

**Agenda Item No:** 6

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**Report Title:** Housing Statement 2018 - 2023

**Report Author & Job Title:** Jennifer Shaw, Housing Strategy Manager

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Gerald White  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Portfolio Holder for Housing



**Summary:**

The report sets out a new approach to developing our housing related strategies and plans in the future by presenting an overarching Housing Statement that is supported by detailed strategies and plans which address particular areas of housing delivery and management.

**Key Decision:** YES

**Significantly Affected Wards:** All

**Recommendations:** The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- I. Agree the draft housing statement be circulated to key partners and stakeholders for comments.
- II. Authorise the Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing to approve any minor changes arising from the consultation prior to the publication of the Housing Statement (any significant changes will be reported back to Cabinet for approval).

**Policy Overview:** The Housing Statement supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan, in particular Priority 2: Quality Housing and Homes for All. The Housing Statement will create a strategic link between the detailed strategies and plans that sit beneath it and the Corporate Plan.

**Financial Implications:** None

**Legal Implications** None

**Equalities Impact Assessment** Not required because is an overarching statement. EIAs will be undertaken for individual detail strategies that flow from the Housing Statement

**Other Material Implications:** None

**Exempt from  
Publication:**

**NO**

**Background  
Papers:**

**None**

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## Report Title: Housing Statement 2018-2023

### Introduction and Background

1. The existing Housing Framework 2013-2018 is due for review. The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the power to require councils to prepare housing strategies.
2. A proposal was discussed with the Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing to instead of developing a new Housing Strategy to write a concise Housing Statement. This will set out broad overarching objectives and provide a foundation to produce detailed strategies and plans that address specific areas of housing delivery and management.

### Proposal/Current Position

3. The Draft Housing Statement (Appendix 1) sets out our broad objectives and how these link to delivering the Corporate Plan priorities. In particular priority 2 'Quality Housing and Homes for All'.
4. The overarching priorities are driven by the challenges and opportunities identified for delivering quality homes across all tenures. The emphasis is on enabling residents to make suitable housing choices that meet their needs, especially for local people unable to access homes through the open market.
5. The Housing Statement reflects the dynamic relationship between itself and the Local Plan in meeting local housing needs and that planning policy is also a contributing factor in delivering the priorities of the Housing Statement.
6. Providing a suitable, safe, affordable home is a key factor in achieving personal wellbeing, educational attainment and economic prosperity for the occupiers, which also benefits the wider community.
7. Coordination between housing services and activities delivered by other council services (such as; stimulating job creation and the promotion of health and wellbeing projects) will strengthen achieving the overarching priorities set out below:
8. The overarching priorities are:
  - *Increasing the supply of homes that residents can afford and will help meet local housing need.*
  - *To ensure housing enables independent living and promotes good health and wellbeing*
  - *To support housing initiatives that stimulate prosperity, employment opportunities and economic activity.*
9. Beneath the Housing Statement will sit a number of strategies or plans each addressing a specific subject area. This will allow for a detailed assessment

of the current position and what the council wishes to achieve in the future. By taking a more targeted approach it is hoped that improved engagement with interested parties can be nurtured to feed into meaningful action plans that have multi agency ownership and delivery objectives.

10. A proposed list of strategies / plans and a summary of the key areas each will address is included within the draft Housing Statement.
11. A report on how the overarching objectives are being met will be presented annually to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report will also note progress on developing each of the specialist strategies / plans that sit beneath the Housing Statement.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

12. Due to the overarching nature of the Housing Statement an EIA is not required.
13. EIA's will be undertaken for each of the strategies / plans sitting beneath the Housing Statement.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

14. The draft Housing Statement has been circulated by email to all members. One positive comment was received, no negative comments were received.
15. Further to Cabinet approval, the draft Housing Statement will be circulated to key partners and stakeholders to seek their comments on the overarching priorities and the range of strategies / plans that will support the Housing Statement.

## **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

16. The Housing Statement provides a strategic link between the Corporate Plan and the detailed housing related strategies that sit beneath it.
17. The Housing Statement reduces duplication that unavoidably occurs when producing a Housing Strategy and specific housing related strategies.

## **Next Steps in Process**

18. Further to Cabinet approval the draft housing statement will be circulated to key partners and stakeholders for comment.
19. Comments received will be collated and discussed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Head of Housing.
20. The Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing will agree any minor changes to the draft Housing Statement ahead of its publication on the council's website. Any substantial changes will be brought back to Cabinet.

## **Conclusion**

21. This proposal is a new approach to setting out the council's overarching housing priorities in a concise and informative document.
22. The Housing Statement will provide a strong connection with the Corporate Plan. By developing detailed housing related strategies / plans that contribute to achieving the overarching objectives whilst tackling very specific issues, a robust set of strategies and plans can be developed and implemented.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

23. This new approach has my support to ensure we set out our overarching direction of travel and demonstrate the links to the Corporate Plan priorities. In turn the more detailed strategies and plans will give an opportunity to address specific housing related topics and further develop relationships with other organisations who have an interest in that area of work.

## **Contact and Email**

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## **Ashford Borough Council**

### **Housing Statement 2018-2023**

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## 1. Foreword by Cllr White (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

This housing statement takes a new approach to setting out our strategic goals for housing. It will provide an overview of how quality housing delivery, with a mix of tenures, is needed to help achieve the corporate priorities. The statement will highlight some key issues and challenges as well as potential opportunities going forward over the next 5 years.

More detailed strategic objectives will be developed in separate specialist strategies or plans with a focus on action plans and deliverable outcomes. This will hopefully stimulate more involvement by residents, stakeholders and partners where they have an interest in a certain area of housing.

Since the Housing Framework was adopted in July 2013 there have been innumerable changes affecting the housing sector. These have influenced the delivery of new homes, how we manage our existing homes and assist people, in need of support, who are living in both the social and private housing sectors.

In light of reduced resources, we will need to continue to be innovative and bold in our approach, seeking out new ways of working to remain efficient and effective in our service delivery.

## 2. Introduction

The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the power to require councils to prepare housing strategies. Therefore, this Housing Statement sets out our overall approach to housing in the borough. This will be supported by detailed strategies and plans that are either in place or to be refreshed or developed, as illustrated diagrammatically below. Each will have an action plan that will contribute to meeting our overarching housing priorities that in turn assist in delivering our corporate objectives.

Our overarching priorities for housing are driven by the challenges and opportunities we face going forward. An adequate, safe, secure home provides a platform for economic growth, personal wellbeing and attainment and can engender a sense of pride and belonging to a local community.

Our overarching priorities are:

1. *Increasing the supply of homes that residents can afford and will help meet local housing need*
2. *To ensure housing enables independent living and promotes good health and wellbeing*
3. *Support housing initiatives that stimulate prosperity, employment opportunities and economic activity*



### 3. Corporate Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2015 identifies 4 key priorities for the borough. Housing contributes in a range of ways to achieving all of these.

