

Report to: Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Date of meeting: 15 December 2025

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy

Purpose: To seek approval for the proposed East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy 2025 to 2030 and to seek endorsement for the draft mobilisation plan for 2026 which sets out key areas of work to support the strategy priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy 2025 to 2030 and;
 - 2) Endorse the outline draft mobilisation plan for the coming year, which the partnership will continue to update.
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1. Background

1.1 East Sussex Housing Partnership is a multi-agency network, led by the five housing authorities. The partnership includes local housing providers, professional bodies from the housing sector and health, adult social care, children's services, criminal justice and the voluntary and community sector. This is the first time the housing partnership have developed a shared strategy, which recognises the importance of housing as a wider determinant of health and to reducing inequalities.

1.2 The aims of the partnership are to set a medium- and long-term vision for local housing services, support cross-sector collaboration and to support partners to make the best use of capacity and resources.

1.3 The partnership has been working to develop a strategy to guide their work over the coming years. The strategy will sit alongside and complement the individual strategies in each of the housing authorities.

1.4 The strategy builds on a strong history of partnership working locally. The strategy supports the priorities in the Council plan including keeping vulnerable people safe by continuing to develop local homelessness services and driving sustainable economic growth by working with partners to deliver the homes people need and make the best use of existing housing stock. Since the announcement of devolution and local government reorganisation the partnership are keen to maintain momentum to address local housing needs and ensuring the Councils retain capacity, resources and expertise in the sector and strengthen cross sector working during a time of change.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The final strategy will be collectively owned by all members of the East Sussex Housing Partnership. The draft strategy has been co-produced with partners across the sector including:

- Producing an evidence base revisiting the data and themes from the earlier Annual Public Health Report 2019/20 – Health and Housing. The updated data has guided scoping

discussions and the priority setting process. The strategy also draws on findings from research in the sector, including a recent multiple compound needs assessment carried out by Public Health, an independent evaluation of the East Sussex Wellbeing and Employment Service and a baseline assessment of local needs for improving the energy performance of existing homes ('retrofit'). This research included significant engagement with people with lived experience of using services, which has supported the strategy development.

- Housing Partnership Board and Specialist Sub-Groups – the partnership has formed a series of specialist groups, to ensure the strategy reflects the sector as broadly as possible and to support closer management-level integration. In addition to working with the board to develop our strategic vision, the specialist groups have also developed key actions and deliverables within each priority area.
- Strategy Workshops – the partnership hosted a series of themed strategy development workshops to reflect on key findings from the evidence base, explore national and local examples of good practice and identify priorities for the strategy.
- Local Housing and Homelessness Strategies - a number of local housing authorities are reviewing their own housing and homelessness strategies. Housing partners have been working to ensure strong correlation between local strategies and the emerging partnership strategy.

3. Strategy Priorities

3.1 The draft East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy includes the following priorities:

- Preventing Homelessness and Ending Rough Sleeping – identifying and supporting people at risk of homelessness as early as possible. Supporting people to keep their existing home whenever possible or find new accommodation as quickly as possible. Providing good quality, cost effective temporary accommodation.
- Working together to reduce health inequalities – ensuring housing is an enabler for people to live healthy, independent lives for as long as possible. Supporting collaboration across housing, health and care services, including supporting people living with multiple compound needs.
- Improving housing management and standards – to create a culture of ongoing improvement against the national consumer standards for social housing providers, including a strong voice for tenants.
- Deliver the homes we need – maximising supply of new housing to meet the needs in our area and making the best use of existing housing stock, including bringing long-term empty properties back into use. Working with local planning services to ensure new housing is an enabler for broader infrastructure improvements.
- Tackling climate change – to create a cross-sector strategic approach to upgrading homes to improve their energy performance and move to low-carbon heating systems. This will support partners to meet their carbon reduction targets. Maximising the energy performance of new homes.
- Private rented housing – working with landlords and tenants to implement new legislative changes for the private rented sector.

3.2 The strategy priorities are supported by the cross-cutting themes of collaboration, evidence-based decision making and workforce development.

3.3 The draft strategy is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

4. Public Engagement

4.1 The draft partnership strategy was published for public engagement over the summer. Key themes from the feedback included:

- Significant support for increasing the supply of affordable housing, particularly 1 and 2 bed units. Greater transparency over how affordable housing is defined and ensuring affordable housing commitments are delivered.
- Concerns about the lack of infrastructure to support housing development, particularly in health, water, education and transport.
- Concerns about building on greenfield land and the impact on the local landscape and countryside.
- Strong support for efforts to bring empty properties back into use, including re-purposing vacant commercial buildings.
- Strong support for new developments including green spaces.
- Strong support for homelessness prevention, particularly ensuring people can keep their existing homes.
- Significant response highlighting the need for stronger links between homelessness, mental health and substance dependency services.
- Concerns about capacity within local authorities to deliver additional compliance and standards duties.
- Ensuring a consistent approach to standards across social and privately rented homes.
- Comments about housing pressures and links to wider government policy and immigration.

4.2 A full overview of the public engagement feedback is attached at Appendix 2.

5. Legal Requirements

5.1 There is no current legal duty for local authorities to develop an overarching housing strategy, however, this is good practice in terms of setting out priorities for local services. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities are required to develop Homelessness Strategies. Each local authority has a legal duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The partnership strategy is intended to support all partners to meet their statutory duties for housing and homelessness and builds upon the work already underway to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.

5.2 There are a number of legislative changes which will affect the housing sector over the coming months, including the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 which has now received Royal Assent, Regulations implementing the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and a proposed reformed Decent Homes Standard. The partnership will support a collaborative approach to preparing for the new requirements.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are significant costs within the housing sector that pose a threat to the system as a whole, particularly the rising cost of temporary accommodation. The partnership will be seeking to maximise investment in activities to prevent homelessness, and new affordable housing to help manage demand for more costly services as well as seeking to reduce reliance on the costliest forms of temporary accommodation.

6.2 Local housing services are also heavily reliant on grant funding, much of which is short term. As part of the public sector spending review, the government confirmed that funding for homelessness prevention and services supporting rough sleepers would continue. The government also announced significant additional investment in housing delivery and improving the energy performance of housing. The partnership will seek to maximise grant funding opportunities and ensure that learning from grant-funded activity informs mainstream services delivery.

7. Delivering the Strategy

7.1 Once the strategy is adopted, the partnership will develop a mobilisation plan of key areas of work for the year ahead. The mobilisation plan will be supported by the specialist groups reporting to the housing partnership board. The specialist groups are themed around key areas of work, including Homelessness Health and Support, Development and Enablement, Housing Management and Standards, Sustainable Homes and Private Rented Homes. An initial draft mobilisation plan for year 1 of the strategy is attached at Appendix 3 of the report.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

8.1 The Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health is recommended to approve the draft housing partnership strategy which will guide collaboration with housing partners over the coming years. The partnership strategy has been developed through a process of system-wide collaboration, identifying shared objectives and strategic outcomes that provides a long-term vision for the sector and its place in the wider system.

8.2 The strategy is designed to form the basis for future business cases across the system, to encourage greater levels of pooled resources, shared commissioning and improved service coordination between sectors. The housing partnership, and its strategy, is well placed to provide the infrastructure to continue to lead the development of the housing sector during devolution and local government reorganisation. The partnership will develop a mobilisation plan each year, setting out their key areas of work. A copy of the draft mobilisation plan for 2026 is included at appendix 3 of the report.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All Members

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy

Appendix 2 – Summary Feedback from public engagement

Appendix 3 – Draft year 1 mobilisation plan

Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment