

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

17th January 2023



Subject: APPROVAL OF “SUPPORTED HOUSING STRATEGY: A FRAMEWORK FOR SHORT TERM SUPPORTED HOUSING (EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION)”

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Relevant Cabinet Members: Cllr Sharon Thompson - Housing & Homelessness
Cllr Mariam Khan - Health and Social Care
Cllr Yvonne Mosquito - Finance and Resources

Relevant O&S Chairs: Cllr Mohammed Idrees - Housing & Neighbourhoods
Cllr Mick Brown - Health and Social Care
Cllr Akhlaq Ahmed - Resources
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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 009647/2022		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of Birmingham's draft Supported Housing Strategy (**Appendix 1**), consultation outcome. This follows a one-month long consultation on Be-Heard (later extended to 5 weeks) with residents, providers, professionals, and service users with experiences of supported housing provision. The findings of the consultation on the draft strategy are presented in a consultation findings report (**Appendix 1a: Consultation Findings Report**). The findings reflect a strong consensus for the way forward set out in the strategy.
- 1.2 The focus of this strategy is on shorter-term transitional supported housing (TSH) different to the long-term provision for older people. TSH provides vital services for working age households across housing, health and social care settings. More than providing roofs over heads, TSH offers care and support so that, regardless of personal circumstances or experience, people can achieve independent, happy, and stable lives. This specific type of provision is often poorly understood due to the varied nature of service intensity, housing types, and diverse range of client groups that can benefit from it, with the term exempt accommodation used to describe it.
- 1.3 The draft strategy calls for a radical change, setting out how greater local oversight and management of supported housing can only achieve this within the context of national legislative and regulatory reforms. The position taken is largely due to a decade long period of fragmentation of policy and funding uncertainties. Birmingham's experience, reflected in other national oversight pilots is that rising demand for shorter term supported housing, is increasingly being met through the growth from unregulated provision from leased private sector housing managed by third party organisations, with mixed experiences and often poor-quality provision impacting on the supply of other types of housing such as affordable rented housing.
- 1.4 One of the key priorities of the strategy is to rebalance provision in the city, to better meet local needs and mitigate against detrimental impacts of oversupply of poor-quality provision. Implementing learning from participation of a national oversight pilot, the strategy also puts forward a range of shorter-term measures to drive up standards including rolling out voluntary local accreditation and quality standards regimes, tested over the last twelve months and working other local authorities to implement positive oversight practice at a local level.
- 1.5 The formulation of strategy has coincided with both local scrutiny and national governmental inquiries and key local and national policy developments led by national local elected members. These include the development of Birmingham's overall Housing Strategy, Overview and Scrutiny and DLUHC Select Committee inquiries on Exempt Accommodation. In addition, there has also been the introduction of a Private Members Bill in Parliament Supported Housing (Regulation and Oversight) Bill. (See background documents)
- 1.6 Upon adoption of the strategy a more detailed action plan will need to be developed carefully taking account of key local and national policy developments including any new legislation.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet: -

- 2.1. Approves the adoption and implementation of the draft Transitional Supported Housing Strategy: A framework for Short Term Supported Housing (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.2 Notes the outcome of the consultation as detailed at **Appendix 1a**, which indicates strong support for the strategy priorities and objectives as the basis for setting the framework for change, alongside actions building upon learning gained whilst delivering its oversight on a national oversight pilot.
- 2.3 To approve that the (Interim) Strategic Director of City Housing establishes a multi-disciplinary Strategic Delivery Plan Group to undertake the development of a five-year Delivery Plan in conjunction with statutory and voluntary sector partners.
- 2.4 The (Interim) Strategic Director of City Housing will provide regular Delivery Plan updates to the Cabinet Member Housing and Homelessness and Cabinet as and when requested.
- 2.5 Delegate local enforcement and decommissioning decisions of supported housing provision in the city, to an officer led Supported Housing Oversight Board. Oversight roles and functions will be set out within a specific terms of reference, including a clear process for briefing Cabinet and Cabinet Members in line with decision making thresholds of the BCC constitution. Membership will initially be drawn from the city's current Supported Housing Sponsor Board and allow for co-opting and changes to be made, in order to ensure the relevant service areas leads are represented over the duration of the strategy.