Corporate Plan	
<p><u>Enterprising Ashford: Economic investment and growth</u> To promote growth and achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford borough. We will work to secure inward investment to create a wide range of jobs carried out by a highly skilled workforce.</p>	<p>To attract a strong workforce a range of attractive quality homes are needed with mixed tenures that are affordable to a people taking up different employment opportunities and working in supporting services.</p> <p>Housing construction contributes to the wider economy.</p>
<p><u>Living Ashford: Quality housing and homes for all</u> To secure quality homes across the borough, catering for a range of ages, tenures and need, in well planned and attractive new places.</p>	<p>Housing addresses local housing needs, through new build and managing existing social housing. Improving access to and conditions in the private sector. Providing supported accommodation.</p>
<p><u>Active and Creative Ashford: Healthy choices through physical, cultural and leisure engagement</u> To provide or enable a range of quality leisure and cultural activities where people can make healthy and affordable lifestyle choices and enjoy assets that create attractive, desirable and active communities.</p>	<p>New developments are master planned to include opportunities for healthy lifestyles. Social Housing providers run initiatives to encourage residents to take part in healthy living and foster good community relationships.</p>
<p><u>Attractive Ashford: Countryside and Townscape, Tourism and Heritage</u> To achieve an environment that creates higher standards of public space design, alongside improved standards of presentation of key green spaces. To safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape quality to ensure the very best attractive environment with thriving and vibrant town centres.</p>	<p>Housing can work to improve street scenes and neighbourhoods and bring empty properties back into use.</p> <p>Monitoring standards in the private sector including park homes and taking enforcement action where necessary.</p> <p>Developing new homes with attractive open spaces.</p>

Other council services will contribute to achieving the housing priorities through a number of activities they undertake. Cross service communication and joint working will optimise where a coordinated joint approach can deliver enhanced outcomes.

#### 4. The Local Plan

The Local Plan policies shape the housing delivery in the borough for both open market homes and affordable homes to meet local housing needs. Therefore the Local Plan and the Housing Statement have a dynamic relationship. The policies of the local plan assist in the delivery of affordable housing, through the affordable housing requirement on qualifying sites and enabling rural exception site delivery. However, it is recognised that the overall affordable housing need cannot be met in full through these policies alone. Planning policy is also a contributing factor in delivering of the priorities of the Housing Statement to enable independent living, promote good health and wellbeing and stimulate prosperity, employment opportunities and economic activity.

#### 5. Challenges and Opportunities

A number of changes affecting affordable housing delivery and its residents have emanated from central government. Most notably the ongoing implementation of welfare reform, the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Housing White Paper 2017, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the introduction of the Better Care Fund.

Some of the key challenges are listed below.

- Delivery of new homes does not match identified need
- Broadening of the definition of affordable housing put forward in the Housing White Paper may mean fewer affordable and social rented homes
- Increasing disparity between private rents and Local Housing Allowance rates
- How to increase access to the private rented sector, for lower income households
- Improving the quality and stability for tenants living in the private rented sector
- Increased losses of social housing through Right to Buy
- Average income increases not keeping pace with average house price increases
- Increase pressure on the housing waiting list
- Increased homelessness leading to higher costs for temporary accommodation
- Continuing implementation of welfare reform and roll out of universal credit may lead to a likely increase in rent arrears and homelessness
- Uncertainty around revenue funding for supporting housing is stifling supported housing development
- The effect of rent reduction in social housing, put in place for 4 years from 2016, on housing services such as maintenance of properties and services to tenants
- Implementation the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

There are also a range of opportunities that the council can grasp. The points below note a few such opportunities but there will be more to investigate.

- Exploration of new ways to deliver affordable housing to meet local housing needs appropriate to local incomes

- Lobbying for increase in HRA debt cap to deliver more local authority built homes
- Increased appetite from investors and housing associations to form joint ventures or similar
- Changes to flexible tenancies to cover all new tenancies could assist in making best use of the council's housing stock
- Greater powers to tackle rogue landlords and poor conditions in the private sector
- Being part of a Kent wide review to improve delivery of disabled facilities grants
- Further build on our homelessness prevention work as Homelessness Reduction Act comes in to force
- Stronger joint working with other organisations to tackle social housing fraud
- Broaden our engagement with other council services and external organisations to deliver targeted, effective initiatives

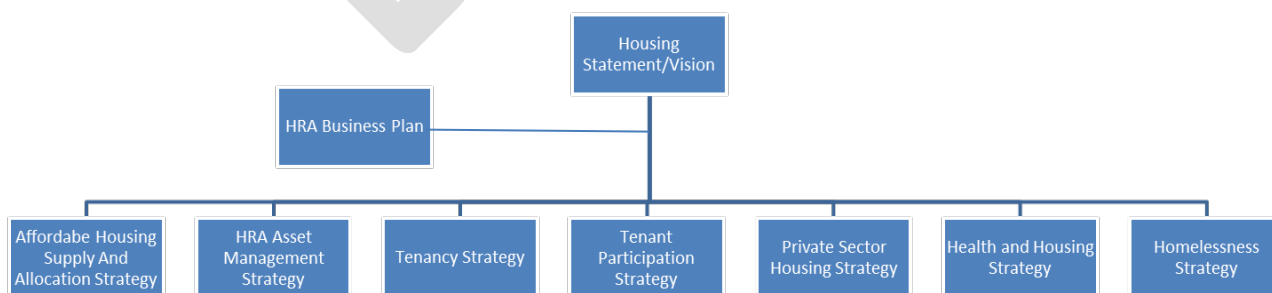
## 6. The Housing Statement, strategies and plans

The strategies/plans sitting beneath the Housing Statement will each contribute to achieving the priorities set out in this Housing Statement.

1. *Increasing the supply of homes that residents can afford and will help meet local housing need.*
2. *To ensure housing enables independent living and promotes good health and wellbeing*
3. *Support housing initiatives that stimulate prosperity, employment opportunities and economic activity*

The review of the Housing Framework 2013-2018 together with an evidence base for each strategy/plan will inform where the greatest pressures lie. Action plans will be developed in consultation with residents and other organisations to set out clear goals to achieve in each area.

The diagram below depicts the strategies that will sit beneath the Housing Statement.



The key areas to be covered in each individual strategy are

Strategy/plan	Key areas
Affordable Housing Supply and Allocation	<p>Sets out how the council will work through a variety of potential mechanisms such as joint ventures, developing an affordable housing property company etc. to increase the supply of social rented and other forms of affordable housing including supported housing that is truly affordable in relation to local incomes.</p> <p>Will consider the role of the social lettings agency and options for expansion.</p> <p>Considers options to assist residents into home ownership and develop pathways to assist social housing tenants to move to alternative tenures.</p> <p>Provides an outline of how homes are let to meet local housing need.</p>
HRA Asset Management	<p>Sets out how the council will manage its housing stock and other assets within the HRA. To maximise income balanced with maintaining good condition of the stock in the longer term and meeting housing need.</p> <p>Need to consider impact of the rent reduction regime until 2020.</p>
Tenancy Strategy (Approved September 2017))	<p>Sets out how tenancies will be issued and reviewed in line with legislative requirements and to make the best use of the housing stock to meet housing needs</p>
Tenant Participation	<p>Sets out how the Council will increase its understanding of what is important to tenants and it how it will engage with tenants to deliver more effective and efficient services</p>
Private Sector Housing	<p>Sets out how the Council will meet its statutory responsibilities.</p> <p>How it will work to improve conditions in the Private Housing Sector, including for owner occupier, private rented landlords and tenants and those renting and living in HMOs and mobile/park homes.</p> <p>Explore how empty homes can be brought back into use.</p> <p>Consider the council commitment to improving energy efficiency and the</p>

	provision of disabled facilities grants within the private sector and new approaches further to the Kent wide study
Health and Housing	<p>Sets out how good housing can benefit health and wellbeing. Consider how closer working with health and social care can be established and what role can be played by the voluntary sector.</p> <p>Will consider which residents can benefit from improved health and well being through housing interventions and homelessness prevention and how these could be implemented.</p> <p>Consideration of impacts of welfare reform on health and wellbeing.</p>
Homelessness (Current strategy adopted October 2016, will be reviewed after implementation of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017)	Sets out how the council will work with others to tackle and prevent homelessness in the borough and meet its statutory responsibilities.

## 7. Annual Review

A report on how the three overarching objectives are being met will be presented annually to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report will also note progress on developing each of the specialist strategies/plans that sit beneath the Housing Statement.