

## LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

Meeting / Date	<b>Cabinet,</b> <b>11<sup>th</sup> January 2024</b>	
Report Title	<b>Waltham Forest's New Housing Strategy</b>	
Cabinet Portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)	
Report Author/ Contact details	Joe Garrod Acting Strategic Director of Place <a href="mailto:joe.garrod@walthamforest.gov.uk">joe.garrod@walthamforest.gov.uk</a>  Jonathan Lloyd Corporate Director of Strategy & Change (DCED) <a href="mailto:jonathan.lloyd@walthamforest.gov.uk">jonathan.lloyd@walthamforest.gov.uk</a>	
Wards affected	All	
Public Access	OPEN	
Appendices	Appendix A: Draft Housing Strategy Appendix B: Engagement report Appendix C: Delivery Plan Appendix D: Equalities Impact Assessment	

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report introduces the final draft of Waltham Forest's new Housing Strategy for 2024-2028. The Strategy has been informed by independent evidence of the challenges faced by the Council in ensuring a supply of decent and affordable homes, resident engagement, and by staff and councillor feedback.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1.1 Agree the draft Housing Strategy (Appendix A) and refer it to Full Council for its approval.
- 2.1.2 Agree the draft Delivery Plan (Appendix C).
- 2.1.3 Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Lead Member for Housing and

Regeneration, to make any necessary minor changes to the Strategy documents prior to Full Council.

### 3. PROPOSALS

#### Background

- 3.1 The Council's current Housing Strategy runs until 2024. Since its publication in 2019, the context has changed. The housing crisis has worsened, and more and more residents struggle to afford decent housing. There have also been national concerns around housing and health and safety, centred around the issues of fire safety and damp and mould, leading to new regulations and standards being placed on both social landlords and private sector developers.
- 3.2 Conscious of the challenges, the Council launched the Waltham Forest Affordable Housing Commission in January 2023. This group of experts were asked to consider how the Council's housing development approach could make the greatest impact for residents, especially those facing the worst effects of the housing crisis, by maximising the borough's delivery of genuinely affordable homes. The Commission delivered a set of 27 recommendations, which were approved by Cabinet.
- 3.3 The Housing Strategy builds on the work of the Commission and addresses wider challenges. The Council has been working with Partnering Regeneration Development (PRD), a team of specialist consultants, to develop a modern and innovative Housing Strategy for the borough (2024-2028), fit for the challenges of the next five years.
- 3.4 The intention is for the new Housing Strategy to be fully cross-cutting and reflect the systemic interdependencies across both council services and the work of partner organisations (for example, housing associations, developers and community housing groups), as well as the aspirations for the borough set out in the Council's 15 Minute Neighbourhood Framework and Inclusive Growth and Economy Framework (currently in development). The Strategy will be the key instrument through which the Council takes [the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Commission](#) into delivery.

#### Approach to the Strategy and Engagement

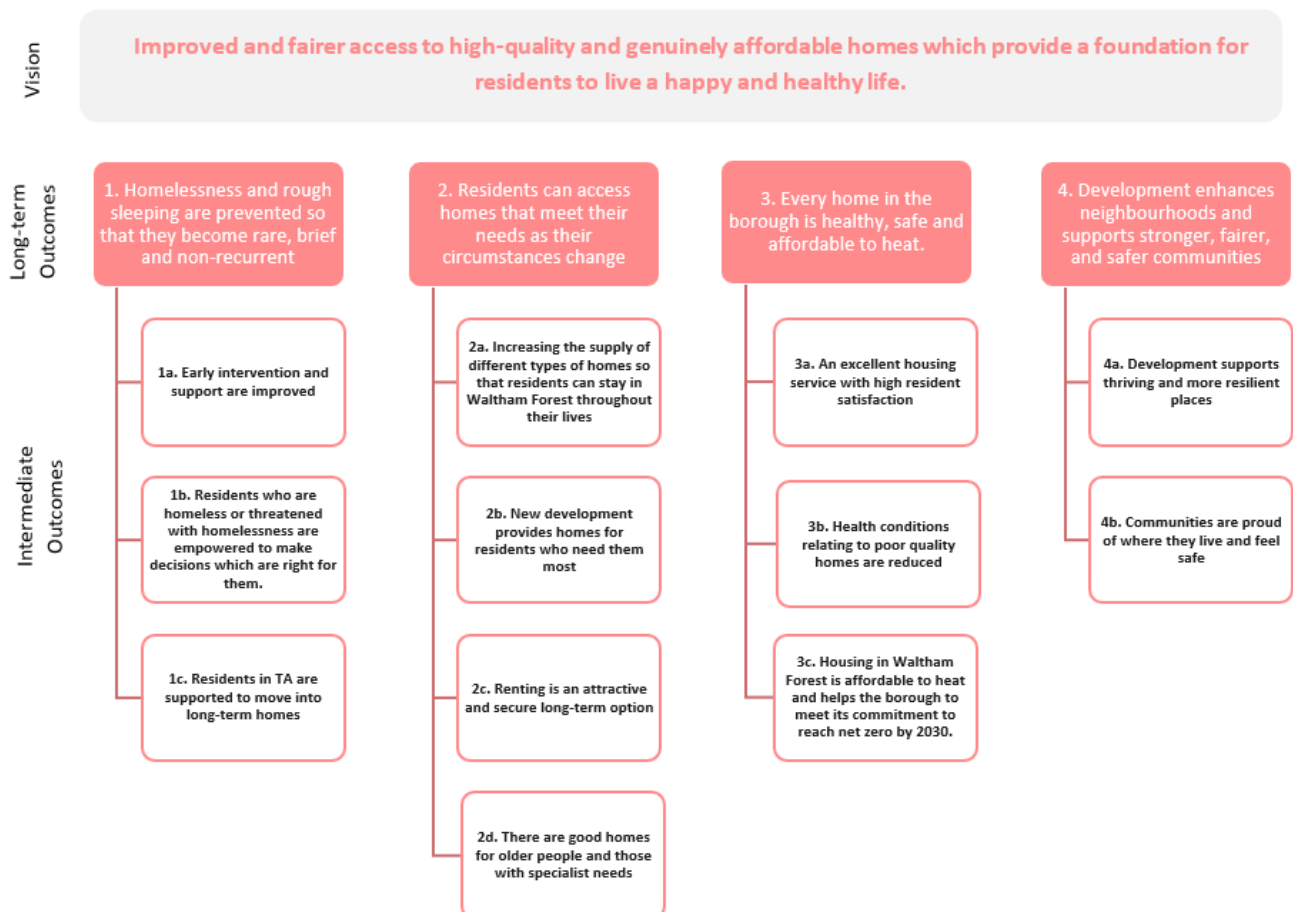
- 3.5 We have been taking a theory of change approach – first identifying the overarching goal the strategy, and then creating ways to get there. This approach has allowed us to articulate the importance of housing in Waltham Forest, and to create a shared vision for the Council and partners to work towards.
- 3.6 The initial phase of work identified this overarching goal for the housing strategy: *“Improved and more equitable access to high-quality and genuinely affordable homes which provide a foundation for every resident to live a happy and healthy life”*.

3.7 Engagement and consultation then took place to test this overarching goal, identify long-term outcomes sitting underneath, and priorities for the Council. The full details of consultation can be found in section 6.

### The Housing Strategy: Outcomes and Priorities

3.8 Under the Housing Strategy’s overarching goal of better access to high-quality and genuinely affordable homes, sit four long-term outcomes. These outline the main challenges the Council’s wants to address and the change we want to achieve. Each of those four long-term outcomes serves as a chapter of the strategy, which contains evidence and a residents’ story on the topic. Underneath each of the long-term outcomes, there are intermediate outcomes, which represent the Council’s delivery priorities over the course of the strategy. These are the key things that need to change to deliver the long-term outcomes.

3.9 The long-term outcomes and intermediate outcomes can be found below.



- 3.10 The strategy is supported by a delivery plan (Appendix C), which outlines delivery details such as KPIs, stakeholders and the timeline for each action or intervention.
- 3.11 Three supporting strategies as well as a Compact will follow finalisation of the overarching Housing Strategy. These will set out in more detail of approach to achieving outcomes in specific priority areas:
- **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** - Setting out our statutory approach to homelessness.
  - **Housing Compact** - Setting out our approach to working with Housing Associations.
  - **Private Rented Sector Strategy** – Setting out our approach to supporting tenants and landlords in the Private Rented Sector.
  - **Supported Housing Strategy** – Setting out our approach to managing accommodation where residents receive support, supervision or care.

#### **4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 An alternative option was to not develop a new Housing Strategy – while every local authority must formulate a Homelessness Strategy, it is not compulsory to have a wider housing strategy. This option is not recommended, as it would encourage a “business as usual” approach to housing, while the widening of the housing crisis requires a renewed commitment to tackle the challenge.

#### **5. COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)**

- 5.1 This proposed Housing Strategy has been developed to support the ambitions of the Council around tackling inequalities and improving residents’ experience. It also draws from other strategies such as the Council’s 15 Minute Neighbourhood Framework and Inclusive Growth and Economy Framework (currently in development).

