

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Waltham Forest's new Housing Strategy
Meeting / Date	Full Council, 25 April 2024
Directorate	Place
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Wards affected	All
Public access	Open
Appendices	Appendix A: Housing Strategy Appendix B: Engagement report Appendix C: Delivery Plan Appendix D: Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix E: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Appendix F: Housing Compact

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. **Recommendation**

- 2.1. Full Council is recommended to agree the draft Housing Strategy (Appendix A)
- 2.2. Full Council is recommended to agree the draft Delivery Plan (Appendix C)

3. **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. In June 2023, 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 Mission Waltham Forest Corporate Plan, the 15 Minute Neighbourhood Framework and Inclusive Growth and Economy Frameworks (currently in development). The Strategy will be the key instrument through which the Council takes [the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Commission](#) into delivery.

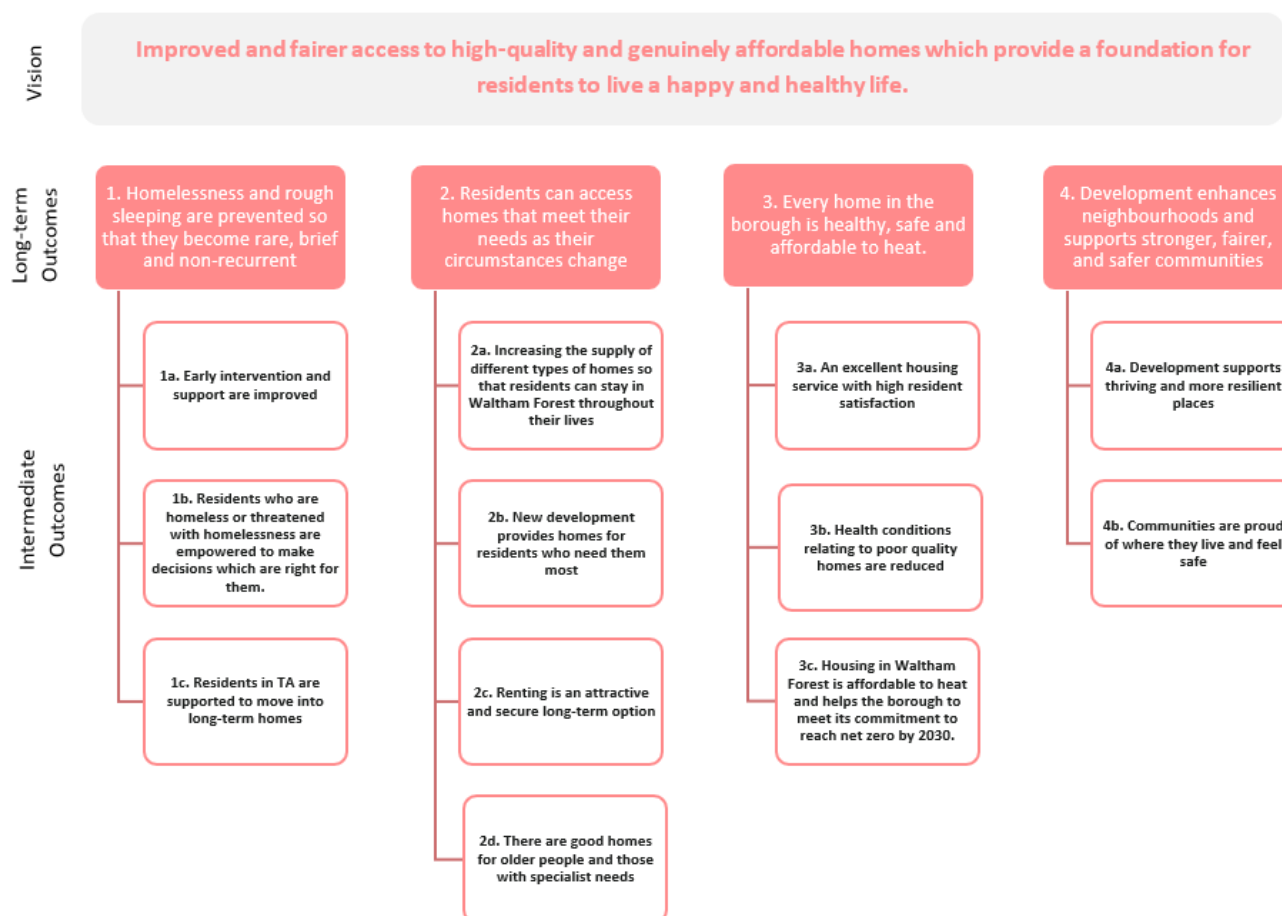
4. Approach to the Strategy and Engagement

- 4.1. We have taken a theory of change approach – first identifying the overarching goal the strategy, and then creating ways to get there. This 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.
- 4.2. The initial phase of work identified this overarching goal for the housing strategy as: *“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”*.
- 4.3. Engagement and consultation then took place to test this overarching goal, identify long-term outcomes sitting underneath, and priorities for the council. The residents engagement report can be found in Appendix B.

5. The Housing Strategy: Outcomes and Priorities

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.

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



5.4. 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.

5.5. The overarching Housing Strategy is supported by a set of products setting out in more details the approach to achieving outcomes in each of the following specific priority areas:

- **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix E)** - Setting out our statutory approach to homelessness.
- **Housing Compact (Appendix F)** - Setting out our approach to working with Housing Associations.
- **Private Rented Sector Strategy (in development)** – Setting out our approach to supporting tenants and landlords in the Private Rented Sector.
- **Supported Housing Strategy (in development)** – Setting out our approach to managing accommodation where residents receive support, supervision or care.

6. **Conclusion**

- 6.1. This new Housing Strategy for Waltham Forest recognises that housing is the foundation for a healthy and thriving life for residents. It comes as a challenging time for housing, with rising homelessness and difficult conditions for housing delivery. However, the Strategy will help the Council rise to the challenge, while laying the foundations for a more resilient future.

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 the HRA and General Fund spend over the next four years.
- 7.1.2. The consultancy PRD was commissioned to support the development of the Housing Strategy following their involvement in developing the evidence for the Housing Commission. The Housing Strategy contract was worth £40,675.

7.2. Legal

- 7.2.1. Whilst the Housing Strategy is no longer forms 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.
- 7.2.2. Housing is a core component of equality and high-quality affordable housing plays a key role in reduces inequalities. 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. Reflecting this, a desired long-term outcome that the Strategy will work towards is specifically to reduce structural inequalities in housing outcomes. Our resident engagement plan was designed to ensure proper representation of views across all protected characteristics.
- 7.2.3. 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. The council's agreed Housing Allocations Policy prioritises care leavers.
- 7.2.4. 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.

7.3. Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder).

7.3.1. Climate change:

7.3.1.1. 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 addresses a large overhead for many residents in the cost-of-living crisis.

7.3.1.2. 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.

7.3.2. Health:

7.3.2.1. 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.

7.3.2.2. Well-maintained, well insulated homes will improve residents' physical and mental health, for example by reducing occurrences of damp and mould.

7.3.3. Crime and disorder

7.3.3.1. The Housing Strategy has the potential to support tackling crime and disorder on several levels. Examples include:

7.3.3.2. The fourth outcome of the strategy specifically underlines the need for developments to support safer communities.

7.3.3.3. 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, the Housing Compact highlights how the council and housing associations will work together. This document specifically emphasises joint work around community safety.

7.4. Council Infrastructure (e.g. human resources, accommodation or IT issues)

7.4.1. None as a direct implications of this report

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

None