

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 18th March 2021

TELFORD & WREKIN'S HOUSING STRATEGY 2020-25 – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR DAVID WRIGHT

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

1.1 The Council's draft Housing Strategy, 2020-25 was approved by Cabinet in June 2020. This is an overarching Strategy which sets out the Council's commitment to work with partners and communities to ensure every resident has a safe and affordable home. It establishes 3 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

1.2 The Strategy sets out a series of actions and priorities to guide delivery, some of which will be implemented by the Council through the Local Plan Review, and through new investment into delivering further homes via Nuplace, our Better Homes for All Programme, our commitment to No Return to Rough Sleeping and new initiatives including our Safer and Stronger Communities programme.

1.3 The Strategy also sets out priorities for our partners and engagement through the consultation has contributed to the new Allocation Policy being presented to Cabinet alongside this Report, and a commitment to work with us on delivering the priorities in our Specialist & Supported Accommodation Strategy.

1.4 A new Affordable Warmth Strategy and a new Empty Properties Strategy are to be presented to Cabinet and will be key enablers in delivering some of our strategic housing objectives.

1.5 The importance of a decent home as the foundation for people's lives has become even more apparent during the Covid-19 crisis. During this time we have seen many more households seek the Council's support as they face homelessness following the loss of employment or family breakdown or challenges with the condition of their homes. Under our commitment to 'No Return to Rough Sleeping,' since March 2020 we have accommodated c.400 people who were faced with rough sleeping and prevented a further 370 from reaching this point.

Our Housing Strategy is a key element of how we will continue to respond to housing needs across our Borough to ensure we futureproof and build resilience into our communities.

1.6 The draft Housing Strategy was subject to a ten week period of consultation in 2020 involving partners, stakeholders and the community. Overall there was strong support for the draft Strategy. A range of comments were received and a number of themes have emerged. They include:

- New house building and infrastructure
- Existing homes

- Affordable homes
- The housing needs of older, disabled and vulnerable people
- Green spaces and ecology
- Climate Change

The report provides an initial response to these themes, highlighting actions already taken and identifies how others will be addressed further over the life of strategy.

1.7 In the light of the consultation a number of amendments have been made to the Strategy including

- To acknowledge the key themes raised through the consultation process
- To reflect the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- To set out arrangements for continued partnership working and consultation to support the delivery of this Strategy

1.8 It is proposed to now adopt the amended Housing Strategy (Appendix A) and to bring an annual report to Cabinet setting out progress in delivery against the objectives.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet note the outcome and response to the consultation process in relation to the draft Housing Strategy.

2.2 That Cabinet approve the final version of the Housing Strategy.

2.3 That Cabinet receive an annual progress report on the implementation of the Housing Strategy.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community ▪ All neighbourhoods are a great place to live ▪ The natural environment is protected and the Council is taking a leading role in tackling the climate emergency.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Everyone living, or seeking to live, in the borough
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	Subject to approval the draft Strategy will be adopted.	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes/No	<p>This 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.</p> <p>The Strategy will allow the Council to continue to make the most effective use of its own resources and seek to</p>

		<p>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, consequential cost benefits for the Council and wider public sector may arise.</p> <p>As the Council continues to develop actions and responses to themes emerging from consultation and any related plans e.g. Local Plan Review, Climate Change Action Plan, further detailed work to assess financial implications will be required. Many of these may be addressed through existing resources but 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 11.2.21</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	No	<p>There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a Housing Strategy, the previous duty being removed by the Deregulation Act 2015.</p> <p>However, preparation of such a strategy is deemed as good practice serving as a useful policy document setting out the Council's aims, objectives and intended outcomes in respect of all housing matters.</p> <p>There are no other legal implications</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes/No	<p>The Council's final Housing Strategy will enable the Council to work with together partners, the community and other stakeholders to address the housing needs of the borough.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	<p>Borough-wide impact</p>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 On 18 June 2020 The Cabinet approved the Council's draft Housing Strategy, 2020-25 for consultation. This consultation took place over a ten week period between 22 June and 29 August 2020.
- 4.2 The Council's Housing Strategy is high level and overarching and is an essential part of driving the future of housing in the Borough. It sets out how the Council will focus its efforts to ensure that there is suitable housing for all, and in particular the most vulnerable. It sits alongside other key documents including the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan. It also provides a framework for supporting strategies including Homelessness, Affordable Warmth, Empty Properties, Private Sector Housing and Supported & Specialist Housing which will develop detailed actions and drive delivery of the overarching objectives. It also sets the context for the delivery of

development directly by the Council and its wholly owned housing company, Nuplace and to guide development delivered by developers, Registered Providers (Housing Associations).

- 4.3 Consultation on The Strategy was launched through the Council's main communication channels, including social media (Facebook and Twitter). This was accompanied by a number of video messages from the Cabinet Lead for Housing, highlighting its main priorities and encouraging involvement.
- 4.4 The Strategy and invitation to consult was also sent to c.100 stakeholders including national organisations, local representative bodies, commercial and social housing providers, voluntary organisations and Parish & Town Councils:
- 4.5 The Housing Strategy consultation has generated a considerable level of interest and wide range of comments both general and specific. As the consultation used a series of open questions a large volume and depth of feedback has been generated. This is valuable and has opened up a number of new areas of discussion with partners and the Council is continuing to follow up these issues in its ongoing engagement with partners and the local community. This has and will inform approaches to investment and policy development e.g. in the Local Plan and Climate Change Action Plan.
- 4.6 Overall there was a high level of support for the Council's draft Housing Strategy including its objectives, priorities and also its approach to various housing issues facing the borough. Comments included:
- a commitment to working with the authority on housing issues
 - welcoming the long term approach
 - the anticipation of strong action and clear outcomes
 - commending the consultation process itself
- 4.7 More specifically, a number of key themes have emerged strongly from the consultation. These reflect partners' and communities' interests, priorities and concerns. They include:
- New house building and infrastructure
 - Existing homes
 - Affordable homes
 - The housing needs of older, disabled and vulnerable people
 - Green spaces and ecology
 - Climate Change

These themes are explored in more detail together with information on how the Council is responding below:

New house building and infrastructure

- 4.8 Observations raised during the consultation included:
- Ensuring that the right number of new homes are provided to meet the needs of the borough
 - Achieving good space standards and quality in new build housing
 - The need to provide the necessary infrastructure and services to complement these new homes.

How we're responding to this feedback:

- ✓ The review of the Local Plan will support new housing and employment land allocations ensuring a balanced supply of homes and jobs.
- ✓ The review will also consider a revised, strengthened policy approach to address design, space standards, housing mix and private amenity space (gardens).
- ✓ Through Nuplace the Council is set to deliver over 700 homes for rent including specialist accommodation, setting a standard for other development
- ✓ The Council will continue to collect and invest contributions from developers to help provide new infrastructure and services to meet local needs, for example, a £3.2 million investment from the Donnington Wood Way development, and a two year £31 million investment programme in local schools.
- ✓ Delivering a £50m highway investment programme to address congestion pinch points and increase capacity to support new development
- ✓ Successfully accessing external funding including over £40m from Marches LEP to deliver new highway and enabling infrastructure to support development
- ✓ The Local Plan review will include an Infrastructure Plan setting out future infrastructure requirements including for schools, health and transport to match areas of potential growth.
- ✓ Through Nuplace's Southwater Way scheme and our plans for Station Quarter introducing mixed tenure town centre living to the Telford Centre

Existing housing

- 4.9 The consultation process raised a number of issues about the quality and condition of existing homes in the borough, particularly in certain parts of the borough including South Telford.

How we're responding to this feedback:

- ✓ Through the Council's Better Homes for All project continuing to work with landlords to promote good management, addressing unlicensed HMO's with 244 now licensed across the borough and using our enforcement powers to pursue landlords to raise standards or face prosecution.
- ✓ Delivering the Brookside Safer Streets project with the Police investing £550k into addressing crime and anti-social behaviour including tackling rogue landlords
- ✓ Investing a further £1.5m into a new Safer & Stronger communities programme with targeted work around housing conditions, empty properties and the private rented sector as part of the development of proposed new neighbourhood plans
- ✓ Through Nuplace the Council will acquire and refurbish up to 100 existing homes across the borough, including the New Town estates. This will also help to raise physical and management standards.
- ✓ Launching our Report an Empty mailbox with a new Empty Property Strategy to be launched setting out a series of interventions and incentives to address the c.1725 empty properties targeting those problem properties that blight communities
- ✓ Continuing to address stalled housing sites across the Borough including a commitment of £2m investment by the Council to unlock sites, and attracting funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority
- ✓ Bringing forward a new Private Sector Housing Strategy in the Autumn which will include initiatives to incentivise property care including home maintenance advice developed on a community basis.

- ✓ Working with partners to extend the scope of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to support a wider number of residents to access funding for first time central heating, boiler repairs and replacement white goods addressing fuel poverty
- ✓ Bidding for LAD2 funding to deliver further targeted interventions in older Estates to address fuel poverty.
- ✓ Lobbying Government for support and investment into a programme of estate renewal addressing the legacy of the New Town
- ✓ Including proposals in the review of the Local Plan for a new policy framework which will enable new, quality development in the former New Town Estates.

