

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

**23 SEPTEMBER 2022**

## **CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HOUSING, CULTURE AND LEISURE: COUNCILLOR ADAM BROWN**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy (2022-2025)</b>
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### **List of Appendices**

- Appendix 1:** West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy 2022-2025
- Appendix 2:** West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy appendices
- Appendix 3:** Pre-decision scrutiny committee recommendations

## **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. To seek approval of the West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy (2022-2025).

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 The Housing Strategy is a key high level strategic document that sets out the local authority's strategic priorities and vision for housing in their area. Whilst a housing strategy is not a statutory duty for the Council, it is a best practice approach and local authorities are encouraged to create a strategic document that states their housing ambition.
- 2.2 The Housing Strategy has been developed having regards to the objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan (2021-2025) alongside the Council's strategic housing responsibilities, statutory requirements and guidance and wider government policy and initiatives. The strategy supports the Council's vision for the area – to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive.
- 2.3 The Housing strategy is intended to cover the next 3 years, which is considered to be a suitable duration to reflect the transitions that West Northants Council are still progressing through. There are a number of different factors that have fed into this timespan, including the development of the West Northants Strategic Plan (due to be adopted in 2025), when a formal review /refresh of the strategy will be required to ensure it is sufficiently aligned.
- 2.4 The Housing Strategy sets out four themes:
- Deliver homes people need and can afford
  - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services
  - Support residents to live healthy, safe, independent and active lives
  - Support thriving and sustainable communities

These themes are supported by 14 strategic priorities. Each of the strategic priorities identify a number of actions required to deliver the priority.

- 2.5 The Housing Strategy has been developed through evidence gathering and consultation with members, internal council teams, the local community, our partners and wider stakeholders via validation workshops, stakeholder events and public consultation.
- 2.6 The formal public consultation on the draft themes and priorities for the Housing Strategy took place from 14 April – 24 May 2022. We had nearly 600 responses analysed, with 257 completing the whole questionnaire and over 280 comments in total from a variety of groups and individuals including residents, registered providers, voluntary and charitable organisations, statutory bodies and parish/town councils.
- 2.7 Feedback from the consultation was generally positive and there was a good level of support for the strategy's four proposed themes and their associated priorities. The responses to the consultation have all been taken into consideration and have supported the development of the actions required to deliver the strategy

### **3 Recommendations**

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- 3.1 To note the outcome of the consultation and how this has been reflected in the Housing Strategy.
- 3.2 To approve the West Northants Housing Strategy 2022-2025 for adoption.
- 3.3 To approve the adoption of a robust Delivery Action Plan, aligned to the priorities set out in the housing strategy, which will be produced with the continued engagement of partners.

### **4 Reason for Recommendations**

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- 4.1 Approval of the strategy will provide the strategic direction of the Council and will support the delivery of key priorities for the Council, including the Corporate Plan (2021-2025).
- 4.2 Local authorities are encouraged to create a document that clearly states their housing ambition and provides a clear and strategic direction for planning and delivering housing in their area and improving housing outcomes for residents.
- 4.3 The housing strategy will ensure that housing is considered at a strategic level so housing related services and plans are delivered efficiently and effectively in a joined-up way.
- 4.4 The strategy has been developed through robust communication and consultation channels. The outcome of the consultation was largely positive and there was strong support for the themes and priorities from residents and well as our partners and wider stakeholders.

### **5 Report Background**

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- 5.1 The Housing Strategy is a key high-level strategic document that sets out a local authority's strategic priorities for housing in their area. The strategy is built around four themes that connect strongly with the Council's vision to create a great place to live, work, visit and thrive and the Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 The Housing Strategy has been developed based on research and analysis of our evidence bases, the key issues identified have been summarised below:
  - A need for more housing to meet the needs of our growing aging population
  - Rising house prices and cost of living increases are adding to affordability pressures
  - A need for more affordable housing, in particular a need for social rent
  - Increasing housing needs on the Council's housing registers/waiting lists
  - High number of households living in temporary accommodation
  - A need to better understand the longer term need and demand for supported housing, housing care and support and other specialist housing options
- 5.3 The housing strategy 2022-2025 has four themes:
  - Deliver homes people need and can afford;
  - Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services;

- Support residents to live healthy, safe, independent and active lives;
- Support thriving and sustainable communities.

5.4 As a new unitary authority we are still making progress in harmonising the delivery of services and undertaking a full transformation programme. Over the life of this strategy the council will continue to develop a range and plans and strategies and the strategy may need to be reviewed to ensure it remain sufficiently aligned.

5.5 We need to have ambitious plan to create homes people need alongside a thriving economy to ensure we meet the housing needs and demands of existing and future residents and achieve the best outcomes for our area.

5.6 Housing is a crucial component of wellbeing. Good quality housing provides a sound platform to build a good quality of life. Poor quality or inadequate housing tends to be associated with poorer outcomes for people.

5.7 As a key council document, the housing strategy has a significant impact with regard to place-shaping for our area. The strategy cuts across a significant part of many of the other services that the council provides, including adult social care commissioned services, children's services and community needs, and impacts on a number of issues including housing need, affordability, economic growth, vulnerable people and social care provision. The effective delivery of the housing strategy is focussed on delivering positive housing outcomes for the area and its residents.

5.8 The Housing Strategy has been developed through consultation with members, the local community, partners and wider stakeholders. The formal consultation on the emerging themes and priorities ran from 14<sup>th</sup> April – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022. We had nearly 600 responses analysed, with 257 completing the whole questionnaire and over 280 comments in total from a variety of groups and individuals including residents, registered providers, voluntary and charitable organisations, statutory bodies and parish/town councils. There was overwhelming support for each of the themes and the priorities to be progressed.