3 Background

- 3.1 Short-term TSH housing forms an important part of social safety net across the housing, health, and social care sectors. It is predominantly funded out of housing benefit and available to vulnerable citizens including care leavers, prison leavers, rough sleepers, homeless people with substance dependencies, those with mental health needs and domestic abuse victims.
- 3.2 Birmingham is one of five local authorities involved in informing future national policy for short term transitional supported housing through its participation in a national oversight pilot programme (2020 to 2021). The pilot has focused on shorter-term supported accommodation with the aim of developing better outcomes and value for money for vulnerable people aiming to provide them with the skills to enter longer-term independent accommodation.
- 3.3 Several outputs to date have been delivered as result of this pilot. These include (1) multi-agency led inspections of properties and services of transitional supported housing; (2) a local supported housing needs assessment (**Appendix 2**); (3) bespoke training targeted at professionals from all sectors, and the development and launch of; (4) Charter of Rights for residents living in the supported housing as well as (5) a locally accredited Quality Standards regime, aimed at driving up confidence and assurance of service quality. The development of this cross-portfolio local strategy represents the final element of this work.

- 3.4 The Cabinet Member of Housing & Homelessness has been leading local, regional and national dialogue and action, concerning policy reforms of supported housing. This includes hosting a national conference event in Birmingham with the homelessness charity Crisis to engage on the development of national legislation being progressed through a Private Members Bill. Local action includes promoting post national oversight action such as the roll-out of local standards regime and promotion of a Charter of Residents for residents living in supported housing. Regionally the Cabinet Member has also supported action at West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) level on policy issues associated with supported housing policy reforms.
- 3.5 The draft TSH strategy seeks to rebalance supported housing provision in Birmingham and identifies the need for urgent national reforms. The reforms are necessary for a number of reasons including for the Council to effectively address the oversupply of poor-quality supported accommodation services linked to several strategic aims which include: -
- Ensuring supported accommodation meets expected standards and is properly funded.
 - Helping residents in supported housing become more independent.
 - Improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
 - Strengthening communities.
 - Making sure supported housing is available for people in the city with different needs and circumstances.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal –

4.1 Option 1: Defer and undertake further consultations.

Undertake further engagement with stakeholders, partners, providers, service users or others to enhance the overall numbers of people involved in consulting on it. This will mean that the strategy and action plan adoption by Cabinet will be deferred. Whilst the overall sample of size of the responses to the consultation will be increased, it will not necessarily yield a different outcome.

4.2 Option 2: Adopt high level strategy & move forwards in the development of Delivery Plan Recommended Option.

Rather than undertake additional time limited consultation on the draft strategy it is recommended ongoing engagement and consultation is embedded into the work on developing Delivery Plan for the high-level strategy.

4.3 Option 2 is the recommended proposal and reflects feedback received from several individuals and organisations that took part in the consultation.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 A one-month long consultation on Be-Heard (later extended to 5 weeks) was held over Summer of 2022, which closed on 16th September 2022. Prior to this there has

also been extensive pre-consultative engagement on the issue of exempt accommodation with various stakeholders and elected members over the course of the Birmingham's involvement in a national 12 month oversight pilot.

5.2 There were 125 responses to the Be-Heard consultation. Nearly half of the respondents were professionals (47%), including individuals and providers, followed by Birmingham residents and homeowners. 5% lived in supported accommodation and 9% were supported accommodation landlords. Key findings (**Appendix 1a**) concerning the strategic priorities and aims show: -

- 94% agree with improved quality and oversight of support provision
- Nearly 70% agree with interim management measures
- Only 17% of respondents did not agree with the priority to reduce the oversupply of some supported housing to rebalance provision in the city.
- There is a need for good quality and high standard accommodation with regulations and legislation
- Need to consider neighbourhoods and the impact and provide more support to resolve issues.
- Funding is a key issue in relation to future regulation and enforcement.
- Housing Benefits were a common theme and need to consider lack of progress on regulations.
- There needs to be stronger focus on people not money when providing support.
- Other comments received included call for set of detailed actions, how the Council would respond to potential legislation being presented in Parliament in November 2022 and measures deployed to control the growth of supported housing from the private rented sector.

