

Report to: Housing Review Board



Date of Meeting 29 April 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Housing Strategy 2021- 2025

Report summary:

This report presents the draft Housing Strategy for Board member consultation. The report seeks member feedback on the structure, focus and content of the strategy and seeks approval for the proposed timeline to publication. It is in draft form at this stage in order that the Board can genuinely assist in shaping the final version of this important policy statement.

It is important that the Housing Strategy is underpinned with robust housing needs evidence, it confronts challenges in the housing sector, and it picks up on and articulates the priorities and ambitions of the Council. It needs to be a forward looking document that has regard to past performance and the local housing market operating within national policy and legislation. It is necessarily a high level document and in recent years we have sought to keep our statement short, to the point and linked with other corporate and service specific policy documents.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the draft Housing Strategy is approved for the purposes of final drafting after the Board have provided a steer on the consultation questions set out in this report.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the Housing Review Board to influence and shape the emerging updated Housing Strategy Statement.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergencies
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Medium Impact: we will ensure that the Housing Strategy has a positive impact in terms of equalities and will provide support for vulnerable and excluded individuals. A process of monitoring will provide a check on the impact.

Climate change High Impact

Risk: Low Risk: The current housing strategy period ended in 2020 meaning a refresh is required. The Housing Strategy is closely linked to the corporate council plan, and formalises the approach that the Housing Service will take to meet the councils broader objectives

Links to background information .

Link to [Council Plan:](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

- 1.1 Our current Housing Strategy expired at the end of 2020 and requires a refresh. Our current Housing Strategy is explained in some detail on our website: [Housing Strategy - East Devon](#)

The strategy was usefully summarised in the chart below, which members will be familiar with from previous reports.

Our over-riding vision	A decent home for all residents of East Devon		
Our responsibilities	To provide a housing options service for all who are homeless or threatened with homelessness	To provide, maintain and manage our own council housing stock	
	To work with housing developers and housing associations to deliver more affordable housing	To regulate and improve other social rented, private rented and owner occupied housing	
Our priorities	To have consistently satisfied customers		
	Providing homes	Improving homes	Improving communities
	prevent homelessness and make sure that accommodation is found for those who do become homeless provide a range of affordable	bring sub-standard housing (of all tenure) up to current standards improve the use and safety of housing improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing and eliminate fuel poverty	support the improvement and regeneration of local communities by encouraging social inclusion, involving children and young people with housing issues, and enabling residents to actively

	<p>housing to meet housing needs</p> <p>widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need</p>	<p>enable elderly people disabled people and people with special needs to live as independently as possible and remain in their own homes if they so wish</p> <p>maintain and manage the council owned housing stock to a high standard, actively involving tenants in all aspects of the service.</p>	<p>participate in their communities</p>
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A local housing strategy is the local housing authority's vision for housing in its area. It sets out objectives and targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role and provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues. The Local Government Act 2003 put Housing Strategies on a statutory basis.

- 1.2 Preparation for the new strategy began in 2019 with an internal review, not only of performance against the objectives set out in the strategy, but also to consider the challenges that we faced during that period. It is vital that the work demonstrates a thorough understanding of the local housing market and the national legislative framework and housing policy. The strategy needs to be underpinned with good housing data on needs, opportunities, supply, stock condition and a range of other factors that inform the direction of travel for the strategy to ensure that it addresses the housing needs of our communities.
- 1.3 Initial conversations with senior Housing managers were also held at the end of 2019. These were informal discussions where we aimed to identify what challenges they felt lay ahead for the Housing Service over the next 3 years and beyond.
- 1.4 Since then, there have been a number of new considerations to factor in including:
 - A new political administration coming in and subsequent development of a new Statement of Intent, with housing (better homes and communities) seen as a priority
 - The production of the EDDC Climate Change Strategy, setting challenging targets for all departments, including Housing
 - Covid-19 pandemic and the impacts on housing
- 1.5 Following the publication of the council's **Statement of Intent**, and development of the **Housing Service Plan** for 2021-22 we are now in a position to present a first draft of the housing strategy to members for their feedback and input.

2. The Housing Strategy 2021 – 2024

- 2.1 The draft housing strategy document has been added to this report as **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The structure of the document has broadly followed the same format as the previous strategy. We have intended this document to be a high level, overarching document rather than too detail-orientated. It is felt that more detail can be found in other strategies and policies, such as the **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy**, **Resident Involvement Strategy**, and **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan**, and that duplication of that detail is best avoided. We also have numerous policy statements underpinning our approach from Devon Home Choice policy to tenancy succession policy, rent arrears policy to our pets policy and tenancy conditions.
- 2.3 We are seeking to link the strategic approach outlined in the housing strategy to the themes of the forthcoming Council Plan, with the annual Housing Service Plan providing the more detailed actions required to meet the priorities of our strategy. The strategy needs to be ambitious, but realistic and achievable. Outcomes need to be specific, measurable and time bound. We will assign lead officers and use objectives and actions to inform individual and team priorities.
- 2.4 We have chosen to keep the three high level priorities of the previous strategy for the new document. This has proved to be a useful approach in the past as it has helped to focus work on core principles of housing service delivery, tying in individual departmental actions to common goals.
- 2.5 For this strategy, a fourth priority has been added to reflect the need to develop our internal systems to better meet future challenges.
- 2.6 Our four priorities are:
- Providing Homes
 - Improving Homes
 - Improving Communities
 - Improving Services

3. Feedback requested

- 3.1 As previously stated, this document is currently in a draft format. We are keen to get the feedback of HRB members at this time to shape the final draft. We raise the following questions for discussion.
- 3.2 Are you happy with the broad structure and format of the document?
- 3.3 Are you happy with the four priorities identified in 2.6 above and in the Strategy draft?
- 3.4 Is there a clear vision and purpose articulated in the draft document?
- 3.5 Are there areas that you would like to be included that are not currently covered in the document?
- 3.6 Is there sufficient evidence to justify the priorities?
- 3.7 We propose monitoring our progress against the priorities through the production of annual service plans. Are you happy with this approach?

- 3.8 Once we have collated the Board's input we will redraft the strategy document, reengage with the managers and the Portfolio Holder prior to presenting the strategy to Cabinet and Council for adoption.
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Financial implications:

There are no specific financial implications requiring comment

Legal implications:

As identified in paragraph 3.8 of this report, full Council will need to approve the proposed Strategy prior to implementation.