

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 18 JUNE 2020

TELFORD & WREKIN CONSULTATION DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2020-2025

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR: HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR DAVID WRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR
ECONOMY, HOUSING, TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE**

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The right balance of good quality homes, which are affordable, sustainable and provide variety, choice and accessibility, are essential to the economic prosperity, health and well-being of the people in our borough. A decent home is the foundation upon which people build their lives and housing is a key theme within the Council's high level vision for the borough as set out in our Community Plan '**Our Programme to Protect, Care and Invest to create a better borough, 2019 – 2023**'.
- 1.2 Telford & Wrekin Council is a unitary authority and takes a proactive, innovative and informed approach to meeting local housing needs. Whilst the Council transferred its own housing stock to local housing associations in 1999, as the housing authority for the borough, it retains a vital role in delivering local and national housing priorities.
- 1.3 A lot has been achieved – for example:-
- We are **delivering 1200 new homes every year** using our own assets and accelerating delivery through the Telford Land Deal.
 - We have **increased the number of affordable homes delivered to 300 pa** and delivered 400 new homes for private rent through Nuplace Ltd.
 - Our **Better Homes for All initiative is driving up standards** in the management and maintenance of private rented housing and we have licensed over 200 HMO.
 - We recognise the need to support the most vulnerable access good quality homes **increasing the amount of supported housing by 65% over the last 5 years including delivery of 7 extra care housing schemes** and developing a family based supported living environment for young people including Care Leavers.
 - We have increased well-being grants and **support over 300 people each year to continue to live independently** by providing Disabled Facilities Grant and other assistance
 - We have implemented a **range of initiatives to support care leavers** in finding move-on homes with approved Landlords in accordance with the Council's Care Leaver's Covenant.
 - We are **providing advice and support to over 3,000 people each year** including people who are victims of domestic abuse, veterans and key workers, as well as almost 400 who are at risk of being homeless.
 - Since the outset of the **Covid19 crisis, we have housed or prevented homelessness for over 200 individuals** and working with our partners have successfully moved the majority on from B&B/temporary accommodation –

placing us **2nd** in **MHCLG recent LA rankings for housing/prevention during the current crisis**

- 1.4 We recognise we still have challenges to address both in relation to the homes that will be built and those that we already have, and we are addressing this at a complex and changing time. **The Council’s new draft Housing Strategy 2020-25**, being proposed for consultation, is an essential part of driving the future of housing in our Borough. It sets out how we will focus our efforts to ensure that there is suitable housing for all, and in particular the most vulnerable. It will sit alongside other key documents including the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan and provides a framework for other supporting strategies including the Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy which we are launching in parallel. The Strategy will also support the Council’s aspiration, working with the community and partners, to achieve a carbon neutral Borough by 2030. The consultation phase will also allow for the short and longer term implications of the Covid19 pandemic, which are still emerging, to be considered.
- 1.5 This report sets out the purpose, scope and content of the Strategy which is centred on the following three key objectives:
- **To create sustainable, accessible, affordable and integrated communities.**
 - **To make the BEST use of our existing homes.**
 - **To provide homes to support and empower our most vulnerable people.**

2.	<u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>
2.1	That Cabinet approve the launch of the Council’s draft Housing Strategy, included at Appendix 1, for consultation.

3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	In Strategy will contribute directly to the Council’s priority: <i>‘To support communities and those most in need and work to give residents access to suitable housing’.</i> However, it will also contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the Council’s priorities.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	As a high level overarching strategy this document will have a fundamental and long term borough wide impact.
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	The draft strategy will be published for consultation subject to approval by Cabinet on 18 June 2020. The consultation period will run until 31 August 2020 following which an updated version of the strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for review, seeking formal adoption.	