Affordable housing

- 4.10 Consultees highlighted the need for more homes that were affordable (of all types and sizes) across the borough. The needs of a number of groups were identified including families, single households and young people

How we're responding to this feedback:

- ✓ The Council is continuing to work with developers, housing associations and Homes England to provide affordable homes that meet the needs of the borough.
- ✓ Maximising our use of S106 powers and commuted sums to deliver more affordable and specialist homes.
- ✓ We will consult on a new Housing Allocations Policy setting out our priorities for our Registered Provider partners to consider in allocating their homes.
- ✓ Working with local housing providers to strengthen nomination arrangements for affordable homes to ensure that more local people in greatest housing need can access their accommodation
- ✓ Following commitment of a further £48m the Council's wholly owned company - Nuplace – is delivering an increased proportion of new rented homes that are affordable and delivering homes that are wheelchair adapted and meet specialist needs.
- ✓ The review of the Local Plan includes policy proposals to help increase the supply of affordable homes for rent and shared ownership and to deliver a greater mix of housing on development sites in order to meet a wide range of needs including families, single people, older people and those who need specialist and supported housing.

Older, disabled and vulnerable people

- 4.11 Other observations were made about the housing needs of the growing number of older, disabled and vulnerable people in the borough.

How we're responding to this feedback:

- ✓ By implementing our new Supported & Specialist Housing Strategy as approved by Cabinet in June 2020
- ✓ By updating our Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- ✓ Accommodating c.400 people roughsleeping or faced with roughsleeping under our commitment to 'no return to roughsleeping' and supporting over 370 to find long term accommodation
- ✓ Working with our housing providers to acquire and provide more move on accommodation for those coming to us homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- ✓ Successfully accessing over £1m in funding to develop our Housing First model.

- ✓ Delivering specialist and wheel chair accessible homes through Nuplace with our partner development at Donnington set to include new Extracare
- ✓ Actively working with providers to continue to increase the provision of specialist, supported and more accessible homes. This will include three new Extra care housing schemes
- ✓ Enabling people to remain safe and well in their existing homes for as long as possible through the provision of aids, adaptations and assistive technology.
- ✓ Investing over c.£3m pa through Disability Facility Grants and Wellbeing grants supporting over 350 people per annum, of all ages, to remain living independently at home
- ✓ The development of Supplementary Planning Guidance to promote the provision of new specialist, accessible & adaptable and wheelchair housing across all tenures.

Green spaces and Ecology

4.12 Consultees stressed that delivering new housing development should not threaten Telford & Wrekin's important green spaces and ecology.

How we're responding to this feedback:

- ✓ A key priority for the Local Plan review is the protection and enhancement of green spaces in the borough. The review of the Local Plan Issues & Options has proposed new policies to address :
 - biodiversity net gain where developers have to provide enhancements to greenspace/ecology either on site or via off site contributions
 - A further programme and adoption of Local Nature Reserves and Green Guarantee sites
 - The creation of new areas of public open space and ecological value
- ✓ The Council's Nuplace development programme will deliver a further 320 new homes on over 18 acres of brownfield land. This will include a number of regeneration projects which will protect and utilise important borough assets, e.g. the former New College (Wellington), The Gower (St Georges).

Climate Change

4.13 The consultation highlighted the vital importance of responding to the challenge of climate change.

How we are responding to this feedback:

- ✓ The review of the Local Plan includes proposals that actively address climate change including:
 - The introduction of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the borough
 - support for renewable energy solutions in the delivery of new developments
 - design measures that can help positively address climate change
 - a new policy approach to support sustainable travel including investment in walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure.

- ✓ The Council has sought site submissions for renewable energy developments as part of the Local Plan review 'call for sites';
- ✓ The next phase of Nuplace developments will deliver, wherever possible, homes which include carbon reduction measures, achieve higher environmental performance and meet increased accessibility standards.
- ✓ As part of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan we will develop plans for a large scale retrofit programme to address insulation and a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels alongside options for a group buying scheme for residents to access photo voltaic and battery storage measures

Next Steps

4.14 While the consultation has identified some areas for the Council and partners to consider further in implementing the Housing Strategy, overall endorsement has been given to the approach, priorities and objectives of the document. It is therefore proposed to make only minor changes to the Strategy and to adopt this as the overarching vision for housing and how we will work with partners and stakeholders over the next 4 years. The changes that are proposed to be made include:

- To acknowledge the key themes raised through the consultation process
- To reflect the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic
- To set out arrangements for continued partnership working in the delivery of this Strategy

4.15 To ensure the delivery of the Strategy and that it is influencing and driving the changes needed we will :-

- Build on the responses to the consultation continuing to work with stakeholders and partners to further address their comments and areas of joint working identified
- Develop our engagement directly with communities including through the Safer/Stronger Communities Programme, with T&PC, representative organisations including AgeUK, community organisations and through new resident engagement mechanisms including the Community Panel
- Continuing to develop actions to deliver the objectives set out in the Strategy and to address the themes emerging from the consultation including via the Local Plan Review, Climate Change Action Plan and Council investment programmes
- Refresh the Borough Housing Partnership as a mechanism to work with the Council to develop housing strategy and support delivery
- Bring an Annual Report to Cabinet setting out what has been delivered and where new actions have been identified

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional comments

6. **PREVIOUS MINUTES -** Cabinet minute CB–6 25 June 2015

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Final Housing Strategy, 2020 – 2025 (appended)

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