

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Housing & New Homes Committee

## Agenda Item 64

**Subject:** Draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029

**Date of meeting:** 13 March 2024

**Report of:** Rachel Sharpe, Executive Director - Housing Neighbourhoods & Communities

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**Ward(s) affected:** All

### For general release

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The last Housing Strategy was agreed in 2015 and expired in 2020. This report summarises the process for developing a new Housing Strategy and presents a draft strategy for review by members prior to public consultation.
- 1.2 The Housing Strategy underpins delivery of a number of priorities in the Council Plan 2023 to 2027. It informs other strategic plans and strategies, including the City Plan, the Economic Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Asset Management Strategy, and others.
- 1.3 A new Housing Strategy for the city will need to consider all the challenges and opportunities that the current and expected future social, economic, and legislative conditions create. The draft strategy proposes five strategic priorities and sixteen areas for improvement to deliver our long-term goal of 'Homes for Everyone'. It outlines the council's contribution, but also recognises that we cannot achieve this on our own. The strategy, therefore, is also a call to action. We need to work with our partners, residents and communities to achieve better housing outcomes for the city. The consultation will ask for views on our proposals and seek creative and innovative solutions to the city's housing crisis.
- 1.4 A final draft of the strategy will return to the Housing & New Homes Committee following consultation. It will be accompanied by a Year 1 action plan, to be updated annually.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees that the draft strategy (Appendix 1) should go forward for public consultation.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees to the consultation plan (Appendix 2).
- 2.3 That Committee notes the timetable (summarized in paragraph 3.13) for finalising and adopting the housing strategy.

### **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 Over the last decade Brighton & Hove has been significantly affected by the national housing crisis. There is a shortage of homes which meet the needs of our residents, and rents and house prices are increasing faster than incomes. Although we experience many of the same housing problems as elsewhere, there are additional pressures because of the city's unique character and history.
- 3.2 We know we need to make the most of the housing that we already have. Around eighty per cent of the homes that will exist in 2050 have already been built. Many properties, across all types of tenure, need work to ensure that that they are suitable, safe and sustainable, both now and in the future.
- 3.3 There have also been major legislative and regulatory changes impacting social housing landlords following the Grenfell Tower tragedy. This means that the council must invest in improving the quality of council homes and estates, prioritising building and fire safety improvements.
- 3.4 The private rented sector provides accommodation for a third of the city's households. We will continue to work with landlords to improve standards in the private rented sector, using our powers to enforce essential work if required.
- 3.5 Improved energy efficiency plays a major role in reducing the city's carbon footprint. It also reduces costs for households and helps tackle the cost-of-living crisis. We will invest in improving the energy efficiency of council homes and, where possible, support other residential property owners to make improvements.
- 3.6 Achieving the right mix of market and affordable housing types is challenging. Pressure on land for development is high and many potential sites are hard to develop. We need to increase the supply of high-quality homes that meet the needs of our communities. We will work to increase the number of affordable homes using the full range of levers at our disposal.
- 3.7 Through our strategy we want to create places where people are proud to live. As part of our programme to provide new homes we will incorporate the physical and social infrastructure for people and communities to thrive. This includes working with our partners to develop safe, healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods.
- 3.8 The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) changed our legal duties towards households facing homelessness. We will increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness and reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation. This is not only unsuitable for many, but the use of temporary accommodation places significant pressures on the council's

budget. We have a duty to focus our assistance on people in urgent housing need.

- 3.9 The city has seen an increase in people with support needs, including supported housing. This includes the growing number of older people, people with physical or learning disabilities, people with autism and people with mental health and substance misuse needs. Housing, adults and children’s services, and the NHS need to collaborate to support people to live independently. Through promoting healthy housing for our residents, the strategy will contribute to the Council Plan priority of better health and wellbeing for all and reducing health inequalities.
- 3.10 The Council Plan 2023 to 2027 commits us to becoming a responsive council with well-run services. This means we need to get better at listening to and engaging with our residents. We have more work to do to ensure that our housing services are accessible, fair and inclusive. We are also clear that, to deliver improved services and better housing outcomes, we must collaborate with our local and regional partners.
- 3.11 Sources of evidence use to produce the draft strategy include data from the Census, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2023, the STAR survey of council tenants, and a range of housing service and performance data. We have also drawn on evidence from needs assessments and other plans and strategies.
- 3.12 The proposed priorities and areas for improvement in the draft strategy have been developed through cross-directorate engagement within the council and tested with members of the Housing & New Homes Committee and policy committee chairs. We have also engaged with strategic partners, including registered social housing providers and local NHS trusts. Further engagement will take place during the public consultation period to test these proposals with a wider audience. We will also seek views on how we best deliver our priorities in working towards our ambitious long-term goal of ‘Homes for Everyone’.
- 3.13 The proposed timetable for the agreement of the final strategy is as follows.

