

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 May 2020

Report Title: Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2020-24

Senior Officer: Christopher Hutton – Senior Policy Officer

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. In 2014, Cheshire East Council adopted the Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy. The document outlined a number of strategic housing priorities for a number of client groups. The development of this strategy was based on robust evidence and a housing needs assessment.
- 1.2. The 2014 strategy is utilised by a multitude of organisations including housing providers, developers and support providers. In particular, the 2014 strategy outlined the needs and priorities for a number of groups who experience challenges within the borough. These included:
 - Older People
 - Learning Disabilities
 - Mental Health
 - Homelessness
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Physical and Sensory Disabilities
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - Young People
 - Cared for Children and Care Leavers
- 1.3. The Council has reviewed the evidence base and the strategic priorities to ensure that they remain relevant and applicable. In addition, the review has highlighted any significant changes in local and national policy, which could affect service delivery. Furthermore discussion has been undertaken with relevant stakeholders
- 1.4. A revised draft strategy has been produced which :

- Provides an updated evidence base
- Provides an update on legislative and statutory changes which can affect service delivery
- Ensures that strategic priorities are still relevant and applicable

1.5. Cabinet are asked to approve the document for the basis of consultation and to delegate approval to Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration to consider the results of the consultation and to approve the final draft of the strategy.

2. Recommendations

2.1. That Cabinet

- Approves the draft Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy as outlined at appendix 1 for the basis of consultation.
- Delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, to consider the results of the consultation and to approve the final version of the strategy.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Cheshire East has an ageing population and has a responsibility to maintain a strategic plan for how it will address any associated issues that an ageing demographic proposes. Access to suitable and safe housing is one of the key elements in this process.
- 3.2. In addition to an ageing population, the local authority has a responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable residents in the borough are safe and are able to live independent and fulfilling lives. Housing plays a pivotal role in supporting the Council to achieve these outcomes.
- 3.3. The revised Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy sets out the strategic priorities for Cheshire East Council in terms of housing provision for vulnerable groups between 2020 and 2024. The priorities included within the strategy will have a direct impact on these groups.
- 3.4. This strategy supports the delivery of Cheshire East Council priorities as set out in the current and future Corporate Plans.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. There is no statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy, and there is the option to continue to use the 2014 version of the strategy. However, it is good practice to ensure

data sources are up to date, and review strategic priorities to ensure they compliment and align with local and national policies and priorities.

5. Background

- 5.1. As detailed above, the 2014 strategy set out clear objectives for how Cheshire East Council would approach housing and accommodation requirements for older and vulnerable client groups.
- 5.2. There have been significant changes in the overall landscape of policy and legislation, which impact on these matters. On a national level, there have been impacts felt via welfare reform and a sense of uncertainty over the future of supported accommodation.
- 5.3. The adoption of Part 1 of the Local Plan in 2017 set out key strategic sites and growth ambitions for the borough. There is ongoing work being conducted within the Council for Part 2 of the Local Plan – referred to as the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document. The revised strategy refers to policies highlighted within this document.
- 5.4. From a resident perspective, evidence suggests that there remains a key focus on living independent and fulfilling lives. This applies to all groups within the borough. There is also additional evidence that the complexity of vulnerable residents i.e. those displaying behaviours which span multiple client groups, is changing. There is an increasingly blurred line between cohorts which needs to be acknowledged and addressed.
- 5.5. It became clear when drafting the revised strategy that the landscape of care, support and accommodation for vulnerable and older adults had changed significantly. For example, the Homelessness Reduction Act was not in place at the time of the 2014 strategy. A renewed and refreshed approach to accommodation for vulnerable and older residents was needed. The 2020-24 strategy aims to provide this.
- 5.6. The strategic outcomes in the 2020-24 strategy are as follows:
 - People are supported to live in their own homes independently for longer
 - When required, people can receive the support they need in a wide range of specialist, supported accommodation within the Borough
 - People are able to make informed choices about the accommodation, care, and support options within Cheshire East
- 5.7. As well as the overarching strategic outcomes stated above, each of the 8 client groups are complemented by key priority focuses - the accompanying action plans within the document highlight how, by whom and when these

actions will be completed. The key priorities for the different client groups are:

- Improve the housing offer for an ageing population
- Ensure adults and children with learning disabilities are able to access suitable accommodation across the borough
- Support the provision of appropriate accommodation for mental health clients
- Support the suitable and safe accommodation provision for cared for children and care leavers
- Ensure safe and suitable accommodation is available for drug and alcohol users throughout all stages of their recovery journey
- Support residents with physical and sensory disabilities to maintain their accommodation or access suitably adapted types of accommodation
- Increase the provision of suitable accommodation for residents who experience domestic abuse
- Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping across Cheshire East

5.8. Following a review and update, this revised strategy is now progressing to consultation by external agencies and residents of Cheshire East. This is to ensure transparency as a local authority, and also that officer interpretation is appropriate for the needs of this strategy. It is foreseeable that this strategy will play a pivotal role in outlining the local authorities' strategic direction, and also in guiding the authority in terms of acceptable development across the borough for housing provision for vulnerable groups.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. It is important to note that the Council is duty bound by a number of legislative processes, some of which are relevant to, and mentioned within, this strategy. This strategy seeks to ensure those statutory duties are met and maintained in line with legislative guidance. The Children Act 2004 placed a duty upon local authorities to carry out their functions having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

6.1.2. The legal implications of any project or development that arises as a result of the Strategy's direction will be assessed individually as these initiatives progress through the Council's project management gateways.

