

Community Housing and Environment Committee

13 October 2015

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Director or Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tony Stewart, Senior Enabling Officer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All wards

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Action Plan attached at **Appendix E**, showing achievements against the stated outcomes from the previous Housing Strategy 2011-15 be approved.
2. That the Key Priority Themes identified for the new Housing Strategy 2016-2020 be approved for consultation with key partners and stakeholders, in order to develop the Action Plan outlined at **Appendix A** and stated outcomes for each Key Priority Theme.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable	
<i>Meeting/Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
Community, Housing and Environment Committee	13 October 2015
Consultation	October to December 2015
Policy and Resources Committee	24 February 2016
Council	2 March 2016

Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider and approve the Action Plan attached at **Appendix E**, showing achievements against the stated outcomes from the previous Housing Strategy 2011-15.
 - 1.2 To approve the Key Priority Themes identified for a new Housing Strategy 2016-2020. The Key Priority Themes are recommended for consultation with key partners and stakeholders, in order to develop the Action Plan and stated outcomes for each theme attached at **Appendix A**, before the final strategy is presented to full council for adoption.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

About this strategy

- 2.1 The current Housing Strategy 2011-2015 expires this year, so the council need to put in place a new Housing Strategy post 2015. The Deregulation Bill received Royal Assent in March 2015. The Bill included the provision to remove the power of the Secretary of State to require local housing authorities in England to produce a housing strategy. This is an attempt to tidy up the statute book, because the power has never been exercised since it was introduced more than 10 years ago.
- 2.2 Although now not a mandatory requirement to have one, it is considered that the council should continue to prepare and adopt a Maidstone Housing Strategy for 2016-2020. It is a fundamental and critical piece of work which helps to identify the main housing issues and key challenges for the local area that the council and its partners need to address over the next five years.

Purpose of the strategy

- 2.3 The Housing Strategy is an overarching plan that guides the council and its partners in tackling the major housing challenges facing the borough. It sets out the priorities and outcomes that we wish to achieve and provides a clear strategic vision and leadership in an uncertain economic climate. The Strategy contributes to the council's corporate priorities for Maidstone '**to keep the Borough an attractive place for all and to secure a successful economy**'. The Housing Strategy is also intrinsically linked with other plans and strategies of the council as shown at **Appendix C**.

- 2.4 It is proposed that the new strategy looks ahead for five years, covering 2016-2020. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement in 2014 included measures to extend capital investment to the current Affordable Homes Programme 2015-2018, for a further two years, up to 2019-20. This signifies a continuation of the current funding model and framework. It is unclear however as to what will be in place after 2019-20. The Council's Strategic Plan also runs from 2015-2020, so it is not considered appropriate to set a longer term than five years for the new Housing Strategy, so that we can respond to future directions of travel both nationally and locally.
- 2.5 The ambition behind this strategy is to ensure that all people in the Borough have access to good quality homes that are affordable for them and meet their needs. Every council has a responsibility to understand what matters most to its local communities and to respond to this through investment, service planning and delivery. We also have to take into account national and regional aspirations and sometimes this requires a balance with local priorities.

Our Achievements 2011-2015

- 2.6 During the life of the previous Housing Strategy much was achieved which made a real difference to peoples' lives, including:
- Delivering 871 new affordable houses
 - Completing the following policy and strategy reviews: Homelessness Strategy, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Tenancy Strategy and Domestic Abuse Strategy
 - Increased engagement with the private sector by hosting bi-annual Landlord forums and offering a new Homefinder incentive scheme to gain access to privately rented properties
 - Allocations policy implemented along with new eligibility criteria and 'banding' introduced to offer a fairer distribution of social housing properties to households on the housing register

Maidstone's Strategic Housing Role

- 2.7 The transfer of our housing stock to Golding Homes (formerly Maidstone Housing Trust) in February 2004 has enabled the council to develop its strategic housing role. Over the past 15 years, central government legislation and guidance has encouraged local authorities to take a more strategic approach to the provision of housing, so encouraging better 'place-shaping', and developing a deeper understanding of the relationship between housing, planning and the economy. Thus, our remit is far wider than just 'housing'.

