

Decision maker:	Cabinet member housing, regulatory services and community safety
Decision date:	Monday 31st January 2022
Title of report:	Housing Strategy 2021-2026
Report by:	Housing Strategy Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To seek approval of the final draft local housing strategy 2021-2026 so that it can be published as a public document.

To seek approval of the public consultation response so that it can be published alongside the local housing strategy 2021-2026.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) That the final draft local housing strategy 2021-2026 and the associated public consultation response are approved.**

Alternative options

1. There is no statutory requirement for the council to produce a housing strategy. Cabinet could decide not to endorse the strategy. This is not recommended as it is considered good practise to have a local housing strategy in place. The strategy gives oversight of the work that the council does directly related to housing; the council does not have another document that brings all of these elements together.
2. Cabinet could decide not to publish our response to the feedback received through the public consultation process. This is not recommended as we have asked the community for their view and we should acknowledge and respond to their concerns and suggestions.

Key considerations

3. The aim of the housing strategy is to provide an overview of the housing related work delivered by Herefordshire Council. It outlines what is being currently delivered and why, identifies areas of challenge, and details improvements that the council intends to make over the next five years. It draws on existing strategies, plans and reports, but does not aim to duplicate them, instead signposting to them throughout.
4. Although there is no statutory obligation to produce a housing strategy, the importance of housing nationally and locally is recognised, as is the need to plan for future demand and ensure that our housing stock is fit for purpose as our population profile grows and changes. The strategy demonstrates how our work to deliver housing links directly with the county plans themes of connectivity, wellbeing and sustainability.
5. Herefordshire faces some significant challenges around the affordability of housing, homelessness, caring for looked after children and young people as well as our aging population, mitigating climate change and ensuring that working age people and families can afford to live and work in the county to support economic growth. Housing is not a stand-alone issue and is closely linked to health inequalities / outcomes for people of all ages across Herefordshire.
6. The strategy has been drafted during the current Covid 19 pandemic and whilst the main issues remain unchanged, some have been exacerbated during this period, particularly homelessness and issues around affordability. We do not yet know what the longer-term impact of Covid 19 might be on the whole housing market.

Community impact

7. The median house price in Herefordshire in 2019 was 11.9 times work based median earnings, this means affordability is a challenge for many people living and working in Herefordshire. The council, who now have approval to start building truly affordable houses for local people, has already highlighted this in the county plan. The council has recently approved an affordable housing supplementary planning document to aid the development of affordable housing in Herefordshire.
8. Herefordshire's population is growing. The latest (2018-based Sub National Population Projections) predict that Herefordshire's population will have grown to 209,878 by 2041. Analysis suggests that the largest growth will be in people aged 65 and over. The recent housing market area needs assessment for Herefordshire (2021) includes a detailed

assessment of affordable housing need and points to a need for 422 new affordable homes for rent per year, and 175 new affordable home ownership homes per year. The strategy explains how the council works with developers and registered providers to develop affordable housing to meet need and outlines the councils commitment to developing 1000 new affordable homes as set out in the county plan.

9. Public Health England consider poor quality housing to be a major public health issue because of the impact that it has on physical and mental health. Housing in poor physical condition can lead to injury and poor physical health, but also has a serious bearing on mental health and wellbeing, particularly cold homes, unsuitable homes and overcrowded homes. The council address overcrowding through our housing allocations scheme which puts people living in statutory or severely overcrowded properties in the highest priority banding – Band A. Severe overcrowding is also a category 1 hazard according to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The Council has a duty to act upon reports of Category 1 hazards. Our approach to enforcement of severely overcrowded properties is covered in the [housing enforcement policy](#).
10. It is estimated that 27% (19,358) of dwellings in the private sector have category 1 HHSRS hazards. Category 1 hazards are hazards that are a serious or immediate risk to a person's health and safety and include excess cold, overcrowding excess heat, damp and mold growth, falls hazards as well as electrical, fire and structural hazards. Poor housing conditions affect the health and wellbeing of residents and so it is a priority for Herefordshire Council to increase the quality, accessibility and safety and of existing homes across all sectors.
11. We face challenges around the condition and efficiency of our existing housing stock; 28% of homes in Herefordshire were built before 1919, a large proportion of these are solid wall properties making them much less efficient from an energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions perspective. Sub regional data suggests that 10,000 households in Herefordshire are living in fuel poverty. The council has and will continue to proactively secure funding to ensure that the worst performing homes are retrofitted with cleaner energy sources and improved thermal efficiency.
12. There are 284 long term empty homes in the county, that have been recorded as empty for more than 6 months. The council has an empty property strategy in place to work with property owners to bring these properties back into use.
13. By 2041 it is projected that there will be 67,200 people aged 65 and over living in Herefordshire. This is an increase of 18,900 from 2020, representing growth of 39%. The population aged 85 and over is projected to increase by 81%. Looking at the other end of the age spectrum the data shows a projected decrease in the number of children (those aged Under 15), with modest increases or decreases shown for adult age groups. This projected increase in older residents will be a significant pressure on resources available to meet housing need and promote independence. The strategy outlines the measures that we have in place to support independent living and the support that we give to people of all ages who are unable to live independently.
14. We are currently accommodating circa 47 people in special emergency accommodation as a result of the government's 'everybody in' initiative, with circa 69 households in temporary accommodation at any one time. People become homeless for a wide range of reasons, the most common reasons in Herefordshire are family breakdown, section 21 evictions and people fleeing domestic abuse. This use of temporary accommodation is essential, but is also costly. The strategy includes information about how we are supporting people who have become homeless during the pandemic.

