

	<h2>Housing and Growth</h2> <h3>13 June 2022</h3>
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<b>Title</b>	<b>Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and Housing Allocations Scheme</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Councillor Ross Houston, Chair of Housing and Growth Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	None
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### Summary

This report recommends that officers are instructed to review and amend, where considered appropriate, the Housing Allocations Scheme and to prepare a new Tenancy Strategy by exploring the impact of the new administration's housing allocations priorities. This report also provides the Housing and Growth Committee with an update on the timeline for amending the current Housing Allocations Scheme and preparing a new Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

### Officers Recommendations

**It is recommended that the Housing and Growth Committee:**

- Approves to instruct officers to review and amend, where considered appropriate, the current explore the emerging housing allocations priorities of**

**the new administration (clause 1.1 of this report) in preparation for updating the Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Strategy.**

**2. Notes the proposed timetable for preparing the new Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.**

**1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 Due to the recent change in administration, it is recommended that a full review of the Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Strategy be undertaken. A consultant will be commissioned to complete this work. The new administration has indicated priorities regarding the number of offers of accommodation to be made, and the approach to non-secure tenancies. It is recommended that the Housing and Growth Committee instructs officers to explore these priorities so that the Committee can be updated on their potential impacts prior to the Housing Allocations Scheme being updated.
- 1.2 If this recommendation is approved, a first draft of the Housing Allocations Scheme will be brought to the Committee in November 2022 seeking approval to commence consultation, including up to an 8-week period of public consultation, which will take place after the New Year. The Housing Allocations Scheme will be updated with any changes following meaningful consultation and engagement and will be presented to the Committee for approval in June 2023.
- 1.3 This report also seeks to provide the Housing and Growth Committee with an update on the council's Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Both strategies date from 2018, and since their implementation there have been significant changes in the housing landscape that make the introduction of new strategies timely. These changes include:
- A change in the council's administration in May 2022.
  - The release of the Social Housing White Paper in November 2020, which sets out central government's housing-related priorities.
  - New legislation including the Fire Safety Act 2021, the Building Safety Act 2022, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
  - Publication of the London Housing Strategy in May 2018.
  - Updates to key Barnet strategies, including the Barnet Plan 2021-25, Growth Strategy 2020-30, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25, and the Local Plan is in the process of being updated.
  - The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing rise in cost of living.
  - A change in the government's direction on the Rent Policy, ending the previous four-year rent reduction from April 2020.
- 1.4 The updated strategies will reflect the national and local changes that have occurred and the evidence base regarding local need, and will take into consideration the emerging housing priorities of the new administration. A report will be brought to the Housing and Growth Committee in September 2022 to recommend the strategies' themes and seek formal approval to commence drafting the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.5 With the Committee's approval in September, early engagement with key stakeholders will be undertaken alongside a comprehensive review of the evidence base, and updates to the strategies will be prepared and drafts will be brought for consideration by the Housing

and Growth Committee in March 2023. A period of consultation with key partners and stakeholders, including up to an 8-week public consultation, will follow. Revised drafts of both strategies that take account of this engagement will be brought back to the Committee in September 2023 for approval.

- 1.6 Officers are starting work to update the evidence base that supports the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. A new Strategic Housing Market Assessment is to be commissioned to set out the level of demand for housing in the borough.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The change in local administration in addition to the changes in the operating and legislative environment mean that the priorities in the Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the approach and criteria in the Housing Allocations Scheme need to be reviewed and updated.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 The council could decide to not review the Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and Housing Allocations Scheme; however, this is not recommended as the documents will not reflect the changes that have occurred since 2018, or the emerging priorities of the current administration.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 Council officers will commission a consultant to explore the impacts of the new housing allocations priorities as part of the work to update the Housing Allocations Scheme. The outcomes of this will be reported to the Housing and Growth Committee.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 The Corporate Plan 2021 to 2025 includes priorities to ensure the borough is clean, safe, and well run, and is thriving as a place fit for the future. It aims to deliver growth to address the shortage of housing, and to address homelessness and the longer-term impacts of COVID-19. The Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and Housing Allocations Scheme contribute to these key priorities.
- 5.1.2 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 to 2025 recognises that the condition of and access to local housing has an important role in the quality of life and health of both individuals and communities.
- 5.1.3 Barnet's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment highlights that there is a long-term shift in housing tenure towards renting and away from owner occupancy (either outright or with a mortgage), reflecting a sustained reduction in housing affordability and an imbalance between housing demand and supply.
- 5.1.4 The Growth Strategy 2020 to 2030 includes priorities to increase the supply of housing, deliver more homes that people can afford, deliver homes on public sector land, and

support our growing older population. The Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy contribute to these priorities under the Growth Strategy's theme of 'a growing borough'.

