

	<h2>Housing Committee</h2> <h3>27 April 2015</h3>
Title	Summary of Feedback Following Consultation on the Draft Housing Strategy
Report of	Commissioning Director, Growth and Environment
Wards	All
Status	Public
Enclosures	Appendix 1- Results of Online Survey Appendix 2- Summary of Written Responses
Officer Contact Details	Cath Shaw, cath.shaw@barnet.gov.uk , 020 8359 4716 Paul Shipway, paul.shipway@barnet.gov.uk , 020 8359 4924 Chloe Horner, chloe.horner@barnet.gov.uk , 020 8359 4775

<h2>Summary</h2>
<p>The Council has undertaken a public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy. The consultation included an online survey as well as presentations to Barnet Homes Performance Advisory Group, The Landlords Forum, and a Housing Forum meeting. This report summarises the outcomes of the consultation. The Housing Committee will be asked to approve a revised version of the draft Housing Committee at the next meeting.</p>

<h2>Recommendations</h2>
<p>1. That the Committee note the feedback following the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy</p>

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Council has developed a new draft Housing Strategy to meet the key current housing challenges in the borough. The strategy contains the following six key priorities:
- Increasing the housing supply,
 - Delivery of homes that people can afford,
 - Sustaining the quality of the private rented sector,
 - Tackling homelessness,
 - Providing housing related support to vulnerable people,
 - Providing high quality services.
- 1.2 A 12 week public consultation was undertaken between 6 January 2015 and 31 March 2015. This report summarises the responses received. The consultation included an online survey as well as presentations to the Housing Forum, Barnet Homes' Performance and Advisory Group and Barnet Landlords Forum.

Survey responses

- 1.3 In total 93 people, including tenants, residents and community organisations, responded to an online survey at <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/>. The results indicate that there is general support for all the priorities set out in the draft Housing Strategy. The results are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1- summary of responses to the online survey

Priorities	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Don't know
Increase housing supply	73.11%	15.06%	5.38%	6.45 %
Deliver more homes that people can afford	70.00%	17.78%	6.67%	5.56%
Sustain the quality of the private rented sector	73.33%	15.56%	6.67%	4.44%
Tackle homelessness	69.32%	15.91%	9.09%	5.68%
Deliver housing to support vulnerable people	80.24%	5.82%	9.30%	4.65%
Deliver efficient and effective services to residents	76.82%	10.98%	8.54%	3.66%

- 1.4 73% of respondents agreed that increasing housing supply should be a key priority of the draft Housing Strategy with 15% disagreeing. However, under this proposal some concerns were raised about the level of affordable housing that is being delivered in the borough. Concerns were also raised about the level of development and whether the borough has sufficient infrastructure to

support the amount of new homes that are planned over the 10 year period of the draft Housing Strategy.

- 1.5 70% of respondents agreed that delivery of homes people can afford should be a key priority with 18% disagreeing. Concerns were raised in the comments on this priority about the proposed rent policy for council homes and whether tenants would be able to sustain tenancies with rents charged at 80% of the average private rented sector market or Local Housing Allowance rates.
- 1.6 73% of respondents agreed that sustaining the quality of the private rented sector should be a key priority with 16% disagreeing. Respondents felt that it was important to improve standards in the private rented sector through landlord accreditation and more environmental health interventions. Concerns were raised about high rents and the lack of security of tenure in the private rented sector.
- 1.7 69% of respondents agreed that tackling homelessness should be a key priority with 16% disagreeing. In the comments section respondents considered that the delivery of more affordable housing is key to tackling homelessness. Concerns were raised about the impact on households who have to move out of the borough away from their support networks.
- 1.8 Delivering housing to support vulnerable people was supported by 80% of respondents with 6% disagreeing. Particular comments were raised about adults with learning disabilities and young care leavers and the need to support these groups to lead more independent lives.
- 1.9 77% of respondents agreed with the final priority to deliver efficient and effective services to residents with 11% disagreeing.
- 1.10 The full results of the online survey are contained in Appendix 1.

