

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Mid Term Review of Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025

Meeting/Date: Cabinet
20th June 2023

Executive Portfolio: Cllr S. Wakeford, Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing

Report by: Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy 2020-2025 was adopted by the Council in October 2020 and was last reviewed in December 2021. The document, which was developed in 2020, following thorough review and consultation upon housing issues in the district, sets out a comprehensive strategy for the Council to focus on its strategic role to meet a broad range of housing objectives.

Since the original Housing Strategy was published there has been a considerable amount of energy and commitment invested in implementing the strategy and achieving the objectives in the action plan, that were set at the time. In developing the five year strategy we recognised that we would need to take stock of progress, any changes in legislation and market forces and we would therefore need to carry out a mid-term review and refresh.

This report provides an opportunity to recognise the work that has been undertaken and also align the strategy with the Corporate Plan and Place Strategy, in addition, there are a number of other significant policy areas which need to be factored into our thinking and activity over the next two years.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is requested to:

- Note the contents of this report and;
- Agree to the Mid Term Review of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out the strategic direction for housing in Huntingdonshire for the next two years.
- 1.2 To highlight the housing priorities for the District and how these will be achieved by the Council directly and through working in partnership with others under the Do, Enable Influence model of action of the Corporate Plan
- 1.3 To set out an action plan for the strategy that recognises the housing priorities.

BACKGROUND

- 1.4 Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy was adopted in October 2020 and runs until 2025, it was last reviewed in December 2021. The refresh of the Strategy is a Corporate Plan action.to be complete in the next two months..
- 1.5 The current housing strategy was developed to deliver the priorities agreed in the Council's Corporate Plan, at the time, and to identify and agree actions to take forward the three key overarching themes of:

- New homes to meet the needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future
- Homes to enable people in Huntingdonshire to live independent and healthy lives
- Working in Partnership to achieve shared objectives

Under these themes there were a total of 32 objectives in the original action plan.

- 1.6 The review will prioritise alignment of the housing strategy with the Corporate Plan and Place Strategy ensuring that actions will allow the required adjustment as much as possible with the strategic ambitions outlined. In addition, there are a number of other significant policy areas which need to be factored into our thinking and activity over the next two years, these are covered in the review.
- 1.7 Since the original Housing Strategy was published there has been a considerable amount of energy and commitment invested in implementing the strategy and achieving 53% of the objectives in the action plan, that were set at the time. When the five year strategy was developed the Council recognised that we would need to take stock of progress and any changes in legislation.
- 1.8 This review will provide an overview of these main achievements and update on the key results of the 2021 Housing Needs of Specific Groups Report, 2021 Census Data and the Diamond Affordability analysis and identify significant policy areas which need to be considered over the next two years prior to the completion of a new Housing Strategy including the

role housing plays in determining good health and quality of life for our residents.

- 1.9 It will also examine the external constraints affecting our ability to succeed and the positive things that can help us achieve our strategic aspirations and sets out a new set of actions for the remaining life of the strategy and beyond.

COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 2.1 The Panel discussed the Mid Term Review Housing Strategy 2020-2025 Report at its meeting on 7th June 2023.
- 2.2 In response to a question from Councillor Gardener on whether agricultural workers would be included within the definition of key workers, the Panel heard that there is a suggestion that this term maybe replaced with Essential Workers by Government in the future, the Council would expect this type of demand to be identified as part of Housing Needs Surveys in local parishes the Council would then use opportunities to meet that demand, within existing policy in the Local Plan.
- 2.3 Following a question from Councillor Pickering, it was acknowledged that whilst an ongoing issue of under occupation of social housing exists, it is a sensitive issue. The Panel were assured that the Council would continue to work in partnership with Social Landlords to manage the situation as proactively as possible in line with tenancies of those residents affected.
- 2.4 In response to a question from Councillor Harvey regarding Disabled Facilities Grants, the Panel heard that a piece of work would be planned to review and assess the current need and anticipated growth in this area.
- 2.5 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 3.1 The Council could choose to solely update the existing Housing Strategy Action Plan and report back purely on our achievements against the 32 objectives, however this would risk the Council not being able to acknowledge the changes identified in the review.

LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The completion of a Mid Term Review of the Housing Strategy aligns to Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan under the Priority – "In creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations", under the outcome of Improving Housing.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Senior Officers across the Council have reviewed The Housing Strategy Mid-Term Review and their comments have been included in the

document.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be no additional resource implications, in implementing this Strategy, activities relating directly to HDC will be undertaken by existing teams and partnerships are already established to enable other actions to be developed.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Within the Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy, there is a priority of, *“Reducing poverty through better housing, employment and skills”* This review identifies the links across this strategy and the Housing Strategy.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In February 2023 the Council formally approved the Council’s Climate Strategy this recognises that the current cost of living and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In passing this motion, the council committed to not only the delivery of a Climate Strategy but also that in making decisions it will wherever possible seek to contribute to positive environmental and social benefits. The delivery of good quality, secure accommodation for residents supports this ambition.

EQUALITIES

- 9.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 9.2 Understanding the need for housing in HDC helps support this duty.

Appendix 1

Mid Term Review of the Housing Strategy 2020-2025

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Pam Scott, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager
Email: pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk