

Westminster Health & Wellbeing Board

Date:	9 th July 2015
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Westminster Housing Strategy Draft for Consultation
Report of:	Julia Corkey – Director of Policy, Performance and Communications Ben Denton – Strategic Director of Growth, Planning and Housing
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Housing Strategy
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications at this stage as the strategy is for consultation only
Report Author and Contact Details:	Cecily Herdman cherdman@westminster.gov.uk 020 7641 2789

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The City Council is consulting on its draft Housing Strategy until 31st July 2015 and the Board is asked for its comments. The final strategy will be published in December 2015. It has been developed over the past year with the Cabinet Member for Housing and other stakeholders. The themes were discussed with the Board in April 2014.
- 1.2 The strategy is closely aligned with the council's City for All vision and it is directed at encouraging prosperity for all in Westminster. It acknowledges that Housing cuts across every aspect of life and plays a key role in having a healthy, economically active and successful life and in creating high quality neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 Proposals include; developing 250 new affordable homes each year to meet high demand (which is above historic levels of delivery); changing planning policy so

that in new developments 60% of new affordable housing is intermediate¹ and 40% is social rented (planning policy currently asks for the reverse); addressing overcrowding in 1,000 properties over the next five years; stimulating a London wide debate on the best way to tackle homelessness in the capital; investing £12m in council housing to tackle damp and cold; working with 450 council tenants that are at risk of poor health, carrying out a review of our sheltered housing portfolio to ensure it is fit for the future and a programme of tailored intensive support to address high levels of worklessness amongst social housing tenants and applicants.

2. Key Matters for the Board

- 2.1 Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to give their views on the draft housing strategy. They are invited to answer some specific questions (set out in section 4) or to comment on any aspect of the strategy, including anything that has not been addressed.
- 2.2 In particular they may wish to focus on proposals which impact on health and wellbeing which are summarised in section 4. A particular challenge for the Board is how CCGs and NHSE support those in temporary accommodation better in terms of getting access to GPs and outreach services.

3. Background

- 3.1 The draft strategy has been developed over the past year with the Cabinet Member for Housing. It is not intended to review or cover aspect of housing but to make proposals where a new approach is needed. It has benefitted from review and input by the Growth Board, Health and Wellbeing Board (in April 2014 where the key themes were discussed), Executive Management Team and other stakeholders. The consultation runs until 31st July and the final strategy will be published in December 2015.
- 3.2 The strategy responds to independent research on the housing market, employment in social housing and on the relationship between poor quality council housing and poor health which was carried out by Public Health. It is aligned with the council's City for All vision and is directed at encouraging prosperity and choice for all in Westminster, contributing to the city's growth and enabling all residents to enjoy the benefits of that growth.

¹ Intermediate housing is housing for working households that cannot afford market housing but do not have priority for social housing

3.3 It acknowledges that Housing cuts across every aspect of life and that a good home enables a healthy, economically active and successful life and that it is important in supporting the most vulnerable and in tackling disadvantage. Also it plays a key role in creating high quality neighbourhoods.

4. Considerations

4.1 The Board is asked to consider the proposals in the strategy. The main proposals which relate to health and wellbeing are summarised below under each of the four themes (Homes, People, Places, Prosperity).

4.2 **Homes** – a target of 1,250 new affordable homes over five years is proposed, which is beyond past levels of delivery which average at around 180 homes each year. This will help to address high demand for all types of affordable housing². Over and above this, it is proposed some out of borough affordable housing is investigated, as supply will never meet demand in Westminster. A more strategic capital-wide approach to affordable housing would improve customer choice, help to meet need and contribute to meeting London’s chronic housing shortages.

4.3 A greater focus on intermediate housing³ is proposed and it is suggested that planning policy is changed so that in future 60% of new affordable housing is intermediate and 40% is social⁴. This responds to new research which finds that 240 new intermediate homes are needed each year compared with 180 new social homes. Currently there are 3,800 households waiting for intermediate housing and 4,500 for social housing, however intermediate housing makes up only c1.5% of the stock compared with social housing which makes up 25%. The strategy also proposes new types of intermediate particularly to assist households with lower incomes that are currently not well catered for.

4.4 The aim of this policy shift is to grow the intermediate sector from this low base and to help provide a more balanced housing market which will in turn support the local and London economy.

The Board may wish to consider if:

- This focus on intermediate housing is right?
- The target of 1,250 new affordable over five years is reasonable? How could we do more?

