



To: Councillor Kevin Price Executive Councillor for Housing

Report by: Suzanne McBride, Strategic Director

Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing 7/3/2017 Scrutiny Committee

Wards affected: Abbey Arbury Castle Cherry Hinton Coleridge East Chesterton King's Hedges Market Newnham Petersfield Queen Edith's Romsey Trumpington West Chesterton

## **INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY STATEMENT 2017**

### **Key Decision**

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#### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 This report seeks approval for an Interim Housing Strategy Statement for Cambridge, prior to development of a proposed joint Housing Strategy for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils.

1.2 In particular it seeks approval for a vision for housing in the City, and a set of strategic aims to help achieve the proposed vision, under the following themes:

1.2.1 Increasing housing supply& tackling affordability;

1.2.2 Existing homes and communities; and

1.2.3 Homelessness, housing advice and rough sleeping.

1.3 It outlines the changing policy context against which the interim Statement is set, and the council's current approach and emerging actions aimed at achieving the vision and objectives within that context.

1.4 The proposed Interim Housing Strategy Statement is at Appendix A to this report.

#### **2. Recommendations**

## 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

2.1.1 To approve the aspirational vision laid out in the draft Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 (attached as Appendix A to this report), for Cambridge to be a City where:

- a) The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy;
- b) There is a wide and varied choice of good quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, to meet the needs of a wide range of different households;
- c) Homes are located in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and neighbourhood facilities, appropriate green space, effective transport links and other necessary infrastructure;
- d) Everyone has access to a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible;
- e) People from all walks of life live in harmony, within mixed and balanced communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the needs of residents into the future;
- f) We have strong relationships with residents, developers and partners that enable us to deliver housing and services effectively, and to innovate where appropriate.

2.1.2 To approve the strategic aims laid out in the draft Interim Housing Strategy Statement 2017 (attached as Appendix A to this report) as follows:

- a) Work with stakeholders to accelerate the delivery of housing and infrastructure in and around Cambridge as set out in the Greater Cambridge City Deal and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Devolution Deal;
- b) Provide, and promote provision of, good quality, energy and water efficient homes, in high quality, sustainable environments, alongside appropriate infrastructure;
- c) Ensure that new homes: are as affordable as possible; are available in a range of sizes, types and tenures, to meet a range of needs; and can support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities;

- d) Make the best use of council land to maximise the supply of housing for those who cannot afford to access the private market;
- e) Make and promote the best use of existing homes;
- f) Enable people to live settled lives, within safe and healthy homes and communities;
- g) Manage and maintain the council's homes and estates in a cost-effective way, protecting core services, balancing the budget, and operating within our means;
- h) Promote a well-regulated, fair, good quality private rented sector, and support the provision of longer and more settled tenancies;
- i) Recognise links between health, social care & housing, and work positively with partner organisations to promote and improve quality of life and health and well-being for those most in need;
- j) Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping;
- k) Minimise use of temporary accommodation and maximise access to longer term housing solutions;
- l) Enable people to make informed choices about their housing;
- m) Promote sustained and settled lifestyles and minimise social exclusion.

2.1.3 To note the ongoing and emerging actions being pursued with partners to achieve the vision and strategic aims proposed in the Interim Housing Strategy Statement, attached as Appendix A to this report.

### **3. Background**

3.1 Housing has an essential role to play in everyone's lives. Ideally, everybody should have access to a choice of good quality housing which they can afford, and which meets their particular needs. But housing is not just about bricks and mortar. Quality of environment, community, appropriate infrastructure, and availability of advice and support where needed are also key. The council, working in partnership, has a central role to play across a whole range of housing activities, to help to enable people to access appropriate housing and live healthy, safe and settled lives.

3.2 Cambridge is experiencing significant housing growth, and is recognised as a major contributor to the national economy. But with economic success comes considerable housing pressure. Cambridge is recognised as having some of the highest house prices and private rents in the country – higher indeed than in some parts of London. It is essential that the council works closely with partners to increase housing supply and tackle housing affordability, within high quality, mixed and sustainable communities.

3.3 The council, in retaining its own housing stock, is the largest single landlord in the City, with responsibility for managing and maintaining its homes and estates in a cost-effective way.

3.4 Over a quarter of households in the City live in the private rented sector, and the size of the sector is growing. It is important that the council works with landlords and letting agencies to ensure that tenants can live in good quality, well-managed homes.

3.5 Everyone's housing needs are different, and some people need additional advice and/or support to live independently. The council, with partners, has an important part to play in promoting and improving quality of life and health & well-being for those most in need.

3.6 Homelessness and rough sleeping are on the rise, and the council plays a central role in working with partners to tackle these issues, with a strong focus on prevention.

3.7 Dealing with these issues is often far from straightforward, and there are some major challenges to be overcome, as well as opportunities to be grasped. It is therefore important that the council has a clear vision and strategic aims in relation to housing and housing services, which can be communicated to residents, partners, developers, and others with an interest in dealing with the City's housing issues.