6.1.3. There are potential implications with regards to the consultation process of the strategy due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, and the resulting social distancing and self-isolation requirements. These implications can be mitigated somewhat via online questionnaires and use of email, as well as promotion through the Cheshire East Council website, press releases and social media. There can be further mitigation by emailing relevant organisations and groups directly, seeking their views and signposting to the relevant documents, to ensure that all stakeholders have opportunity to respond.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. This strategy has highlighted a number of actions to be taken forward and these will be funded via a number of different sources including existing service budgets or the development of a detailed business case which consider all financing options (both internal and external) and any potential risks to the Council will be developed for any major projects or developments that arise as a result of the strategy's priorities. These will be prepared and assessed on a project-by-project basis at the appropriate time. Business cases will follow the established route for ratification in accordance with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy process.

6.2.2. The costs of funding the consultation for this strategy will be met through existing Housing budgets.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. Government guidance suggests local authorities should be aware of the varying housing needs for different residents across the locale. This includes, but isn't limited to, "older people" and "people with disabilities" (National Planning Policy Framework, 2019)

6.3.2. This strategy is supportive of additional specialist services and suitable accommodation to help meet this identified need. This strategy is aligned and supportive of existing Cheshire East strategies and policies which aim to deliver on the outcomes of the Council as a whole.

6.3.3. The priorities and aims of this strategy will compliment the wider CEC Housing Strategy 2018-23, as well as corporate ambitions for growth and development as highlighted in the Cheshire East Local Plan.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed which is giving consideration in regards to how the strategy affects groups within the protected characteristics. It is predicted that the strategy will have a

number of positive outcomes for client groups and those who come under the protected characteristics, most notably for age and disability.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. It is not anticipated that there will be any additional staff resources required to enact the actions in the strategy, and any resulting tasks and workgroups will be facilitated and completed within existing staff resources.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. It is not foreseen that the objectives set out within this strategy will cause significant risk to residents or the local authority. Priorities are derived from a strong evidence base which have taken consideration of resident requirements, as well as other local authority departmental ambitions.

6.6.2. There is a current risk to the authority that inappropriate development of services in areas of low need may be permitted due to a lack of evidence suggesting the contrary. This strategy will go some way to prevent this taking place.

6.6.3. A number of actions within the strategy will involve working with external partners, stakeholders and other CEC departments. This may assist in mitigation of risk due to a consistent and approved narrative taking place.

6.6.4. The development of new major projects for older and vulnerable people is a complex and costly endeavour. The focus within the strategy with regards to partnership working and liaison with local authority officers will be vital in mitigating risks when developing such schemes.

6.6.5. There is a potential risk that delivery of actions within the strategy may be delayed due to staff resources and availability. This can be mitigated somewhat via a robust action plan for the priorities and use of SMART objectives between projects.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There is potential that the strategy will be pivotal in the development of new services for vulnerable and older adults, and the impact of these may be felt within rural communities. The strategy outlines geographical areas of the borough where there is a need for services and specialist housing provision requirements are demonstrated. However, it is worth noting that the strategy does not name specific rural areas for

development. All resulting developments from this strategy, across the whole of borough, will be subject to their own due processes as standard.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. Young People and Cared for Children feature as a chapter within the strategy, so there is a direct implication for this client group. The strategy seeks to ensure that suitable and safe accommodation pathways are in place for this group, most notably when transitioning into adult services.

6.8.2. It is envisaged that any implications for this client group would be viewed positively and in line with wider Cheshire East ambitions and outcomes.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. This strategy focuses on improving health outcomes for a variety of client groups across the borough through positive housing interventions. The implications on public health are expected to be noticeable, if not significant. These may include higher levels of wellbeing, improved mental health and access to more suitable accommodation services.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. The Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and to encourage all businesses, residents, and organisations in Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint. Whilst it is not the aim or remit of this strategy to address these issues specifically, there is potential for new residential developments and support services to provide improvements in terms of tackling fuel poverty, ensuring new buildings are constructed and insulated to the appropriate standard, and allowing residents access to more energy efficient services and dwellings.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All wards have the potential to be affected by this strategy. During the recommended external consultation period, Members will have the ability to provide comments on the strategy that are specific to their ward, as well as the wider borough.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. This strategy will be subject to 8 weeks of external consultation, which will take place between Monday 18th May 2020 through to Monday 13th July 2020. This will take the form of an online questionnaire, which will be promoted through the Council's website, press releases and social media. The current Covid-19 pandemic presents some implications relevant to the consultation and engagement process. These will be mitigated by sending presentations to relevant stakeholders and external partners to ensure that all have the ability to engage and respond. If it is deemed that there have

been insufficient responses, an ODR could be produced to extend the consultation period for a further 4 weeks. Following consultation, the responses will be compiled into a document or briefing report which will be presented to the Portfolio Holder, along with the final version of the strategy.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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