

Meeting date: 9 March 2023

Report to: Full Cabinet

Report title: Housing Strategy

Report from: Director of Economy and Infrastructure

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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve a Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan for Solihull. The report summarises the Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan, responses received to the public consultation and the comments of the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board.
- 1.2 An Executive Summary of the Housing Strategy and the Implementation Plan are provided at Appendix 1 and 2 respectively. The full Housing Strategy is provided at Appendix 3. This, together with the other supporting documents, are viewable online.
- 1.3 The 10-year Housing Strategy is summarised in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.5 below. It sets out:
- A proposed vision (Housing Strategy, Section 1)
 - The local, regional and national context and six key housing challenges (Section 2)
 - Sections 3 – 8 consider 6 themes with their challenges and opportunities and the Council's ambitions
 - Section 9 covers implementation, governance, delivery and partnerships
 - An appendix to the Strategy provides an explanation of some of the technical terms referred to in the Strategy.

- 1.4 The Implementation Plan is described in paragraph 3.6. It covers the 3-year period 2023-2025 and focuses largely on new activity. It sets out 25 priorities, component activities, timescales, progress indicators and outcomes.
- 1.5 A 6-week consultation on the draft Strategy and associated documents was held between 21 September and 2 November 2022. Section 6.2 of the report explains how the consultation was undertaken and paragraphs 3.8 – 3.15 summarise the responses received.
- 1.6 A report was provided to the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board on 17 November 2022. This included a comprehensive summary of the consultation responses received.
- 1.7 Scrutiny Board made no formal resolutions to be considered by Cabinet but made helpful comments to improve the Implementation Plan. These are described in paragraphs 3.16 – 3.18 and the proposed changes have been made to the Implementation Plan.

2. Decision(s) Recommended

- 2.1 To approve the Solihull Housing Strategy 2023 – 2032.
- 2.2 To approve the Implementation Plan 2023 – 2025.
- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees to delegate responsibility to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure to make amendments to the Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan as necessary to deliver the ambitions of the Strategy.

Report Title: Housing Strategy

3. Matters for Consideration

Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan

3.1 The draft Housing Strategy covers the 10-year period 2023 - 2032 and is supported by an Implementation Plan for the 3-year period 2023-2025. Both are 'Deliverables' in the 2020 - 2025 Solihull Council Plan.

3.2 The full Housing Strategy is provided at Appendix 3 as an online document. An Executive Summary, including a 'Plan on a Page' is at Appendix 1 and the Implementation Plan at Appendix 2.

3.3 The main aspects of the Housing Strategy are:

1. The housing vision: "Everyone in the Borough is able to access housing at the point of need and has opportunities to create sustainable homes in thriving communities".

2. Six key housing challenges are identified:

- Delivering excellent housing services
- Making the best use of the borough's housing across all tenures
- Tackling climate change through the retrofit of privately owned and socially rented homes, and building new housing to higher environmental standards
- Enabling good housing and care choices and pathways for older people
- Helping people with additional support needs
- Addressing the affordability of housing to meet the shortage of social rented homes and help younger people and other first-time buyers to access home ownership.

3. Responding to these challenges, sections 3 – 8 of the Strategy are based on the following themes:

Section 3 - Building Thriving Communities and Wellbeing

Section 4 - Making Best Use of Existing Housing

Section 5 - Tackling Climate Change

Section 6 - Meeting the Housing Needs of Older People

Section 7 - Helping People with Additional Support Needs

Section 8 - Meeting Local Housing Needs Through New Development.

3.4 These are not set in any order of priority. In many cases, the challenges and themes are inter-related so delivery in one area of activity will contribute to others, for example, thriving communities helps tackle loneliness and can enable older people to live independently; providing specialist housing meets the needs of vulnerable people and can help make best use of housing.