- 2.8 Poor housing or lack of a home has a detrimental impact on many areas including employment, crime, education, homelessness and health. Housing and support provides valuable help to enable people to achieve increased independence and health and well-being outcomes at times of difficulty and can prevent difficulties becoming a crisis.
- 2.9 In the 5 years since our last Housing Strategy was published, the housing sector has experienced a period of rapid change. A combination of policy change at national level, led by the shift in approach to subsidy and vast welfare and planning reform changes, has created opportunities as well as a climate of uncertainty and heightened risk. These are discussed further in **Appendix B** of this report.
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3. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The new Housing Strategy for 2016-2020 is supported by a number of key background evidence papers, documents and research and data analysis of which were undertaken to determine the key housing related challenges facing Maidstone. The Housing Strategy and Research Paper shown at Appendix B contains an insight into the National Context for housing as well as a detailed analysis of the local issues affecting the borough including deprivation, demographic change, housing costs, need and supply, health and well-being and development pressures. Some of the key evidence based national and local documents and data sources used as part of the aforementioned research and analysis is as follows:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (January 2014)
 - Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (November 2011)
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – March 2012)
 - National Quality Technical Standards
 - Summer Budget 2015
 - Preventing Homelessness to Improve Health and Well-Being (July 2015)
 - Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health Audit Results 2014
 - Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010)
 - Office of National Statistics
 - Locata
 - Help to Buy Agent
 - Census 2011
 - Statistical Data Return (2013-2014)
 - Affordable Housing Development Programme
 - Emerging Local Plan (2011-203)
 - Homelessness Strategy (2014-2019)
 - Health Inequalities Action Plan
 - KCC Social Care Accommodation Strategy
 - P1E Homelessness Data
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4. EMERGING CHALLENGES

4.1 From the analysis of the above documents and data sources and a review of national, county and local policy, the key housing challenges in Maidstone are identified as:

- Projected population growth from 2011 to 2031 shows a greater proportion of the population expected to be in age groups aged 60 and over (and even more so for older age groups) - in particular the oldest age group (85+) shows an increase of 142%.
- Evidence in KCC's Adult Accommodation Strategy clearly demonstrates that the majority of need arises from persons in older age groups: those 75-84 and particularly over 85. The needs of these groups range from support in adapting properties to meet changing needs and provision of care in the home through to specialist accommodation.
- There is an estimated total need for 3,620 specialist accommodation units for older persons from 2011 to 2031.
- The council has a net affordable housing need of 5,800 households from 2013 to 2031 equivalent to 322 affordable homes each year (which is 35% of the council's objectively assessed need of 928 dwellings p.a.).
- Across the borough as a whole, it is estimated that some 67% of affordable need is for social or affordable rent tenures, whilst around 33% is for intermediate housing.
- Across the Borough it is estimated that around 43% of households are unable to access market housing on the basis of income levels.
- The difference in life expectancy at birth in our most affluent wards compared to our most deprived is 8.9 years.
- Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however 15% (4,300) of children (under 16 years old) in Maidstone live in poverty. There is a larger difference in life expectancy of men and women; 7 years lower for men and 4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Maidstone than in the least deprived.
- The number of homelessness decisions made by the council has increased significantly since April 2011 from 80 to 604, representing a 655% increase over the last 5 years. From April 2015, 314 decisions have been made so far, showing that numbers are not decreasing.
- The use of temporary accommodation has resulted in a large increase in cost to the Council. The past five years have seen a near fivefold increase in the net cost of temporary accommodation from £118,620 to £584,055.

