



Committee and date

Cabinet
25th March 2020

Item

Public

DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION REPORT

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1. Summary

1.1 This report sets out the Council's proposed vision and objectives for Shropshire's new Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025 and seeks approval to issue the draft strategy for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks.

1.2 Although there is no statutory obligation to produce a housing strategy, the importance of housing nationally and relevance locally has never been more recognised or acutely felt by the Council and residents of Shropshire, particularly with regard to:

1. Affordability – inability of households with median gross household incomes to purchase a home; for example, in Shrewsbury there is a multiplier of 6.7 to purchase a median house price home. In Oswestry the figure is 5.4. The generally accepted mortgage multiplier is 4 times household income
2. Rise in homelessness – rise of 24.5% in the previous 2 years
3. Aging profile – by 2041 over a third of residents will be above 65 years of age. 35% of the population live in rural area and 61% of these residents are between 65 – 79 age group. High cost of housing challenges the ability for essential workers to be able to support older people.
4. Ensuring that young, skilled, essential workers and families can find an affordable home in Shropshire, which supports the economic growth priorities
5. There are 1,731 long term empty properties in the County
6. Climate change impacts and opportunities and new technology including advanced methods of construction

1.3 It is therefore important that in considering and addressing these fundamental difficulties, we articulate through a strategy our objectives and develop the necessary framework on how the Council will engage and work with our many stakeholders and partners to deliver housing and housing related services.

1.4 Shropshire's Housing Strategy 2020 – 25 will benefit all our residents, our focus is not only addressing housing need, but on the role that housing can play in meeting

the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the County, which is why it is important to widely consult on our priorities and how we intend to deliver them.

1.5 Shropshire Council has faced an 80% reduction in revenue cuts to their budgets since 2013, this in combination with other public sector restrictions and welfare changes has resulted in increased demand for public services and housing provision. This strategy recognises the high priority that housing has within our communities and acknowledges that with reduced budgets we have to do more with less and acknowledge that in order to address these pressures, we identify the increasing role that innovation in services in combination with the private and voluntary sector has to play in delivering our housing priorities.

1.6 Only by hearing the range of views from all and reflecting on those in the final document, can we hope to deliver our housing ambitions.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to;

1. Acknowledge the work to date on developing the draft Housing Strategy and endorse the proposed vision and objectives.
2. Approve the draft Housing Strategy at Appendix 1 for public consultation for a period of six weeks
3. Agree that a final version of the Housing Strategy, having considered any relevant consultation responses, will be brought back to Cabinet later in the summer for approval.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 There is no statutory obligation to produce a housing strategy in England, although as a strategic housing authority there is a duty to periodically assess and review the housing condition and needs in their area. Latterly, such is the local and national importance, and prominence given to housing and in particular the Governments attempts and ambition to fix the “broken housing market”, that most Councils have housing as a strategic priority and produce a housing strategy to articulate their ambition, vision and objectives.

3.2 The proposed Housing Strategy will demonstrate how the Council will:

- Target housing solutions within the Council area.
- Broaden the housing range for residents.
- Highlight to tenants and residents the forthcoming challenges which both the Council and they themselves will face.

- Structure the Council's approach to housing, as relevant to the Local Development Plan.
- Meet its housing legal requirements.

3.3 An initial screening Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment has been undertaken to support the Shropshire Housing Strategy and is appended to this report. Following the consultation on the Strategy any identified impacts in equality terms, whether negative or positive will be considered further by completing a follow up ESIIA and amendments made depending on the feedback received. We would expect at least a low to medium positive impact across the Protected Characteristic groupings, with positive impacts being sought for the groupings of Age and Disability and for people at risk of social exclusion, these groupings in the community include: low income households; households in fuel poverty; people at risk of homelessness; and people living in rural areas.

3.4 We will continue to engage with all Members as community leaders, and through Cabinet and our Portfolio Holder, which will help the service area and therefore the Council to ensure that information, feedback and concerns are raised through a variety of channels and that actions may then be identified as necessary to seek to mitigate any negative impacts for any Protected Characteristic groupings within the community, and to enhance positive impacts across communities and across our rural county as a whole

4. Financial Implications

4.1 An innovative and robust Housing Strategy seeks to advise potential investors in Shropshire's housing services and development what is required and where it is needed.