3.5 The Strategy sets out a number of Council ambitions for each theme.

- Section 3 Building Thriving Communities and Wellbeing. 'Safe, healthy and connected communities'; 'Maximise the contribution of housing to meeting people's health, care and support needs'; 'Strong Locality working through partnerships, housing plans, policies and management'; 'Enable a strong voluntary and community sector, strengthening housing and care related community involvement and support'; 'Build thriving communities through new development'; 'Ensure that the right housing is in the right place to meet local needs'; 'Prevent problems at a neighbourhood level'
- Section 4 Making Best Use of Existing Housing. 'Enable a good and well-maintained housing stock, suitable for its occupiers (all tenures)'; 'Assist older, vulnerable and poorer homeowners through grant assistance and signposting'; 'Develop a fairer, more secure, and high quality private rented sector'; 'Take an evidenced based approach to private rented sector improvement ('Supported Exempt Accommodation', 'Selective licensing', 'Houses in Multiple Occupation)'; 'Identify and act against empty homes'; 'Well managed social housing fit for the future (asset management; lettings, tenancy management and fraud)'
- Section 5 Tackling Climate Change. 'Implement the Council's Climate Change Declaration through housing policies, investment decisions and partnerships'; 'Deliver place-based high quality, cost-effective domestic retrofit to low-income households'; 'Support the 'able to pay' market by helping people to access good information about retrofit'; 'Develop and support local retrofit supply chain capability and accredited supplier capacity'; 'Raise the energy performance in the private rented sector through regulation and enforcement (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards)'; 'Raise energy performance levels in social housing (Council and housing associations)'; 'Build and commission housing to more environmentally sustainable standards'
- Section 6 Meeting the Housing Needs of Older People. 'Ensure older people have good housing and support options and can make informed decisions about them'; 'Promote independent living by extending the take-up of grant assistance to help people remain in their own homes'; 'Develop more accessible, adaptable and specialist housing for older people'; 'Ensure that health, care, housing and community support services work effectively together'
- Section 7 Helping people with additional support needs. 'Ensure that people are able to access housing and support services when it is needed'; 'Deliver effective homeless prevention and advice'; 'Ensure disabled people have the same rights to home security and to health and other services'; 'Implement the agreed Veterans Pledges Action Plan'; 'Help people from refugee and migrant communities successfully navigate the UK housing market and sustain their

tenancies in the private rented sector'

- Section 8 Meeting Local Housing Needs. 'Deliver more affordable homes to meet housing need and improve the affordability of housing'; 'Enable a better balanced and more diverse housing market in Solihull'; 'Accelerate housing delivery'; 'Promote sustainable development and housing quality'; 'Promote self-build and community led housing approaches'.

3.6 In the context of the housing vision, the challenges and ambitions, the Implementation Plan proposes several Priorities, which will provide the focus for strategic housing work in this period. The bracketed numbers below refer to the actions in the Implementation Plan.

- The health and housing relationship is strengthened through a Health and Housing Group and Workplan and the Health Equalities Assessment Tool is used for review and wider landlord engagement (1,2)
- Good use is made of land in all areas with any local problem sites tackled (3)
- Specific and detailed actions to help ensure Solihull has a well-managed private rented sector (4 – 7)
- Social housing management is strengthened by the creation of a senior-level forum of Council, SCH and Housing Associations (8)
- The environmental sustainability of existing homes is improved through housing 'retrofit' with particular attention to helping vulnerable households (9)
- Building new Council and Council commissioned housing to net zero (10)
- Promoting independent living for older people (11,12,13,14)
- Review and refresh the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, develop specialist homelessness pathways, improve services for young people and rough sleepers and reduce the use of temporary accommodation (15,16,17,18)
- Encourage more in-borough housing provision, partnerships and services for younger adults with disabilities (19,20)
- Ensure that Solihull's housing policies provide excellent standards in assisting Veterans (21)
- Meet the housing needs of refugee and other newly arrived communities by putting in place a range of housing options (22)
- Increasing the supply of social rented and affordable home ownership (23,24, 25).

3.7 2021 Census data is becoming available and will be progressively released throughout the year. The priorities in the Implementation Plan are relevant to addressing the main housing implications from this, such as the ageing population, the

continued increase of the private rented sector and the proportionate decline in home ownership. Detailed Census data will help shape the delivery of the Plan and will also be used to assess whether any priorities or any component activities should be amended.