	The Strategy covers the five year period 2020-25.	
FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes /No	<p>This draft Housing Strategy currently encompasses a number of actions identified within its supporting strategies and policies that have a range of financial implications that are being met from within existing resources or short term funding. The latter will need to be considered in the context of the 5-year plan if this work is to continue.</p> <p>The proposals within this document will allow the Council to continue to make the most effective use of its own resources and seek to attract external funding where possible. It will also influence the funding and investment decisions of others. This will help address a wide range of housing needs but by the provision of appropriate and affordable housing will also benefit all elements of the community through a number of improved outcomes and consequential cost benefits for the Council and wider public sector may arise.</p> <p>Subject to any changes, following consultation further detailed work to assess financial implications will need to be done as the strategy is implemented. Any significant financial implications identified will be reported through future financial management reports to Cabinet and accommodated within future service and financial planning strategies</p> <p>TAS 13.2.2020</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>There is no legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy as required in other specific areas of housing provision, e.g. allocations policy and the homelessness strategy.</p> <p>However, the preparation of such a strategy is deemed as good practice to bring together all relevant policies and strategies which influence housing provision and housing standards, providing clear direction for the Council and its partners in meeting housing expectations.</p> <p>Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 requires local authorities to consider housing conditions in their district and the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation.</p> <p>There is no statutory requirement to consult on the draft housing strategy, however in this case the common law duty to consult is engaged in light of the nature and the impact of the strategy and the likely legitimate expectation of stakeholders, interest groups and individuals.</p>

		<p>As such the consultation must comply with the following:</p> <p>(a) it should be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;</p> <p>(b) the Council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;</p> <p>(c) adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and</p> <p>(d) the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">PM 13/02/2020</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	<p>The Housing Strategy will underpin a series of sub projects and actions necessary to secure and safeguard delivery of the Strategy's' objectives. Impacts, risks and opportunities will be evaluated as these sub projects evolve, with delivery against the Strategy being overseen by Council's Housing Programme Board on behalf of the Cabinet.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	<p>The Strategy will impact on all wards.</p>

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Background

- 4.1 The right balance of good quality homes, which are affordable, sustainable and provide variety, choice and accessibility, are essential to the economic prosperity, health and well-being of the people in our borough. Housing is a key theme within the Council's high level vision for the borough as set out its Community Plan '**Our programme to protect, care and invest to create a better borough, 2019 – 2023**'. Key housing themes from our Community Plan are summarised in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Council Priority Plan & Housing Strategy Priorities.

- 4.2 Whilst the Council transferred its own housing stock to local housing associations in 1999, as the housing authority for the borough, it retains a vital role in delivering local and national housing priorities and ensuring sufficient homes for all, especially the most vulnerable.. We adopt a proactive approach to delivery, working with an existing partner and provider network, as well as brokering new relationships to deliver on our objectives. Through our proactive approach to housing we have already:

Helped secure the delivery of high quality new homes:

- Adopted a **new Local Plan**, which sets out the Council's overall vision and growth strategy for the borough, including how future housing needs will be met with a target of over 17,000 new homes by 2031
- Enabled the delivery of **1,200 new homes** every year (the third best nationally), partly through the use of Council land and assets but also by adopting a supportive and 'business friendly' development management approach including providing pre-application advice, support and viability assessment, and assisting to unlock stalled development sites.
- Accelerated the **delivery of over 600 new homes**, through our unique '**Land Deal**' with Homes England.
- Increased the number of **new affordable homes** provided every year from 100 to 300, through joint working with local housing associations and Homes England and supporting the delivery of wholly affordable schemes.
- Attracted annual **housing investment of over £5 million** from Homes England.
- Delivered almost **400 new homes for rent**, including some at affordable levels and some built to accessible and adaptable and wheelchair standards, through the Council's in house company, Nuplace Ltd.

Helped to improve our existing housing stock:

- Promoted better management and maintenance standards in the private rented sector through the Council's '**Better Homes for All**' programme which is underpinned by an "Educate, Encourage, Enforce" approach.
- Supported home owners and landlords to invest in the maintenance and improvement of their properties through **access to low cost/trusted finance** and directing them to sources of information, advice and accredited traders.
- Taken a proactive approach to **bringing long term empty homes back into use**.
- Relaunched our **Landlord Accreditation Scheme**.
- Operating our own social letting agency – '**Telford Homefinder**' – to help those in housing need to access affordable and safe privately rented accommodation.
- Licenced more than 200 **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** who meet our enhanced licencing standards, with two prosecutions to date addressing poorly managed HMOs.
- Issued the first **Banning Order** in England, preventing the landlord concerned from working in the property industry for up to 5 years;
- Ensured compliance with more than 400 **enforcement notices** to bring properties up to standard.
- Increased **environmental maintenance and enforcement** in 'hot spot' areas, working with local Town and Parish Councils and other partners.

