusion of consultation, with a draft final strategy document and accompanying action plan.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 9th January 2018 Cabinet agreed to the development of a Housing Vision and Housing Strategy for the Borough on the understanding that a collective vision for housing is critical to providing context and coherence for strategy and policy decisions. It was agreed that the need for housing to be considered as an integral component of the Council's work on behalf of local citizens and their changing demographics, to ensure that those needs are clearly identified, and therefore housing is central to the Council's ambitions for economic

development, the creation of jobs, enabling of a workforce, and to its aspirations as an emerging city with a broad and compelling offer.

Simultaneously to the Housing Visioning work, work commenced on ‘Southend 2050’; a consultation that will lead to the development of a new, over-arching vision for the town, where policies and strategies sitting beneath this (such as the Housing strategy) will be seen as vehicles for Southend 2050’s delivery and work has been on going in the preparation of a new Local Plan which will set out the Council’s strategic vision for development, policies and site allocations and provide the planning framework for Southend to 2036.

3.2 The suggested timescales for development of the corporate housing strategy are outlined below, which will allow for Southend 2050, the Housing Strategy and the new Local Plan to be fully aligned and for formal consultation regarding the Housing strategy and Local Plan to commence at the same time, and adopt a shared evidence base and consultation approaches. The proposed approach is aimed at ensuring the council is perceived as having ‘One Voice’ when consulting on the future direction for the borough.

Month	Task overview
Sept 2018 – Oct 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence base development & homelessness strategy review • Policy & best practice research • Engagement & workshops with key stakeholders (internal & external) to develop proposed strategy aims & actions • Funding bids made to support strategy implementation. • Equality Analysis of emerging strategy
November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments/alterations to Strategy in response to consultation • Strategy and implementation plan taken to Cabinet
Nov 2018 – Mar 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider public consultation and promotion of Strategy continues alongside initial public consultation on new Local Plan. Shared media release and shared evidence base for overlapping areas. • Implementation of actions continues and is further developed

3.3 Based on the work to date there are five strategic aims emerging, these being:

1. *Prioritise the supply of safe, genuinely affordable homes.*
2. *Regeneration and growth to create inclusive, healthy places to live and thrive.*
3. *Support people to live independently in their own homes and avoid homelessness*
4. *Encourage good quality housing design, management and maintenance*
5. *Where not prevented, make homelessness brief and non-recurrent.*

3.4 Also emerging from development discussion has been the instruction to commence bold activity under the strategy swiftly and to quickly move towards implementation. In this light work is already underway on a number of projects

and key actions against each of the above strategic aims. Work underway or in early development includes the following:

1. *Prioritise the supply of safe, genuinely affordable homes.*

- Bringing forward site investigation for phases 3&4 of the HRA land works in Shoeburyness and St Laurence, which, if approved, could deliver over 50 new council homes by the end of 2020. Procurement of site works has commenced, with an expectation that contractors will be on the ground during October;
- Bidding for additional HRA borrowing headroom available to us as we have been identified by government as an area with high affordability pressures. We are currently developing a bid for submission to Homes England by 7th September. If successful this additional HRA borrowing would contribute to the development of affordable homes.

2. *Regeneration and growth to create inclusive, healthy places to live and thrive.*

- Development of the housing company to drive forward regeneration projects and supply of both affordable housing supply and developments for sale and rental at market rates.
- Development of the new Local Plan which unlocking new sites for house building and regeneration, and promoting well designed, accessible developments that encourage health, wellbeing, and independence.
- Work with partners to create income, employment and skills opportunities for disadvantaged groups, for example, social value requirements within large procurements such as Better Queensway and the creation of apprenticeships as part of new developments.

3. *Support people to live independently in their own homes and avoid homelessness*

- Dedicated project investigating robotics, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies as aids and adaptations for living which enable and support people to live independently. This work is already investing in new approaches and developing exemplar practice to support this requirement;
- Introduction of Homelessness Reduction Act and the co-production of personal housing plans (PHPs) with all people threatened with homelessness presenting to the Council. This work will further extend in October with closer work with statutory partners required to refer people to the local authority, and through the development of more inclusive and multi-agency supported PHPs. A leading example of this is the work underway with Essex Community Rehabilitation Company;

- Supported housing for specialist groups is in place for many discrete client groups, for example, people with learning difficulties; mental health needs; ex-offenders; drug and alcohol recovery; young homeless people; teenage parents and more. All these offers include progressive support to enhance capacity for independence and the ability to manage tenancies successfully.
- Building on the work of the Sheltered Housing Review we are developing detailed models for potential future use and configuration of the schemes. This work will consider potential uses of existing sheltered schemes along with costing of alternative models of provision and re-purposed use of the sites.
- Floating support provision has been re-designed in recent months and is currently out to tender, with a new contract to be in place from April 2019. This work will focus on supporting people to be independent and avoid homelessness, and will be required to work across multiple Council and other partner run services, and in a highly accessible community-based way.

