

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board / Cabinet

Date: 9 February 2023 / 23 February 2023

Wards affected: All wards

Report Title: Draft Housing Strategy and Public Consultation

When does the decision need to be implemented? 23 February 2023

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing

Director/Divisional Director Contact Details: Tara Harris, Divisional Director Community and Customer Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider the draft Housing Strategy and to note the response from the public consultation

2. Reason for proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 In 2021 Torbay Council declared a housing crisis to address local housing issues and announced, via the Community and Corporate Plan, the challenge for economic and housing growth. As such, Housing has become a high corporate priority for Torbay Council.
- 2.2 The Strategy will better inform our communities, stakeholders and members about what the Council and its partners are doing about local housing priorities and issues.
- 2.3 The Strategy will give stakeholders and members a clear annual delivery plan on which performance can be monitored on a quarterly basis.
- 2.4 Although the current Housing Strategy runs to April 2025, it was adopted prior to the Council declaring a Housing and Climate emergency in 2021, and before the C-19 Pandemic in 2020. We have refreshed our aims and objectives accordingly.
- 2.5 The Strategy supports cross-organisational, collaborative working. It provides the structure against which the Council can develop other, more specific policies affecting its housing function.
- 2.6 Both the Housing Delivery Group and the Torbay Strategic Housing Board have recommended that the Strategy be reviewed in light of the Council's new priorities.
- 2.7 Responses to the consultation has helped inform the approach we will take with all our partners and stakeholders to improve housing supply, conditions and support.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board considers the submitted report and documents and make recommendations to the Cabinet.

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- 3.1 That the Torbay Housing Strategy 2023-2030, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be approved; and
- 3.2 subject to 3.1 above, the Cabinet approves the Housing Strategy Project Plan 2023-2024

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Strategy 2023-2030

Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report

Appendix 3 - Housing Strategy Project Plan 2023 – 2024

Background Documents

Corporate Housing Indictors (approved by Cabinet 26th July 2022)

Housing Strategy Evidence Base Document

4 Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy is the over-arching strategic document that pulls together all aspects of the Council's strategic housing function. It sits within the Council's policy framework and provides the context for other plans policies and strategies, such as the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy and the Empty Homes Policy.
- 4.2 The Strategy supports the Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023 to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing', 'regenerate and re-invent our town centres' and to 'encourage a sustainably developed built environment. It also supports Torbay's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, as well as the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, the Torbay Carbon Plan (2023/25), the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and the Economic Growth Strategy to name but a few.
- 4.3 The Strategy sets out what the Council, and its partners, will be doing to improve the housing situation for our current and future residents. It sets out the approach we will take with all of our partners to work towards our vision. These are grouped into three priorities.

4.4 The priorities reflect the broad range of work that we do to meet local housing need, including developing affordable housing, maintaining housing standards, and helping people to stay independent in their own homes, whilst preventing homelessness. Within each theme officers have identified key aims of the Council, which are considered to directly contribute to the overall sense of community health and wellbeing in the Bay.

4.5 Our housing priorities:

1. Improve housing supply
2. Improve housing quality
3. Improve housing support

Our cross-cutting principles:

4. Put our customers first
5. Tackle climate change
6. Work in partnership

4.6 During 2022/23 there has been investment to:

- increase capacity across Planning and Housing to enhance the development of affordable homes
- tackle disrepair and poor housing conditions, including the review and reduction of empty homes
- enhance homeless reduction, such as investment in temporary accommodation and client support

4.7 The Chief Executive is currently reviewing the Housing structure to provide additional capacity to enable the delivery of new affordable homes and the development and production of Housing policy and strategies, which will link with Torbay's urban regeneration programme and the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

5 Options under consideration

5.1 Consider the consultation response from partners, members, stakeholders and note the wider response from the public consultation

5.2 As a result of consultation with the public, partners and stakeholders we have taken on a number of comments and suggestions and have amended the Strategy accordingly. In summary they are:

- a. Clarify and better explain housing terms, such as 'housing support', geographic relief' and the role of strategic partners.

- b. Include the fact that affordable housing is key to attracting and retaining our workforce, supports the growth of our key employment sectors, such as tourism, fishing, hi-tech etc, reduces the levels of deprivation and meets the priorities in our Economic Growth Strategy.
- c. Reinforce partner approach and that we are open to all methods of affordable housing delivery and that it is the Local Plan that dictates overall housing targets, as well as affordable homes.
- d. Update the number of affordable homes required over the next eight years to ensure all of our strategies reflect the same target. This is the function of the Local Plan, and, until it is updated, we must adopt the Government's 'standard method' calculation for the delivery of homes that places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed 'buffer', due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. However, the Government is now looking at reducing its compulsory housebuilding targets, which will also be mentioned.
- e. Ensure we include our partners in the voluntary sector to help us improve our support offer and take the opportunity to work closer to better understand how they can assist and support our work, as well as listen to what is happening at a local level.