Other responses to the consultation

- 1.11 Barnet Homes Performance Advisory Group (PAG) is a group of volunteer Barnet Homes tenants and leaseholders committed to improving housing services for tenants and leaseholders, as well as scrutinising Barnet Homes performance and complaints. The PAG was supportive of aspects of the draft Housing Strategy, particularly the proposals around sustaining quality in the private rented sector through increased landlord accreditation. PAG members raised concerns about the level of affordable housing being re-provided on the regeneration estates and the potential impact on homelessness of the proposal to charge higher rents to council tenants.
- 1.12 Barnet Housing Forum includes a number of housing association and support agency partners. The Forum was generally supportive of the draft Housing Strategy.. Attendees were also invited to complete the online survey.

- 1.13 The Landlord Forum is attended by landlords and letting agencies operating in Barnet. Feedback at the forum was generally positive with regards to the proposals in the draft Housing Strategy to extend the licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation.
- 1.14 There were eight written responses to the consultation. They were received by The Barnet Group, Fizzy Living LLP, Mill Hill Neighbourhood Forum, a resident, prospective parliamentary candidates and the Barnet Labour Group Housing Commission. A summary of the written responses is contained in Appendix 2.
- 1.15 Officers are currently considering the responses to the consultation and will bring forward a revised draft Housing Strategy to committee at the next meeting. This will take account of the feedback and comments received. Officers are currently considering how to proceed on a range of issues, including:-
- The approach to setting council rents and the level of rental income required to enable the delivery of more affordable homes.
 - Whether increased rents for existing tenants will enable the council to provide additional services.
 - Support given to non-secure tenants on regeneration estates.
- 1.16 In addition, officers are considering a number of minor points and drafting improvements.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The draft Housing Strategy has been designed to meet the key current housing challenges in the borough and to meet the Council's statutory requirement to have a Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.2 The continued supply of good quality housing to accommodate a rapidly growing and changing population is one of the biggest challenges facing London. Every one of London's [32] boroughs will need to contribute to meeting it. The challenge for Barnet – expected to be London's most populous borough by the end of 2015 – is significant, but also brings opportunities.
- 2.3 Barnet's is expected to grow by a further 22% over the next 30 years. Within that, the number of children and older people will increase significantly. This means that not only does Barnet need more housing, but also that the type of housing required is changing to reflect the borough's evolving demographic profile.
- 2.4 Barnet is an expensive place in which to live, both in terms of buying a home and renting a home. This means that the number of households who require help with their housing has increased.
- 2.5 There has been a shift in tenure in Barnet. Home ownership has fallen whilst private renting has increased as more people have found it difficult to buy their

own home due to higher prices and reduced availability of mortgages. Rents are also rising and are increasingly beyond the reach of low income households which means that some people will need to consider living in more affordable areas outside of the borough.

- 2.6 The Council has had to make significant reductions in its expenditure, and is determined to provide services in a more cost effective way to maintain quality and improve customer satisfaction. The reform of council housing finance provides an opportunity to invest in housing in a way that reduces some of those costs.
- 2.7 Whilst Barnet is a relatively wealthy place, more than 20,000 households have been affected by the Government's welfare reforms which are designed to help people back into work. The Council has worked in partnership with Barnet Homes and Job Centre Plus to assist households affected by the overall benefit cap move into more affordable accommodation or enter employment.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The Council could decide to not develop a new housing strategy but this would mean that important decisions on housing investment would not be based on a robust and up-to-date evidence base. It may also be difficult to secure external funding for regeneration schemes if the borough's housing strategy does not reflect the London Mayor's housing objectives described in the new draft London Housing Strategy.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Council is currently reviewing the responses to the consultation and will bring forward a revised draft Housing Strategy for consideration and approval by the Housing Committee at the next meeting.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013/16 includes as a priority outcome "To maintain the right environment for a strong and diverse local economy". Barnet is a popular place in which to live and has high demand for a limited supply of council and housing association housing. Developing the Housing Strategy is a key element of the Housing Committee Commissioning Plan 2015-2020 which describes the overall vision as "Barnet is a place where housing helps individuals and families who add economic, social, civic or cultural value to communities, to live as owners or renters of property".
- 5.1.2 The spatial expression of the Housing Strategy is provided by the Local Plan. An updated Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being drafted. This will set out the Council's approach to securing affordable housing and growth whilst ensuring that we get the right homes in the right places for sustainable vibrant mixed communities. The SPD will be

considered by the Policy and Resources Committee after public consultation and will reflect the final draft of the Housing Strategy.

