

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC REPORT

Report to:	CABINET
Report of:	Corporate Director for Place
Date of Decision:	25 July 2017
SUBJECT:	BIRMINGHAM: A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE
Key Decision: Yes	Relevant Forward Plan Ref: 003753/2017
If not in the Forward Plan: (please "X" box)	Chief Executive approved <input type="checkbox"/> O&S Chairman approved <input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes
Relevant O&S Chairman:	Cllr Victoria Quinn, Housing and Homes
Wards affected:	All

1. Purpose of report:
<p>1.1 To seek endorsement for Housing Birmingham’s strategy statement – “Birmingham: A Great Place to Live”. Birmingham City Council is a member of the Housing Birmingham partnership. The strategy commits the Council to progressing both unilateral and collective actions.</p>

2. Decision(s) recommended:
<p>That the Cabinet:-</p> <p>2.1 Endorse the Housing Birmingham partnership strategy (Appendix 1 & Summary – Appendix 2);</p> <p>2.2 Commit to adopting the approaches outlined in the strategy as the strategic direction for improving housing conditions and truly making Birmingham a great place to live for all citizens;</p> <p>2.3 Commit to working through the Housing Birmingham partnership to deliver the ambitions of the strategy;</p> <p>2.4 Mandate the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes to further evolve, develop and monitor the implementation of the strategy through the Housing Birmingham partnership.</p>

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3. Consultation

Consultation should include those that have an interest in the decisions recommended

3.1 Internal

Whilst this is a partnership rather than a BCC document it is recognised that a range of members and officers with the Council have an interest in the content of the strategy. Internal consultation has therefore been undertaken with members of the Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment, Housing Transformation DMT, Economy SMT and Public Health. Input has also been received from commissioning colleagues in Adults and Health Directorate.

3.2 External

The document has been developed through the Housing Birmingham Partnership. Two facilitated strategy development sessions were held with a wide range of stakeholders including registered providers, developers, private landlords, community interest groups, students, health colleagues, elected members and citizens (see Appendix 4). These sessions have helped to inform the priorities of the strategy. In addition the members of the Housing Birmingham partnership board have been consulted on the draft strategy. An extensive public consultation has not been undertaken. The document is intended to be a high level statement of strategic direction that will be underpinned by more detailed proposals, strategies and plans that, by their nature, would require more extensive consultation.

4. Compliance Issues:

4.1 Are the recommended decisions consistent with the Council's policies, plans and strategies?

The strategy has been designed to complement the Council's vision of "Birmingham – a city of growth where every child, citizen and place matters". Within this vision, "Housing – a great place to live" is identified as one of the four key priorities. This strategy builds upon the vision and provides further analysis and strategic direction for the Housing theme.

4.2 Financial Implications (Will decisions be carried out within existing finance and Resources?)

- 4.2.1 A significant level of investment over the next 10 years will be undertaken by our partners, private developers and other social housing providers in the delivery of the Housing Strategy (this will include the provision of new homes and specialist accommodation for specific groups including young people, students and extra care villages for people). The strategy will also assist the West Midlands Combined Authority to develop Housing Investment Programmes across the region for the future.

4.2.2 With specific regard to the Council, the investment that will be undertaken in the delivery of public and private sector housing is set out in the Financial Plan 2017+ (including the HRA Self Financing Business Plan) that was approved by City Council on the 28th February. In particular this includes:

- £445m over the next 10 years in the provision of new social and affordable homes by the Council (estimated at 2,570 new homes);
- £585m over the next 10 years to ensure that the key components of our existing properties are replaced e.g. central heating systems, double glazing, gas boilers, new wiring, external fascias, new kitchens and bathrooms;
- £37m over the next 10 years to provide adaptations in properties to promote independent living;
- £668m over the next 10 years to repair and maintain our properties (including emergency and day to day repairs, empty property repairs, annual gas servicing and internal communal areas).

4.2.3 In addition, the Council will be investing £106m over the next three years to continue our work on our Empty Property Strategy (and to return homes into use), provision of new properties for market rent through our wholly owned company – In-Reach and supporting other programmes of regeneration and housing across the City.

4.3 Legal Implications

There are a number of proposals within the strategy that have clear legal implications – for example the use of fixed-term tenancies. The actual implementation of any proposal contained within the strategy will be subject to legal assurance and the appropriate governance approvals.

4.4 Public Sector Equality Duty

This is a high-level strategy statement. Implementation of specific proposals will be subject to an assessment of the equality impact. As a whole the strategy is intended to have a positive impact upon the housing conditions enjoyed by all citizens. Particular cohorts identified within the strategy are highlighted as facing particular barriers in accessing housing that is suitable for their needs. This includes younger people, people with vulnerabilities and older residents. The strategy is intended to direct the creation or improvement of housing pathways for those cohorts. An Equality Analysis is attached as Appendix 3.

5. Relevant background/chronology of key events:

5.1 Housing Birmingham is a partnership for the City's housing stakeholders. The partnership board comprises representatives from Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Social Housing Partnership, Birmingham Landlords Forum, Health, Homes and Communities Agency and the Third Sector Assembly. In addition to the board the partnership is able to draw upon the expertise of a network of agencies, organisations and groups who have a stake in housing the people of Birmingham.