Supported vulnerable people to access good quality housing:

- Completed a detailed analysis to **understand housing needs of vulnerable people** which has informed the development of a **Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy**.
- Helped increase the amount of **supported housing** by 65% over the last five years, including the delivery of **seven new extra care housing schemes**.
- Is **directly delivering** more 'accessible & adaptable' and wheelchair standard homes through its own housing company, Nuplace Ltd.
- **Increased well-being grants** from £191k in 2017/18 to £459k in 2018/19 (in total £2.16m in grants in 18/19).
- Helped around 300 people to continue to **live independently at home** by providing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and other assistance every year.
- Implemented a **range of initiatives to support care leavers** in finding move-on homes with approved Landlords in accordance with the Council's Care Leaver's Covenant.
- Developed a **family based supported living environment** via Shared Lives for 16-17 and 18-24 Care Leavers.
- Provided advice and support to over 3,000 people each year including people who are victims of domestic abuse, veterans and key workers, as well as almost 400 who are at risk of being homeless.
- Provided **support through the Thrive partnership** to help prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.
- **Implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act** and advised over 3,300 people to date.
- Provided **additional support for young homeless clients** in temporary accommodation.

- Secured funding of over **£369,000 to assist with homeless and rough sleepers.**
 - Launched our **homelessness fund-raising** and awareness raising campaign (<https://homeless.telford.gov.uk>).
 - Developed a new **rough sleepers register.**
 - Ensures that there is a place of safety available through emergency **accommodation for all people experiencing domestic abuse**, in accordance with the Council's Domestic Abuse Policy and our status as a White Ribbon Town.
- 4.3 These actions are already having a significant and positive impact in terms of; securing housing delivery that directly responds to housing need, supporting people to access this housing and helping to raise standards in terms of the condition and management of existing homes.
- 4.4 Despite this, and in line with other parts of the Country, the Borough still lacks sufficient suitable homes, some of these homes are unaffordable and others are unsuitable.
- 4.5 In addition, the national policy context for housing is complex and changing, requiring the Council to be responsive and dynamic in its approach:
- There continues to be a very strong emphasis on building more new homes across the country, with a series of Government planning and housing policy measures aimed at all types of providers and individuals, seeking to increase and speed up new housing delivery.
 - The Government has announced that further funding for new affordable homes will be provided beyond the end of the current Shared Ownership & Affordable Homes Programme in March 2021 with a focus being on home ownership.
 - New and emerging policies are focussing on improving housing design and quality, physical accessibility, environmental performance and safety alongside modern methods of construction.
 - An urgent requirement to deliver housing for older and vulnerable people.
 - Limited national funding for housing renewal and improvement, with the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants and related measures.
 - Continuation of Welfare Reform changes, however planned changes to the funding of specialist housing have not been introduced.
 - Introduction of a series of measures to help protect consumer rights in housing.
 - The prevention and mitigation of Climate Change.
- 4.6 At a local level the Borough experiences some key housing related challenges which include;
- The borough is continuing to grow and change, while the population is ageing and becoming more diverse – as such there is a need to maintain an up-to-date and comprehensive understanding of the borough's housing needs.
 - There are high levels of new home building and an increasing range of housing providers – the housing tenure mix is becoming more diverse and like the country as a whole.
 - There is a continuing unmet need for more affordable homes, while homelessness and rough sleeping is still a significant issue.
 - Some homes in the borough require urgent renewal as part of wider regeneration programmes.
 - There are concerns about physical and management standards in some parts of the borough's housing stock.
 - The delivery of new homes is challenging in an area where many housing sites are brownfield in nature, with historical uses linked to past mining or other

industrial activity. This, combined with historical fluctuations in the housing market, has left a number of housing developments in the borough stalled. Often located within some of the more disadvantaged parts of the Borough, these sites can be a blight on communities and hotspots for anti-social behaviour. However they also present a valuable opportunity to deliver much needed housing and kick-start regeneration of these communities if ways can be found to address viability and other constraints.

- 4.7 In this context, this report presents for consideration a new '**draft**' Housing Strategy 2020-25 for the Borough. The Strategy establishes a series of Objectives which will underpin our approach to tackling some of the ongoing housing issues faced within the Borough in order to ensure that access to suitable housing becomes an achievable goal for all of our residents. The three objectives are summarised below:

Objective 1: To create sustainable, accessible, affordable and integrated communities

- Review the Council's long term development plan for the borough - the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan – to help make Telford & Wrekin a great place to live.
- Promote high standards in all new build homes and ensure that they contribute positively towards the Council's climate change commitments.
- Work with our partners to achieve a real net gain in the number of truly affordable homes available.
- Continue to provide more new sustainable homes through Nuplace and examine new opportunities for the Council to be a direct home provider.