5.1.3 The Mayor's statutory London Housing Strategy was approved by the Secretary of State in October 2014. This aims to put in place the resources to deliver more than 42,000 homes a year across the Capital. The Mayor also aims to increase opportunities for home ownership, improve the private rented sector and ensure working Londoners have priority for affordable homes to rent. The Greater London Authority is currently working with boroughs to develop Framework Agreements on how new affordable housing will be delivered. Barnet's strategy will have to be in "general conformity" with the London Housing Strategy.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 The draft Housing Strategy and associated report will detail the resources implications of the Council's housing plans, including the use of the Housing Revenue Account additional borrowing headroom of £28m. The Council has developed an investment model to make decisions about how to spend the headroom and the housing strategy will be a key document to shape and support these decisions.

5.2.2 Any decision on increasing council dwelling rents will need to take into account how many homes the Council wishes to build as the increased revenue will be used to support the delivery of new council homes.

5.2.3 The introduction of the overall benefit cap (as part of the Government's reform of welfare) from August 2013 means that some households will not be able to afford the rents charged in Barnet and other parts of London for temporary accommodation and private rented sector homes even where these fall within local housing allowance levels. The Council has been working with Job Centre Plus and Barnet Homes in a joint taskforce to assist households affected by the cap, either by entering employment or securing more affordable accommodation elsewhere.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 The Local Government Act 2003 makes provision for a local housing authority to have a housing strategy. The Greater London Authority Act 1999, as amended, requires a local housing authority in Greater London to ensure that any local housing strategy is in general conformity with the London Housing Strategy. The term local housing strategy includes any other statement of the local housing authority's policies or proposals relating to housing.

5.3.2 Annex A to the Responsibility for Functions Section of the Council's Constitution gives the Housing Committee specific responsibility in relation to the Housing Strategy (incorporating the Homelessness Strategy).

5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 The existing strategy was last updated fully in 2010 and since then there has been a change in government and a number of key housing reforms. There is a risk that it does not take account of changes that have occurred in the wider housing market that has emerged since then and therefore is no longer considered to be fit for purpose and underpin other strategic housing decisions.

5.4.2 There is a risk that the existing strategy will not be in “general conformity” with the London Mayor’s Housing strategy, which could lead to loss of support from the Mayor in respect of delivering the capital’s housing objectives. This could lead to potential difficulties in obtaining funding for the borough’s housing plans.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

5.5.1 An initial high level outline equalities impact assessment identified the need for a full equalities impacts assessment which will be completed and reported to the Housing Committee when the final draft of the Housing Strategy is submitted for approval. Feedback from the consultation will also feed in to the equalities impact assessment.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

5.6.1 This report has summarised the public consultation that has been undertaken so far. In addition, a presentation will be given to the Older Person Partnership Board on 15 April 2015. This will also be fed into the final Housing Committee report in June 2015 which will consider whether amendments have to be made to the final strategy.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Relevant previous decisions are indicated in the table below.

Item	Decision	Link
Cabinet 12 March 2010	Decision item 8 - approved the existing Housing Strategy	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Cabinet/201004121900/Agenda/Document%207.pdf
Cabinet 14 September 2011	Decision item 8 - approved Barnet’s approach to social housing reform	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Cabinet/201109141900/Agenda/Document%204.pdf
Cabinet Resources Committee 24 June 2013	Decision Item 6 - Local Authority New Housing Programme	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s9244/CRC%20LA%20New%20Build%20public.pdf
Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee 9 July 2014	Decision Item 11 - Strategic Asset Management Plan principles for consultation	http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16064/Strategic%20Asset%20Management%20Plan%20principles%20for%20consultation.pdf

<p>Policy and Resources Committee 21 July 2014</p>	<p>Decision Item 10 - Funding for an Extra Care Housing Scheme at Moreton Close, NW7 and Advance Acquisitions of Leasehold properties on Regeneration Estates</p>	<p>http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16154/Funding%20for%20an%20Extra%20Care%20Housing%20Scheme%20at%20Moreton%20Close%20NW7%20and%20Advance%20Acquisitions%20of%20Leasehold.pdf</p>
<p>Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee 8 September 2014</p>	<p>Decision Item 12 - Barnet Development Pipeline</p>	<p>http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s17356/Development%20Pipeline%20-%20Report.pdf</p>
<p>Housing Committee, 27 October 2014</p>	<p>Decision Item- Housing Strategy</p>	<p>http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=7936&Ver=4</p>