



Committee report

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	2 JULY 2020
Title	HOUSING STRATEGY – PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES
Report of	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

Introduction

This report updates on the public consultation outcomes and the changed timeline for the adoption of the draft housing strategy.

Public Consultation

The draft housing strategy has been widely consulted upon internally and drafts were circulated to all internal and external stakeholders in June, August and October 2019. Successive drafts were developed through our housing conversation events. The on-going feedback from these has enabled more focused outcomes in the action plan to prioritise key actions and interventions.

The Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing via a delegated member decision recommended that the strategy 2020-2025 was publicly consulted upon before adoption.

The public consultation ended at the end of March just before the Pandemic lock-down. The consultation exercise itself required completion of a detailed questionnaire and comments to drill down into the reasoning and evidence base of what the public were saying and thinking about housing delivery on the Island and its links to regeneration.

As a result, around 200 responses were registered and the outcomes are summarised below.

Most respondents showed agreement with several of the Isle of Wight Council's approaches contained within the Housing Strategy. With a positive response between agree and strongly agree, 31% and 27% respectively, with the approach of developing infrastructure alongside growing communities. Respondents also positively agreed with the Isle of Wight Council partnership approach to housing. Furthermore, respondents felt that the council's approach to providing housing for children, young

people, including fostered children is the correct one; along with positive agreement that 'Island Independent Living' is the right approach to improve housing options for older people and adults with learning difficulties.

Respondents clearly agreed with the Isle of Wight Council's approach to addressing and reducing homelessness, and to actively providing affordable housing, as opposed to leaving this to private sector and housing associations. Conversely, there was not a definite correlation as to whether the Isle of Wight is viewed to have a housing shortage, with 29% agreeing there is, against 21% disagreeing and 21% strongly disagreeing, this is reflected in respondents feeling strongly the Isle of Wight Council should target empty properties (60%).

Finally, although agreeing with the council's partnership approach, 73% of respondents are not involved, and are not considering being involved in local partnership work.

The outcomes were discussed at the Regeneration Members Board in May, and the responses remain very detailed and challenging the council's ambition to build more homes on the Island. Indicating there is still much further to go for the housing campaign and the "numbers debate" and land use issues are left for the Island Plan, rather than the housing strategy. However, the public consultation did not take account of post Covid-19 feelings and public sentiment to housing supply due to its timing, and it will be interesting to revisit this at some stage to see if public perceptions have changed once we have recovered from the pandemic.

There is undoubtedly a changing landscape for the housing strategy in terms of six - fold increase in homeless presentations, existing housing developments have mostly paused, housing associations are discussing their future ambitions and role on the Island, which is not within the control of the council, but within their own business plans.

Time is also needed to explore this further as the three housing associations on the Island responded collectively on the last day of the public consultation stressing their desire to work more closely with the council to develop more affordable housing on the Island requesting that and that the council's housing company does not compete with them for council land and resource, but considers new ways of partnership working to improve delivery.

These issues alone could result in a very different housing action plan and focus for the draft housing strategy when the national emergency is over. The bottom-line is the draft housing strategy needs to reflect some very big decisions the council has not yet made in terms of the recovery and planning for the future, not least will be the housing required to reduce the economic impacts on Island residents.

Revised Timetable

The revised dates have been put on the Forward Plan, and assuming the meeting can be held in public by September the timetable for adoption is:

Report and appendices circulated: Monday 10 August (latest)

Call Over deadline: Monday 17 August, 1pm

Call Over Meeting: Wednesday 19 August 10am

Final papers to Democratic Services for publishing: Tuesday 1 September midday

Cabinet meeting: Thurs 10 September 5pm

It is worth noting that a number of authorities have made similar decisions to pause the development or even review their current housing strategies in the context of responding to the emergency and planning for the recovery. The full draft housing strategy remains on-line at <https://iweightinvest.com/housing-strategy/> There is also a published summary consultation document available on-line and attached as PowerPoint slides for ease of use.

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