

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020 REPORT NO.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PORTFOLIO DECISION OF:
Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Leader Enfield
Council

REPORT OF:
Sarah Cary, Executive
Director of Place

Agenda – Part 1

KD Numbers:
4841 & 4809

Subject: Housing and Growth Strategy; and
Preventing Homelessness and Rough
Sleeping Strategy – drafts for public
consultation

Wards: All

Cabinet Member Consulted: Cllr Gina
Needs, Cabinet Member Social Housing

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The draft Housing and Growth Strategy sets out how the Council proposes to use housing and good growth to help create a more balanced housing market which can support delivering a lifetime of opportunities for people in Enfield. The aim of this strategy is to deliver more homes and better homes for Enfield in a way that everyone benefits from the opportunities that growth can bring.

The draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy sets out our proposed approach to ending homelessness in Enfield. With homelessness continuing to significantly increase in the borough and with the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, this strategy sets out our vision to end homelessness through making homeless prevention a priority across the Council, with our partners and in the community.

These two strategies are being published for public consultation. At the end of the twelve-week public consultation, the analysis of this consultation will be used to finalise the strategies. They will then be taken to Cabinet for a final decision.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leader is asked to agree for these draft strategies to be published for public consultation.

A final decision on the strategies will be made by Cabinet, scheduled to take place by December 2019, after they have been further developed as a result of the public consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

A Local Housing Market in Crisis

There is sector-wide acknowledgement of a national housing affordability crisis and the challenge in Enfield is significant. We have too few social rented homes and a growing number of people on low incomes living in the private rented sector.

The unaffordability and insecurity of the local private rented market is illustrated by growing numbers of people becoming homeless and too many people living in homes that do not meet their needs. At March 2019, there were 3,410 households in Enfield's temporary accommodation which is a 74% rise since 2012. Temporary accommodation is costly to the local authority. In 2018/19, Enfield spent over £66m on the Temporary Accommodation service, with a net cost to the local authority of £7m. There has also been a significant increase in rough sleeping in the borough. Reported numbers have increased from seven in 2017/2018 to 78 in 2018/19.

Through the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, we are aiming to work collaboratively across the Council, with partners and with the community to prevent homelessness.

We also know that we need to significantly increase the supply of good and affordable homes to end homelessness and the Housing and Growth Strategy seeks to achieve this. Through the development of both strategies, we are aiming to re-balance the housing market and drive good growth for local people for now and the future.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 was enacted on 3rd April 2018 and significantly reforms England's homelessness law by placing new duties on local authorities to intervene at a much earlier stage to assess and prevent homelessness. The changes require local authorities to assist all homeless households irrespective of their priority need status and put in place a Personal Housing Plan that is kept under regular review. The legal requirement for prescribed public bodies to refer those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with effect from 1st October 2018 and has increased demand for services.

Consultation

We will publish the draft strategies for a 12-week consultation, scheduled to start in July and complete in September. The consultation will include an online survey which will be promoted via multiple channels and will also include consulting with residents at community events, engaging with local community forums and with stakeholder partnership groups.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The alternative option considered was to develop strategies in consultation with officers across the Council and then run a shorter public consultation than the full 12 weeks. However, this would have meant we developed strategies based on existing evidence, research and perspectives from across the Council but without allowing for sufficient and robust consultation with stakeholders and the public. This option would have prevented us from developing a strategy which fully considers and reflects the views of local people and the perspective of our partners, who are key to our success for both strategies.

As the Housing and Growth Strategy is not a statutory document, another option considered was to not renew our existing strategy. However, in the context of the national housing crisis, rising homelessness in Enfield and significantly increased housing targets, it is unlikely that the Council would be able to address the scale of this challenge without a renewed strategy setting out a clear approach.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing homelessness; a growing private rented sector which in many cases is offering sub-standard accommodation; a growing population and ambitious new housing targets mean that we require a bold new approach to deliver more and better homes and prevent homelessness in Enfield.

Homelessness has increased significantly in Enfield in recent years. We have seen a 74% rise in temporary accommodation rates since 2012 and rough sleeping has increased from 7 in 2017/18 to 78 in 2018/19. In addition, the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act has increased our responsibilities to prevent homelessness. As such, we require a radically different approach to preventing and ultimately ending homelessness.

These new strategies will set out our approach for guiding future housing decisions, giving an overarching vision and guiding principles that will ensure consistency across relevant Council departments and set out how we will work in partnership to achieve our vision. The strategies provide the opportunity for new ways of working and increased partnership across the Council, with stakeholders and with local people in our communities.

The draft strategies take a 'Health in all Policies' (HiAPT) approach by setting proposed principles for how we will improve health and wellbeing through housing and good growth, and in how we propose to work together to prevent and address homelessness.

We now need to consult with stakeholders across the borough, and with regional and national partners, to obtain feedback which we will use to further develop our strategies. We will use this feedback to finalise strategies for approval from Cabinet by December 2019.

6. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

The Housing Strategy is a high-level objectives document and does not detail specific budget requests.

The HRA 30-year business plan includes funding to increase the number of affordable homes within Enfield by c. 3,500 in the next 10 years.

There are likely to be financial implications in executing this strategy, but it is expected that these would be considered as part of rent setting process or presented once specific proposals have been completed.

