

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2024 - 2029	
Meeting / Date	Cabinet, 14 March 2024	
Cabinet portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)	
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Wards affected	All	
Public access	Open	
Appendices	A1: Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2024-2029 A2: Equalities Impact Assessment Screening	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report introduces the new Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2024 – 2029. The Compact is a subsidiary document to the new Waltham Forest Housing Strategy 2024-2029, which was agreed by Cabinet in January 2024, and sets out the framework for the Council working in partnership with housing associations to deliver the Council’s Housing Strategy and other related resident priorities.
- 1.2 The Compact has been developed through Compact specific engagement and consultation and builds on wider consultation and engagement for the new Housing Strategy and the Waltham Forest Affordable Housing Commission.
- 1.3 The Compact follows the Theory of Change model used to develop the Housing Strategy, with the same Outcomes Framework with a Delivery Plan incorporating actions to deliver a wider range of resident social and economic wellbeing outcomes. Governance of the Compact will be through a Compact Board with councillor and senior council and housing association officer representation, with annual updates to Council Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 Approve the Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2024 - 2029, included as Appendix 1 of this report, as the framework for working with housing associations to help deliver the Council’s Housing Strategy and other resident wellbeing outcomes.

3. Proposals

Background

- 3.1 Housing associations are mainly independent charitable organisations set up to support people in housing need. 30 housing associations have homes in Waltham Forest, together providing about 16,000 social and affordable rent and circa 1,700 shared ownership homes. This provides affordable homes to circa 14% of the borough's residents.
- 3.2 Waltham Forest Council has for many years worked closely with housing associations to increase the supply of affordable homes and provide a range of support to residents. Most recently this was under the framework of the first Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2019 – 2024 approved by Cabinet in March 2019. The Compact is effectively a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Council and housing associations active in the borough, setting out principles and working arrangements to deliver the borough's housing priorities as set out in the borough's Housing Strategy.
- 3.3 As such, the first Housing Compact was contemporaneous with the Housing Strategy 2019-24 and set out a framework for the Council working with housing associations to deliver the borough's priorities as set out in the Strategy – to provide high quality affordable homes and excellent management services, connected communities, and resident wellbeing.
- 3.4 The first Compact worked well as a framework for engaging with housing associations on a wide range of local and housing priorities and was flexible enough to adapt through a period of significant disruption and change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the timeframe of the first Compact the housing crisis has worsened, with fewer residents being able to afford good quality homes, the need for affordable homes continuing to outstrip supply, and new regulations relating to building safety and quality increasing the financial challenges faced by social landlords.
- 3.5 The Council's new Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029, approved by Cabinet in January 2024, sets out how the Council will be seeking to address the housing crisis. The Housing Compact is a subsidiary to the Housing Strategy setting out a framework for working with housing associations to deliver Housing Strategy outcomes and includes these housing outcomes and other resident wellbeing outcomes that the Council is looking to deliver over the next five years.

Waltham Forest Housing Compact 2024 - 2029

- 3.6 The new Compact has been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation, is reflective of changes and challenges that the social housing sector is facing and seeks to place residents social and economic wellbeing at the heart of the partnership.

- 3.7 The Compact sets out principles and a framework for working in partnership with housing associations in the borough, providing a structure for working on housing and other council resident focused outcomes and priorities including increasing the supply of good quality affordable homes, improving community safety, enabling digital inclusion, providing training and employment opportunities, and other community investment projects to support residents' wellbeing.
- 3.8 The Compact consists of three key themes:
- Four partnership promises for resident focused services;
 - How we work in partnership to deliver these services; and
 - An outcomes framework that will guide delivery.
- 3.9 The Compact Promises put residents first in its partnership approach. The promises align with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Consumer Standards, which will be a regulatory requirement for all registered providers from April 2024. The Compact will seek to use RSH tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) as the basis for performance measures for the Compact. All housing associations with homes in Waltham Forest are registered providers, as is the Council as a stock holding local authority, and subject to the new social housing regulatory regime.
- 3.10 The second theme covers the Compact's new governance and delivery approach. The Compact will be managed through a board co-chaired by Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration) and a senior housing association officer, Ruth Davison, Chief Executive of Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association, and consisting of senior council and housing association officers. The Compact Board will agree and steer the Compact delivery priorities that will be set out in a Compact Annual Engagement and Action Plan, which in turn will be based on the Compact Outcomes Framework, the third theme, to deliver Housing Strategy and other local outcomes through a systems convener process - a lead officer is identified to set up a focus or working group with clear terms of reference and expected outputs and outcomes.
- 3.11 The Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee will continue to have oversight of the Housing Compact through regular progress and update reports. In addition to the Annual Engagement and Action Plan, communication with and information exchange between Compact key stakeholders will be through a regular Compact Stakeholders Newsletter, and a Compact webpage will be set up on the Council's website to ensure information on the Compact activities and outcomes is more readily available to stakeholders, partners and residents.
4. Options & Alternatives Considered
- 4.1 It is not a statutory requirement to have a Housing Compact. However, the learning from previous working arrangements with housing associations is that the Council, associations and residents benefit

from a more structured partnership working arrangement to help deliver positive housing outcomes for residents.

