

Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	26 May 2021
Title of report:	Draft Bury Housing Strategy
Report by:	Cllr Cummins, Cabinet Member, Housing Services
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Ward(s) to which report relates	All wards.

Executive Summary:

The Council commissioned Campbell Tickell to develop a housing strategy for the Borough, which meets the needs of different sections of the population at different stages of their lives. The draft Strategy was subject to extensive stakeholder and public consultation for twelve weeks commencing 30 November 2020 to the 22 February 2021.

The draft Strategy has been updated and a high-level action plan has been developed to support delivery, following feedback from the consultation. The Cabinet is recommended to note the findings of the consultation and adopt the Strategy to guide future housing delivery. Member approval of the proposed arrangements for implementation and governance is also required.

Recommendations and recommended option:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the findings of the public consultation and the post consultation revisions, comments and updates.
2. Adopt the Housing Strategy and proposed arrangements for implementation and governance as set out within this report.

Other options considered and rejected:

Utilise the existing Housing Strategy (2014 – 2024) to deliver housing priorities and guide economic growth and investment in the Borough - this option has been considered and rejected for the following reasons:

- The existing Housing Strategy (2014 – 2024) is obsolete as the housing landscape and the way in which housing services are delivered has changed considerably in recent years.
- The Council and its partners would be unclear on their priorities and how to deliver them.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the methods used in consulting on the draft Housing Strategy. It provides a summary of the findings, post consultation revisions, comments, and updates, together with an overview of the intended next steps and proposed governance arrangements to oversee delivery.
- 1.2 A Strategic Priority Action Plan has been developed to support the delivery of the Strategy, following feedback from the consultation. This document sets out a range of physical interventions and wider strategies that will guide economic growth and investment in the Borough to ensure the delivery of sufficient high-quality housing, reduce inequalities and meet the current and future needs of residents.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The existing Housing Strategy was approved in 2014. Since then, there have been significant changes to the housing landscape that make the introduction of a new strategy timely. Fundamental legislative reforms and continuing financial constraints have had a significant and lasting impact on the context in which housing services are delivered. Therefore, it is essential that the Council has a robust and up-to-date housing strategy to enable it to deliver its housing priorities.
- 2.2 The new Housing Strategy contributes towards meeting the Council's priorities across a range of policy areas including climate change. It sets out the scale of housing issues and challenges facing the Borough and provides a clear direction of travel for the delivery of a balanced, diverse housing supply and an opportunity to create successful and inclusive neighbourhoods in conjunction with our Bury 2030 vision.
- 2.3 The Strategy has been informed by our new Housing Need and Demand Assessment and, through early and extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including private developers and registered providers. It was approved by Cabinet for public consultation on the 14 October 2020.

3.0 CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY

- 3.1 The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Gunning Principles. It ran for twelve weeks commencing 30 November 2020 to the 22 February 2021. All residents of the Borough and stakeholders were invited to take part.
- 3.2 Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible to use some of the more traditional methods of consultation i.e. face-to-face meetings and drop-in sessions. Consequently, a number of different approaches were introduced to raise the profile of the consultation and maximise engagement.
- 3.3 The consultation featured two on-line surveys, one for residents and stakeholders and an easy read version of the draft Strategy and survey produced by Bury People First, suitable for those with communication, literacy and learning disabilities. In addition, the Council hosted two on-line webinars for residents and stakeholders, three focus group sessions with tenant and resident associations, Bury VCFA (Voluntary, Community & Faith Alliance) and people with communication, literacy and learning disabilities, to gather input on the draft Strategy.
- 3.4 The Strategy was promoted via key partner/stakeholder networks, targeted social media campaigns, Council Website, press releases, Bury Directory and One Community. Posters advertising the consultation were displayed in Bury Market Hall, the Millgate Centre, leisure centres, libraries and 100 community notice boards in neighbourhoods across the Borough. A dedicated Housing Strategy consultation page was established on the Council's Website which included full and summary versions of the draft Strategy, an easy read translation of the Strategy, FAQ's, and an executive summary. Feedback was encouraged by post or e-mail and a dedicated phone line and email address was established, to enable people to find out more information or request hard copies of documents.

