

Cabinet

12 March 2024

Housing Strategy to 2030

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Naushabah Khan, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property

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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. This report was considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 February 2024 and its comments are set out at section 9 of the report.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet notes the comments of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in section 9 of the report.
- 1.2. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves adoption of the Housing Strategy to 2030, as attached at appendix 1, subject to completion of the introduction by the relevant Portfolio Holder and Assistant Director.

2. Suggested reasons for decision

- 2.1. The previous Housing Strategy ran from 2018-22 and an updated strategy to 2030 will allow a clearly defined direction of travel for Medway Housing's priorities and objectives contained within the strategy.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. The 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.

4. Background

- 4.1. 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. In consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Khan, the Council publicised the draft for consultation with Medway residents over a 12 week period with an end date of 4 February 2024.

5. Options

- 5.1. The options are:
- 5.2. That Cabinet agree adoption of the Housing Strategy to 2030. This will provide structure to Medway Housing's objectives and service planning for the lifetime of the strategy.
- 5.3. That Cabinet require amendments to be made to the Housing Strategy to 2030 and re-presentation to Cabinet at a future date for adoption.
- 5.4. That Cabinet do not agree to adopt the Housing Strategy to 2030 and carry on business as usual without a new strategy in place.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. The Housing Strategy to 2030 has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:
- The national and local context.
 - Achievements and progress of the 2018-22 Housing Strategy.
 - Consultation with Stakeholders.
- 6.2. The Housing Strategy to 2030 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, and wider residents, can get involved and have a say in services which affect them.

- Independence - how Medway will help people to stay living in their own homes.
- 6.3. The Housing Strategy to 2030 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.
- 6.4. 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 advancements stem for the targeting of resources towards more vulnerable groups amongst Medway residents e.g. older adults who need support to stay in their own homes through adaptations, young people with support needs who require accommodation with on-site support, households who are on a low income who may benefit from sustainable warmth grant programmes, etc. This is detailed in the Diversity Impact Assessment which is included as appendix 2.
- 6.5. 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.
- 6.6. Included within the strategy is the Council'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.

7. Risk management

- 7.1. Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

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	

8. Consultation

- 8.1. Initial consultation sessions were carried out with a group of elected members, Housing and Support providers, Adult Social Care colleagues and the wider Medway Council housing team. This allowed an initial draft to be drawn up which was then surveyed across a variety of stakeholders with the support of the Business Intelligence Team. Consultation was also carried out with Medway Housing's Resident Scrutiny Panel.
- 8.2. The Draft Housing Strategy was shaped by this input and went out online to public consultation for a 12 week period until February 04 2024. There were 60 submitted responses to the consultation. All strategic commitments were viewed positively by the majority of respondents, with Supply having 77% agreement, Quality 82% agreement. Participation 85% agreement and Independence – 93% agreement.
- 8.3. The main reasons and comments given for disagreement were;
 - Supply (17% disagreed) - too much overdevelopment with empty houses not being utilised, potential building on green spaces, insufficient infrastructure in place, never enough affordable housing from current developments;
 - Quality (8% Disagreed) – needing to ensure people of lower incomes don't get priced out, risk of increasing costs for landlords, existing standards of properties are fine except poor quality new builds;
 - Participation (5% Disagreed) – There is a perceived lack of action in response to feedback, it makes no difference, people only take responsibility if they own the property;
 - Independence (2% Disagreed) No reason given. A summary of the themes from respondents views and response from Housing Services is attached as appendix 3.
- 8.4. In advance of presentation to Overview and Scrutiny, the Housing Strategy to 2030 went to internal directorate management team meetings, and comments (e.g. on bringing Climate Response issues and the main points of the People Strategy to more prominence) were used to strengthen elements of the strategy text.

9. Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 9.1. The Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Housing Strategy at its meeting on 28 February 2024 and its comments are set out as follows.
- 9.2. The Committee were presented with the draft Housing Strategy to 2030.
- 9.3. The Committee queried how widely publicised energy efficiency schemes were and how residents could apply to them. In response officers reported that they were published on the website but that other opportunities to make residents aware of them could be explored including the use of social media or the one minute Medway broadcasts.

- 9.4. The collaborative approach with social care services was discussed and Members queried how Housing Associations could be encouraged to look at smaller developments in Medway.
- 9.5. Officers reported that conversations with Housing Associations were ongoing regarding smaller sites however this was challenging as Housing Associations were unable to access grants from Homes England on Section 106 sites. Members requested an update on progress regarding smaller sites at an appropriate point in the future.
- 9.6. The Committee concurred with Regeneration, Culture and Environment Departmental Management Team (DMT) and Children and Adults DMT that the Draft Housing Strategy to 2030 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) proceeds to Cabinet with a view to approval in March 2024.

10. Climate change implications

- 10.1. 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.	

11. Financial implications

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

12. Legal implications

- 12.1. 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

- 1) Housing Strategy to 2030
- 2) Diversity Impact Assessment
- 3) Consultation comments with responses

Background Papers

None