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| Committee: Community and Children's Services Committee – For information | Dated: 11/03/2024 |
| Subject: Housing Strategy | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | N |
| If so, how much? | £ |
| What is the source of Funding? | N/A |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | N/A |
| Report of: Judith Finlay, Executive Director Community and Children's Services | For Discussion |
| Report author: Gerri Scott, Housing Consultant | |

Summary

The purpose of this report is to advise on the development of the new Housing Strategy. The previous strategy ended in 2023 and the new Housing Strategy will set out the City of London Corporation's vision for the supply of housing and the successful delivery of housing services to residents.

The strategy should align to national housing priorities and provide clear strategic direction for housing investment in the development of new and existing homes, actions, and targets to improve quality, condition, and energy efficiency.

Five draft priorities have been developed for consultation with members, residents, officers, and stakeholders. Once the consultation has been concluded, a final draft strategy will be presented for approval in May 2024.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the report
- Note the planned consultation and the timescales for development of the final draft strategy
- Note the draft priorities and consider whether there are any additional priorities that should be included.

Main Report

Background

1. The previous housing strategy for the City of London Corporation concluded in 2023. The new corporate plan provides the context for a new Housing Strategy, setting out core principles for housing:
 - People should receive good services, live in good quality housing, and live independent and healthy lives.
 - Communities should be involved in co-creating fair and innovative outcomes to improve how they feel about the place where they live.
 - Housing should be a positive aspect of everyday life, enhancing health and wellbeing and providing stability for successful lives.
 - Housing services should be high-quality, generating high levels of resident satisfaction.
 - Homes should be safe and well-maintained with a strong emphasis on fire safety and building safety.
2. There is an aspiration to develop more housing for those in housing need. There should be meaningful engagement with residents, so they can influence the quality of their housing services and raise the standards of their homes to enhance their wellbeing and life chances.

Current Position

3. Since the development of the last Housing Strategy, there have been changes to the wider housing strategic context.
4. Inquiries into the Grenfell tragedy have informed a new approach to regulation of the housing sector and the Social Housing Regulation Act and Building Safety Acts set out changes to strengthen building safety and improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods.
5. Regulation of the social rented sector has been strengthened with the introduction of a landlords' league table, to be published annually from April 2024, and performance rated against a suite of new consumer standards and tenant satisfaction measures.
6. Landlords must ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly, that the resident's voice is heard and that residents are treated with respect. The Housing Ombudsman's role has increased with a series of spotlight reports on complaint-handling by local authorities and housing associations with high-profile 'deep dives' into damp and mould, anti-social behaviour, attitudes, respect, and rights.
7. In 2019, central government declared a climate emergency, amending previous legislation to commit the UK to bringing down all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The City of London Corporation has embraced this challenge with an aspiration to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

8. The Building Safety Act 2022 is intended to strengthen the regulatory system for building safety, with increased responsibilities for building developers, owners, and managers to ensure greater accountability for the design, construction and occupation of high-risk buildings. Recent high-profile cases have increased the scrutiny of housing conditions, the health and wellbeing of residents and how landlords tackle damp and mould alongside health and safety compliance of the 'big six' issues – fire, asbestos, gas, electrical, lifts and legionella.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic legacy and the exit from the European Union have had a profound effect on housing – from supply chain issues, which have impacted on the cost and timeliness of new development, the costs of procuring and delivering effective repairs and maintenance services, and shortage of resources, skills, and expertise. COVID-19 also magnified existing issues such as social isolation, poverty, and scarcity of housing supply.
10. The rent cap worsens an already difficult financial position for the Housing Revenue Account, with the annual 1% reduction policy in place from 2016 to 2020 leaving reserves severely depleted and demanding greater efficiency to achieve savings.

Proposals

11. Five draft principles have been developed for the new housing strategy and will inform the consultation process. They are:
 - i. Increase the supply of housing
 - ii. Improve housing quality
 - iii. Improve the quality of housing services
 - iv. Improve building safety
 - v. Engage and listen to residents
12. There will be consultation on each of these draft principles and the proposals for the ambition to achieve targets for each principle. Appendix 1 includes a slide deck that supports the consultation on the draft principles.
13. The main methods of consultation will be lead Member engagement and separate focus groups with staff, involved residents and stakeholders. The aims of the sessions will be to provide an opportunity to highlight key housing issues and to give views on the proposed priorities and actions.
14. There will also be an online survey on the website to run for a period of six weeks, asking for views. The survey will also be emailed to residents directly.
15. Consultation has started and will include internal conversations with key Members, officers, involved residents and stakeholders, as well as an online questionnaire to invite the wider resident population to participate.

16. An evidence base of key data is also being prepared to support the Housing Strategy.

17. **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

- **Strategic implications** – The Housing Strategy will align to the aspirations of the Corporate Plan, which sets the overarching context for the City of London Corporation’s ambition for its existing and future housing provision and service delivery.
- **Financial implications** – None
- **Resource implications** – None
- **Legal implications** – None
- **Risk implications** – None
- **Equalities implications** – Consultation around the priorities for the Housing Strategy will be inclusive and will ensure that a wide and diverse audience are invited to participate.
- **Climate implications** – None
- **Security implications** – None

Conclusion

This report sets out the process for consultation and involvement in the development of the new Housing Strategy.

Once consultation is concluded, and comments and contributions considered, the strategy will be amended before being presented to Members for final approval.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 includes the slide deck to support the consultation on the draft principles for the housing strategy.

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