4.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES/KEY THEMES

- 4.1 Despite the Covid-19 restrictions the consultation programme generated a good level of response in comparison to similar consultation exercises:
- Just under 400 surveys were completed, which generated around 600 comments. An additional 15 comments were received via e-mail and telephone.
 - Just under 100 participants attended the online webinar events, and 66 questions were received. A selection of key questions were answered via a panel of experienced officers as part of the webinars, those remaining were covered in the FAQ section of the consultation webpage.
 - Approximately 45 people attended the focus group sessions which generated a further 90 comments and suggestions.
- 4.2 Responses were received from residents and stakeholders living in all six townships of the Borough. Approximately 45% of all responders were aged between 55 and 85. 64% were female, 16% indicated that they had a specific

housing need, 23% said that they had caring responsibilities, 46% said they had a long-term health condition and, 88% stated their ethnicity as white British, which accords closely with the split of the Borough's entire population (2011 Census).

4.3 The consultation questions were structured around the 6 main sections of the draft Housing Strategy as follows:

- New homes.
- Action on existing homes.
- Enabling access to a suitable permanent home.
- Supporting people to live well in the community.
- Healthy people, homes, and places.
- Towards low carbon homes.

Respondents were asked to reflect on their importance and identify any additional considerations that the Council should take into account when finalising the Strategy and developing an action plan. The Consultation Summary Report can be found at Appendix 1.

4.4 As can be seen, the responses, comments and suggestions received were generally supportive and correspond with the proposals in the draft Strategy including:

- More affordable housing in the right locations to meet the needs of all residents including those who are homeless. Respondents felt that affordability and location is more important than numbers delivered or size of homes.
- Higher standards in the private sector and more enforcement for bad landlords.
- Improved housing offer for older people and people with disabilities including those with a learning disability.
- The need to improve/maintain existing homes in both the private and public sector and tackle empty properties.
- Support for the low carbon agenda/energy efficiency.

4.5 Areas of concern broadly related to:

- The impact of building more homes – protecting the greenbelt/open spaces which have been absolutely crucial for physical and mental wellbeing during the pandemic.
- The need to ensure sufficient infrastructure is in place around new developments to generate strong, productive, and sustainable communities.
- Perceptions that resources are insufficient to tackle poor quality homes in the private rented sector and the low carbon agenda.
- The impact on air quality through increased urbanisation and traffic.
- Environmental sustainability/ecological balance.

4.6 Although the Housing Strategy does not have the authority to allocate land for housing development or re-set planning policy, it should be noted that

requests from respondents to preserve/protect greenbelt land was a common theme/key issue throughout the consultation process.

- 4.7 Following analysis and full consideration of the responses received from the consultation; a number of revisions/updates have been made to the draft Strategy. The vast majority of comments/feedback concur with the objectives of the Strategy and have been incorporated into the Action Plan. A copy of the updated Housing Strategy can be found at Appendix 3.

5.0 DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY

- 5.1 A high level, Strategic Priority Action Plan has been developed to support the delivery of the Strategy (see Appendix 2). The Action Plan has seven strategic priorities which have taken account of the feedback from the consultation:

1. Develop township specific housing action plans to support wider township place strategies.
2. Increase the amount of new and available housing in the Borough (both market and affordable homes).
3. Address the shortfall in housing provision for older people.
4. Increase housing options for specialist groups including people with a learning disability.
5. Reduce the need for rough sleeping and homelessness.
6. Improve the energy efficiency of the Boroughs housing stock across all tenures.
7. Ensure that the private rented sector plays an important role in providing good quality homes in safe neighbourhoods across the Borough.

