



# Report to Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

<b>Date:</b>	23 November 2023
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029</b>
<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b>	Councillor Mark Winn, Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Lisa Michelson – Service Director
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>It is recommended that the draft Housing Strategy is considered and comments made as appropriate</b>
<b>Reason for decision:</b>	Although there is no legal obligation to introduce a housing strategy, a Buckinghamshire-wide housing strategy will have a positive impact upon both affordable housing delivery and housing conditions, and upon other corporate priorities.

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This new single Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy has been developed to replace the district-based strategies that were carried forward when unitary authority was formed in April 2020. This single strategy will aim to:
- Ensure a co-ordinated approach to housing activities and interventions in Buckinghamshire, linking county-wide policies and strategies to deliver Buckinghamshire Council's ambitions.

- Maximise opportunities and resources to meet housing needs and aspirations, setting out a framework for the use of council resources and partnering opportunities.
  - Promote the role of housing in delivering corporate priorities and wider objectives, including health and wellbeing, climate change, and sustainable economic growth.
  - Ensure Buckinghamshire Council meets its housing -related obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and meeting a diverse range of housing needs.
- 1.2 The housing strategy has been drafted for consideration ahead of a public and stakeholder consultation which will take place in November and December 2023. The strategy covers the five-year period 2024 to 2029. Within each of the three priority areas, a set of actions has been devised. The action plan will be revised and updated on an annual basis to ensure that the strategy remains agile and responsive to a range of changing circumstances.

## 2. Content of report

- 2.1 The draft Housing Strategy, in both full version and executive summary, is in **Appendix 1**. It has been devised for the five-year period 2024 to 2029. The vision for the housing strategy is the following:

*A strong housing offer that provides affordable, accessible, sustainable and suitable choices at all life stages.*

- 2.2 The three updated strategic priorities for the Housing Strategy are:
- Priority One - Understanding the housing needs of our diverse population.
  - Priority Two - Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need.
  - Priority Three - New Homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate.
- 2.3 The Critical Success Factors for each of the priorities are:
- i) Understanding the housing needs of our diverse population – we will:
- Understand the housing issues and needs.
  - Enable the fair and consistent allocation of tenancies for affordable housing via Bucks Home Choice Register.
  - Adopt an effective and proactive approach to address Temporary Accommodation (TA) and homelessness increases in number of placements and costs.

- Identify, specify, and deliver housing options for groups with particular needs.
- ii) Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need – we will:
- Ensure that Registered Providers are actively maintaining and improving the quality of their homes.
  - Ensure that the Private Rented Sector maintains and improves the quality of rental properties.
  - Work to ensure that best use is made of existing social housing.
  - Improve the accessibility of new and existing homes.
- iii) New Homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate – we will:
- Support and enable Registered Providers to deliver new affordable homes, including for those with special needs.
  - Explore the use of local authority assets and resources for the purposes of delivering additional new housing.
  - Ensure that residential development (including affordable housing) is considered in regeneration strategies, and in brownfield and redevelopment proposals for mixed use developments where appropriate.
- 2.5 Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee is asked to consider the draft Housing Strategy and comment as appropriate, including recommending any amendments that the Committee wishes to see.

### **3. Other options considered**

- 3.1 **Not to produce a Housing Strategy for Buckinghamshire** – This is not recommended. The housing strategy is an opportunity to marshal and co-ordinate the resources of the Council and its partners and stakeholders to produce effective housing-related interventions.

### **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 Although there is no legal obligation upon local authorities to produce a housing strategy, it is relevant to the following legislation:
- Housing Act 1996 – legal obligations for the allocation of social housing and assisting households who are potentially or have become homeless.

- Homelessness Act 2002 – a legal obligation to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review and strategy.
  - Housing Act 2004 – improvement of private sector housing conditions.
  - Localism Act 2011 – a legal obligation to produce a Tenancy Strategy.
  - Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 – a legal obligation upon local authorities to prevent or relief homelessness.
- 4.2 Housing delivery budgets: the council invests annual revenue of £7 million to support its housing function and has a £1.6 Capital Programme for affordable housing investment. The council invests any developer funding (Section 106) which it receives for affordable housing (funds currently standing at more than £5 million) and the council may be using its ability to borrow to invest in new temporary accommodation units.
- 4.3 Financial implications: the delivery of this strategy will be met from existing budgets in the council.

## 5. Corporate implications

- a) Property – The Housing Strategy includes broad content and recommended actions relating to the potential use of Council-owned property and assets to support the delivery of affordable housing.
- b) Human Resources – The Housing Strategy does not have relevance to Human Resources.
- c) Climate change – the Housing Strategy is relevant to the following corporate priority: Improving the Environment. It will link to the following corporate strategy: Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021.
- d) Sustainability – the Housing Strategy is relevant to the following corporate priority: Improving the Environment. It will link to the following corporate strategy: Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021.
- e) Equality – The Housing Strategy is relevant to the following corporate priority: Protect the Vulnerable. The Housing Strategy will require an Equality Impact Assessment.
- f) Data – The Housing Strategy does not have relevance to Data Protection.
- g) Value for money – The Housing Strategy does not seek any specific financial commitments, so Value for Money is not a relevant consideration.

## **6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views**

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder has been consulted on the drafting of the Housing Strategy and his comments and feedback have been incorporated in the initial draft.

## **7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 The draft Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 has been drawn up from engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. A series of workshops were held in the autumn of 2022 to explore the priorities and the actions that would sit beneath them. In addition, participants were asked to consider the commitments they would make to support the delivery of the new strategy. These initial consultation exercises have assisted in the drawing up of the priorities and the action plan.
- 7.2 A wide range of sources have been used to provide information on housing need and condition in Buckinghamshire, including the Census 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) data, Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) information on earnings.
- 7.3 Two All-Member briefings on the housing strategy for Buckinghamshire councillors were held on Monday 6 November. The attendees at the briefings provided comments and feedback on the draft housing strategy.
- 7.4 A formal public and stakeholder consultation on the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy will be conducted between 8 November and 18 December 2023. Next steps and review
- 7.5 The formal public and stakeholder consultation exercise, taking place between 8 November and 18 December 2023, will provide comments and feedback on the contents and proposals within the housing strategy.

## **8. Background papers**

- 8.1 Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029, full version and executive summary (see Appendix 1)

## **9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).