

Report of the Strategic Director Place to the meeting of the Regeneration & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 7 November 2019

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Subject: Draft Housing Strategy and the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Summary statement:

The current Housing & Homelessness Strategy, A Place to Call Home, 2014-2019, is undergoing review and two separate strategies, Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are being produced. This report provides the draft strategies to Members of the Committee to consider.

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Portfolio:

Regeneration, Planning and Transport

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration & Environment

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The current Housing & Homelessness Strategy, A Place to Call Home, 2014-2019, is undergoing review and two separate strategies, Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy are being produced. This report provides the draft strategies to Members of the Committee to consider.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 'A Place to Call Home: Housing & Homelessness Strategy for Bradford District 2014-2019 was endorsed by the Council Executive on 11 March 2014 and agreed by full Council at its meeting on 25 March 2014.
- 2.2 The strategy is partnership-led and jointly owned by the Council and the Housing Partnership reflecting the reality of delivery of the objectives which requires a range of partners and stakeholders to implement successfully.
- 2.3 The current strategy has the following vision and objectives:

'Everyone in the District should have a place to call home which is suitable for their needs and in which they can thrive'

More Homes: *new homes; better use of existing stock/empty homes; and appropriate infrastructure to support growth*

Safe & Healthy Homes: *housing which is free of hazards; support people to stay healthy; adaptations to stay independent; work with landlords and lettings agents; tackle blight of empty homes*

Affordable Homes: *Adequate supply of affordable homes to buy or rent in relation to incomes; affordable warmth and energy efficient*

Support independence and prevent homelessness: *support for people to live independently and prevent homelessness; raising aspirations and removing barriers to employment to sustain housing independence*

- 2.4 Since the strategy's adoption regular progress reports have been considered by the Regeneration & Environment committee with the last progress report tabled at its meeting held on 18 September 2018.
- 2.5 A report was also presented to the Regeneration & Environment Overview and Scrutiny on 19 September 2019 updating the committee on the progress of the strategy review.

3. REPORT ISSUES

- 3.1 A review of the strategy began in early 2019 with a decision to separate the strategy into a housing strategy and a separate homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. This decision took into account the local context as well as recent government requirement to focus increased attention on homelessness & rough sleeping.

- 3.2 There were several strands to the review including analysing the evidence base and engaging stakeholders and partners.
- 3.3 A range of evidence was used to inform the review process including but not limited to:
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 by arc4
 - Upgrading the demographic evidence 2019 by Edge Analytics
 - Stock Condition Modelling and Health Impact assessment 2016 by BRE
 - Understanding Housing Markets: Bradford 2019, Local Government Association
 - Review of the homelessness evidence base 2019 by Campbell Tickell
- 3.4 A series of engagement events to inform the housing strategy together with a set of co-production events to review and develop the homelessness strategy were held. Meetings were also held with a sub group which was set up by the Regeneration & Environment Committee.
- 3.5 Outcomes from the Housing Strategy and Homelessness engagement events were presented to the committee at the 19 September 2019 meeting. Draft strategies were not available at that stage and the Committee requested: 1. An informal session to consider the draft strategies and 2. For the draft documents to be presented to the November meeting.
- 3.6 Since the meeting, the two draft strategies were produced and went out to public consultation, for a 4 week period ending 21 October 2019.
- 3.7 An informal consultation session with Committee Members was held on 21st October. A summary of comments are set out below:

Housing Strategy

- Members were generally supportive of the structure and content of the report particularly the case study examples.
- Members stated that the introductory place marketing text promoting Bradford as a place to live was good and disagreed with officer proposal to remove it. It was agreed to cut it down to a paragraph.
- Members agreed with the title of the document and the Vision
- Members were happy with the 3 key objectives and the 4 underpinning themes
- Members supported the officer proposed change to the titles of the Objectives from:
 - More Homes, Quality, Independence to:
 - More Homes, Quality Homes & Neighbourhoods and Homes for All.
- Members did not support the suggestion to replace the word “Quality” in the second objective with the word “Better”.
- Members supported the bold commitment to be inclusive.
- Members agreed with new proposed formatting which would improve the layout etc.
- There was support to remove the 4 themed sections which were overly wordy and technical but some concern that valuable information is not lost. Members were reassured that some of the information would be included elsewhere in the strategy and some of the technical information will be moved into the evidence base appendix.

