

People and Health Overview Committee

27 June 2023

Developing the Housing Strategy

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jane Somper – Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

Local Councillor(s): All Ward Councillors

Executive Director: V Broadhurst – Executive Director for People, Adults

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with:

- an overview of the of the statutory requirements of the Housing Strategy and the opportunities this will bring for integration, collaboration and to do things differently in Dorset.
- an overview of the timeline for approval of the strategy to raise awareness of time pinch points.
- an update on the approach being taken to develop the strategy and the progress made to date.
- potential policy and strategy areas that would benefit from overview and scrutiny consideration, arising from the strategy development process.
- Seek support from the Committee to the approach to building the strategy and identify opportunities for continued engagement.

Recommendation:

- **Members support** the update on the approach and development of the Housing Strategy.
- **Agree** how the People and Health Overview Committee can support the strategy through the consultation period and its recommendation to Cabinet and Full Council for approval in December 2023.

Reason for Recommendation:

The housing strategy provides a real opportunity to identify priorities for improving access to housing in Dorset. The strategy recognises the importance of good, safe, environmentally sustainable, and affordable housing to enable our residents to live healthier and more independent lives. Early engagement of the People and Health Overview Committee in the process for its development will provide opportunities to identify the most important integration and health and wellbeing issues for inclusion in the strategy.

1. Report

- 1.1 All Councils are required to have a Housing Strategy under the Local Government Act 2003. The Act requires Dorset Council to have a clear vision for housing and that the strategy should set out objectives, targets, and policies on how it intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role. It should also provide an overarching framework against which the Council considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues. The LGA stresses the importance of addressing all relevant issues, including homelessness and energy efficiency of housing stock and be consistent with any community strategies. As well as addressing local housing related issues, needs and challenges, the strategy should also reflect national policies and be agile enough to be able to adapt to changing landscapes in relation to housing law.

The Housing Strategy is not a stand-alone document, and it reflects on and links to the Council Plan, aims of the Transformation Programme, the draft Local Plan and key Council strategies and workstreams. The strategy is also part of our Policy Framework.

This document will replace the existing legacy housing strategies and create a single document which represents the needs of Dorset Council as one authority. The new strategy will set out our vision for housing in Dorset and will have five key objectives that will allow us to focus on creating positive changes for our area and the residents of Dorset.

As well as setting out our role as a housing enabler, the strategy needs to reflect Dorset Council's work with our stakeholders and partners, to deliver aspirations and actions set out in it. This means that we need to be clear about roles and responsibilities both internally and externally to ensure that we achieve this.

1.2 This strategy is due to be approved by Cabinet and Full Council in December 2023 and will go through a public consultation in July 2023.

1.3 This report updates Members on:

(i) Approach and principles to the developing the strategy.

(ii) Progress to date

(iii) Timeline

(iv) Next Steps

2 Approach to developing the strategy.

2.1 The proposal for developing the Housing Strategy was approved by Vivienne Broadhurst and Andrew Billany in May 2022 This proposal highlighted some principles for how we work in developing a strategy:

(i) Recognising the process as an opportunity to do things differently

(ii) Importance of using data and insights to inform the strategy.

(iii) Engaging with key internal and external stakeholders to sense check findings and the direction of the strategy.

(iv) Getting it right rather than doing it quickly

(v) Continuous review, engagement, and refresh, aiming for a live strategy, not something done once and 'left on a shelf'.

3. Progress to date

3.1 A project group was formed in 2022 and some initial work carried out to identify key stakeholders and engagement opportunities. Whilst some elements of the strategy development were identified and agreed at that time, including the format of the strategy, the work was not able to progress until the appointment of the Housing Strategy Lead in November 2022. Since that appointment work has continued at pace and the original timeline has been reduced significantly to ensure that the strategy is delivered by the end of 2023.

Research

- 3.2 The strategy is being developed using data from the 2021 Census; NOMIS; Council strategies and plans; information from partner agencies, and experiential evidence gained through a series of engagement events with internal and external partners and a public consultation.

Engagement

- 3.3 Internal and external engagement activities have taken place, and these include:

- Presentation to Extended Leadership Team
- Presentation to Public Health Dorset
- Presentation to Landlord's Forum
- Meeting with EDI Reference Group
- Staff engagement videos and surveys
- Focussed meetings with key internal stakeholders, including providing feedback on the strategy for the provision of Extra Care and the Climate and Environment Strategy.

- 3.4 Further engagement is ongoing, including a market engagement event with Registered Providers. This will be a joint event with colleagues from Adults and Children's Services and we will be seeking feedback and buy-in from the RPs in relation to the provision of extra care and specialist supported housing units.

Leadership and engagement

- 3.5 The Housing Strategy was presented to the Extended Leadership Team in December 2022. The Team was asked to consider how the Strategy links in with, or impacts on, the wider Council and to identify challenges and opportunities for consideration during development of the strategy. The responses were analysed in January 2023 and feedback provided.

