

Committee(s)	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	26 September 2017
Subject: Housing Strategy	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report presents an outline of a proposed new Housing Strategy. This will set out the City of London Corporation's vision for the management of our social housing estates, on how the Corporation will contribute to new housing supply and on how housing will contribute to wider objectives around health and wellbeing, building sustainable communities and supporting vulnerable people.

This report is presented to enable Members to have oversight of the strategy development process and to provide feedback on its proposed outline and scope.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Consider whether the proposed areas of focus outlined are the right ones.
- Offer any initial feedback on the key questions posed within each area.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation is renewing its Housing Strategy. This will set out the vision for the management of the City Corporation's 12 estates across London, our commitment to build 700 new affordable homes by 2025 and how our Housing Service will contribute to wider objectives around improving health and wellbeing, helping people achieve their potential and building sustainable communities.

Strategy Outline

2. The vision of the strategy, 'Providing Londoners with high quality, well managed homes in thriving communities' is supported by four proposed areas of focus, which are discussed in more detail below.

3. Members are asked to consider whether these areas of focus and the questions posed within them are the right ones for the strategy to explore. Members are also asked for any initial responses to the key questions posed.

Theme One – Providing homes for Londoners

4. Housing shortage is one of the most pressing economic and social issues that London faces. The capital's current building rate of 25,000 new homes per year falls far short of the 50,000 that are needed to keep pace with the growing population.
5. The City Corporation has committed to play its part in tackling the housing crisis by building 700 new affordable homes, a 25 per cent increase, on its social housing estates by 2025. A similar commitment has been made to deliver 3,000 new homes on sites within the City Corporation's wider portfolio of land.
6. The Housing Strategy will help realise these commitments by setting out the type, size and tenure of homes that would most benefit those with a connection to the City. It will also provide a framework to guide decision making on how best to achieve an increase in the number of homes on the City Corporation's housing estates. To do this, it will seek to answer the following key questions:
 - a. What housing need will the 700 new affordable homes aim to meet? The focus could be exclusively social housing, or some resources could go towards intermediate housing for middle income workers who are currently excluded from both social housing and home ownership.
 - b. What should the scope and scale of our proposals for existing estates be? Projects could either focus on infill opportunities or propose wider estate regeneration where this would be beneficial. If projects are disruptive, how can we ensure existing residents also benefit?
 - c. Where is additional social housing most required by those with a connection to the City? This involves a trade-off, as increased costs in Central London means fewer units can be delivered for the same resource.

Theme Two – High quality homes

7. Maintaining and improving our existing homes is our most important duty as a landlord. However, some elements of our housing stock are reaching the end of their life and need to be updated for residents' health, safety and comfort. The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 required all social landlords to reduce rents by 1% per year for four consecutive years. The cumulative cost of this to the City Corporation is estimated to be £4.5m and this has added to the pressure to carefully prioritise projects.
8. Maintenance is a pressing issue for many residents, aging stock is often poorly suited to the needs of older residents or people with mobility issues and, as the

investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire progresses, due consideration will need to be given to ensuring the safety of the City's estates.

9. Alongside the Asset Management Strategy, the Housing Strategy will set out our ambitions to improve the quality of our homes and assess how our existing stock can be adapted to better need today's needs. To do this, it will seek to answer the following key questions:
 - a. Has the City Corporation struck the right balance between responsive maintenance and planned works? If an increase in planned works is recommended, how can the impact of this on leaseholders be managed?
 - b. What are our aspirations around quality? Is it enough to meet the Decent Homes standard or should the City Corporation go further? Would this be realistic, given the amount to do on some estates?
 - c. How can our existing housing stock best be adapted to enable older people and people with disabilities to remain independent for longer?

Theme Three – Well-managed homes

10. How we manage our homes is crucial to residents' quality of life. While most tenants are satisfied with how their estates are managed, leaseholder satisfaction lags behind.
11. The private rented sector is home to over a third of City residents and has a growing presence on our housing estates. The City Corporation has a role to play in the private market, both as the strategic housing authority for the Square Mile and as the freeholder of the out of City estates.
12. The Housing Strategy will set out our ambitions as a housing management service, reviewing whether our current structures and resource allocations offer the best outcomes for residents and considering what it means to run estates with a mix of tenures. To do this, it will seek to answer the following key questions:
 - a. Our management model, of local Estate Offices is both unusual and comes at greater cost. Does the model meet the needs of residents to the extent that this is money well spent?
 - b. Tenants and leaseholders both report differing levels of satisfaction with our service. How can we provide a consistently good service, regardless of tenure or proximity to the City?
 - c. Is there any evidence of poor conditions or management problems in either the Square Mile's private rented sector or in private rented homes on City Corporation estates? How are these best addressed?

Theme Four – Thriving communities

13. Decent housing is more than just bricks and mortar. Safe, secure and adequately sized housing is essential for a range of other outcomes including improving health and wellbeing, building sustainable communities and helping all people to achieve their potential.
14. For those with greater needs or vulnerabilities, providing timely advice, specially designed accommodation and personal support can prevent the breakdown of tenancies and homelessness, avoiding great personal upheaval and the need for more costly forms of provision or intervention.
15. The Housing Strategy will set out how the City Corporation's Housing Service will contribute to achieving these wider social objectives. To do this, it will seek to answer the following key questions:
 - a. Overcrowding has implications for physical and mental health, child development and impacts disproportionately on certain sectors of the population. What more can the City Corporation do to reduce overcrowding amongst social housing tenants and City residents?
 - b. Should the City Corporation provide more specialist housing to support older people, young people and care leavers, rough sleepers and those with health needs? Alternatively, could more be done to effectively provide this support in general needs housing?
 - c. How can housing play a greater role in health and social care prevention work, in supporting planned care and in maintaining good health and reducing the onset of care needs?

Development

16. Prior to the development of the strategy a full needs analysis will be carried out, drawing on evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Housing Register, HouseMark benchmarking, the Survey of Tenants And Residents (STAR), the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and internal Performance Indicators.
17. Officers will engage with residents, tenants and leaseholders at an early stage. This will enable the strategy to be genuinely co-produced and to tackle the issues that are most important to our residents. We envisage this will take a form of a short exercise delivered through existing groups like the Housing User Board, as well as more in depth conversations between residents and senior officers.
18. Member feedback on a draft of the Housing Strategy will be sought at a Breakfast Briefing event in December, before a final draft of is prepared and brought back to this Committee for initial approval and onward recommendation to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Community and Children's Services Committee and Policy and Resources Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. The Housing Strategy will contribute to achieving all five themes in the Department of Community and Children's Services Business Plan. These are:

- Safe - People of all ages live in safe communities, our homes are safe and well maintained and our estates are protected from harm
- Potential - People of all ages can achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong-learning
- Independence, involvement and choice - People of all ages can live independently, play a role in their communities and exercise choice over their services
- Health and wellbeing - People of all ages enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Community - People of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community.

Conclusion

20. This paper presents an outline of a proposed Housing Strategy for the City of London. This strategy will set out the City Corporation's vision for its housing delivery programme and the management of its 12 housing estates. Member feedback is sought on the proposed scope and direction of the strategy.

Appendices

- None

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