4.2 The costs of developing this high-level strategy and the expected costs of consultation can be met from existing budgets.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

5.1 **Energy and fuel consumption:** Positive effect. One of the key priorities of the Housing Strategy is to minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and to positively influence the design of future housing development to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques. Maximising energy efficiency in new and existing housing will also contribute positively by reducing energy costs for occupiers, particularly those on limited incomes;

5.2 **Renewable energy generation:** Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide opportunities to foster the generation and storage of renewable energy as part of the refurbishment of existing housing stock and the design of new housing;

5.3 **Carbon offsetting or mitigation:** Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide opportunities to foster the capture and storage of carbon emissions as part of the design of sustainable urban drainage and open space integral to the design of new housing schemes;

5.4 Climate Change resilience and adaptation: Positive effect. The Housing Strategy will provide positive opportunities to ensure that the foster the refurbishment of existing housing stock and the design of new housing deliver accommodation which is resilient to more extreme weather events and enables occupiers to adapt to the changing climate;

6 Background

6.1 The Council's "current" housing strategy (2012 – 15) was jointly formulated and adopted by Herefordshire and Shropshire with the wider regional intention of eventually converging timelines and developing a further joint strategy to include Telford and Wrekin Council. Given the changing nature of local government funding and housing legislation over the past years, it became apparent there was a need to produce a Housing Strategy that concentrates on and best reflects Shropshire residents and local housing needs. For those same reasons, a strategy that covered a relatively short time span (5 yrs.), was appropriate.

6.2 The Council's Housing Strategy sets out the vision and objectives for housing in Shropshire and provides an action plan for achieving those objectives and opportunities and contribute towards delivery of the council's corporate plan.

6.3 The Housing Strategy reflects the council's role in discharging a range of statutory duties such as those relating to homelessness, private sector housing and the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults. It will also contribute to meeting the council's priorities across a range of other priority policy areas including the Economic Growth and Climate Change Strategy. Finally, the Housing Strategy should also reflect national housing priorities and general direction of travel.

6.4 The Housing Strategy cannot be viewed in isolation and is central to delivering many of the objectives contained in the Council's Corporate Plan. Its purpose is to provide a framework and clear direction of travel influencing all housing related activities undertaken by the Council and its delivery partners across Shropshire and help focus our collective resources on achieving sustainable solutions that ensure the delivery of sufficient high-quality housing and housing support of the right types, in the right places, and at the right times, to best meet the current and future needs of our communities.

6.5 This is a wide-ranging strategy that impacts on the lives of all Shropshire residents in one way or another, be that directly through the provision of accommodation and services or indirectly through improvements in the public realm, environment and health. To this end, the Housing Strategy contributes to many of the council's corporate priorities in the current Corporate Plan.

6.6 The following vision, priorities and principles for Shropshire's new Housing Strategy have been developed by considering the council's corporate priorities together with a range of demographic and other data about housing need. They reflect the overarching need for more homes in Shropshire together with the council's ambition to build those new homes within neighbourhoods that residents identify with, where they are needed and where they can thrive.

6.7 The proposed vision is

“All homes are well designed, high quality decent homes, which will protect Shropshire's unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live. That all Shropshire residents have access to the ‘right home in the right place’ to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives”

6.8 The 6 proposed priorities are:

1.To meet the overall current and future housing needs of Shropshire's growing population by addressing the housing needs of particular groups within communities

2.To ensure people whose housing needs are not met through the local open market housing can access housing that meets their needs

3.Working to reduce and prevent households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resettle

4.To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire's urban and rural landscape, that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing.

5.To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. To work with policy makers, developers and private and social landlords to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.

6.To support the drive for economic growth by ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need.

6.9 The Housing Strategy will be delivered through a series of action plans and sub strategies/policies that sit beneath the Strategy and cover areas such as homelessness, the private rented sector, housing investment and renewal. These plans will set out how the council and its partners will use the diminishing resources available to deliver the vision and meet the priorities contained within the overarching Strategy.

6.10 In moving forward we need to be realistic about what is achievable, and what is not, and who is best placed to deliver on key aspects of the strategy. The council will remain accountable for the delivery of the housing strategy even if services are delivered by other organisations.

7 Additional Information (Next steps)

7.1 The consultation will be undertaken for a period of 6 weeks. Consultation documents will be made available on the Shropshire Council web-site, and paper copies will be provided at libraries and council offices in the main towns. A significant number of organisations and individuals will continue to be notified directly of the

publication of the consultation documents in accordance with the SCI. Electronic responses are encouraged to reduce printing and distribution costs and to reduce the time spent collating and analysing paper responses.

7.2 Following the consultation, a final draft of the Housing Strategy 2020-25 will be brought back to Cabinet with the outcome of that consultation for consideration and for approval.

8. Conclusions

8.1 By agreeing to consult on the draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025, the Council will be able to ensure a range of stakeholder and partner views help inform the future of housing and strategic direction aligning with other corporate priorities. It will also help to inform housing related services and make sure that these align with local need and demand, therefore supporting effective and efficient use of resources.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Rob Macey - Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Planning
Local Member All members
Appendices Appendix 1 - Draft Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025 Appendix 2 – ESIIA