5.3 Recommend the adoption of a Housing Strategy for Torbay, including amendment recommendations from the consultation. Please see Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report for more detail

6 Financial opportunities and implications

- 6.1 There are no significant financial implications. Any financial commitments would be subject to further approval.
- 6.2 New homes and improved facilities are key ingredients in developing economic growth. It often goes unnoticed that increased capacity of schools, GP surgeries, new roads, community centres or sports facilities have been paid for as a direct result of housing development.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council's Housing Strategy must be 'fit for purpose' in terms of providing an overall framework against which the Council will formulate other more specific policies affecting its housing functions, which will ensure that the Council is capable of meeting its statutory functions as housing authority.

- 7.2 The Housing Strategy sets out the Council's priorities in terms of its housing ambitions, but the overall number of homes, including affordable housing is determined by the Local Plan update, a key statutory document. Once a local plan has been submitted, a Planning Inspector's role is to examine whether the submitted plan meets the tests of soundness defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and meets all the relevant legislative requirements, including the duty to co-operate
- 7.3 Until the new Local Plan is adopted, the Government's 'standard method' calculation for the delivery of homes places a requirement on Torbay to build 600 dwellings a year, plus a 20% (120) imposed 'buffer', due to the under-delivery of housing over the previous years. This may be revised by Government

[Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations](#)

8 Engagement and consultation

- 8.1 The draft Strategy has been developed Council wide and went out to consultation from 24 October to 5 December 2022; for just over 6 weeks. Please see Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Consultation Report

9 Purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services

- 9.1 It is not anticipated that the Housing Strategy itself will require the purchasing or hiring of goods and/or services. Should the Council wish to hire goods, or services to facilitate its strategic objectives, then more specific reports detailing this will be presented to Cabinet

10 Tackling climate change

- 10.1 One of the cross-cutting principles in the Strategy is to 'tackle climate change'. The Strategy also supports the Torbay Carbon Plan (2023/25), which has the following action 'Torbay Council to develop a new Housing Strategy and Action Plan that aims to Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty' (p20). Additionally, Torbay Council's Climate Emergency Officer has provided input into the development of this Strategy.

11 Associated risks

- 11.1 Not finding the Housing Strategy 'fit for purpose' and thus unable to provide an overall framework against which the Council will formulate other more specific policies affecting its housing functions
- 11.2 Reduced compulsory housebuilding targets from central Government will deliver fewer homes, particularly affordable homes

12 Equality impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

- 12.1 Our equality duties apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, gender and sexual orientation. Although not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Torbay Council recognises the profound and far-reaching impacts of socio-economic disadvantage and public health and treats these characteristics as protected.
- 12.2 The Strategy prioritises and supports low-income households, those fleeing domestic violence, care experienced children, vulnerable households eligible for grants to help heat their homes.

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people	Helping older households remain independent at home		
People with caring Responsibilities			Neutral
People with a disability	Helping households remain independent at home		
Women or men	Particularly single parents, are more reliant on benefits and are consequently more vulnerable to welfare cuts and are also more likely to be eligible for means tested support		Neutral
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			Neutral
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			Neutral
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			Neutral
People who are transgendered			Neutral

People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			Neutral
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave	Housing support for those escaping domestic violence		
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	<p>Providing affordable housing for households on low incomes</p> <p>Improving energy efficiency, thus reducing the cost of heating the home</p> <p>Support people into jobs that will improve their quality of life and reduce homelessness</p>		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	<p>Improving housing conditions will positively impact health outcomes</p> <p>Tackle street homelessness and provide support</p> <p>Provision of temporary accommodation for those accepted as homeless</p>		

13 Cumulative Council impact

- 13.1 Build on the Council's understanding about what our communities, stakeholders and partners want in relation to housing and planning and deliver agreed solutions that align with Council priorities

14 Cumulative community impacts

- 14.1 Reinforce our commitment to deliver against our Community and Corporate Plan 2019-2023 to 'improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing', 'regenerate and re-invent our town centres' and to 'encourage a sustainably developed built environment. It also supports Torbay's Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans
- 14.2 Help reduce carbon emissions and achieve a carbon neutral Torbay by 2030, and reduce household energy costs
- 14.3 Provide affordable housing to retain a sufficient workforce in Torbay
- 14.4 Prevent homelessness and address rough sleeping