- Members agreed with the proposed targets and were happy to remove the problematic target on Disabled Facilities Grants as DFG's are allocated based on the funding pot from government and Council.
- Members agreed that the "Government Asks" section should be removed but should be used to lobby government for policy changes. This may be considered as a recommendation to the Executive
- Members spoke about how to deal with empty homes, reducing Bed & Breakfast use, meeting the cultural needs of South Asian households, how we could build more affordable homes and more adapted homes, and the role of the Council in delivering housing which the market cannot provide e.g. larger family homes, adapted homes, zero carbon homes etc. Members were also interested in the issue of affordability and economics and its impact on housing. It was agreed that these are potential items for discussion at Scrutiny meetings rather than an explicit request to cover them in this strategy
- It was suggested that a one page leaflet is produced which summarises the strategy for the public

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

- Members agreed with proposals to include a glossary, to explain any specialist terms or services, so the Strategy is easier to understand for non-housing specialists.
- Members were keen to ensure that sofa-surfing was recognised as a form of homelessness
- Members were keen to recognise empty homes as potentially part of the solution for housing homeless households. It was suggested that the action relating to empty homes is broadened out to encourage partners and the Empty Homes team to explore options for linking their programmes / objectives together.

3.8 A summary of comments from the public consultation are given below:

Housing Strategy

Many of the comments received were around formatting and structure including reducing the positive description of the District in the introductory pages, making the final four sections more concise, removing references to overly technical information, and removing the section on Government Asks.

Inclusion of additional case studies and highlighting the good work going on through these case studies was suggested.

More specific comments were:

- Emphasise the size of the BAME population and their housing need including the issue of residential segregation
- Reference to the Homelessness Reduction Act and its impact on Housing Options team capacity
- Exploring opportunities to regenerate areas like Manningham
- Impact of local planning and licensing decisions on the quality of the lived environment
- Suggestion that the planning and licensing system should be directed towards

ensuring that families have safe, quiet, and litter-free environments, comment was made that a lack of effective planning and licensing controls destabilises communities and acts against social cohesion

- A Developer Forum did not agree with the proposed new homes target in the Partial Review and suggested that it is made clear in the housing strategy that the reduced target is a proposal only and not yet adopted
- There was a suggestion to include a theme that relates to building and adapting houses with a view to them being accessible to everyone from day one and future proofed for people as they age
- Reference to working with Adult Social Care to develop appropriate housing to support people to live in the community
- Highlight the positive role played by our social landlord partners in the District

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

Comments included the need to articulate the complexity around affordability, low income and debt more clearly, and a request for the strategy to include more 'plain English' explanations of technical homelessness terminology. Other suggestions were to include links to Bradford's Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Mental Wellbeing Strategy. Other comments were around clarifying the difference between the definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping, and highlighting some of the reasons for rough sleeping. There were also comments about highlighting the role of social landlords through the Commitment to Refer, recognising their role in early intervention to reduce evictions.

3.9 The draft strategies appended to this report have been updated following public consultations and a consultation session with the Regeneration & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub Group held on 21 October 2019.

3.10 Next Steps

Deadline for report to Executive 12 November 2019
Meeting of the Executive 3 December 2019

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1.1 The strategy review and development process was carried out using existing staffing resources. However much of the evidence gathering and analysis was commissioned due to the need for specialist skills not available within the council or due to capacity constraints.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

No significant risk management issues arising from this report

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

No significant legal issues arising from this report

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The strategies will set out an explicit commitment to reducing inequalities and recognises that housing has a big part to play in promoting equality of access and

support, and in tackling inequalities.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The strategy seeks to support sustainability of the district and its communities through prioritising the provision of suitable, affordable housing to meet the needs of our growing population and by retrofitting existing dwelling stock to improve its long term viability. The recent Design Guide and other policy and good practice documents will be used to inform the development of the strategy.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Environmental sustainability and energy efficiency will be key features within the developing strategy. The strategy seeks to improve energy efficiency within the districts stock and to promote the adoption of low and zero carbon technologies in new homes.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The strategy seeks to support the creation of safe, healthy, welcoming and cohesive communities.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The HRA dimension of housing is recognised in the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which includes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family, including adequate housing. The UK is legally bound by this treaty. The Council also has regard to good practice in housing particularly those that adhere to guidance contained in: 'Deciding Rights – Applying the Human Rights Act to Good Practice in LA decision making'.

7.6 TRADE UNION

No issues identified

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

No specific ward implications as both the housing and the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy will apply on a District wide basis. However in the planning of new supply of housing there will be specific targets for specific areas of the District in line with the Local Plan.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

One of the objectives in the developing housing strategy is likely to be supporting independence which will apply to care leavers and the homelessness strategy will also set out our approach to care leavers.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

No specific issues arising from this report

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

There are no options being presented in this report

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members consider the draft strategies and comment as appropriate.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Draft Housing Strategy

Appendix 2: Draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

REOS report 19 September 2019:

[Housing strategy and homelessness and rough sleeping strategy](#)