5.9 The comments and responses through these various consultation channels have influenced and have been reflected into the final housing strategy

5.10 Following adoption of the strategy a Delivery Action Plan will be developed, this will set out the specific actions and targets for the delivery of the Housing Strategy. This will be prepared with partners.

5.11 It will be essential that we keep the delivery action plan under review and adapt accordingly to recognise changes in the housing market, national policy and changes in the economic outlook and the continual alignment with the Council's priorities and other strategies

5.12 The delivery action plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by officers and on an annual basis the delivery action plan will be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny committees to update on progress and outcomes and will feed into the annual budget process. In addition, with the strategy's strong links with the wider determinants of health the Health and Wellbeing Board will also contribute to the implementation and progress of this strategy on an annual basis.

## **6 Issues and Choices**

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6.1 Cabinet agrees to adopt the Strategy, themes, priorities and actions

6.2 Cabinet agrees not to approve the housing strategy and consider an alternative focus for future action. To note by not adopting the West Northamptonshire Council Strategy will result in the council not providing the strategic leadership and focus for our partners and wider stakeholders.

## **7 Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

7.1.1 The approval of the Housing Strategy does not in itself incur any new revenue or capital liabilities for either the Housing Revenue Account or the general fund.

7.1.2 The implementation of and delivery of the Housing Strategy requires significant investment of time and resource by existing council staff and its partners. The delivery action plan will need to be fully costed to set out the expected financial impact on the council. If the financial impacts cannot be covered within existing resources a further report will be brought back to Cabinet to determine if additional resources will be released and how they will be funded.

7.1.3 The delivery plan will be an ever-evolving document and if additional resources are required in the future they may be considered as part of the normal budget setting process.

7.1.4 Throughout the lifetime of the strategy there will be some specific projects and developments where decisions will need to be made and the full revenue and capital implications will be made clear at the time. None of the projects or development will be able to proceed until the appropriate funding is agreed and in place.

### **7.2 Legal**

7.2.1 It is not a statutory requirement for the Council to adopt a housing strategy. However, it sets out objectives and targets and policies on how the Council intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role and provides an overarching framework against which the Council considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing offices which relate to the delivery of the Council's housing functions.

7.2.2 Consultation responses received from key services users, key stakeholders and other interested parties on the Council's strategic housing role are required to be considered in the decision making process.

7.2.3 The Council is required to comply with its public sector equality duty, under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to consider whether policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. Members are referred to the community impact statement in the body of this report and the housing evidence base document as Appendix 2 which should be considered in the decision-making process.

### **7.3 Risk**

7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

### **7.4 Consultation**

7.4.1 The Housing Strategy has been developed through consultation with members, the local community, partners and wider stakeholders through the following channels:

- Evidence gathering – We collected a wide range of evidence across all areas which impact on Housing to understand the situation including trends and future predictions.
- Validation workshops – We held a number of workshops with different departments in the council and external organisations who will be involved with the delivery of the strategy to understand the context and delivery challenges they face.
- Stakeholder events – We brought together a wide range of people with an interest including local voluntary groups, members, officers and other organisations to get their feedback and input into the recommendations.
- Member involvement – We attended a number of committees with elected members to share the strategy as it was developed and to get their input into it. This included an all-member workshop in May 2022.
- Formal public consultation – We did a full public consultation to understand people's concerns and priorities so that we could ensure the strategy had the right focus and included actions which would address their concerns.

7.4.2 The formal consultation on the emerging themes and priorities ran from 14<sup>th</sup> April – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022. We had nearly 600 responses analysed, with 257 completing the whole questionnaire and over 280 comments in total from a variety of groups and individuals including residents, registered providers, voluntary and charitable organisations, statutory bodies and parish/town councils. There was overwhelming support for each of the themes and the priorities to be progressed.

7.4.3 The comments and responses through these various consultation channels have influenced and have been reflected into the final housing strategy in the following ways:

- Priorities have been consolidated where required
- Responses have been used to strengthen priorities
- Responses have helped identify actions to deliver the strategy
- The priorities and actions are more outcome focused for services users
- Targets have been added to allow monitoring

## **7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 During the validation period of developing the strategy, a presentation was given to People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees, this provided an overview of the evidence base gathered and the draft themes and priorities to be consulted on. During the formal consultation period all members were invited to a Housing Strategy workshop. In August a pre-decision scrutiny of the draft Housing Strategy took place. The workshop was led by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee but was open to members of the Corporate and Place Overview and Scrutiny committee to attend.

7.5.2 The recommendations of the pre-decision scrutiny are an appendix to this report.

## **7.6 Climate Impact**

7.6.1 Supporting thriving and sustainable communities is one of the four themes of the Housing Strategy. It sets out that the provision and management of housing plays a role in helping to deliver the overall sustainability goals the Council are seeking to achieve through its Corporate Plan and the recently adopted Sustainability Strategy.

7.6.2 The strategy recognises the need to achieve zero carbon will be a significant challenge

## **7.7 Community Impact**

7.7.1 The Housing Strategy will have a positive direct and indirect on housing, health and wellbeing across multiple areas. It promotes the provision of healthy housing, good quality supported housing, aim to reduce homelessness, supports economic prosperity and provide support for those who need it. It also supports good quality environments and public spaces that also benefit are our mental health and wellbeing.

7.7.2 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (EIA) was undertaken to inform the development of the draft Housing Strategy. The results of this screening process did not highlight any areas of concerns as the strategy document doesn't seek to introduce any policy change directly and any actions from the strategy that do introduce new policy or approach will be accompanied by their own EIA screening.

## **8 Background Papers**

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### **8.1 None**