4. Encourage good quality housing design, management and maintenance

- A new Partnership Agreement with our Arm's Length Management Organisation, South Essex Homes, is in development and will focus both on the core business aspects of their management of the Council's social housing stock, such as maintenance, rental and tenant management, as well as on areas for growth and further development with a view to adding value to South Essex Homes' role in Southend and ensuring sustainable best practice locally.
- We are re-designing the Private Sector Housing service in order to ensure both that we deliver effectively new requirements to licence houses of multiple of occupation, as well as having the capacity to pursue to take full advantage of new enforcement powers against rogue landlords. In reviewing our resources and approaches we are focussing on our capacity to respond effectively to disrepair and/or poor management of properties in both the private rental and the owner-occupier sector, responding to empty properties and returning these to use where possible, and growing our integrated response along with other services where vulnerable people are involved.
- We are working with SEAL and seeking to re-instate and re-invigorate the Landlords Forum, where advice, information and opportunities can be shared and relationships between the private sector and public bodies/support agencies can be further built upon and maintained.

5. Where not prevented, make homelessness brief and non-recurrent.

- We have implemented the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, including extending both prevention and relief duties from 28 to 56 days,

designed to enhanced the capacity to keep people in their homes or more effectively house them should they become homeless. We continue to develop our work in this area, particularly with statutory partners as indicated above, and to focus on other key relationships such as landlords in order to increase the supply of suitable, affordable move-on accommodation.

- We were successful in bidding for £425k additional funding under the Rough Sleeper Initiative, which will introduce additional outreach and service-based capacity until March 2019, and bring additional accommodation on line for this group. A further bid has been submitted for 2019-20 and will be announced soon. Recruitment of staff has commenced for this work and enhanced partnership activity is already in place. Additional street counts and much tighter monitoring has been agreed in order to drive this key project forwards at the pace it warrants.
- We are working closely with the Centre for Homelessness Impact, a new national body leading the development of evidence-based approaches to working with homelessness. This work, which includes academic-led research with our partners in Southend and which will seek to understand homelessness locally and apply international knowledge to approaches we may deploy, is the first of its kind internationally and Southend is one of only a handful of UK local authorities currently involved.

These actions will continue to be progressed, alongside many others in planning or early stages, and will form part of the action plan accompanying the final strategy that will be return to Cabinet in November.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 An alternative approach to that proposed above would be to pursue consultation independently of the work being undertaken with the Local Plan. This option has been rejected given the importance of housing to the Local Plan and vice versa it is felt to be of high value that both projects are pursued together and that consultation findings are consist.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 It is felt that progress to date has been very productive and that the joint work with other key programmes of work being pursued by the Council, notably Southend 2050 and the Local Plan, are imperative to the future power of the strategy once adopted. This joint development will support synergy across key streams of council activity and ensure that priorities and expectations over the next few years are consistently framed. It is felt that support for the revised timescale will facilitate this approach and both better enable further initialisation of key projects to be progressed through the strategy, and more robust consultation about the work.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Simultaneously to the production of the council's new corporate housing strategy is the production of 'Southend 2050'; a consultation that will lead to the development of a new, over-arching vision for the town, where policies and strategies sitting beneath this (such as the Housing strategy) will be seen as vehicles for Southend 2050's delivery. Consultation from Southend 2050 is/will continue to feed directly in to the development of new corporate housing strategy.

6.2 Financial Implications

As the plans are developed, the appropriate level of financial due diligence, will be undertaken, to both understand the nature and extent of any required financial investment, financial risk and opportunities. Therefore financial due diligence will inform and be part of the draft final strategy currently proposed to be presented back to Cabinet in November 2018.

A key aim of the strategy must also be to take advantage of external funding bids/opportunities that meet the aims of the strategy.

6.3 Legal Implications

The strategy and its actions must respond to the requirements of relevant legislation. The need for a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is specified by s.3(1) of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2002 and is re-stated by the national Rough Sleeper Strategy (August 2018).

6.4 People Implications

Housing and homelessness issues impact people's health, wellbeing and prosperity.

Housing development and regeneration are issues members of the public are likely to feel passionately about, hence the need for the development of the Housing strategy to be aligned with the Local plan.

6.5 Property Implications

These will be assessed and made clear as the strategy emerges.

6.6 Consultation

Please see section 3.1 – 3.2 for proposed timescale project, upon which consultation and engagement planning will be based.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

An Equality Analysis on emerging aims and actions will inform strategy development and be presented to Cabinet with the proposed strategy.

6.8 Risk Assessment

These will be assessed and made clear as the strategy emerges.

6.9 Value for Money

The corporate housing strategy will support the prevention of homelessness, material poverty and long term care and support needs, all of which incur great expense to the council, public sector partners, businesses and residents.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

The corporate housing strategy will encourage partnership working to encourage good quality housing management and maintenance, keeping people safe in their homes.

The strategy supports the reduction of homelessness & rough sleeping which may impact public perception of community safety and prevent rough sleepers from being at risk of severe weather, physical and verbal abuse.

6.11 Environmental Impact

These will be assessed and made clear as the strategy emerges.

7. Background Papers

PSI visioning paper
CMT/Cabinet away day slides 24.07.2018.

8. Appendices

None