Additional consultation and engagement have and is being undertaken with a City-Wide residents' group and City-Wide Exempt Accommodation Forum.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 Given the wide-ranging role and remit of transitional short-term supported housing in providing vital services to vulnerable citizens across the housing, health and social care setting, the strategy is a high level overarching document, setting out a framework for future change. A strategy Impact Modelling paper (**Appendix 3**) has been produced to guide the development of the subsequent delivery plan.
- 6.2 An Options Appraisal process will be undertaken to inform any actions around reducing the supply of supported housing in Birmingham. This will be carried out in conjunction with all key service directorates and stakeholders.
- 6.3 Approvals for any decommissioning supported housing provision in the city is to be led and approved by the existing Supported Housing Sponsor Board.

7. Compliance Issues:

- 7.1 The recommended decisions are consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 priorities, specifically supporting three of the four priority area grand challenges and associated priority themes:

Opportunities for children and young people

A BOLD Inclusive Birmingham

5. Tackle poverty and inequality
6. Empower the citizens and enable the citizen voice
7. Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture
8. Support and enable all children and young people to thrive

Community Resilience, Cohesion and living standards

A BOLD Safe Birmingham

9. Make the city safer
10. Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens
11. Increase affordable, safe, green housing
12. Tackle homelessness

Health and Wellbeing

A BOLD Healthy Birmingham

13. Tackle healthy inequalities
14. Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living
15. Champion mental health
16. Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people

The strategy has also been developed in line with the development of Birmingham's overarching Housing Strategy objectives and is consistent with the new Private Rented Sector Strategy 2022-27. Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017+ and the following specific strategies: -

- Birmingham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Creating a Bolder, Healthier City 2022-2030
- Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2018+
- Refresh of Adult Social Care Vision and Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Financial Inclusion Strategy 2017-2020+
- Transition Strategy 2018+

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 The strategy is a high-level framework for change upon which a future delivery plan will be established which will consider all legal and legislative implications including the possible progression of Supported Housing (Oversight and Regulation) Bill 2022 into law. The impacts of any new primary legislation and supporting Regulations will trigger a review of this proposed Strategy which may require further approval by Cabinet at a later date. The wider impacts of

the proposed new legislation, once known, may result in a review of other Housing related policies and procedures.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 The report seeks approval to adopt and implement the draft Transitional Supported Housing Strategy. This is a continuation of an existing programme within Birmingham City Council, which in 2022/23 was allocated one-off funds of £1.997m from the delivery plan reserve. Cabinet approval to bid and accept DLUHC grant funding of £3.19m was provided in June 2022. This covers the years 2023/24 and 2024/25 and delivery of the strategy will be contained within this amount. Any changes that impact the overall cost or funding position will require further approval and may need a further Cabinet decision.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 7.4.1 Training packages have been procured as part of the work funded and undertaken during the oversight pilot phase. This is targeted at equipping housing and support practitioners to understand some the practical implications associated with using the supported housing sector.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

- 7.5.1 None

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 7.6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed (**Appendix 4**) which identifies positive impacts for groups with protected characteristics, as well as vulnerable communities that use supported housing. The assessment has also identified actions to consider as part of the Delivery Plan formulation process. The EIA will be kept under review to capture any changes discovered as part of the Delivery Plan formulation process including impact assessing any consequential implementation of national primary and secondary legislation that emerges.

7.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 7.7.1 Due to the nature of the strategy being a high-level strategic framework upon which a subsequent Delivery Plan will be developed after Cabinet approval, an ESA is not applicable at this stage. The Delivery Plan will identify both positive and negative impacts on environment and sustainability considerations resulting from improving provision of supported housing in the city available to vulnerable citizens. This Delivery Plan will be overseen by the City Council's Supported Housing Oversight Sponsor Board, which over the course of strategy, holds the remit to provide assurance and oversight of the 5- year delivery plan. Impacts on environmental and sustainability concerns will be captured and reported annually. To inform this work the Strategy Impact Modelling Summary paper, which accompanies the Cabinet Report, identifies the main environmental impacts.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: The future of Transitional Supported Housing: A strategic framework for short term supported housing.

Appendix 1a: Consultation Findings Report.

Appendix 2: Summary Findings Supported Housing Needs Assessment.

Appendix 3: Supported Housing Impact Modelling Summary Paper.

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment, Supported Housing Strategy.

9. Background Documents

[Exempt Accommodation Report, Birmingham City Council Overview & Scrutiny, 2021](#)

[Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities Inquiry Report,](#)

[Supported Housing \(Regulatory Oversight\) Bill](#)