- 5.2 This document outlines the approach the Council will take to achieve its objectives and focus resources in collaboration with partners, including the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. A new Joint Commissioning Partnership has been established with local registered providers to facilitate delivery. There will also need to be significant private sector investment and this Strategy will help to create confidence and buy-in from private organisations including private developers.

6.0 GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 Officers with clear roles and responsibilities will oversee the delivery of the Strategy and supporting Action Plan.
- 6.2 It is proposed that progress will be monitored by the existing Housing Strategy Working Group on a monthly basis and will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Housing and quarterly Partnership Board meetings, to provide executive

and political leadership for the delivery of the Strategy and ensure robust stewardship.

- 6.3 Decisions on Council spending and recommendations for investment and acquisition will be taken at Cabinet or, by officers under delegated powers where appropriate.

7.0 NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Council will execute the Strategy as a matter of priority, subject to approval. The Strategic Priority Action Plan will guide implementation of a range of projects aligned to each of the priorities. Progress will be reported/monitored in accordance with paragraph 6.2 of this report.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The implementation of this Strategy will need to be contained within existing resources and considered as part of the Councils overall budget for future years. However, various funding streams are likely to be available to both the Council and its partners including grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Homes England, and other Government backed schemes and we will continue to maximise opportunities to tender for these resources in order to accelerate delivery of the Strategy.
- 8.2 Additional spend will be assessed and reported on an individual basis as and when required.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct legal implications - legal advice will be sought on specific topics as and when required. It should be noted that the proposals within the Strategy and supporting Action Plan will assist the Council in discharging a range of statutory duties such as those relating to homelessness, private sector housing and the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 See options and recommended option.

11.0 APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1 – Consultation Summary Report - Key Themes, Views from Respondents and Post-Consultation Revisions, Comments and Updates.
- Appendix 2 – Strategic Priority Action Plan.
- Appendix 3 – Updated Housing Strategy.

Community impact/links with Community Strategy

The new Housing Strategy supports the themes of the Bury 2030 Strategy. It promotes factors that protect against poor health and housing and, provides a clear direction of travel for the delivery of a balanced, diverse housing supply and an opportunity to create successful and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Equality Impact and considerations:

The draft Strategy promotes equality of access to housing and demonstrates a positive impact on people with protected characteristics. It seeks to ensure that there is a balance of housing provision across the Borough to meet the needs of all residents and, recognises the specific housing needs of different client groups including the BAME community, low-income households, people at risk of homelessness, older people, and people with disabilities.

Assessment of Risk:

The following risks and opportunities apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Approval of the Strategy will ensure that the Council has a robust and up-to-date housing strategy in place, to enable it to deliver its housing priorities and influence private developers and registered providers to build the types of homes needed.	It is recognised that there are a number of outcomes in the Strategy which, if not delivered, carry risks. Mitigating these risks is a key part of the action plan monitoring.
Insufficient resources and capacity to deliver the key strategic objectives.	This can be partly mitigated through maximising funding opportunities, choice of the right partners and well negotiated contractual agreements.
Opportunity to generate additional income through Council Tax growth.	

Legal Implications:

To be completed by the Council's Monitoring Officer:

The Strategy has been revised to be cognisant of the comments received during the public consultation period. The governance proposals as set out in the report will provide a framework for the delivery of the strategy and how it will be monitored.

Financial Implications:

To be completed by the Council's Section 151 Officer:

The implementation of the Housing Strategy will need to be considered in the context of the Council's overall financial strategy both for capital and revenue. At this stage there are no financial implications, however these will need to be considered as proposals come forward for implementation.

Various funding streams are likely to be available to both the Council and its partners including grant funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Homes England and other Government backed schemes and opportunities to bid for these resources will be maximised.

The scale and pace of delivery will be dependent upon the level of funding available. The strategy also provides an opportunity for additional income for the Council through Council Tax growth and this will be captured as part of the development of the Council's medium term financial strategy.

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