

**COMMITTEE:** EXECUTIVE REF NO: E/19/27  
**DATE:** 3 SEPTEMBER 2019  
**SUBJECT:** IPSWICH BOROUGH COUNCIL  
HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE/  
REFRESH

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR NEIL MACDONALD**

**HEAD OF SERVICE: IAN BLOFIELD**

***Short description of report content and the decision requested:***

The Ipswich Borough Council Housing Strategy has been updated to reflect:

- The removal of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping into a separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024
- A new strategic approach to the Private Rented Sector
- A new strategic approach to older persons housing

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Executive approved the draft updated Housing Strategy for public consultation. The draft updated Housing Strategy 2019-2024 was subject to a public consultation exercise from 18<sup>th</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019. The draft updated Housing Strategy was considered by full Council at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

This report recommends that Executive considers and approves the draft strategy for adoption, as required by the Council's constitution.

***Ward(s) affected:***

All

***List of Appendices included in this report:***

- a) Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2019-2024
- b) Appendix 1a – Housing Strategy Action Plan 2019-2024

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*This report was prepared after consultation with:*

*Internal consultees*

*Councillor Neil Macdonald*

*Corporate Management Team*

*Chief Executive – Russell Williams*

*Chief Operating Officer – Helen Pluck*

*Housing Advice Operations Manager – Peter Whittall*

*External consultees*

*N/A*

*The following policies form a context to this report:*

*(all relevant policies must also be referred to in the body of the report)*

*Building a Better Ipswich 2017: The Council's Corporate Plan*

*Economic Development Strategy 2013-26*

*Gateway to Homechoice Allocation Policy 2018*

*Empty Homes Policy 2019*

*Local Plan 2011 - 2031*

*Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024*

*Asset Management Strategy 2018 - 2023*

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW**

*(papers relied on to write the report but which are not published and do not contain exempt information)*

- 1) Housing Strategy Action Plan**
- 2) Ipswich Housing Report**
- 3) The National Context**
- 4) The Local Context**
- 5) Links to other Strategies**
- 6) Housing Strategy Stakeholder Event**
- 7) Older Persons Housing Review – IBC Tenants**
- 8) Annual Housing Strategy Review Report 2018**

## **OTHER HELPFUL PAPERS**

*(papers which the report author considers might be helpful – this might include published material)*

- 1. Building a better Ipswich' – Corporate Plan**
- 2. Economic Development Strategy 2013-26**
- 3. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2013-42**
- 4. Gateway to Homechoice Allocation Policy 2018**
- 5. Empty Homes Policy 2019**
- 6. Local Plan 2011 - 2031**
- 7. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment – updated Nov 2013**
- 8. Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (ANA) for Babergh, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney. May 2017**
- 9. Suffolk Housing Survey 2014**
- 10. Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2017**
- 11. New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan**
- 12. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Suffolk**
- 13. A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk refresh 2016-19**
- 14. A Housing & Health Charter for Suffolk**

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## **1. Introduction**

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- 1.1 In November 2017 the Council adopted the Housing Strategy 2017 – 2022. The Strategy detailed the Council's vision for housing in Ipswich over the next 5 years and what the Council would be doing to try to achieve it. The Strategy incorporated Housing and Homelessness within the same strategy.
- 1.2 In the 18 months since the Housing Strategy was adopted Housing has been, and continues to be, a key government priority with significant changes to date. The most significant being the requirement for Local Authorities to have a separate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.3 Coupled with demographic trends (particularly an ageing population) and an appetite for a new strategic approach to the private rented sector; there is a need to refresh and update the Housing Strategy to ensure it is up to date and able to respond to these changes.
- 1.4 The updated Housing Strategy is returning to Executive following both a public consultation exercise and consideration at Full Council.
- 1.5 The current environment calls for greater partnership working in order to achieve more holistic priorities. The Housing Strategy provides a clear vision and direction to guide the Council's housing activity. The adoption of the Housing Strategy 2019-2024 will aid the Council in delivering an effective future housing service.
- 1.6 The purpose of the Strategy is to cover what the Council can either directly do or influence, with an emphasis on affordable housing and increasing standards.
- 1.7 The Strategy compliments the Local Plan and other key policies, which address areas out of scope for the strategy including housing demand and the infrastructure required to support housing growth.