- 4.2 The Housing Compact 2024 - 2029 is another step change in the partnership working arrangement between the Council and housing associations. It is a more collaborative, flexible and adaptable way of working together to provide good outcomes for local residents as set out in the Housing and other borough strategies.

5. Council Strategic Priorities (and other National or Local Policies or Strategies)
 - 5.1 The Compact is primarily a framework for working with housing associations to deliver the outcomes as set out in the Housing Strategy 2024-29 as approved by Cabinet in January 2024.
 - 5.2 The Compact will also continue as the framework for engaging with housing associations on a wider range of local and national priorities including digital inclusion; education, training and employment; community safety; and other community investment initiatives to support resident life chances and wellbeing.

6. Consultation
 - 6.1 The Housing Compact 2024 - 2029 has been developed through engagement with key partners and stakeholders. Housing associations have been consulted through the existing Compact structure including through the Compact Housing Partnership Group and other theme specific groups. A key consultation event was a Compact Leadership workshop on 30th October 2023 with senior Council and Housing Association staff and Council Cabinet Members, which looked at priorities, principles and working arrangements for the new Compact.
 - 6.2 Development of the new Compact has been contemporaneous with the development of the Housing Strategy 2024-29 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-29 and builds on the extensive resident engagement and stakeholder consultation used to develop these strategies.
 - 6.3 The Housing Scrutiny Committee has had oversight of and been involved in the first Compact and development of the new Compact. The new Compact development process was considered and endorsed by Housing Scrutiny Committee in December 2023 and the draft Housing Compact 2024 - 2029 in February 2024.

7. Implications
 - 7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk
 - 7.1.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising out of the introduction of a new Housing Compact to govern engagement and partnership arrangements with Housing Associations. There may be

projects agreed under the Compact framework requiring funding that will go through the appropriate funding approval processes to be funded from existing budgets.

7.1.2 The Compact partnership arrangements should help attract investment into the borough in the form of funding for building new and improving existing affordable homes, as well as for a wide range of projects to support residents and should provide a more effective and efficient means to achieve council led projects and initiatives to deliver social and economic wellbeing outcomes for residents.

7.1.3 The Council continues to directly support housing associations to procure and build affordable homes in the borough by providing grant funding from retained right to buy receipts. The use of right to buy receipts is subject to regulation and the Council will have to ensure any financial support from right to buy receipts is in accordance with these regulations.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the Waltham Forrest Housing Compact 2024-2029. It is not a statutory or legally binding document, and the Housing Associations will not have any legal obligation to sign up to or adhere to the principles and process set out in the Compact.

7.2.2 All the Housing Associations active in Waltham Forest are registered providers regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing and have to adhere to a comprehensive regulatory framework. The Regulator of Social Housing is accountable to Parliament for the discharge of functions conferred on it by virtue of Part 2 (regulation of social housing) of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has introduced an enhanced regulatory regime for social landlords, including local housing authorities, effective from April 2024.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

7.3.1 There will be no adverse impacts on protected groups. The Housing Compact seeks to provide positive benefits for all affordable housing residents across the borough, particularly targeting vulnerable households and low-income residents, who may be from protected groups, with the provision of affordable homes and additional support as necessary and appropriate.

7.3.2 The Housing Compact is primarily focused on delivering the Council's Housing Strategy 2024-29 outcomes. The Housing Strategy is supported by an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure proper representation of views across all protected characteristics.

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

7.4.1 The Compact is intended to encourage and facilitate partnership working to meet a wide range of sustainability objectives including providing more energy efficient and sustainable homes, retrofitting the borough's affordable housing stock which will help with the cost-of-

living crisis and help tackle the climate emergency; tackling anti-social behaviour and improving community safety; and providing community support, training and employment opportunities for residents to help improve life chances and wellbeing.

7.5 Council Infrastructure

7.5.1 There are no implications on Council infrastructure, the Housing Compact will be delivered within current resources.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.