Objective 2: To make the BEST use of our existing homes

- Support the positive redevelopment and improvement of existing homes to address climate change and reduce fuel poverty.
- Continue to work to bring empty homes back into use.
- Create a new focus on housing renewal in the borough, starting with some of the earliest new town housing estates to deliver sustainable, cohesive communities.
- Champion high standards in the private rented sector, actively addressing the worst conditions through the application of our Better Homes for All programme whilst providing a strong role model through Nuplace.

Objective 3: To provide homes to support and empower our most vulnerable people.

- Work with our partners to increase the supply of specialist and accessible homes for older and vulnerable people.
- Help local people, including key workers and veterans, to find and sustain the homes they need.
- Help people to live in their own homes as independently as they can for as long as possible.
- Continue to prevent homelessness and work to eradicate rough sleeping.

- 4.8 While the development of a housing strategy itself is no longer a formal requirement, there are clear benefits from demonstrating our strategic approach in:
- Providing a clear and co-ordinated focus for housing within the authority.
 - Highlighting the Council's housing role and key functions.
 - Demonstrating the link between the Council's housing priorities and other service areas.
 - Identifying areas of achievement together with current and future challenges.

- Sending clear signals to partners and investors about the Council's ambitions and priorities, highlighting the opportunities available locally.
- 4.9 As such the Housing Strategy, will be of interest to a wide range of investors, partners, stakeholders and community groups, describing the Council's housing role and how this will contribute to achieving the Council's Plan to '**Protect, Care and Invest - to create a better borough**'.
- 4.10 The Strategy also provides a framework for a number of other supporting housing strategies and policy documents, including, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping, Specialist & Supported Housing, Better Homes for All Programme and The Home Assistance Policy. At the same time it complements other strategic documents including the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Health & Well Being Strategy and the Council's carbon reduction commitments. It also supports delivery of housing related themes in our Care Leaver's Covenant, Armed Forces Community Covenant and Domestic Abuse Policy in which access to suitable housing is seen as a fundamental component in supporting people to obtain and maintain health and wellbeing

Impact of Covid19

- 4.11 The Coronavirus pandemic has emerged towards the latter part of the development of this draft strategy and the medium to long term implications are yet to be determined. In terms of the housing market generally, whilst a small dip has been seen, property experts remain positive about its recovery. We have seen the majority of the Borough's major housebuilders recently remobilise to sites, supported by positive sales figures, even during lockdown.
- 4.12 However, the pandemic will undoubtedly have long term economic and social impacts for people within the borough with many continuing to face increasing hardship in the short and medium term. Supporting those threatened with homelessness and seeking funding to sustain our success with 'everybody in' alongside work with private landlords as the moratorium on evictions comes to an end, will be key. The availability of suitable and affordable housing will also continue to be a top priority during the implementation of this strategy.
- 4.13 The response to the pandemic has also resulted in new ways of working, especially in supporting some of our most vulnerable clients to access housing and a growth in volunteering and community capacity. These new ways of working and community engagement will be further developed as we move into the recovery phase.
- 4.14 In the longer term, the pandemic is anticipated to have a profound effect on how many people live and work with the transition to home working that the pandemic has accelerated being a key change which many expect to be sustained in some form. This again may have a significant impact on the future design and configuration of housing as we move forward and which will need to be accounted for in the Local Plan Review and in the properties that Nuplace and/or the Council delivers directly.

Consultation & Implementation

- 4.15 Subject to approval from Cabinet, the Council will invite comments on the draft Strategy from a range of partners and stakeholders as well as residents of the

Borough, with comments to be received by 31 August 2020. A final draft of the Strategy, will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and adoption.

- 4.16 The consolidation of capacity and resources into a new Directorate for Housing, Employment & Infrastructure will facilitate increased focus on the delivery of this key Strategy and ensure that it is aligned with the Borough's economic growth. Whilst Government funding to deliver on this agenda remains constrained, the Council will continue to make the most effective use of its own resources and seek to attract external funding where possible. It will also seek to influence the funding and investment decisions of others to realise the objectives of this strategy.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Not Applicable.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Telford & Wrekin Local Plan
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016 (SHMA)

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