

STRATEGIC HOUSING BOARD
14 OCTOBER 2020

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A NEW HOUSING STRATEGY FOR DARTFORD

1. Summary.

1.1. This report considers the development of a new Housing Strategy document for Dartford.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1. That consideration be given to the development of a new Housing Strategy for Dartford, included key themes for the Strategy.

3. Background and Discussion

3.1. The Council last developed a Housing Strategy in 2009, which ran until 2013. At the time, government required all local authorities to develop a housing strategy, which set out their key priorities for action across their housing service. The Housing Strategy went through a formal assessment process by government to ensure it was 'fit for purpose'. It was also monitored by government. In or around 2012, the statutory requirement on local authorities to have a housing strategy was repealed.

3.2. Following the end of statutory requirement to produce a strategy, and a restructure of the Housing Policy team after two Housing Policy Officers left the Council and were not replaced in 2014, it was decided that resources were better targeted elsewhere on mandatory policies and strategies, e.g. the Homelessness Strategy etc. and since then, the Council has not produced a new Housing Strategy.

3.3. As time has passed and the situation has changed, it is felt that now is a good time to write a Housing Strategy. This will be assisted by the fact that the Housing Policy team has now recruited a Policy Officer to assist with the development of this Strategy and a number of different tasks across the Housing Service.

3.4. Since the implementation of the last Strategy there have been significant changes to the housing landscape.

3.5. A summary of the key changes and impacts on the housing service are outlined below:

- Local Authorities have been given greater abilities to directly build following the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap.
- Concerns about housing affordability and insufficient supply of genuinely affordable housing to match the demand have increased.
- There is continued shortage of properties at social rent and privately rented properties at LHA rate or below, accessible to those claiming social security/benefit.

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- As a result of the pressures on homelessness services, the need for temporary accommodation is increasing.
 - Major legislative change has been brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which has resulted in a major change in how the homelessness service runs, and an increased demand for advice & support services.
 - Welfare reform measures over the last five years have impacted those on low incomes, particularly in relation to the introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit.
 - Landlord licensing has been widely introduced to improve the private rented sector. There has been an increase in the powers held by local authorities to prosecute illegally acting landlords through the use of civil penalty notices.
- 3.6. A new Housing Strategy would consider the challenges and opportunities that the current and expected future economic and legislative conditions create. It can respond to these changes by outlining key priorities for the Council and how they might be tackled and actioned. The Strategy could also be used as a guide for partners, including housing associations, voluntary agencies and developers to help gain an understanding of Dartford's key housing priorities over the coming years.
- 3.7. The previous Housing Strategy contained five main themes:
- Increase the supply of affordable homes across the borough.
 - Prevent homelessness.
 - Improve homes and neighbourhoods.
 - Improve housing conditions in the private sector and reduce the number of empty homes.
 - Ensure that all residents have fair and equal access to housing.
- 3.8. The Strategic Housing Board is asked to consider the merits of developing a new Housing Strategy for Dartford and to discuss what key themes could be included. A copy of the last Housing Strategy is attached at Appendix A for information.
4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan
- 4.1 To support the Council's overall vision to make Dartford 'the place of quality and choice, a place where people choose to live, work and enjoy their leisure time.
- 4.2 To support the strategic aim to facilitate quality, choice and diversity in the housing market, assist in meeting housing need in Dartford and deliver high quality services to service users; and to create strong and self-reliant communities.
5. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments

Financial Implications	None
Legal Implications	None
Staffing Implications	None

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Administrative Implications	None specifically at this stage
Risk Assessment	N/A

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Dartford Housing Strategy 2009

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
		Jackie Pye (01322) 343683	Housing/ External Services	N/A