- The Government will reduce rents in social housing in England by 1% a year for four years from April 2016. This will apply to both social rent and affordable, and the Government indicates this will result in a 12% reduction in average rents by 2020/21, compared to current forecasts. The rent reduction does not apply to shared ownership. Registered providers are already reviewing their business plans and viability of schemes, leading to requests to switch tenures in favour of more shared ownership.
 - Access to alternative funding and delivery sources to help maintain supply due to reductions to capital subsidy is of high importance.
 - Currently over 55% (801 households) of applicants on the council's housing register have a 1-bed need and 27% (392 households) have a 2-bed need. There is therefore a need to increase the delivery of new 1 and 2 bedroom affordable homes.
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5. KEY HOUSING PRIORITY THEMES / OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 At the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) away day held on 24 September 2015, the emerging themes and objectives of the Council's new Housing Strategy were discussed. Following research, analysis and feedback from CLT it is proposed that the new Housing Strategy 2016-2020 is designed around the following key priorities and objectives:
- **Priority 1: Enable and support the delivery of quality homes across the housing market**
 - **Priority 2: To ensure that existing housing in Maidstone Borough is safe, desirable and promotes good health and well-being**
 - **Priority 3: Prevent homelessness; secure the provision of appropriate accommodation for homeless households and supporting vulnerable people.**
- 5.2 This new Housing Strategy for Maidstone gives the Council an excellent opportunity to make a real difference for the residents of the Borough. **Appendix A** lists some suggested outcomes and actions to help us achieve the above key priority themes. This includes working with partners to facilitate housing development, maximising investment opportunities, raising housing quality standards, promoting ways for residents to improve their health and wellbeing and preventative measures and services for homeless persons. The outcomes and actions listed will be developed further after consultation with key partners.

- 5.2.1 The Council is being encouraged to demonstrate its community leadership through direct action and working in partnership with key organisations to deliver homes to meet our identified need in the emerging local plan of 18,500. This will include initiatives like redevelopment of Brunswick Street car park to provide homes whilst retaining sufficient supply of car parking; and the investment in that acquisition/purchase of appropriate properties for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.
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6. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Council could choose not to adopt a new Housing Strategy and instead continue to refresh the 2011-15 strategy, or not have one at all post 2015. However, to not agree a new Housing Strategy would mean a diminution of our community leadership and strategic housing roles and would make effective engagement with our partners much more difficult. It would also mean that the Homes and Communities Agency would be much more likely to direct funds away from Maidstone if they could not clearly see an up to date and coherent vision for the area.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The Council cannot achieve the Key Priority Themes and subsequent outcomes and action plan without working in partnership with other key statutory and voluntary organisations, including the Homes and Communities Agency, elected Members and a broad range of stakeholders and partners.
- 7.2 The new Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 will be subject to consultation with key stakeholder partners and voluntary organisations to determine the priority outcomes and actions before being presented to full council for adoption.
- 7.3 In order to aid the consultation process a stakeholder mapping exercise will be carried out to identify key partners, voluntary organisations and internal departments that we will need to consult in order to help us achieve the aforementioned objectives. This process will also help to determine synergies with relevant partners of which consultation in various group exercises will be mutually beneficial.

7.4 The timetable for the development of the new Maidstone Housing Strategy is set out in the table below.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting/Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
Community, Housing and Environment Committee	13 October 2015
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8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The adoption of the housing strategy will assist in the delivery of the council's corporate priorities.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Risk Management	The delivery of this strategy will depend upon the effectiveness of the partnership working between the statutory and voluntary sector and through listening to and involving service users. Housing is a cross-cutting issue and new partners need to come on board and recognize the importance of tackling the challenges identified. The way forward will require an effective strategic partnership that focuses on delivery of successful outcomes across services, combined with robust risk analysis.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Financial	To be developed as part of the housing investment plan.	Paul Riley, S151 Officer & Ellie Dunnett, Finance
Staffing	Appropriate staffing resources will need to be in place to deliver the outcomes and actions established for the strategy. The position of development officer is currently being advertised which will help with the acquisition and purchase of property's.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Legal	N/A	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
		Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The Housing Strategy potentially affects all population sections and groups. A preliminary EQIA has been carried out, which will be reviewed following the stakeholder consultation exercise, before the new Housing Strategy is presented to full council for adoption.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	N/A	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Community Safety	N/A	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Human Rights Act	N/A	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Procurement	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development, & Paul Riley Section 151 Officer
Asset Management	None	

9. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix A: Priorities, Outcomes and Actions

Appendix B: Housing Strategy 2016-2020 Analysis & Research Paper

Appendix C: Housing Strategy Links

Appendix D: Relationship between poor Housing and Health

Appendix E: Housing Strategy 2011-2015 Action Plan