Member Engagement

- 3.6 A Member Housing Advisory Panel (MHAP) was created to provide Member overview and critical feedback. The Cabinet reshuffle, and a reduced timeline, resulted in a change of direction for Member involvement and the dissolving of MHAP. Member drop-in sessions and a Member

Briefing will take the place of the MHAP. Member workshops will also take place during the consultation period.

Engagement Outcomes

- 3.7 A Vision Statement for the housing strategy was developed at an MHAP meeting. The vision is “to ensure our residents have access to affordable, suitable, secure homes where they can live well as part of sustainable and thriving communities”.
- 3.8 Using feedback from evidential information, five key objectives were identified, together with an outline of what the council wishes to achieve in each of these areas. The proposed objectives formed part of an internal engagement exercise and the feedback shaped the formation of four objectives which will form part of the public consultation. In the initial stages we had considered having Environment as a fifth objective but recognised that this important issue features heavily in the Supply and Standards objectives and that having this as a separate objective would make it appear as a standalone. As a result, we are embedding the aims of the Environment section within the strategy document. See (Appendix 1 – Internal Engagement Analysis Report). The amended objectives were agreed by the project steering group, and these are:

Key objective	Aim
Housing Need: Enabling residents to live safe, healthy, independent lives in homes that meet their needs.	We will invest in and provide a selection of housing and support services that promote healthy, safe, and independent lives.
Housing Supply: Driving the delivery of homes people need and can afford to live in	We aim to increase the supply of affordable and social housing, which will help to ensure that all residents in Dorset have access to high-quality housing that is affordable to buy or rent. To achieve this, we will work with our partners to identify and support a range of housing options that meet the needs of our community.

<p>Housing Standards: Improving the quality, standard, and safety of homes.</p>	<p>We are committed to improving the quality of housing for everyone by forming strong partnerships, using resources wisely, and making sure that regulations are enforced.</p>
<p>Prevention of Homelessness: Support, at the right time, to people in crisis to prevent homelessness.</p>	<p>We recognise that we need to offer a range of housing options for people in crisis, and we are committed to tackling homelessness by providing support and assistance to help people find suitable long-term housing solutions.</p>
<p>Environment: Encourage housing supporting Dorset's environment, heritage, and carbon-neutral goals.</p> <p>These aims are now embedded within the Supply and Standards sections of the strategy.</p>	<p>We are committed to contributing actively to the protection and enhancement of Dorset's unique environment and heritage. We understand that the environment plays a critical role in our quality of life, and we will work to ensure that our housing strategy is aligned with our broader environmental goals. Our Housing Strategy recognises the importance of balancing development with the need to maintain the character and integrity of our natural environment. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure that new housing developments are designed and built to the highest environmental standards.</p>

Timeline

- 3.9 The original timeline showed final approval of the strategy set for March 2024. The strategy will now go to Cabinet and then Full Council in December 2023.
- 3.10 To mitigate this risk of slippage, we are planning to actively engage with Members throughout the development of the strategy and we would ask for support of this Committee with this process.



Next Steps

- 3.11 A public consultation will commence on the 24th of July and run for 10 weeks. During the consultation we will present the evidence, the proposed four objectives and the direction that the council is considering taking to achieve these objectives. On a weekly basis, the Housing Strategy Lead will receive a report of the responses to the consultation. Using this data, we will start to draft the final strategy document, with a view to amending following the October consultation findings report.

The consultation will consist of an online consultation questionnaire, and workshops with key stakeholders and Members. We will work with the EDI Reference group to ensure that the consultation reaches a diverse range of customers and with the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils to ensure that our rural customers are given their chance to take part.

The strategy will be developed in line with each of the key objectives and will include an Introduction and a Foreword from the Lead Member. As each of these sections is drafted it will go through an approval process, including feedback and recommended amendments from specialist peer groups and the project Steering Group before being presented to this Committee again in November.

- 3.12 Work will begin during July to create the public consultation documents and a communications campaign will start to appear on social media, and external webpages, to raise awareness of the consultation and generate interest.

4. Financial Implications

A transformation bid was made to recruit the Housing Strategy Lead and a Project Support Assistant. To date, we have not recruited to the Assistant post, and we are managing this workload within the existing Housing resources.

5. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Implications

No direct implications from the development of the strategy. The strategy looks to support the aims of the Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy with sustainable development and construction and increasing standards of existing homes featuring within the Supply and Standards objectives.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

The strategy recognises the impact that housing has on health and wellbeing and, at its heart, seeks to improve conditions for all residents, through the provision of housing which meets need and is affordable.

7. Other Implications

None

8. Risk Assessment

8.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

An EQIA is being developed with support and advice from the EDI Reference Group

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Internal Engagement Analysis Report.

11. Background Papers

None.