

COUNCIL MEETING – 5TH OCTOBER, 2023

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 (3)

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2023-2027

A report from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th September, 2023

SUMMARY

This report sets out the council's strategic approach to housing and homelessness prevention, it meets the council's statutory obligation to have a Homelessness Strategy in place and supports the delivery of the separate Rough Sleeping Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council is recommended to approve the Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2023-2027 as attached at Appendix 1.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is to ensure that residents have access to good quality housing that is affordable and appropriate to their needs. The Strategy, which was considered and recommended for approval by the Cabinet at its meeting on 12th September, has been developed in consultation with members of the Policy and Programme Advisory Board (PPAB) and the Strategic Housing and Local Plan Group (SHLPG) who, following resident consultation, have agreed to focus on three core themes of:

- 1) Increase the supply of good quality homes, for all residents and prosecutive residents, for every stage of life
- 2) Support residents to access affordable, well managed and maintained housing in the private and social sectors
- 3) Work proactively to improve the condition and energy efficiency of housing in the borough

1.2 The objectives for each theme and action points to deliver them have been streamlined compared to the previous Housing Strategy, with emphasis being made on working with partners, maximising the council's existing land holdings and developing the way the council engages with customers through digital and traditional formats appropriate to their needs.

- 1.3 Data from the council's own sources, housing market data and census data have been used as evidence for the objectives and actions proposed.
- 1.4 For the first time, the three themes also set out the council's response to accommodating Afghan and Ukrainian refugee families and working with landlords and homeowners to improve the thermal efficiency of the borough's housing stock.
- 1.5 This strategy is a significant improvement on previous approaches addressing current issues across all housing tenures and developing housing products and services for the future which serve residents, communities and the economy better.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The complete strategy document is attached to this report. It has been developed with a good degree of member involvement firstly, working through scoping the structure and key themes with members of PPAB in November 2021, July 2022 and November 2022 and then developing the content of the draft document and data sources with SHLPG in November 2022 and March 2023.
- 2.2 A digital resident consultation took place in July 2022, with lower-than-expected engagement levels with the Nepali community and younger people. Community leaders supported officers with improved in-person engagement in the Nepali community, whilst further engagement with younger people is identified in the strategy as an area to focus on going forward.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

General

- 3.1 The strategy is a more streamlined approach than the council's previous versions to reflect the capacity of the council's existing resources. However, there are new aspirations, workstreams and approaches set out in the document:
 - A determination that residents in Rushmoor should be able to access good quality homes which are suitable for every stage of their life
 - New homes that will contribute to building communities where people are proud to live, particularly in the town centres
 - The council's use of its landholdings to deliver new homes through Rushmoor Homes Limited
 - A new commitment to providing safe accommodation for Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees working with the Home Office, Department of Levelling Up Homes and Communities and Hampshire County Council

- Improving digital communication platforms on matters such as housing advice and signposting residents to energy efficiency grants and schemes
- Working with partners to maximise opportunities and funding to improve the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock

Alternative Options

3.2 N/A

Consultation

3.3 Consultation with residents and elected members has been central to the development of the strategy. The themes, objectives and action points have been informed by residents' views and agreed by members as outlined above.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

4.1 No risks are identified through the agreement of this strategy. Risks that arise through its implementation will be identified and managed within the council's Risk Register.

Legal Implications

4.2 The strategy ensures the council meets its statutory duty to have a Homelessness Plan in place and to conduct a homelessness review.

Financial and Resource Implications

4.3 The strategy will be delivered with existing budget and service resources.

Equalities Impact Implications

4.4 Access to good quality housing in both the local and national housing market is based on ability to pay therefore inherently unequal. The most disadvantaged members of the community are less likely to be living in good quality accommodation which is the right size for their household.

As a non- stock holding authority, the council is limited in its ability to change this, however, the strategy seeks to address this by identifying key issues and working with partners to maximise good quality homes which are affordable and accessible for its residents.

4.5 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out specifically for this strategy document, it has not identified the approach being proposed to disadvantage any groups of people.

Other

- 4.6 In order to deliver more housing related advice on digital platforms and via social media, additional support will be needed from the council's communications and IT services.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The housing and homelessness prevention strategy, which was considered and recommended for approval by the Cabinet, provides a robust approach to housing and preventing homelessness for the borough over the next five-year period. It has been developed with input from residents, members and partners and is backed up with data from the council's own sources, local housing market information and census data.
- 5.2 Its publication provides direction to the council's officers and partners to deliver new homes, improve the existing housing stock and ensure residents are able to access good quality housing related services and support.

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