#### **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 PRD ran the engagement, which took place in two phases.
- 6.2 **Phase 1.** A series of resident focus groups, building on the work of the Affordable Housing Commission, were held to get a deeper understanding of the experience of living in Waltham Forest. PRD also undertook targeted engagement activity to address gaps in participation, with young people, older people’s groups, and people receiving support in relation to their housing situation.
- 6.3 **Phase 2.** A draft strategy was created based on the themes that were recurrent in the focus groups. PRD then organised a workshop to test

this draft strategy. A selection of residents from previous focus groups, as well as members of the STAR Panel of council tenants, were invited to discuss and critique the outcomes. Council officers also attended in an observer capacity.

- 6.4 The full results and insights from this engagement are in Appendix B.
- 6.5 Alongside work with residents, PRD has been engaged with key senior officers from across the Council to inform the strategy. Reflecting the cross-cutting importance of housing, they have been speaking to various teams, including officers in regeneration, planning and delivery, climate emergency and behaviour change, social care, Community Safety and public health.
- 6.6 As part of the Affordable Housing Commission process, a developers' panel was consulted before finalising the recommendations. Alongside the Housing Strategy, we are renewing the Housing Compact, which sets out how we will be working with housing associations. We met with the main Housing Associations in the borough in October 2023, to present the Housing Strategy work to them, and we will continue to engage with them as we develop the Housing Compact.
- 6.7 Finally, the Housing and Growth Scrutiny Committees were engaged in an initial meeting setting the direction of travel, and in another session to review the draft of the Strategy.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk**

- 7.1.1 Though there are no direct costs associated with the Housing Strategy it will provide critical strategic direction for HRA and general fund spend over the next four years.

### **7.2 Legal**

- 7.2.1 Whilst the Housing Strategy is no longer a Strategy forming part of the statutory plans and/or policies reserved to Full Council, under Paragraph 13 of the Terms of Reference of Full Council, it may decide statutory plans and/or policies which the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Governance & Law and the Leader of the Council, deems to be major policies in terms of their implications and/or impact on the borough or part of it. It is proposed that given the importance of the Housing Strategy that following consultation with Cabinet this is decided upon by Full Council.

### **7.3 Equalities and Diversity**

- 7.3.1 Housing is a core component of equality. It highly impacts other areas of life, such as health, work, or school. We also know that housing outcomes are not always equal, with certain groups more likely than other to be homeless, or to live in poor quality or overcrowded housing. Because of this, one of the desired long-term outcomes that the strategy will work towards is specifically about reducing structural inequalities in housing outcomes. Our resident engagement plan was

designed to ensure proper representation of views across all protected characteristics.

- 7.3.2 Looked after children entering adulthood and care leavers can specifically struggle to find affordable housing. By improving access to high-quality and genuinely affordable homes, we expect that the Housing Strategy will have a positive impact on looked after children and care leavers.
- 7.3.3 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed (Appendix D) and determined that as a result of the strategy no negative outcomes will arise for groups with protected characteristics. An increase in affordable housing, and better housing conditions, will have a positive impact on those groups. Full analysis is available in Appendix D.

#### **7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)**

##### 7.4.1 Climate change:

- (a) Domestic energy contributes almost half of the borough's total carbon emissions. One of the outcomes of the strategy is specifically about improving this. Retrofitting the borough's affordable housing stock and other fuel-poor homes will help us tackle the climate emergency, but also address a large overhead for many residents in the cost-of-living crisis.
- (b) Similarly, new homes built in the Borough will be more energy and carbon efficient than existing homes, so will help minimise increases in carbon emissions from new development and supporting infrastructure.

##### 7.4.2 Health:

- (c) The strategy's overarching goal recognises housing as a foundation for a healthy life. A specific intermediate outcome (3b) is around reducing health conditions relating to poor quality homes.
- (d) Well-maintained, insulated homes, will improve residents' physical and mental health, for example by reducing occurrences of damp and mould.

##### 7.4.3 Crime and disorder

- (e) The Housing Strategy has the potential to support tackling crime and disorder on several levels.
- (f) The fourth outcome of the strategy specifically underlines the need for developments to support safer communities.
- (g) The importance for the Council of working hand-in-hand with Housing Associations to address challenges around community safety has been recognised. Following the Housing Strategy, and based on the same outcomes framework, a Housing Compact is being developed, highlighting how the

Council and Housing Associations will work together. This document will emphasise joint work around community safety.

## **7.5 Council Infrastructure**

7.5.1 None as a direct implication of this report

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)**

None