

Brighton & Hove City Council

Agenda Item 62

Cabinet

Subject: Housing Strategy 2024-2029

Date of meeting: 26 September 2024

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing & New Homes

Contact Officer: Interim Corporate Director for Housing, Care and Wellbeing – Housing Lead

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Ward(s) affected: All wards

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The last housing strategy for Brighton & Hove was agreed in 2015 and expired in 2020. This report seeks the endorsement of the Cabinet for a new Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 prior to its adoption by Full Council on 24 October 2024. An earlier draft strategy was considered by the Housing & New Homes Committee on 13 March 2024 prior to public consultation.
- 1.2 The draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 sets out how we plan to improve housing outcomes against five priorities:
 - i. Improve housing quality, safety and sustainability
 - ii. Deliver the homes our city needs
 - iii. Prevent homelessness and meet housing need
 - iv. Promote improved health and wellbeing for all
 - v. Provide resident focused housing services
- 1.3 The draft housing strategy contributes to the delivery of all four strategic outcomes in the Council Plan 2023 to 2027. It contains actions that will help us create a city to be proud of, a fair and inclusive city, and a healthy city where people thrive. It also contributes to our goal of being a responsive council with well-run services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommends the draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 set out at Appendix 1 to go to Full Council for approval.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agrees the Year 1 Action Plan set out at Appendix 2.
- 2.3 That Cabinet receives a report on the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 on an annual basis.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Over the last decade Brighton & Hove has been significantly impacted 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 that 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 they are suitable, safe and sustainable, both now and in the future. 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 its homes and estates and to prioritise building and fire safety improvements.
- 3.3 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 where necessary.
- 3.4 Improved energy efficiency plays a major role in reducing the city's carbon footprint. It also reduces costs for households, helping 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.
- 3.5 Achieving the right mix of market and affordable housing types is a significant challenge for the city. Pressure on land for development is high and many potential sites are hard to develop. We want 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, in particular additional council homes, using the full range of levers at our disposal. We also 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 to thrive. This includes working with our partners to achieve safe, healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods.
- 3.6 The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) changed our legal duties towards households facing homelessness. We must increase our effectiveness in preventing homelessness and reduce the number of households in temporary and emergency accommodation. This is not only unsuitable for

many, but also places significant pressures on the council's budget. We have a duty to focus our assistance on people in urgent housing need, including those fleeing domestic abuse and people sleeping rough.

- 3.7 The city has seen an increase in people with more complex support needs, including the need for various forms of 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 work better together to support people to be more resilient and as independent as possible. Through promoting healthy housing for our residents, the strategy contributes to the Council Plan priority of better health and wellbeing for all and reducing health inequalities.
- 3.8 The Council Plan commits us to becoming a responsive council with well-run services. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act (2023) regulates the activities of social housing providers including the council and sets standards for their conduct and performance. It aims to give tenants a real voice and requires landlords to be more transparent about their performance. This means we need to get better at listening to and engaging with our residents. We have 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.
- 3.9 The strategy and accompanying action plan outline the council's contribution to improving housing outcomes in the city, but it acknowledges that we cannot achieve this on our own. The strategy is also a call to action. We urge our partners, residents and communities to work with us to deliver our ambitious long-term vision of homes for everyone in Brighton & Hove.
- 3.10 The draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 is at Appendix 1. It is accompanied by an action plan for the current financial year (Appendix 2). The action plan will be updated annually with the development of the action plan for 2025/26 scheduled to begin in the autumn. A progress report for 2024/25 will accompany the refreshed action plan for 2025/26. Key areas of progress to date on the Year 1 Action Plan are outlined below:

Improve housing quality, safety and sustainability

- £13.9 million allocated to health & safety improvements.
- Additional HMO licensing implemented July 2024.
- Selective licensing implemented in September 2024.
- 300 solar panels installed on council homes.

Deliver the homes the city needs

- Construction to begin on 294 new affordable homes to rent and 137 new homes in design phase.
- 20 long term empty homes back into use, on track to exceed target of 35.
- 54 homes being bought back into council ownership and 21 homes at St Aubyns approved.

