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Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Draft Housing Strategy to 2030

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Summary

This report introduces the Housing Strategy to 2030 which replaces the 2018-22 Housing Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2018. The Housing Strategy sets out Medway's strategic approach for housing services and details how the Council will enable the delivery of these services. This paper sets out the background to Medway Council's Housing Strategy to 2030, the consultation process, and the refinement of the strategy based on feedback received to date.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The recommendation is that Committee concur with Regeneration, Culture and Environment DMT and Children and Adults DMT that the Draft Housing Strategy to 2030 proceeds to Cabinet with a view to approval in March 2024. The Draft Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. The Draft Housing Strategy to 2030 has been developed in line with the Council Plan and sets out the Council's contribution to meeting the aims of the Council Plan with respect to Housing. The approval of a Housing Strategy is a matter for Cabinet.

3. Background

- 3.1. Medway Council's current Housing Strategy was agreed in 2018. It was recognised that an updated strategy was required to reflect the changes in local demand and national legislative changes. The Housing Strategy to 2030 details the Council's planned response in meeting the housing needs of Medway's residents. To ensure that we captured a broad spectrum of views on the local picture, with its pressures and opportunities, a stakeholder survey and stakeholder events were held from September into early November 2023. This recognised the impact housing has on a wide range of areas including social care, public health, support services and the wider community. This

input has allowed us to better understand these interrelationships and look to agree how best to work together around future service development. This input was sought during the process of drawing up the strategy and an iterative process was used to develop the current draft version. With agreement of our portfolio holder, Councillor Khan, Medway Housing is currently publicising the draft for consultation with Medway Residents with an end date of 4 February 2024.

- 3.2. Responses to the strategy consultation will then be analysed by officers within Strategic Housing Services, supported by Business Intelligence colleagues and any potential changes to the draft identified and a log of responses to consultation and any answers to questions raised will be summarised in the report to Cabinet.

4. Options

- 4.1. The options are:

- 4.1.1 To agree that the Housing Strategy can be presented to Cabinet for adoption.

- 4.1.2 To propose amendments to the draft Housing Strategy in advance of presentation to Cabinet

- 4.1.3 To not agree to the progression of the draft Housing Strategy and carry on business as usual without a new strategy in place.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1. The draft strategy has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:

- 5.1.1. The national and local context

- 5.1.2. Achievements and progress of the 2018-22 Housing Strategy

- 5.1.3. Consultation with stakeholders

- 5.2. The strategy is designed around four Strategic Commitments:

- Supply - how Medway will increase the amount of affordable housing to meet the identified needs of Medway Residents.
- Quality - how Medway will improve standards across all types of accommodation.
- Participation - how Medway Housing Tenants can get involved and have a say in service which affect them.
- Independence - how Medway will help people to stay living in their own homes.

- 5.3. The Housing Strategy will be delivered in partnership with a range of internal Medway Council partners and external stakeholders including Housing Associations, the Homes and Communities Agency, private landlords and local organisations whose work focuses on housing issues. Each of the

Commitments is accompanied by progress indicators and practical actions to meet the aims of the commitment. Throughout the lifetime of the strategy, the Housing service will work with partners to take advantage of new opportunities for funding and with stakeholders to take advantage of resources not available to the Council.

- 5.4. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out and no adverse impacts were identified with advancement of equality identified in the categories of Age, Disability, Sex and Low Income. The Diversity Impact Assessment is included as Appendix 2.
- 5.5. Sustainability is a dynamic issue cross cutting several of the Commitments contained within the strategy. Through delivery of improvements to the energy efficiency of Medway Council's own housing stock, to delivery of Government programmes such as the Homes Upgrade Grant and the Energy Company Obligation scheme and the enforcement action of the Private Sector team to ensure that people living in the private sector are given redress when identified as living in properties with excess cold, the activities within the strategy align with Medway's Climate Change Action Plan.
- 5.6. Included within the strategy is Medway Housing's ongoing commitment to include the needs of Looked After Children, this will include seeking additional affordable properties to meet the needs of this group where possible.

6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
That the actions required by the strategy are not carried out.	The actions which support the commitments are used to derive an action plan which will have indicators of progress which will need to be achieved to meet the outcomes required by the strategy.	Monitoring of progress against the actions agreed will be carried out by the Senior Housing Management Team within Housing Services. Overall progress by individual officers will be managed under the PDR process across the Housing Services. A quarterly analysis of progress will be uploaded on to Pentana.	CII

That agencies do not work in a coordinated fashion to achieve the aims of the strategy.	Actions detailed to fulfil the aims of the strategy will need the input of statutory and voluntary partners.	Officers across Housing Services will ensure that updates are timetabled to progress specific elements of the strategy and that all relevant agencies are regularly met with. Any issues with this will be picked up in quarterly Pentana monitoring commentary and addressed.	CII
That the decision is made not to update the 2018-22 Housing Strategy to this draft version, leaving the council open to challenge as not having a current strategy.	The strategy has been written to take into account recent legislative changes and the national picture (e.g. the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act 2023 and the cost of living crisis) and the evolving needs of Medway's residents.	The direction outlined in the strategy is a shared vision across strategic housing and partner agencies. Should the strategy not be agreed, the work areas would continue under the aims of the previous strategy.	CIII
Likelihood		Impact:	
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare		I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor	

7. Consultation

- 7.1. Consultation initially took place as a survey sent to a range of stakeholders in September including elected members, internal colleagues across housing and public health, registered providers, support providers, voluntary and community sector providers. Following analysis of responses, a set of online meetings were held in October to explore the issues in greater depth and with a focus on ensuring that issues around diversity and potential blockages to access were explored. There followed a consultation meeting with Senior Managers from Children and Adults in November. This allowed for a refining of the draft strategy to the point where Housing Services have now sent the strategy out to public consultation.

8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. Contained within the strategy are a number of actions to reduce the carbon footprint of housing in Medway. These are detailed in the table below. It is recognised that the majority of Medway Housing's Partners (for example registered providers) will have their own climate change strategies and we will seek to coordinate activity wherever possible. This is in line with Medway Council's target to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Positive Impact on Climate Change	Negative Impact on Climate Change
Improve the thermal efficiencies of Medway Housing properties through planned activity and the utilisation of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund	
Promote Government Funded Schemes such as the Great British Insulations Scheme, Homes Upgrade Grant and the Energy Company Obligation scheme to improve the standard of thermal insulation amongst homeowners and the private rented sector	
Work with landlords to improve their understanding of acceptable standards, available funding and any likely future requirements regarding the energy efficiency of their buildings. This will include enforcement activity where this becomes necessary.	

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The draft Housing Strategy to 2030 does not include any budgetary commitments over and above those already planned for.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. There is not a legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy (although there is to have a Tenancy Strategy, Allocations Strategy and Homelessness Strategy). It does however serve as a useful policy document setting out the Council's approach to housing and allows Members to scrutinise delivery. There are no other legal implications.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Draft Housing Strategy to 2030
- Appendix 2 - Diversity Impact Assessment