There is a commitment to reduce the pressure in Homelessness with a range of savings and initiatives designed to both prevent homelessness in the borough and where homelessness does occur to provide cheaper, better accommodation for those in need.

The Council has identified £1.1m of savings around the supply of Temporary accommodation, which is reflected in the 2019/20 budget.

The Council is currently in receipt of the grants for Rough Sleepers and Flexible Homelessness Support (FHSG). The FHSG is partly administered to give Local Authorities the means to implement a successful prevention strategy. However, whilst the Flexible Housing Support Grant meets some of the cost of temporary accommodation, the uncertainty of this grant every year means that we cannot plan for the longer-term, making it harder to put in place longer term approaches to preventing and addressing homelessness.

As with the Housing Strategy there are likely to financial implications of executing and a detailed assessment of the finances for each scheme/initiative will follow in due course.

6.2 Legal Implications

Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review. Section 1(4) requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.

Housing authorities must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. Housing authorities will also wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the district. Section 3(4) provides that a housing authority cannot include in a homelessness strategy any specific action expected to be taken by another body or organisation without their approval.

There is a statutory duty to consult on a proposed homelessness strategy. Failure to carry out a public consultation will render the strategy unlawful.

The Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required. However, section 333D of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 provides that any local housing strategy of any London borough has to be in general conformity with the Mayor's London housing strategy.

While there is no statutory requirement to consult for the Housing Strategy the Council is required to consider whether a common law duty arises. This common law duty imposes a general duty of procedural fairness on public authorities exercising a wide range of functions which affects the interests of individuals. On balance, it is advisable to consult as this report proposes.

6.3 Property Implications

The Housing and Growth Strategy refers to the Council's intention to expand current housing delivery programmes by optimising the Council's property holdings. The Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan, which applies to the Council's non-housing assets, supports this approach.

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's approach regarding action to prevent and tackle rough sleeping in the borough, with reference to our role as a corporate landlord.

It also sets out the Council's intention to re-design housing options and advice services to make sure the Council can intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and support people at risk in the private rented sector to sustain their tenancies. This may have implications for where housing options and advice staff are located which will need to be considered alongside relevant property strategies.

7. KEY RISKS

These two draft strategies set out ambitious proposals to deliver more and better homes for Enfield, and to end homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough. These are long term strategies (ten and five years respectively) and there is the risk that we will not achieve the ambitions they set out as a result of increasing pressure on limited resources, and local and national changes which will occur over the ten year period.

We are mitigating this through ongoing consultation and engagement across the Council and importantly through the public consultation, to seek feedback from the community and partner organisations regarding the proposed approach and to better understand the contribution partners can make to achieving our aims.

We will also develop clear annual action plans with specific and measurable actions to ensure there is accountability for delivering the aims of the final strategies. The results of the public consultation will be used to inform both the final strategies and the detail of these action plans. We will ensure that future performance management frameworks for the Council reflect the new priorities in the strategies.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES – CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD

The draft strategies will have a significant impact on our ability to deliver on the Council priority to create a lifetime of opportunities in Enfield.

8.1 Good Homes in Well-Connected Neighbourhoods

Both strategies will impact our ability to deliver good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods. The Housing and Growth Strategy sets out how we propose to deliver this priority using good growth principles.

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy aims to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and to increase the quantity of decent and good quality private rented sector accommodation.

8.2 Sustain Strong and Healthy Communities

The Housing strategy is guided by five principles, one of which is to build homes and places that are health promoting. The vision is to build places that are affordable and child, age and disability friendly – all of which will contribute to sustaining strong and healthy communities.

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy aims to build the resilience of residents in all aspects of their life by empowering them to take responsibility for their housing needs with the support of the Council.

We know that poor housing and poor health are linked and that people who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation are more likely to experience mental health issues and poor health outcomes. By preventing homelessness, raising standards in the private sector and reducing the length of time that people spend in temporary accommodation, we are contributing to the Council's ambition to sustain healthy communities.

8.3 Build our Local Economy to Create a Thriving Place

Our vision is to build more homes and better homes through good growth principles. This means that any new housing must bring benefits to the local economy through regeneration and renewal.

As part of our holistic approach to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, we are proposing to also tackle worklessness, which is a contributing factor to homelessness. We anticipate that this will help build our local economy and contribute to thriving communities.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

We are in the process of completing an Equality Impact Assessment which will inform the final strategies. The results of the public consultation will be used to inform the Equality Impact Assessment and the finalisation of both strategies.

10. PERFORMANCE AND DATA IMPLICATIONS

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy includes proposed outcome measures that will evidence whether the strategy and action plan have been successful. The action plan and the outcome measures will be monitored by the new Homelessness Partnership Board that is in the process of being established.

We will use the results of the public consultation to finalise the action plan and outcome measures, and to help develop an action plan and to identify measures of success for the Housing and Growth Strategy.

11. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Both strategies will help to embed Health in All Policies (HiAP) principles. In the Housing and Growth Strategy, we have proposed an Enfield Housing Test which sets out guiding principles to achieving good growth. This includes questioning whether any plan for housing renewal or a new development is 'health promoting' which includes helping people to be smoke free, be physically active and eat well.

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy sets out our proposal to work across council services, with our partners, local organisations and with the community to respond to links between poor housing, low income and poor health to help residents to build resilience to prevent homelessness.

Background Papers

Draft Housing and Growth Strategy

Draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy