

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 04/05/2021

Subject: Housing Strategy 2021

Report of: Councillor Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing

Report author: Beatrice McGuire, Senior Housing Strategy & Growth Officer

Responsible Director: Tony Clements, Strategic Director for the Economy

SUMMARY

This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of the:

- Housing Strategy (Appendix A);
- Homebuy Allocations Scheme (Appendix B);
- Housing Strategy Consultation Summary Report (Appendix C), and note the
- Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix D)

The Housing Strategy sets out five key objectives for housing, with an action plan to meet specified commitments under those objectives.

The Home Buy Allocation Scheme sets out the Council's approach to prioritising applicants on low to medium incomes who are seeking low cost home ownership and other intermediate housing options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the summary and analysis of responses to the Housing Strategy consultation process in the Housing Strategy Consultation Summary Report (Appendix C)
2. To note the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix D)
3. To Adopt the:
 - a) Housing Strategy (Appendix A);
 - b) Homebuy Allocations Scheme (Appendix B),

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	More genuinely affordable homes, affordable rents, discourage second homes, bring more empty homes into use, protect our housing estates
Creating a compassionate council	Improved landlord services, ethical debt collection, homelessness prevention and ending rough sleeping, access to affordable tenancies
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Co-production with disabled residents, community engagement, resident led commissions
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Securing more funding for housing, better deals with developers, reducing wasteful spending
Taking pride in H&F	Green estates, becoming the greenest borough
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Retrofitting our council stock to meet decarbonisation targets, planning for a zero-carbon future

Financial Impact

The financial impact which will follow adoption of the Housing Strategy and Homebuy Allocations scheme is likely to include costs and benefits which will need careful consideration prior to implementation. It is expected that separate reports which contain detailed financial implications will be produced for approval by the relevant decision maker at the appropriate time.

For example, the Housing Strategy (Appendix A) includes action plans which will have financial implications and items for consideration may include co-producing a new online digital platform to allocate social housing stock, enabling the delivery of building safety and compliance targets through the Council's capital programme, and exploring funding opportunities to support housing needs and deliver affordable homes.

The costs of consultation relating to proposals for the Council's Housing Strategy have been funded from existing resources and staff time.

Legal Implications

Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives puts Local Housing strategies on a statutory basis and the Government's Explanatory Notes state:

"a local housing strategy is the local housing authority's vision for housing in its area. It sets out objectives and targets and polices on how the authority intends to manage

and deliver its strategic housing role and provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues”.

In addition, section 28 of the Greater London Authority Act 2007 requires that Housing Strategies are *"in general conformity"* with the Mayor of London's London Housing Strategy. Officers consider that the Housing Strategy recommended to Members complies with these statutory requirements.

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Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report - None

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Proposals and Analysis of Options

1. This report recommends that members adopt the Housing Strategy and revised Homebuy Allocations Scheme.
2. The Housing Strategy sets out five strategic objectives for housing. The five strategic objectives are:
 - Working with Residents to Meet Housing Needs,
 - Safe, Sustainable Housing;
 - Make H&F a Great Place to Live;
 - Delivering More Homes for Residents; and
 - Prevent Homelessness and End Rough Sleeping.