² There are two types of affordable housing; social housing and intermediate. Intermediate housing is defined below

³ This is housing for working households that cannot afford market housing but do not have priority for social housing

⁴ Currently planning policy requires the reverse i.e. 60% of new affordable housing is social rented and 40% is intermediate

- 4.5 **People** – this theme considers the impact of housing on different aspects of a person’s life. Two reviews are proposed; into the future housing/support needs of vulnerable people and of the council’s portfolio of sheltered housing. The sheltered housing review responds to the predicted growth in the older population and issues with the stock (for example only 6% of units are wheelchair accessible and 42% are studios which are not popular). The review will look at whether sheltered housing could play a greater role in reducing cost pressures on Adult Social Care and health services in future. Discussions are underway with Public Health colleagues on incorporating these reviews into the planned Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Health and Disability Housing Needs.
- 4.6 The strategy seeks to tackle poor housing conditions and acknowledges the impact they can have on health. Public Health research into whether council properties with the worst thermal performance were giving rise to the poorest health outcomes in Westminster found there to be no relationship which was unexpected. The strategy therefore proposes a two pronged approach; investing £12m to tackle cold and damp in 5,800 council homes and alongside this, working with 450 council tenants at particular risk of poor health and helping them to improve their living conditions. It also sets out how Housing will work with partners to respond to the Care Act and considers how housing services are delivered to vulnerable people and if they can be more efficient and joined up with other services.
- 4.7 A range of measures to tackle overcrowding in 1,000 social homes over five years is proposed and a London wide debate on the best way to manage homelessness is suggested. Westminster accepts 600 – 700 homeless households each year and has statutory duties to accommodate them. However given the high cost and shortage of land in the city, there are limited opportunities to develop new social homes to meet demand. This results in very long waits in temporary accommodation which is often out of Westminster.

The Board may wish to consider:

- How can housing services best help to reduce the burdens on adult social care and health services?
- How do we ensure that people in temporary accommodation, particularly those with a range of needs, are fully supported?
- Are there better ways to address London’s homelessness problem? If there were a more pan London approach what would the challenge be for health services?

- 4.8 **Places** – this theme highlights the benefits of the current housing renewal programme, which not only provides better quality and more energy efficient

homes, but also better shops, business workspace infrastructure and community facilities. It proposes that estate renewal should become “business as usual” in future.

- 4.9 The strategy suggests that CityWest Homes, our housing management provider, explore partnerships with a range of organisations such as healthcare and social and employment organisations to look for ways in which customer needs could be met in one place - as housing services are often located in places where residents have a range of needs. It also proposes a “preferred partner” system whereby housing associations operating in Westminster become affordable housing partners with the council. This would mean they are supported to develop affordable housing in the city if they sign up to meeting certain standards including standards on housing condition.

The Board may wish to consider:

- If there are any estates that they would suggest for inclusion in a future estate renewal programme?

- 4.10 **Prosperity** – this theme looks at the connection between housing and the local and London economy and at ways of supporting social housing residents and applicants into jobs, as this is viewed as the best way of lifting people out of poverty. Social housing residents have lower rates of employment than people in other tenures and evidence shows they are more likely to have a physical or mental health condition which can be a barrier to employment. So, in line with the council’s wider Public Service Reform agenda, we will be providing targeted, tailored support to help the long term unemployed move towards work, with a focus on those with health conditions that have left the national Work Programme without getting work.

The Board may wish to consider:

- What other approaches could we consider to help address long term unemployment?

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 A full assessment of any legal implications will be undertaken before the strategy is finalised. Initial implications are as follows:

- 5.2 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will need to be completed alongside the final strategy.

- 5.3 Out of borough temporary accommodation housing can be financed by Housing Revenue Account monies but this is controversial and not straight forward as a result of this recent case of ours.
- 5.4 The Supreme Court has handed down judgment in the case of *Nzolameso v City of Westminster* [2015] UKSC 22 on the question of when a local authority may lawfully provide accommodation outside its district to a household owed the 'main housing duty' under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. It held that it could if it had good reasons and could not offer accommodation in borough.
- 5.5 A local authority may only discharge its homelessness duties by securing that "suitable" accommodation is available for the applicant. Accommodation must be provided within the district of the authority "so far as reasonably practicable". The question of what is suitable has been fleshed out in the Code of Guidance (2006), the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, and associated Supplementary Guidance. The combined effect of the 2012 Order and Guidance is that local authorities are under a duty to accommodate homeless households within their district as far as reasonably practicable, and where that is not practicable must (where possible) try to secure accommodation as close as possible to where the applicant was previously living.
- 5.6 Section 11(2) of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 5.7 As a result of this case, decision letters will need to set out what accommodation is available in borough, or nearer to the applicant's previous address and, if that accommodation is not to be offered, should set out detailed reasons for this.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as the strategy is currently a draft. A full assessment of the financial implications will be undertaken before the strategy is finalised.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the
Background Papers please contact:**

[Cecily Herdman – Principal Policy Officer]

Email: [cherdman@westminster.gov.uk]

Telephone: [020 7641 2789]

APPENDICES:

Westminster Housing Strategy – Draft for public consultation, Westminster City Council June 2015

Westminster Housing Strategy Summary – Draft for public consultation, Westminster City Council June 2015

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Ecorys: Westminster Housing Market Study. Final report to Westminster City Council
www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy

Wessex Economics: Westminster Housing Market Analysis: Final Report December 2014
www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy

Wessex Economics: Westminster Housing Market Analysis: Summary Report December 2014
www.westminster.gov.uk/housingstrategy

Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion Social tenants and economic wellbeing in Westminster June 2014 (this is available on request).

Public Health research into the relationship between poor health and poor quality council housing locally (this is available on request).