Environmental Impact

15. The accelerating impact of climate change will continue to affect weather patterns across the UK, leading to an increase in flooding and unpredictable weather events. Herefordshire Council have recognised this and declared a [climate and ecological emergency](#). This impacts on every part of the council's work including the delivery of new homes. The council have developed Herefordshire Future Homes guidance which sets out the housing standards that we aspire to.
16. The main source of emissions from residential sectors is the use of natural gas for heating (and for cooking in the case of the residential sector). In 2020, the residential sector emitted 67.7 MtCO₂¹, accounting for 20.8% of all carbon dioxide emissions.²
17. The average Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating for all private sector dwellings in Herefordshire is 52 (E), which is worse than both England (60) and the West Midlands (58), meaning that there are a significant number of houses that will potentially contribute higher greenhouse gas emissions than similar sized higher rated (D+) properties. The housing strategy summarises the actions that are being taken by the council to address fuel poverty and improve the environmental efficiency of existing homes.
18. As well as the direct environmental impact of housing itself, the strategy makes links between housing, waste management, connectivity, digital connectivity, sustainable water management and air quality, all of which are vital to ensuring quality of life for our communities.
19. The government has launched the future homes standard to ensure that new homes (from 2025) are carbon neutral. The council are developing a sustainable development supplementary planning document to offer further guidance on the policies within the current Core Strategy and are reviewing the Core Strategy for the county. The council have set out clear ambitions that new council built houses will be carbon neutral.
20. The government launched its heat and buildings strategy in October 2021. This strategy sets out the vision for a greener future, which creates hundreds of thousands of green, skilled jobs, drives the levelling up agenda and generates opportunities for the growth of British businesses. The document sets out a range of actions that will reduce the carbon emissions from our homes and buildings in line with the government's target of net zero by 2050.

Equality duty

21. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/972583/2020_Provisional_emissions_statistics_report.pdf

² It should be noted that emissions from these sectors do not include emissions from the generation of electricity consumed, as these emissions are included in the energy sector.

- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
22. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
23. The work that the council does to provide housing for homeless people and people in housing need along with the related support that we commission assists in the delivery of the public sector equality duty, as does our work to improve housing conditions, support the provision of homes, registering HMO's and the provision of dedicated sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling showpeople.

Resource implications

24. This strategy brings together the work of a wide range of teams from across the council, each being responsible for their own budgets and any related governance. There no direct cost implications for this strategy. Actions listed within the strategy are / will be taken forward by their respective teams along with any related governance requirements. Many of the activities listed are already being delivered; this strategy just brings them together into a single document.

Legal implications

25. While there is no statutory requirement for the council to produce a housing strategy, the previous duty under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 being removed by s29 of the Deregulation Act 2015, the preparation and review of a housing strategy is considered good practice and can set out the council's aims, objectives and intended outcomes in respect of all housing matters as well as demonstrate how the council is responding to recent legislative changes and updates to statutory guidance in meeting other legal duties.
26. There are no other legal implications.

Risk management

27. There are no direct risks associated with the strategy; instead, it brings together the work of a range of teams under one umbrella. The development of any new projects to deliver improvements would be subject to a business case and related governance by each team, rather than through this strategy. It is not yet clear what the longer term impact of the Covid 19 pandemic will be on the housing market.
28. There are wider risks around the housing market that this strategy considers e.g. the lack of affordable homes, the impact of climate change and the need to eliminate carbon emissions from our homes, the forecast growth of our already aging population and the

associated demands on services and housing as well as the unknown longer term impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the housing market in the county.

29. Whilst having a housing strategy is not a statutory requirement, the council does have a number of statutory duties related to the assessment of housing need, development, delivery, inspection and licensing of safe housing across the county, and the prevention of homelessness. This strategy reflects the work that the council undertakes to deliver those duties. If we did not have a housing strategy, these activities would be viewed in isolation, rather than as a collective effort to improve the lives of our communities.
30. Progress against this strategy will be measured through a range of existing performance indicators linked to existing service and actions plans. These will be updated annually and reported through the councils Housing Board. This will enable oversight of the councils approach to housing in its widest sense.

Consultees

31. The initial draft of the local housing strategy was developed with support from the council teams that deliver housing related services.
32. This document was issued to the public, alongside a survey, which sought the view of the public on the priorities of the strategy. This combined with written feedback meant that we received over 150 responses and in excess of 600 comments. Due to the level of feedback, main themes were selected and it is these that form the bulk of the consultation response – appendix 2.
33. A political group consultation has been carried out and as with the community consultation, much of the feedback was related to planning policy. This feedback has been forwarded to planning colleagues to consider as part of the Core Strategy review process. The Housing Strategy covers a wide range of topics, related to both new and existing housing stock. It is based on existing planning policy, action plans and strategies. It can't be used as a tool to replace planning policy, although it clearly acknowledges the administration's desire to improve the environmental standards of new and existing housing and review the Core Strategy.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Final draft local housing strategy 2021 -2026

Appendix 2 – Draft public consultation response – September 2021

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	John Coleman	Date 11/10/2021
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 29/09/2021

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Hannah McSherry, Tel; 01432 383531, email: hannah.mcsherry2@herefordshire.gov.uk

Legal	Elaine McGurdy	Date 15/10/2021
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 20/09/2021
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 20/09/2021
Risk	Paul Harris	Date 14/10/2021

Approved by	Paul Smith	Date 20/01/2022
-------------	------------	-----------------

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.