3. The five objectives have been arrived at through consultation with residents and stakeholders, and analysis of targets from key documents: H&F business plan and manifesto commitments, the draft London Plan, the Local Plan, the London Housing Strategy, and H&F values.
4. The Council considered updating the Housing Scheme of Allocations, however, as changes to the Scheme were recently adopted at Cabinet on 12 October 2020, no further updates to the Scheme were required at this time.
5. A summary of the adopted changes made to the Housing Allocations Scheme in 2020 are as follows:
 - Change the way social housing is allocated by introducing an online digital housing platform;
 - Allow qualifying households to remain or join the housing register when assisted into the Private Rented Sector via our Homelessness Service;
 - Lower the community contribution threshold for Disabled households;
 - Make an exception to the local residency qualification so that young people are not disadvantaged by time spent outside the borough to access SEN services;
 - Ring fence properties which have been adapted or are suitable for adaptation for disabled households;
 - Give additional priority for young people ready for move-on from Care by increasing their priority award to Band 1 and increase the annual quota for Children Leaving Care from 30 to 40 housing lets; and,
 - That local Lettings Plans be put in place automatically to give local residents priority for all new social housing developments.
6. Reference is made in the Housing Strategy to relevant updates of the Housing Scheme of Allocations.
7. Four of the strategic objectives were arrived at following the resident consultation process. Objective 2 - Safe, Sustainable Housing, was added at a later stage of development to give due regard to the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, and the addition of the sixth Council value; Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency. This was felt necessary due to the vital role housing will play in reducing carbon emissions in the borough.
8. Throughout the Housing Strategy, reference is made to several specific Council strategies. These strategies are either current, or in development and due for adoption within the lifetime of this strategy. These are referred to as 'linked strategies'. These references are made where action points from the 'linked strategy' fulfil commitments made in the Housing Strategy. This method is used to avoid unnecessary repetition of action points in multiple documents, and to draw attention to the broad scope of work underway in line with the objectives of the Housing Strategy.
9. 'Linked strategies' referenced in the Housing Strategy include:

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (in development)
 - Asset Management Strategy
 - Older People's Housing Strategy
 - Disabled People's Housing Strategy (in development)
 - Resident Involvement Strategy
 - Defend Council Homes Policy
 - Housing Energy Strategy
 - Home Buy Allocation Scheme
 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy
 - Climate and Ecology Strategy (in development)
10. The option was considered to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy alongside the Housing Strategy. However, more time is needed to complete a full, separate consultation for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. To prevent delay to the adoption of the Housing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be published at a later date
11. Consideration was also given to publishing a new Tenancy Strategy with the Housing Strategy. However, it was preferable to publish the Tenancy Strategy separately to allow for a full and proper consultation on the draft Tenancy Strategy. Disaggregating the documents will prevent delay to the adoption of the Housing Strategy and Homebuy Allocations Scheme
12. The Homebuy Allocations Scheme has been updated to include key workers, adapt contact arrangements in light of Covid-19, and increase income thresholds in Intermediate Housing incomes bands in response to inflation. The bandings are:
- a) 1/3 affordable to households on gross incomes of up to £32,102
 - b) 1/3 affordable to households on gross incomes of up to £48,208
 - c) 1/3 affordable to households on gross incomes of up to £55,957

Reasons for Decision

13. The Housing Strategy sets out the Council's approach to the provision of affordable housing and housing services over the next 5 years. This Housing Strategy has considered and follows the Council's previous Housing Strategy, published in 2015.
14. The Home Buy Allocation Scheme sets out the Council's overall approach to allocating intermediate homes available to applicants on the H&F Home Buy Register. These will be applicants who cannot afford to access open market housing in Hammersmith & Fulham and do not otherwise qualify to access affordable housing for rent that can be accessed under the Housing Allocation Scheme. This document is broadly similar to the Scheme adopted in 2015, with only minor details changed, as described elsewhere in this report.
15. As well as reflecting revised policy positions on tenancy issues, the documents also reflect any relevant updates arising from changes in Mayoral policy;

publication of government regulations; case law and judicial reviews; refinement of definitions; other updates and corrections to previous documents; and other drafting changes made by Council officers. The format of the appended documents are broadly similar to that of documents previously adopted, but changes in policy as described in the Housing Strategy have been made.

Equality Implications

16. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149, the Public Sector Equality Duty (“PSED”). The PSED provides (so far as relevant) as follows:
 - (1) a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
17. The adoption of the revised Housing Strategy documents requires the Council to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) to fully assess what the positive, neutral and/or negative impacts of adopting the changed approach will be on those with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics to which the PSED applies are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
18. The impacts of the delivery of the Housing Strategy vision and actions on groups of individuals with protected characteristics are considered to be positive or neutral. However, officers will continue to monitor the equality implications, to ensure early identification of any adverse impacts regarding the implementation of the Housing Strategy and The Homebuy Allocations Scheme on protected groups.
19. The completed Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix D to this report.