Prevent homelessness and meet housing need

- New housing allocations policy to be approved.
- 55 vulnerable tenants helped to sustain their tenancy.
- New Supported Accommodation through Single Homelessness Pathway commissioned.
- 16/17 year-old and Care Leavers' Housing Protocols to be approved.

Support improved health and wellbeing for all

- Work started on 28 supported homes for people with acquired brain injury and/or physical disabilities.
- £3.97 million allocated for housing adaptations.

Provide resident focused housing services

- STAR survey of tenants & residents.
- Roll out of trauma informed practice training.
- 18 Local Authority Housing Fund units already secured, a bid for a further 25 units agreed.

3.11 The proposed priorities and areas for improvement in the draft strategy have been developed through cross-directorate engagement within the council and were tested earlier in the year 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 took place during eleven weeks of public consultation. A report on the main themes arising from the consultation and the council's initial response is at Appendix 3.

3.12 Sources of evidence used to produce the housing 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 relevant needs assessments and other plans and strategies. Consideration of the equality impacts of the proposed priorities and areas for focused action can be found in Appendix 4.

3.13 A report to the Housing & New Committee 13 March 2024, prior to public consultation, can be found on the council website [here](#).

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 The Deregulation Act (2015) repealed the Secretary of State's power to require local housing authorities in England to produce a housing strategy. The option of not producing a housing strategy was tested with members of the Housing & New Homes Committee and policy committee chairs. Members agreed to proceed with production of the strategy. The vision of the housing strategy is 'Homes for everyone'. An updated housing strategy and action plan is key to delivery of this Council Plan priority.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 Findings from council and partner consultation and engagement exercises were used to inform the development of an initial draft housing strategy. This included 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 Strategy (in development), Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (in development).
- 5.2 Formal consultation on the draft housing strategy ran for 11 weeks from 18 March to 2 June 2024. When the consultation closed, we had received 347 responses. Of these, 294 were from members of the public, including 265 from residents of the city. 53 responses were submitted on behalf of groups, networks and organisations. Most were received through Your Voice, the council's online consultation platform. A small number of responses were sent by email or post. For comparison purposes, 208 responses were received over a two-stage formal consultation on the Housing Strategy 2015 to 2020. Most of these were from professionals and organisations.
- 5.3 The consultation report at Appendix 3 summarises key themes and issues arising from the consultation. The consultation report also sets out the council's response to the feedback. There was strong support for the proposed priorities and areas for focused action. There was also detailed feedback on the content of the strategy. Action arising from this feedback has led to one or more of the following: feedback to consultees on work already underway; amendments to the draft strategy; inclusion of actions in the accompanying action plan; and identification of issues where the council may wish to lobby central government for additional powers or resources.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Implementation of the Year 1 Action Plan for 2024/25 will need to be managed from the resources available during this financial year. The financial implications arising from the implementation of this strategy from 2025/26 onwards will need to form part of the budget setting processes and be managed within budget constraints. In addition, the strategy may have budgetary impact on other service areas across the council which will need to be quantified as the strategy is implemented. Significant elements of the strategy rely on financial and other resources from partners to ensure successful delivery, including but not limited to Homes England, MHCLG and the NHS.

6.2 The gross budgets for 20204/25 for both Housing General Fund services and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are shown below:

Housing General Fund Services	24/25 Gross Budget
Expenditure	£'000
Adaptations	0.783
Homemove	0.130
Housing Options	3.113
Private Sector Housing	0.950
Rough Sleepers and Supported Housing	6.971
Strategy & Supply	0.241
Temporary Accommodation	26.527
Travellers	0.495
Grand Total	39.211

Housing Revenue Account	2024/25 Gross Budget
Expenditure	£'000
Housing Investment & Asset Management	5,664
Housing Management & Support	7,192
Housing Strategy & Supply	1,495
Repairs & Maintenance	18,648
Tenancy Services	14,864
Major repairs Reserve	16,516
Capital Financing Costs	8,825
Contribution to / (from) reserves	3,266
Total Expenditure	76,470

6.3 The 2024/25 HRA capital programme reflects the required investment in Health & Safety, Building Safety and Fire Safety compliance alongside the planned maintenance, improvement programmes, major capital projects to council housing as well as new supply projects, linking investment plans to the Housing Strategy. Implications arising from the strategy for 2024/25 will need to be managed within the resources approved for 2024/25. Capital budgets are reported to Cabinet as part of the council's Targeted Budget Management (TBM) process with variations reported and approved as part of the main TBM report. The budget setting cycle for 2025/26 will further reflect the required investment based on latest information provided through surveys and due diligence work being undertaken, the implications from the Housing Strategy will be included within the 2025/26 proposals.