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## **2. Background**

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- 2.1 The Local Government Act 2003 required all Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy setting out its vision for housing in its area. However, the Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 There are benefits in maintaining a clear housing strategy. The Council as the Strategic Housing Authority decided that it would consult on and adopt a Housing Strategy for the period of 2017-2022 and has followed the same process for the updated Housing Strategy 2019-2024.
- 2.3 The Housing Strategy has been revised and updated to reflect national change; the requirement for all local authorities to have a separate

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and to reflect the new strategic approach to the Private Rented Sector and to older persons housing.

2.4 The main changes are:

- Priority 2 'Improving Access to and the Quality of Existing Housing' now includes further details of the Council's ambitions to work more effectively with the private rented sector (page 19)
- Priority 3 'Meeting the Needs of all Communities and the Challenges of an ageing population' now includes details of the Council's approach to Supporting Older IBC Tenants (page 22)
- Priority 4 'Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping' includes a link to the new stand-alone Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (page 24)

2.5 The updated Housing Strategy 2019-2024 continues to have 2 elements. These are the Strategy and an Action Plan. All the key priority areas, identified in the Action Plan, will be addressed within the 5 year period of the Strategy.

2.6 The Action plan is a robust and responsive document that is reviewed and amended quarterly to ensure it remains focussed and relevant. Updating the Housing Strategy to reflect national change and local appetite for change in terms of working with the Private Rented Sector and renewing focus on housing for older people will ensure that the Housing Strategy and Action Plan continue to direct the work of Housing Services. Officers will continue to develop detailed delivery programmes with associated milestones and target dates to achieve the aims of the updated Housing Strategy.

2.7 It is important that the updated Housing Strategy is firmly based on evidence. The appendices include all the supporting documentation for the Strategy. These documents include:

- An evidence based report 'Ipswich Housing Report 2019'
- The National Context
- The Local Context
- Links to other strategies
- Stakeholder Event (explaining how the four Strategy priorities were agreed at a stakeholder workshop).
- Older Persons Housing Review – IBC tenants
- Annual Housing Strategy Review Report 2018

2.8 The updated Housing Strategy 2019-2024 will now comprise of four identified priorities:

- Enabling building of houses of all tenures
- Improving access to and the quality of existing housing
- Meeting the housing needs of all communities and meeting the challenges of an ageing population.
- Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

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### **3. Relevant Policies**

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- 3.1 This report contributes to achieving 'Quality Homes for All' in the Council's Corporate Objectives, Building a Better Ipswich, February 2017. Acknowledging the fundamental nature of housing, the Strategy will also contribute to a:
- A Strong Ipswich Economy
  - An Enjoyable Place to Live, Work and Study
  - A Healthy Community
  - Safe Communities

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### **4. Options Considered / Under Consideration**

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- 4.1 The Council is not required to have a Housing Strategy. The key options considered are:

Option 1

- 4.2 The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy. As the Strategic Housing Authority there is a need to have a clear Vision and Strategy to guide future housing activity, particularly with the links to economic regeneration and wellbeing. The option of not having a housing strategy is not recommended

Option 2

- 4.3 To approve the new Housing Strategy for the period 2019-2024. This option is recommended.

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### **5. Consultations**

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- 5.1 The draft updated Housing Strategy was subject to a public consultation exercise from 18<sup>th</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019.
- 5.2 4 responses were received via Survey Monkey. This is comparable to the level of responses we received to the last Housing Strategy consultation in 2017.
- 5.3 Overall the feedback was very positive, with a few suggestions for changing the strategy:
- More prominence should be given to particular groups of the population
  - The statistics section could include an unmet need and gap analysis
  - The language could be more committal from an IBC perspective, to convey more ownership and leadership
  - More detail could be included about the funding needed for various initiatives and how they are going to be resourced.
- 5.4 After careful consideration no amendments to Strategy were deemed necessary in light of the feedback through the consultation process.

