

- 1 The Housing Strategy builds on earlier consultation carried out through the 'All in One' Survey in 2010 and subsequent Village Planning processes, as well as resident focus groups which were held in summer 2012 to inform the Tenancy Strategy. After the Strategy was drafted, a public web consultation was carried out, as well as a series of focus group discussions with representatives of key partners, such as social landlords, health colleagues, social work teams and the voluntary and community sector.

Web consultation

- 2 There was a four week web consultation (closing on 8 Nov 2013) on the draft London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Housing Strategy 2013-17. Both the full draft Strategy document, and a Plain English summary version were made available. The consultation was promoted via local press, social media and partners. The consultation was open to both residents and stakeholders.

- 3 Respondents to the web consultation were asked to rank (from 'very important' to 'not important at all') each of the Strategy's twenty four objectives. Respondents could also give free text feedback

- 4 Forty eight people took part in the web consultation, of whom forty seven lived in the borough, forty two replied as borough residents, three as local business owners and three as representatives of local community/voluntary organisations.

The survey respondents closely matched the overall borough resident profile in terms of tenure, ethnicity and disability. Slightly more men responded than women (56%; twenty seven people) and no young people took part (under 25 years old).

- 5 The five themes of the draft Strategy, which consisted of twenty four more detailed objectives, covered: house conditions, increasing the supply of affordable housing, preventing homelessness and addressing housing market pressures, supporting choice, quality and standards for tenants who rent and finally housing's contribution to health and wellbeing. Nineteen of these objectives were strongly supported. Five objectives received slightly less emphatic support (but were still supported by the majority of respondents in each case).

- 6 Twenty three respondents gave free text responses: twenty as local residents and three as local organisation representatives. While comments received were detailed and diverse the key points are listed below:

- We need more affordable housing in the borough, including higher density social housing and housing for people on low to medium incomes
- The most pressing housing issues affect the most deprived or vulnerable, e.g. young hidden homeless people
- Housing policy needs to be green, e.g. cycle parking provision tied to housing development delivery
- Local housing pressures are tied to forces beyond the Council's control, e.g. Government welfare reforms and private sector market conditions
- We request a clearer link between housing service provision and the needs of carers, including parents of people with learning disabilities/mental ill health

Focus groups

- 7 There were five stakeholder consultation groups. Participants were subject area experts from within the Council and from external partner agencies such as housing associations and the voluntary sector.

8 The headline messages from the focus groups are summarised in the table below:

Theme	Summary points
Good quality homes	<p>Representatives from the voluntary sector highlighted that older people in the borough may decide not to have central heating due to perceptions about higher heating bills. They also may not want the disruption that any work would cause. They highlighted clients known to them who had central heating but who chose only to heat the living room, leaving the bedroom cold. Representatives also commented that older housing stock tends to be less energy efficient, which can contribute to fuel poverty.</p>
Supporting residents: delivering affordable homes	<p>The Borough's 'All in One' survey (2010) ranked affordability of housing 6th highest in terms of issues that most need improving in the Borough, highlighted by 17% of respondents. There are also concerns about the affordability of tenancies with Affordable Rent Levels. Welfare reforms, which include the benefit cap, can limit the income available for rent.</p> <p>Purchase and Repair programmes are useful: these are programmes whereby homes are bought on the open market and repaired for occupation by social tenants. This programme operates where sites for new homes are limited. The Extensions Programme is also useful: this programme helps to deliver larger homes for overcrowded households. The Purchase and Repair and Extensions Programmes can be used in conjunction with each other.</p>
Supporting residents: addressing housing market pressures and homelessness	<p>Feedback from a focus group held with housing associations and voluntary and community group partners on this theme was that the issues were comprehensively covered.</p> <p>Long term empty residential properties in this borough do not pose a significant problem.</p> <p>There is a perception that the private rental sector market in the borough for benefit claimants is shrinking.</p>
Supporting residents: choice, standards and quality for renters	<p>Anti-housing-fraud work is progressing well. This ensures that public resources are properly used.</p> <p>It is challenging to promote private renting tenure in the context of welfare reforms in a high value area. This is because landlords can seek higher rents if they choose not to rent to benefit dependent households.</p> <p>The Council has a planning policy position to balance infill development interest with preserving local character of the built environment.</p>
The connectivity of housing to people and place; housing's contribution to health, wellbeing and the economy	<p>There was strong overall support for this theme. Additional areas of connectivity of health and housing issues were raised, e.g. that mental ill health can have an impact on a person's ability to maintain their tenancy. In the current economic climate, focus group participants from the social housing sector reported that an increasing proportion of their tenants are seeking assistance from tenancy support services due to domestic violence.</p>

Outcome

- 9 The Strategy was revised in light of consultation feedback, e.g. to reflect good work already underway of relevance to the Strategy, to link to policy and strategy documents, to respond to feedback on local residents' aspirations and to clarify links within the document. For example:
- A section was added, highlighting anti-housing fraud work underway (in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kingston)
 - Numerous amendments were made to the fifth theme (The connectivity of housing to people and place; housing's contribution to health, wellbeing and the economy) to reflect existing and planned connections with health services
 - Added to the Strategy: a commitment to ensure that covered cycle parking spaces be considered where possible when commissioning new affordable housing developments
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