Consultation Responses

- 3.8 The consultation approach is set out in section 6.2 below.
- 3.9 43 responses were received to the consultation (42 were reported to Scrutiny Board but one late response was received and accepted). In addition, there were also some internal responses from Solihull Council officers.
- 3.10 In general, consultation responses welcomed, and were supportive of, the Strategy and the Council's approach.
- 3.11 There was strong support for the proposed housing vision and ambitions:
- 25 of the 34 who responded to the question agreed with the proposed vision
 - 27 of 31 respondents agreed with the housing ambitions set out in the draft Housing Strategy.
- 3.12 Some responses raised matters that are outside of the Council's control or the scope of a Housing Strategy (e.g., health workforce issues). Other points will be taken forward in more detail through work already in progress (e.g. Domestic Abuse and the development of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2023).
- 3.13 In some cases, people expressed concerns about funding, including implications for Council Tax. New initiatives will be subject to their own detailed financial assessment before they are approved, and many initiatives draw on other finance such as government grants.
- 3.14 Recurring themes from the consultation responses helps to highlight a number of important considerations:
- Strengthening the connections between housing, social care and health
 - The need for effective infrastructure provision, including transport connectivity
 - Building partnerships with a wide range of housing providers, for example almshouses operating in the borough
 - The potential to develop the 'Green Economy' locally and how this can promote inclusive growth
 - Maximising social value through Council contracts
 - Older people having a range of housing options and being able to receive good advice on what is best for them
 - The need for more attention to be given to young people and help for first time

buyers.

- 3.15 The implementation of the Housing Strategy will work alongside other Council plans and strategies to respond effectively to these points.

Scrutiny Board

- 3.16 At its meeting on 17 November 2022, the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board considered the draft Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan and responses received to the consultation.
- 3.17 A detailed summary of the responses was provided to the Board and this is available at [Consultation Responses Summary](#)
- 3.18 Scrutiny Board made no formal resolutions to be considered by Cabinet but made important comments that the Implementation Plan should be more specific with regard to timescales and ownership of actions. These have been added to the Implementation Plan.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 The Council is not required to produce a Housing Strategy, but it is a 'Deliverable' outcome in the Solihull Council Plan and there are good reasons for having a published Strategy (see paragraphs 5.1 – 5.4 below).
- 4.2 With regards to the Implementation Plan, many of the 'Priorities' will have options for action as they are developed. These will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with recommendations brought to the relevant Cabinet decision-maker.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Housing in both its built form and its policies and services are important to the Council's overall vision 'where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all'.
- 5.2 Delivering effective housing plans requires excellent partnership working at many different levels. By clearly setting out the Council's vision and ambitions this Housing Strategy aims to provide a common and shared reference point to facilitate excellent partnership working and help all stakeholders maximise the contribution housing can make to wider objectives.
- 5.3 The Strategy is cross-sector and cross-tenure with the intention that housing policies are cohesive and complement other Council plans and strategies.
- 5.4 The Strategy sets the direction for Council and SCH housing plans and strategies and helps strengthen funding bids.
- 5.5 Implementation of the Strategy and Plan will be monitored by the Strategic Housing Board with reports provided to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull. 2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it. 3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 4. Enable communities to thrive. 	<p>The Strategy considers younger adults with disabilities and young people (Section 6) and older people (Section 7).</p> <p>Meeting the housing needs of older people and improving health outcomes are important in the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Section 3 of the Strategy is concerned with 'Building Thriving Communities'.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres. 6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2. 7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable. 	<p>Section 8 of the Strategy 'Meeting Local Housing Needs Through New Development' focuses on maximising the delivery of affordable and social housing.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions. 	<p>Section 5 'Tackling Climate Change' sets out the Council's ambition to implement 'domestic retrofit' to help reduce net carbon emissions from residential buildings. New affordable homes built by the Council will be to net zero standards.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Promote employee wellbeing 	<p>N/A</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1. The following documents were consulted on for the 6-week period 21 September – 2 November 2022:

- Draft Housing Strategy (and Executive Summary)
- Draft Implementation Plan
- Health Equalities Assessment Tool
- Fair Treatment Assessment
- Housing Data Dashboard.