Launch of public consultation	18 March 2024
Close of public consultation	19 May 2024
Housing & New Homes Committee	June 2024*
Full Council	July 2024*
* <i>date to be confirmed</i>	

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 The Deregulation Act (2015) removed the requirement for local housing authorities to produce a housing strategy. The option of not producing a housing strategy has been tested with members of the Housing & New Homes Committee and policy committee chairs. Members agreed to proceed with the production of the strategy.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 Following discussion with senior officers and councillors, we propose a period of eight weeks' public consultation on the draft strategy to run from 18 March to 19 May 2024. While this is not a statutory consultation, best practice guidance indicates that we should consult with interested parties for a period of between six and twelve weeks. We will market and promote the consultation widely, through social media and communications channels as well as publicity material in public buildings, including housing offices, libraries, community venues and family hubs. As well as general promotion, we will target publicity to ensure we reach our strategic partners as well as seldom-heard groups and communities. The public consultation forms part of a longer process of engagement with internal and external stakeholders which began in November 2023 and will continue during the formal consultation period.
- 5.2 We have used findings from council and partner consultation and engagement exercises to inform the first phase of strategy development. This includes consultation and engagement on the Adult Learning Disability Strategy (2019), care needs assessment for adults under 70 (2019), older people's housing (2019), Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2020), review of Area Panels (2022), the Autism Strategy (2023), Additional and Selective Licensing (2023), Community Safety Strategy (2023), the STAR survey of council tenants (2023), Antisocial Behaviour (ongoing), Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (ongoing).
- 5.3 Consultation responses can be submitted on the council website, with copies of the survey in other formats available on request. The council will provide resource material for community groups and others who wish to engage their members or service users in submitting a response. The consultation will be promoted by the council's communication team and through mailing lists of partners and community groups across the city. Council tenants and leaseholders will also be consulted through the Area Panels.
- 5.4 Initial work on the equality impact assessment has identified a number of groups detailed in the consultation plan where we will proactively seek responses to address gaps in our knowledge. While it would delay approval of the final strategy, there remains an option to extend the period of consultation should we be unsuccessful in reaching key groups of

stakeholders. This will be kept under review by the project group during the consultation period.

5.5 The consultation plan is at Appendix 2.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 This report seeks approval from the Housing and New Homes Committee for public consultation on the draft housing strategy, prior to its final agreement in the summer.

## **7. Financial implications**

7.1 The consultation process is estimated to cost between £3,000 and £5,000 and will be met from current budget resources for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

7.2 The financial implications arising from this strategy will need to form part of the budgeting setting processes and managed within budget constraints. In addition, this strategy may have budgetary impact on other service areas across the council which will need to be quantified as the strategy is implemented.

Name of finance officer consulted: Monica Brooks      Date consulted  
23/2/24

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 Under Part 3 of the Council's constitution, adoption of the Housing Strategy is reserved to Full Council as part of the Policy Framework.

Name of lawyer consulted: Simon Court      Date consulted 27/02/24

## **9. Equalities implications**

9.1 Work on an equalities impact assessment is underway and the final assessment will accompany the strategy when it returns to committee for approval. Initial findings indicate that, while the council collects and uses equalities data to inform housing service, policy and strategy development, our information is partial and there are gaps. The consultation plan details how we will seek responses in relation to groups and protected characteristics where this is the case.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

10.1 Housing is one of the largest contributors to the city's CO2 emissions. The draft Housing Strategy includes actions to ensure that new housing maintains a high standard of design to minimise impact on the environment and reduce fuel costs, that we make best use and improve the existing housing stock.

## **11. Other Implications**

### **Social Value and procurement implications**

- 11.1 The draft strategy contains a commitment to seek Social Value through our procurement and other activities. For example, our in house repairs and maintenance service provides opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships to local people.

### **Crime & disorder implications:**

- 11.2 The strategy reinforces the continued need for services to support rough sleepers and those experiencing domestic violence, and, on improving joint working with the police and other partners to ensure issues of harassment and hate crime are tackled effectively.

### **Public health implications:**

- 11.3 Poor quality, unaffordable, inappropriate or lack of housing have a direct impact on the ability of residents to maintain their health, wellbeing and independence. Measures to improve housing quality, tackle health and safety hazards, improve the environment and increase community cohesion will have a positive impact on health and contribute to tackling health inequalities.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **Appendices**

1. Draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029
2. Consultation plan