

9 March 2017

Environment & Housing Management Committee

Housing Strategy 2017-2020

Report of: *Angela Williams, Interim Head of Housing*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The current policy document 'Housing Strategy 2013-16' has expired. To forward the aims of the Service and Council a new document is required to outline in strategic terms proposed service provision.
- 1.2 A draft version of the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' was put to Committee on the 7th December 2016 which was approved to move forward to public consultation prior to ratification.
- 1.3 The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' outlines a transparent and ambitious approach to the provision of housing services.
- 1.4 The draft 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' was put to public consultation for six weeks, ending on the 28th February 2017. The consultation was widely advertised and included representations from tenants, residents and professionals.
- 1.5 The public consultation strongly supported the new 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' and its implementation. Only some minor technical alterations have subsequently been made; no substantive change has been made to the draft version.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee formally approve the final 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' for immediate adoption (Appendix A).**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 It is a legal requirement that the Tenancy Strategy and Homeless Prevention Strategy are produced and updated. As both documents are due to expire, and given radical changes and challenges post their implementation it is now service critical to review these documents.
- 3.2 The Tenancy Strategy presents and directs the relationship with Housing Associations and other Registered Providers.
- 3.3 The Homeless Prevention Strategy demonstrates the Council's plans for how to deal with homelessness and the causes of homelessness.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that the proposed Homelessness Reduction Bill currently laid before Parliament will introduce more rigorous prevention duties upon Local Authorities and housing providers. It is therefore timely to produce a revised approach.
- 3.5 The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' fully outlines the confirmed, proposed and potentialities of future service provision. Having obtained Committee approval on the 9th December 2016 it also contains the Tenancy Strategy and the Homeless Prevention Strategy. The 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' is intended in both format and scope to enable a transparent and rigorous approach to the challenges within the contemporary housing market.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The provision and renewal of both the Homeless Prevention Strategy and Tenancy Strategy are statutory requirements. The combination with the Housing Strategy allows for a single document which will clearly evidence the combined strategic planning of Housing Services in an open and transparent manner.
- 4.2 The proposed Housing Strategy focuses on key priorities, such as homeless prevention, and outlines those mechanisms through which to improve our service offer. The anticipated benefits of this will include:
 - Providing a targeted housing service; offering a range of housing solutions to differing household types and needs.
 - Outlining new accommodation provision, as per the Building Programme previously recommended to, and approved by, Committee.
 - Creating an effective and practical document for 'real life' use and reference by the Council, residents, tenants and partner agencies alike.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- The proposed Housing Strategy will allow the Council to:
- Meet its legal requirements
- Target housing solutions within the Borough.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Highlight to tenants and residents the forthcoming challenges which both the Council and they themselves will face.
- Support the implementation of the Welfare Reform agenda (which Brentwood Council is committed to, particularly within existing written policy)
- Structure the Council's approach to housing, in particular as relevant to the Local Development Plan.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Staff, tenants and member consultation events were conducted on the 1st September, 8th November and 16th November 2016 respectively. Strong direction was given to provide a more robust approach to service provision.
- 6.2 The public consultation in 2017 returned a low response rate, despite being widely advertised in the Local Press, online media sites, internal electronic and traditional display boards, posters throughout the Borough, direct communications, and corporate website exposure.
- 6.3 The results of the consultation (Annex B) strongly suggest that the priorities and mechanisms identified within the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' are correct.
- 6.4 The principal concerns of the sample were for greater access to affordable housing, particularly by younger households and to promote an aspirational culture within the local community.
- 6.5 Clear support was given at all stages of consultation for the current direction of travel by Housing Services and to implement the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020'.

6.6 Given the level of clear support only a few technical alterations have been made to the 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' document; no substantive alterations have been included.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan aims to:

- Find new ways of working with partners and embrace support of communities.
- To deliver safe and comfortable homes which are efficient and sustainable
- Develop effective partnership arrangements with key agencies
- Manage our stock to recognise the limited resources available and supporting those in greatest need.
- Review the future delivery of housing services to provide the best outcomes for Brentwood residents.

7.2 The final 'Housing Strategy 2017-2020' feeds directly into each of the aims listed above and will serve to provide clear guidance to all in strategic terms as to how those aims will be achieved.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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8.1 Any costs arising from the new strategy will be funded from existing budgets.

Legal Implications

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8.1 None.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8.2 None.

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None.

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Housing Strategy 2017-2020

Appendix B – Housing Strategy Consultation Overview

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