3.8 The council has close strategic links with South Cambridgeshire District Council, and many common issues to deal with. There are plans for a joint Housing Strategy to be developed between the two districts, to tie in with the development of a new joint Local Plan covering the two districts. Discussions are also starting to be had around having a Housing Strategy for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

3.9 This draft Interim Housing Strategy Statement aims to: outline the context within which the council, together with its partners, is operating; clarify and communicate the council's vision and strategic aims; and summarise ongoing and emerging actions to achieve the proposed vision and aims; prior to a joint Strategy or Strategies being developed.

3.10 South Cambridgeshire District Council is also planning its own Statement for its March 2017 decision-making cycle. The aim is for the two Statements to help form the basis of the proposed joint Housing Strategy across the two districts.

3.11 Cambridge City Council's previous Housing Strategy ran from 2012 to 2015. Consultation was carried out on a proposed new Strategy in 2015, but that was put on hold following a number of significant national policy announcements, which cast doubt on whether the proposed Strategy could be implemented. For example: a 1% annual rent cut for social housing; a proposed levy on councils based on notional sales of 'higher value' homes; phasing out of lifetime tenancies for social housing tenants; requirements for starter homes on new developments; etc.

3.12 Since then, new opportunities have begun to emerge – not least plans for increasing housing delivery through the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Devolution deal. Government intentions have started to become a little clearer, although detailed guidance on some of the proposals is yet to be issued.

3.13 Setting a vision and achieving our aims and objectives in a period of such significant change is challenging, and further change may mean that we need to rethink some of our approach. However, in some ways this makes it even more important that we have our own strategic framework within which we aim to operate and implement change. The Statement aims to try and be flexible enough to deal with national policy change as it emerges, and to explore and embrace new opportunities.

3.14 The Statement is based around three main themes:

3.14.1 Increasing housing supply & tackling affordability;

3.14.2 Existing homes and communities; and

3.14.3 Homelessness, housing advice and rough sleeping.

3.15 It is set within the context of the council's corporate objectives and a number of other strategies and policies. It also draws on responses to the Housing Strategy consultation carried out in 2015.

3.16 The Homelessness, Housing Advice & Rough Sleeping chapter also aims to meet the council's statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy. The proposed strategic approach to homelessness has been incorporated into this Statement, instead of having a separate homelessness strategy

document. This ensures that how we deal with homelessness issues is set firmly within the wider housing context.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

The Interim Housing Strategy Statement will form part of the framework within which decisions are made on the allocation of council resources – eg through the Medium Term Financial Statement and annual budget rounds.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications.

### **(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

The Statement is aimed at meeting the housing and housing-related service needs of a wide range of people with differing needs. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out, and the drafting of the Housing Strategy Statement has taken into account many of the issues raised.

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

Nil net climate change impact.

Although the Housing Strategy Statement outlines plans for new housing development, it does not in itself propose any new plans which have not already been agreed, or where agreement or approval will not be sought through other channels.

The Statement proposes a housing vision for Cambridge, including good quality, sustainable homes in high quality, sustainable environments, served by appropriate green space.

To help achieve this, one of the strategic aims includes providing good quality, energy and water efficient homes.

Reference to the council's ongoing approach includes: seeking to promote high quality design across all tenures; and an ongoing programme through the council's Carbon Management Plan, to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in sheltered and temporary housing schemes.

Emerging actions include: implementing a new Sustainable Housing Design Guide, setting out quality standards for homes to be built through the Housing Development Agency.

**(e) Procurement**

There are no procurement implications.

**(f) Consultation and communication**

**Consultation**

Consultation was carried out on a new draft Housing Strategy for Cambridge in the summer of 2015. The proposed Strategy was subsequently put on hold, but the results of that consultation have been used to inform this proposed Interim Housing Strategy Statement.

Partners were involved in carrying out a review of homelessness in 2015, through the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group, to inform the homelessness and rough sleeping elements of the proposed Strategy. A Homelessness and Rough Sleeping action plan was then developed with partners during 2016.

The results of these consultations have been used to draw up this Housing Strategy Statement.

Other elements of the Statement are based around strategies, policies and approaches already agreed/approved, or being developed through separate channels.

**Communication**

The Interim Housing Strategy Statement, if approved, will be communicated: through a news release; by email to key partners; through Cambridge Matters; and via Twitter. It will also be published on the Housing Strategy pages of the council's website.

**(g) Community Safety**

Community Safety issues are taken into account in the Interim Housing Strategy Statement.

Included in the vision is that: residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible; and that people from all walks of life live in harmony, within mixed and balanced communities.

The strategic aims include: enabling people to live settled lives, within safe and healthy homes and communities; preventing homelessness and rough sleeping; and promoting sustained and settled lifestyles & minimising social exclusion.

The council's current approach and emerging actions include: treating anti-social behaviour and hate crime seriously, and being an active member of the Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership; improving our approach to dealing with domestic abuse; and measures to prevent and tackle rough sleeping.

## **5. Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Housing Strategy Consultation 2015 - Analysis of Results
- Homelessness Review 2015

## **6. Appendices**

Appendix A: Housing Strategy Statement 2017

## **7. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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