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## **6. Council Response**

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- 6.1 Council considered the Housing Strategy on 24th July 2019 and provided comments. The comments and responses are summarised below.
- 6.2 *Two comments related to the absence of measurable targets within the action plan.*
- 6.3 *Response:* The Action Plan is a high-level plan for IBC operational areas, and will be backed up by individual plans for each area as the actions are implemented. The Action Plan will be constantly monitored by the IBC Steering Group and is designed to evolve over time as work progresses.
- 6.4 *One comment suggested that a residency requirement be introduced to the Council's allocation policy so that Council houses are given to local people.*
- 6.5 *Response:* The allocations policy is agreed between all partners of Gateway to Homechoice. It allows for applicants who are residents in the Borough to obtain housing both within the Borough and in other participating Council areas. As this system works to the benefit of Ipswich residents in obtaining accommodation, there is no intention to seek a change in the allocations policy which may have the consequence of limiting the supply of housing to Ipswich Residents.
- 6.6 *One comment was to increase the number of shared ownership properties as it would be good for those younger people trying to get on to the housing ladder.*
- 6.7 *Response:* It should also be noted that the requirement for discount home ownership/Starter Homes has been identified through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was last updated in January 2019.
- 6.8 *Other comments supported the greater focus given to housing the ageing population, and also for those with dementia, disabilities and mental health problems.*
- 6.9 No changes have been made to the Housing Strategy 2019-24 as a result of the feedback from Full Council.

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## **7. Environmental Impact Assessment**

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- 7.1 There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this report.

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## **8. Equalities and Diversity Implications**

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- 8.1 Under the general equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 8.2 The protected grounds covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. The equality duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- 8.3 The law requires that this duty to have due regard be demonstrated in decision making processes. Assessing the potential impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is one of the key ways in which public authorities can demonstrate that they have had due regard to the aims of the equality duty.
- 8.4 An equality screening has identified that there is no requirement to undertake a full assessment as the individual activities to deliver the Strategy will be subject to separate assessment at the appropriate time.

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## **9. Financial Considerations**

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- 9.1 There is a budget for the design of the Housing Strategy document and also for the consultation process. The budget for individual activity to deliver the Strategy will either come from existing resources or be sought, in accordance with the Council's Financial Standing Orders, at the appropriate time.

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## **10. Legal Considerations**

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- 10.1 The Deregulation Act 2015, (Section 29) removed the power for the Secretary of State to require Local Authorities to have housing strategies and to prepare housing statements
- 10.2 However, there is no legal bar to a Local Authority to continue to have a Housing Strategy if it wishes.
- 10.3 The consultation followed the Gunning Principles in order for it to be fair, this ensured:
- that the consultation is at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;
  - that the proposer gives sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;
  - that adequate time was given for consideration and response; and



- that the product of consultation was conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.

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## **11. Performance Monitoring**

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- 11.1 The Housing Strategy lasts for five years. The Action plan is reviewed on an annual basis to review progress and the draft updated Housing Strategy and Action Plan will continue to be monitored in this way
- 11.2 Officers will continue to develop a detailed delivery programme with associated milestones and target dates.

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## **12. Conclusions**

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- 12.1 Housing has been, and continues to be, a key priority with significant changes to date. Coupled with demographic trends, particularly an aging population, and an appetite for a new strategic approach to the Private Rented Sector, the Council needs to consider the best way forward.
- 12.2 The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy. As the Strategic Housing Authority, there is a need to have a clear Vision and Strategy to guide future housing activity, particularly with the links to economic regeneration and wellbeing.
- 12.3 The conclusion is that this new Housing Strategy from 2019 to 2024 should be adopted.
- 12.4 The Housing Strategy covers what the Council can either directly do or influence, with an emphasis on affordable housing and increasing standards in the private rented sector. Areas out of scope for the strategy including housing demand and the infrastructure required to support housing growth are covered by other strategies within the Council, predominantly the Local Plan.

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## **13. Recommendations**

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**It is recommended that Executive**

- 13.1 Adopts the draft Housing Strategy at Appendix 1 which has been subject to public consultation and consideration by full Council.**

Reason: To enable a robust structure for housing services work plan over the next 5 years