Risk Management Implications

20. Cabinet is asked to approve the Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026 which is in line with the Council's Values and having regard to political, legislative requirements, duties and policy changes both nationally and locally. This includes acknowledging the impact of Covid, listening to and considering the views of residents on the overarching Housing Strategy through co-production and consultation whilst remaining responsive to the potential changes required as the area recovers from the pandemic. The Strategy recognises the needs and expectations of residents having regard to providing secure homes and safe places for our communities to thrive and grow together. Inevitably the Strategy now builds upon and responds to the environmental conditions, climate change, sustainability, optimum use of resources to ensure that there is enough housing supply to enable local businesses to continue to attract and retain the local workforce that they need.

Implications verified by: Michael Sloniowski, Risk Manager, tel: 020 8753 2587

Consultation

21. Full details of the Housing Strategy Consultation are set out in Housing Strategy Consultation Summary Report (Appendix C)
22. To summarise the Housing Strategy consultation process is:
 - Residents were consulted during the development of the Housing Strategy. Consultation took two forms: an online consultation, and focus groups
 - Third sector organisations were invited to contribute to the development of the housing strategy by answering an online questionnaire, 'Housing Strategy Questions for 3rd Sector', in May 2019.
 - Housing associations with stock in the borough were invited to contribute to the development of the housing strategy by answering an online questionnaire, 'Housing Strategy Questions for Housing Associations', in May 2019.
 - The Co-Production Lead was consulted throughout the development of the Strategy regarding involving residents in the process.
 - In May 2019, an email was sent to residents by the Resident Involvement team inviting residents to take part in a Housing Strategy focus group. Two focus groups took place in June 2019, with a total attendance of 13 residents. The focus groups were delivered by the Partnership and Strategy Team, and supported by the Resident Involvement Team.
 - Key messages taken from the questionnaires and focus groups are presented in the Strategy section 'What You Said'. These messages, as well as specific suggestions and comments, also shape the strategy more broadly.
 - Consultation responses contributed to the development of four key objectives for the strategy: Working with Residents to Meet Housing Needs, Make H&F a Great Place to Live, Delivering More Homes for Residents, and

Prevent Homelessness and End Rough Sleeping. (Objective 2 - Safe, Sustainable Housing, was added at a later stage).

23. Quotations from residents are featured throughout the Housing Strategy. Quotes were selected where they best illustrated the views of a number of residents, reflecting the key messages which emerged through the consultation process.
24. Independent and robust investigation commissioned into the root causes of homelessness in our borough has provided a fuller understanding of why homelessness happens. In 2017, H&F established the Rough Sleeping Commission.
25. Below is a summary of the work of the Rough Sleeping Commission:
 - **Stage 1: Literature review**
From February until March 2017, the commission conducted a literature review of international, national and local analysis and good practice, maintaining its focus on the the relevance of this data to H&F. The information gathered enabled the commission to build an accurate picture of why people sleep on the street in H&F.
 - **Stage 2: A call for evidence**
A call for evidence was undertaken in April until June 2017 to gather the views directly from people who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough in H&F, frontline workers and experts in the field. Groundswell were commissioned to conduct a peer led research project with the aim of enabling people with experience of homelessness to contribute to the work of the commission.
 - **Stage 3: Public hearing**
The commission consulted H&F residents on its findings and draft recommendations at a meeting of the Health, Adult Social Care and Social Inclusion Policy and Accountability Committee on 12 December 2017.
 - **Stage 4: Commission Report**
The cabinet endorsed Rough Sleeping Commission's report was published. The report, 'Ending Rough Sleeping in Hammersmith and Fulham', contained recommendations for how to end rough sleeping.

Which can be found at <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/resident-led-commissions/rough-sleeping-commission>

26. The Rough Sleeping Commission's report 'Ending Rough Sleeping in Hammersmith and Fulham' highlights how a complex mix of factors can affect lives in our borough. This report presents the commission's findings alongside key local and national context data and information and gave recommendations which are reflected in the Housing Strategy, with an action plan to be developed further by a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.
27. No consultation was required for the minor update made to the Homebuy Allocations Scheme.

List of Appendices:

Appendix A – Housing Strategy 2021

Appendix B – Homebuy Allocations Scheme

Appendix C – Housing Strategy Consultation Summary Report

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment