

<b>Report of</b>	<b>Assistant Director of Place and Client</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Karen Paton</b> ☎ 282275
<b>Title</b>	<b>Colchester's new Housing Strategy 2022-27</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards		

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1 Colchester's new Housing Strategy is due for publication in 2022.

The new Housing Strategy sets out our ambitions for housing in Colchester over the next 5 years and describes how we intend to use our resources and work with partners in both the public and private sectors to help us achieve our priorities. The new Housing Strategy highlights how our work in housing contributes to wider agendas such as Levelling Up

The Local Government Act 2003 required all local authorities to have a Housing Strategy, which sets out its vision for housing in the local area and provides an overarching framework for policies and plans.

The Housing Strategy is a key strategic document for the Local Authority. It recognises the importance of a safe and affordable home for health and wellbeing.

The Strategy sets out what the Council and its partners will do to help address the key housing issues and challenges facing the residents of Colchester including increasing the supply and access to affordable housing and making better use of what is available, providing support to people to help them maintain their tenancies, improving neighbourhoods to create better communities for people to live in, improving the standard of accommodation in both the public and private rented sector and reducing carbon emissions in homes.

## 2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To adopt the new Housing Strategy 2022-27 for Colchester.
- 2.2 To recommend to full Council that the Housing Strategy be adopted as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

## 3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to produce and publish a Housing Strategy based on a review of housing in the borough.

## 4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 To not adopt the Housing Strategy. There are however clear risks to not having a robust evidence based strategy in place such as not achieving local priorities, not being able to evidence and articulate Colchester Borough Council's wider vision for housing and not providing a strong focus to our partners about their contribution to meeting our priorities.

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## 5. Background Information

### 5.1 Developing the new Housing Strategy

In the process of developing the new Housing Strategy, we have collaborated extensively to ensure it is based on firm evidence.

- We updated and considered an in-depth evidence base to understand the details of housing need.
- We held a Consultation workshop with representatives from local housing organisations to help shape the new Housing Strategy by identifying the current challenges for housing in Colchester for both organisations and residents and how these can be addressed.
- Following the consultation, we established a Project Group with partners to ensure a collaborative approach to designing the new Strategy. The group considered the challenges identified at the workshop and agreed priorities with collaborative actions to improve the housing situation in Colchester.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing, CBC Senior Management Team and Colchester Borough Homes Board have been given the opportunity to review the documents.
- The Draft Housing Strategy has been circulated to Officers and Partners for their comments and amendments made based on largely positive feedback.
- Senior Managers have reviewed and approved the draft.

### 5.2 Key Priorities

Colchester's Housing Strategy 2022-27 sets out our vision for housing in the borough:

‘Colchester, where all residents have access to a safe and affordable home that promotes health and equality, in a sustainable community’.

The Housing Strategy recognises the importance of a safe and affordable home in ensuring healthy lives and levelling up access to life opportunities. It provides the overarching framework for the Council's housing policies and plans.

The key priorities that the new Housing Strategy will focus on are:

- Supply – ‘We will increase the supply of quality affordable homes’
- Sustainability and Community – ‘We will support people to maintain their homes and build sustainable communities’
- Structure – ‘We will reduce carbon emissions from homes and improve quality and standards’
- Prevent Homelessness – ‘We will prevent homelessness by working with partners to deliver Colchester's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy’
- (A separate document that sits under the Housing Strategy).

We have considered government policy in the development of the new strategy to ensure that it aligns with the priority housing issues identified nationally especially around:

- Initiatives for increasing housing supply and homeownership
- Reforming the welfare system
- Quality of housing in both the social and private sector
- Levelling Up

We recognise that our work with partners is key to achieving the actions set out in our new Housing Strategy Delivery Plan and we have ensured that this aligns with the work of existing partnerships and programmes.

### 5.3 Monitoring and Review

The strategy will be a live document that will achieve its aims and objectives through the implementation of a 5-year Delivery Plan, which will be updated by Colchester Borough Council on a regular basis.

## 6. **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 6.1 In completing this section you should give proper weight to equality and diversity considerations and demonstrate how the decision will impact on the promotion of equality and overcome discrimination in relation to gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age and race/ethnicity.
- 6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment on the Housing Strategy has been completed and a link to the document can be found below – link to be added
- 6.3 There are no Human Rights implications

## 7. **Strategic Plan References**

- 7.1 The priorities in the new Housing Strategy will deliver against the Council's current Strategic Plan 2020-23 priorities in particular the pledge to "increase the number, quality and types of homes" and under this the goals to:
  - Deliver 30% affordable housing across all our own housing sites
  - Deliver 380 affordable homes
  - Improve existing Council homes to keep them in good repair and improve energy efficiency
  - Build new Council homes for our residents
  - Ensure all new homes are designed to a high quality across all tenures
  - Continue to improve and modernise available housing for older people

## 8. **Consultation**

- A Consultation workshop was held with representatives from local housing organisations as well as housing teams from CBC and CBH to help shape the new Housing Strategy.
- The Draft Housing Strategy has been circulated to Officers and Partners for their comments.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing, CBC Senior Management Team and Colchester Borough Homes Board have been given the opportunity to review the documents.
- The responses to consultations have been positive. Where comments, amendments and suggestions have been made these have been incorporated where appropriate.

## **9. Publicity Considerations**

- 9.1 The Housing Strategy documents will be published on the Council's website. A communications plan is being developed to publicise the Strategy and generate interest and commitment to the Delivery Plan.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1 The strategy sets out a challenging and ambitious vision for housing which will be delivered against a backdrop of significant reduction in funding for local government.  
In the current financial climate of reduced resources, the Council will need to look carefully at how it will use these resources to deliver the strategy from existing budgets.

The Council will work to encourage its partners to commit their resources to meeting the priorities set out in the strategy. As many of the organisations are members of the Housing Strategy Project Group, they have already helped to shape the strategy and shown their commitment to its delivery.

## **11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 Providing good quality homes is crucial to people's health and quality of life and the actions set out in the Delivery Plan of the new Housing Strategy aim to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Colchester by providing affordable, safe and secure housing.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that with the implementation of the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan there will be a positive benefit for Community Safety.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 There are no risk management implications

## **14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications**

- 14.1 Environmental and sustainability implications have been considered throughout the development of the new Housing Strategy, recognising the role that housing must play in the Net Zero Carbon agenda. The Housing Strategy Delivery Plan sets out dedicated actions to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes as well as on new housing developments. These improvements will benefit residents by providing a cost saving on utility bills and improvements to their health and wellbeing.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A Colchester's Housing Strategy 2022-27  
Appendix B Housing Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-27