- 5.2 Housing is one of four key priorities for the Council. The Council's Vision and Forward Plan sets the ambition that Birmingham should be a great place to live for all citizens. This recognises that, at an individual level, access to decent and safe housing is a pre-requisite for good health, well-being, making a positive contribution to the community, educational attainment and for children to fully realise their potential. There is a dependency between good housing and the other key priorities of Health, Jobs and Skills and Children.
- 5.3 Whilst for many people Birmingham is already a great place to live; it is very clear that there are significant challenges in meeting our ambition for all citizens. This is not just a local problem. The 2017 Housing White Paper was an admission from the Government that the housing market is broken and that the housing crisis cannot be fixed without a role for local government. Delivering this role relies upon collaborative working with statutory and non-statutory partners.
- 5.4 Particular local challenges include:
- 89,000 new homes required to meet the needs of a growing population - capacity for just 53,000 new homes within the city boundaries;
 - Larger than average household sizes – pockets of over-crowding;
 - A demand for more and better housing options for older residents;
 - Many homes are under-occupied;
 - High levels of statutory homelessness;
 - Increased numbers of street homeless;
 - Rising rent levels and house prices but falling real incomes – especially impacting on young people;
 - The impact of benefit reforms – again particularly impacting on the young;
 - An ageing housing stock and many homeowners with fixed or low incomes – lack of investment in maintaining their homes;
 - Fuel poverty is widespread;
 - The need for improvement in the management of rented housing;
 - A rapidly growing private rented sector with variable quality of housing and management.
- 5.5 This strategy builds upon the many strengths and assets that we already have, including:
- A positive, enabling approach to housing growth that is reflected in the ability of the city to attract private investment for housing development;
 - Significant investment in infrastructure – such as HS2 – that will attract further housing investment;
 - Opportunities presented by the West Midlands Combined Authority and devolution to develop a more responsive approach to local conditions;
 - The Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) - a direct delivery vehicle for house-building that is now the largest developer of new homes in the city;
 - A track record of returning empty homes to use and positive use of planning powers to enable re-use of obsolete commercial property for housing;
 - A relatively large affordable housing sector;
 - A history of innovation in responding to homelessness; effective prevention work and examples of national best practice such as the Youth Hub;
 - A network of partners and private landlords who have a shared ambition to deliver a quality private rented housing choice;

- Enforcement and licensing powers for tackling instances of unacceptable private renting management and property standards;
- Significant investment programmes to maintain social rented properties;
- £4m per year to fund adaptations to enable people with disabilities to maintain independence.

5.6 Our approach to delivery is based upon making the most of our existing strengths and assets against three priorities:

- A strong supply of new, high quality homes;
- Citizens are able to find, access and sustain housing that meets their needs;
- Neighbourhoods are enhanced and the quality of existing housing is improved.

5.7 We will increase the supply of new, high quality homes by:

- Creating the conditions for private sector investment and development;
- Enhancing the capacity of BMHT to maintain and increase the Council's direct contribution to housing growth;
- Returning empty homes to use;
- Encouraging and supporting innovation; including self-build;
- Maximising opportunities for registered providers to deliver.

5.8 We will enable citizens to find, access and sustain housing that meets their needs by:

- Making best use of the existing affordable housing stock;
- Working to remove barriers to renting privately;
- Bringing forward a new homeless strategy – with the goal of eradicating homelessness and delivering through a multi-agency positive pathway board;
- Developing a Young Persons Housing Plan – responding to the particular needs of our young population;
- Sustaining tenancies across all rented tenures;
- A Supported Housing Policy that will provide direction on the use of resources in a changing funding environment.

5.9 Our strategy represents a consensus view of the activity that partners will take to meet our priorities. However, there are opportunities to go further to develop more radical options to addressing our challenges. For example, work at a city-region and core city level is moving towards a city deal for housing for the West Midlands Combined Authority. This offers the possibility of much greater flexibility in order to use resources more effectively to respond to local pressures and opportunities. The intent of the Housing Birmingham Partnership is to use this first strategy statement as a platform for developing more transformational proposals. To this end, against each priority theme, we have identified themes where there are opportunities to “stretch delivery”. These are not proposals for which there is a consensus but are areas of potential for the partnership to explore.

6. Evaluation of alternative option(s):

6.1 There is no longer a statutory requirement for the Local Authority to have a Housing Strategy. However, the partnership board feel that there is a value in a collective statement of priorities and acts that provides a direction for housing in the city.

7. Reasons for Decision(s):

7.1 A decision is required in order for Birmingham City Council to endorse the Housing Birmingham partnership strategy. The Council is a key member of the partnership and progressing many of the proposals contained within the strategy will require the support of the Council.

7.2 The strategy is intended to provide a direction for policy development. Whilst the detail of specific proposals will be subject to appropriate governance procedures approval for the strategy indicates an agreement to general principles and direction of travel.

Signatures	<u>Date</u>
Cllr Peter Griffiths Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes
Jacqui Kennedy Corporate Director for Place

List of Background Documents used to compile this Report:

- List of Appendices accompanying this Report (if any):**
1. Birmingham: A Great Place to Live
 2. Birmingham: A Great Place to Live – Summary + proposals to stretch delivery
 3. Equality Analysis
 4. Summary Housing Birmingham Strategy Workshops

Report Version		Dated	
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