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

5.2.1 A consultant will be commissioned to review and amend the current Housing Allocations Scheme and prepare a new Tenancy Strategy, including exploring the potential impacts of the new housing allocation priorities. The cost of this will be met from existing budgets.

5.2.2 A new Strategic Housing Market Assessment will also be commissioned. In 2018, this was undertaken as a joint exercise with the West London Alliance. The cost of this will be met from existing budgets.

5.2.3 The costs of producing the draft Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will otherwise be met within existing resources through The Barnet Group's strategy function.

## **5.3 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.3.1 The Housing Allocation Scheme is a statutory requirement under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011. The Tenancy Strategy is a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011. The Tenancy Policy is a requirement of the Tenancy Standard set by the Regulator of Social Housing. There is a requirement to keep them under review.

5.3.2 The Housing Act 1996, Section 166A(1), as updated by the Localism Act 2011, provides that:

- 1) Every local housing authority in England must have a scheme (their "allocation scheme") for determining priorities, and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation.

5.3.3 It is best practice to review the schemes regularly (i.e. every few years) to ensure compliance with the law and good practice and that the scheme is addressing housing need effectively. In formulating or amending its scheme, a local housing authority must have regard to its current homelessness strategy under section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002. Where changes are to be made to the scheme, it is a requirement to consult with those affected by the changes including Registered Providers.

5.3.4 The Tenancy Strategy and the Tenancy Policy should also be reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with changes to legislation and statutory guidance.

5.3.5 Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required by section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.

5.3.6 Section 333D of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 provides that any local housing strategy of any London borough must be in general conformity with the Mayor's London

Housing Strategy.

5.3.7 Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 provides that a local housing authority in England may from time to time

- (a) carry out a homelessness review for their district; and
- (b) formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review.

5.3.8 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.

5.3.9 The council's Constitution (Article 7 - Committees Sub-Committees Area Committees and Forums and the Local Strategic Partnership) sets out the responsibilities of the Housing and Growth Committee which include:

- Responsibility for housing matters including housing strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, commissioning of environmental health functions for private sector housing.

#### 5.4 **Insight**

5.4.1 No specific insight has been used in this report. The Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be informed by evidence bases, which will include insight gained through the Health Workplan's Homeless Prevention and Insight Project.

#### 5.5 **Social Value**

5.5.1 There are no specific Social Value aspects to this report; however, outcomes that are ultimately delivered through the new Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will take into account the delivery of social value through any procurement that is undertaken.

#### 5.6 **Risk Management**

5.6.1 There is a risk that the housing requirements of the borough are not met if the Housing Allocations Scheme and the Housing Strategy are not updated.

5.6.2 There is a risk that homelessness may increase if the council does not update the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and set out the measures it will take to tackle homelessness.

#### 5.7 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.6.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision making of the council. This requires elected Members to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day-to-day business and that all proposals emerging from the finance and business planning process have properly taken into consideration what impact, if any, there is on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place.

5.6.2 The Equality Act 2010, Section 149 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.6.3 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.

5.6.4 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- c) Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

5.6.5 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken to assess the impacts of the Housing Allocations Scheme, the Housing Strategy, and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## **5.7 Corporate Parenting**

5.7.1 The council assigns the highest priority for council housing to foster carers (if they require a larger property to foster more children) through its Housing Allocation Scheme. Council housing remains the most affordable housing option for care leavers and all rents and the majority of tenant service charges proposed remain eligible for housing benefit. Care leavers are placed into suitable accommodation when leaving care to allow a successful transition to independent living whilst also developing their skills by providing the right support to help them maintain their tenancies.

## **5.8 Consultation and Engagement**

5.8.4 There has not been any specific consultation on the issues arising in this report. Public consultation will be undertaken on the new Housing Allocations Scheme, Housing Strategy, and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as part of their development timetable.

## **6 Environmental Impact**

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from noting the recommendations. Implementing the recommendations in the report will lead to a neutral impact on the

council's carbon and ecology impact. Environmental impact will be considered in the drafting of the new Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## 7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.6 Relevant previous decisions are listed in the table below.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Link</b>
Housing Committee, 21 June 2018	Approved Housing Allocations Scheme	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9486&amp;Ver=4">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9486&amp;Ver=4</a>
Housing Committee, 1 April 2019	Approved Housing Strategy 2019-2024	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9740&amp;Ver=4">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9740&amp;Ver=4</a>
Housing Committee, 1 April 2019	Approved Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9740&amp;Ver=4">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Clid=699&amp;MId=9740&amp;Ver=4</a>