

**TO: EXECUTIVE  
13<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2018**

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**HOUSING STRATEGY 2018 - 2036  
Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to agree the Council's Housing Strategy.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive is asked to agree;**

**2.1 The Housing Strategy for Bracknell Forest 2018 - 2036 as at Appendix A.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 The Executive agreed a draft Housing Strategy document for consultation at its meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In addition, an Adult Overview and Scrutiny Working Party has been reviewing the elements of the strategy over the last twelve months.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 There are no alternatives.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

5.1 This Housing strategy has been developed to support our Bracknell-Forest children, their families and vulnerable people through ensuring the availability of appropriate, safe and sufficient accommodation.

5.2 This strategy sets out our key principles:-

- Supporting a vibrant housing market
- Increasing the percentage of affordable housing
- Providing the right homes for vulnerable people
- Contributing to sustainable communities
- Using Downshire Homes Limited as a vehicle to provide accommodation to key groups of vulnerable people and reduce costs to the Council

5.3. The Housing strategy statement has been developed within the context of the Council's other key strategies and plans. The Council is currently consulting on the draft Local Plan. The Bracknell Forest Local Plan will be key in achieving the Housing strategy key principles.

- 5.4 Appendix B contains the response to consultation that was facilitated via the Council's consultation portal during the summer of 2017. There were 196 separate responses to a series of questions based on the consultation document that Executive agreed at the end of 2016. The consultation was promoted via social media and direct text and emails. The majority tenure of those responding was from people living in the private rented sector.
- 5.5 Of those who responded 47% spent more than 30% of their net household income on their home each month. In terms of affordability 71% would like to rent an affordable home. Interestingly over a quarter of respondents stated they did not know much about shared ownership and over half thought they would not be able to afford it. Of those who were planning to buy a home 39% were looking to buy outside Bracknell Forest as the area was too expensive. In terms of renting privately 68% of those who responded stated affordability as their main concern. The responses support the strategy proposals to provide more information on low cost home ownership options as well as promote sound financial management and saving by households so they better afford their housing costs.
- 5.6 Just under a third of those who responded thought they would downsize when they retired. Following on from this 91% thought the Council should support the development of specialist housing for older people.
- 5.7 The vast majority of respondents thought the Council should always seek affordable housing on site of developments above 15 units rather than take commuted sums to invest in specialist housing.
- 5.8 Appendix A contains the revised Housing Strategy based on comments received from the Overview and scrutiny working party, consultation responses and emerging Government policy as indicated in the White Paper "Fixing our broken housing market"<sup>1</sup> published February 2017. By necessity the Housing Strategy sets out the strategic priorities over a long term time horizon and as such does not set out detailed actions. Appendix C contains an annual action plan and it is suggested that this is revised on an ongoing basis with a formal review of strategy and performance on a five year basis. The action plan does not contain actions which are already agreed as part of other strategies or plans for example the homeless strategy.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the body of the report

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 There are no direct financial implications within this report

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The consultation responses as shown in Appendix B contain breakdown by gender, age, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

## Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The consultation responses identify affordability as a main concern of residents in the Borough. Households have indicated that they intend to buy outside the Borough in areas that are cheaper. Affordability will impact on the Council's ability to recruit key workers to provide services. The action plan proposes to explore opportunities to provide affordable accommodation for key workers.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1. Consultation responses are included at Appendix B.

### Contact for further information

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