- 6.4 New projects, in particular New Supply projects are brought to cabinet on a case-by-case basis when approved these are added to the HRA capital programme in year.
- 6.5 The total opening capital programme budget for 2024/25 is £89.735m, the breakdown of which is outlined in the table below.

Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme		Opening Budget £'000
Health & Safety		13,914
Major Works		19,495
Planned Works		8,463
Sustainability		9,275
Other		3,157
New Supply		35,431
Grand Total		89,735

Name of finance officer consulted: Monica Brooks Date consulted 5 September 2024

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 Under Part 2A 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 20 August 2024

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 The vision of the housing strategy is 'Homes for everyone'. This is derived directly from the Council Plan 2023 to 2027 and forms part of the council's vision for a 'Better Brighton & Hove for all'. It is anticipated that the housing strategy will lead to improved outcomes relating to the condition and supply of housing across the city as well as promoting resilience and improved health and wellbeing. The strategy also outlines the council's commitment to work with communities and a wide range of partners. Such partnership working is particularly important as the council only owns a small proportion of the city's housing stock.
- 8.2 The anticipated benefits are expected to particularly affect those who are currently not suitably housed. This includes many of those covered under protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010). It will also impact those with intersecting characteristics and people with care experience which the council has determined should be treated as a protected characteristic.

- 8.3 Consideration of the equality impacts of the proposed priorities and areas for focused action in the housing strategy is at Appendix 4. The Equality Impact Assessment contains 10 recommendations with associated actions cross referenced to the Action Plan.

9. Sustainability implications

- 9.1 Housing is one of the largest contributors to the city's CO2 emissions. Reducing the energy used to build, heat and operate homes is key to achieving our Net Zero ambitions. The draft Housing Strategy includes measures to improve the energy performance of council homes, support property owners to improve their properties and to enforce energy performance standards in line with legislation. It also seeks to ensure that the delivery of new homes is resource efficient and has minimal impact on the natural environment and identify opportunities to enhance the environment.
- 9.2 Helping residents to live in well-insulated, efficiently heated, healthy council homes addressing fuel poverty issues remains a key long-term objective, which is supported through the HRA capital programme. The five-year programme sets out resources of £30.800m; an average investment of £6.160m per annum. This includes investment in making improvements to communal and domestic heating systems as well as identifying opportunities to install energy efficient & low carbon heating systems. The council's solar PV programme is also being taken forward.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1 Poor quality, unaffordable, inappropriate or lack of housing directly impacts people's ability to maintain their health, well-being 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.

Other Implications

11. Procurement implications

- 11.1 The Best Value Duty requires the council to seek continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions, considering a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The draft strategy aims to maximise overall value, including social value through our procurement and other activities. We encourage the use of local suppliers and contractors as well as identifying other opportunities to add value, for example, our in-house repairs and maintenance service provides opportunities for work experience and apprenticeships to local people.

12. Crime & disorder implications:

12.1 The strategy reinforces the continued need for services to support rough sleepers and those experiencing domestic abuse, and, on improving joint working with the police and other partners to ensure issues of harassment and hate crime are tackled effectively. It also identifies the need to create safe homes and neighbourhoods and to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour on our estates.

13. Conclusion

13.1 The draft housing strategy has been amended following public consultation. An action plan for the current business year sets out more detailed measures to improve housing outcomes in the city. This report seeks support from the cabinet for the strategy, including aspects which require cross-directorate collaboration or work with external partners.

Supporting Documentation

None

Appendices

1. Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029
2. Action plan 2024/25
3. Consultation report
4. Equalities impact assessment