6.2.2. A consultation webpage with each of these documents was created with an on-line response form. Responses could also be made by email or post.

6.2.3. A wide range of organisations were contacted directly to invite their responses including,

- Solihull Council Members
- Parish and Town Councils
- Solihull MPs
- West Midlands Combined Authority
- West Midlands Local Authorities
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- Homes England
- Regulator of Social Housing
- Housing associations operating in Solihull
- National Residential Landlords Association
- Housing and advice organisations contracted with the Council
- Use of 'Stay Connected' and 'Latest News' to make the consultation known more generally.

6.2.4 In addition, notification was provided to members of a range of multi-agency boards and groups including the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board, SCH Board, Strategic Housing Options with Care Group, Multi Agency Homelessness Forum and the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement group.

6.2.5 The Housing Strategy has been considered by the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board, see paragraphs 3.16 – 3.18 above.

6.2.6 Subject to Scrutiny Board agreement, the Implementation Plan could be included in the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Workplan for 2023/24.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1. No consultancy or other external costs have been incurred in developing the Housing Strategy and associated documents.

6.3.2. There are no immediate implications as a result of this report, however options requiring council funding from either the General Fund or the Housing Revenue Account will be assessed, on affordability and outcomes, on a case-by-case basis with recommendations brought to the relevant Cabinet decision maker.

6.4 Legal implications:

- 6.4.1. Local authorities do not have a statutory duty to produce a Housing Strategy and there are no immediate implications as a result of this report.
- 6.4.2. Specific initiatives in the draft Strategy, such as greater regulation of the private rented sector, are reliant on specific legal and regulatory processes being followed before policies can be agreed and adopted by the Council.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

- 6.5.1. There are no immediate risks as a result of this report. It is important to note that specific parts of the Housing Strategy have detailed risk assessments.
- 6.5.2. Overall, the successful implementation of the housing vision and the housing strategic objectives will depend on a wide range of factors outside of the Council's control. This includes levels of government grant funding, legislation and partner investment and economic performance.

6.6 Equality implications:

- 6.6.1. A Fair Treatment Assessment (FTA) was completed for the Housing Strategy and formed one of the documents that was consulted on. This is set out at Appendix 5.
- 6.6.2. The Housing Strategy aims to deliver positive outcomes for people with Protected Characteristics. This is set out in more detail in the draft FTA but includes:
 - Health – the Housing Strategy places an emphasis on how housing investment and management can help tackle health inequalities and promote better outcomes
 - Age – Section 6 of the Housing Strategy is concerned with meeting the housing needs of older people
 - Disability – Section 7 looks at helping people with additional support needs and this includes younger adults with disabilities, veterans and those at risk of homelessness
 - Socio-economic – Section 8 focuses on meeting local housing needs through the provision of more affordable housing.

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

- 6.7.1. The Strategy references the important role of the WMCA in helping the Council to realise its objectives (Appendix 3, paragraphs 2.34 and 2.35, page 6).
- 6.7.2. The implementation of the Integrated Care System is also of great importance to realising the proposed housing vision. This is identified in Section 3 of the Strategy (Appendix 3, paragraphs 3.10 and 3.17).

6.7.3. As described at 6.2 above, WMCA and ICS officers were invited to comment on the draft Housing Strategy and associated documents.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 Appendix 1. Housing Strategy - Executive Summary

7.2 Appendix 2. Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2023 - 2025

7.3 Appendix 3. Housing Strategy 2023 – 2032 – viewable online only

7.4 Appendix 4. Health Equalities Assessment Tool - viewable online only

7.5 Appendix 5. Fair Treatment Assessment - viewable online only

7.6 Appendix 6. Housing Data Dashboard - viewable online only

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 None.

9. List of Other Relevant Documents

9.1 None