



# Housing Strategy

2019-2022



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

# Contents

Deputy Leader's Foreword	2
Introduction	4
Strategic context	6
Our key priorities	14
Delivering the strategy	28



# Deputy Leader's Foreword

As a result of the Grenfell tragedy, we have fundamentally changed our approach to housing in Kensington and Chelsea.

We have purchased new homes for Grenfell survivors and supported them to settle there. The Council now runs housing management services and we have made major changes to these in partnership with residents. We have taken swift action on fire safety to ensure that all our residents are safe in their homes. These were immediate and necessary fixes, but they are just the beginning.

We recognise that there were failings in our Housing services and that we have a long way to go to get things right. I believe that every resident in Kensington and Chelsea deserves to live in a safe and secure home that they can afford and I want us to put the learning from Grenfell at the heart of our new approach. I want us to be leaders on issues such as fire safety and resident engagement and to be bold and ambitious in all our work in Housing.

This Housing Strategy sets out key priorities for the next three years but it also outlines a broader vision for the long term. It reflects what we have heard from residents and partners, particularly the wide range of comments, suggestions and feedback we have had since the consultation we launched in July. The final version is a testament to the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of our residents and I am grateful to everyone who has shared their views with us.

We face a major challenge in Kensington and Chelsea around the shortage of truly affordable housing, particularly social housing. The borough is the

most expensive place in the country, with an average house price of over £1.2m, meaning residents who work in the borough or have grown up here cannot afford to stay. We have the second highest rate of homelessness in London, with approximately 700 people coming to the Town Hall with housing issues every month (of who 200 are at risk of homelessness) and more than 2,000 households in temporary accommodation waiting for a permanent home.

The strategy sets out what we will do to address these challenges over the next three years. By 2022, we will have started building our 600 new homes, at least 300 of which will be at social rent. We will have reduced the number of empty homes and will be using our planning powers to push developers to provide more social housing, including on major strategic sites in private ownership (Earls Court and Kensal Gasworks, for example). In addition to providing more social homes, we will be developing housing options for specific groups such as key workers who struggle to find affordable housing in the borough.



**Cllr Kim Taylor-Smith**  
Deputy Leader  
Grenfell, Housing  
and Property

By 2022, we will be half way through our £300m refurbishment programme of the Council's housing stock, improving quality and safety standards. We will have made huge improvements to our housing management services in partnership with residents, building on the new model of engagement we have developed on the Lancaster West Estate and at Bramley House. We will have transformed our housing needs services to provide more tailored advice and support for residents at risk of homelessness.

But our ambitions are bolder than this. Residents have told us that they want the standard of housing services to be world class, setting the benchmark for other local authorities. We aspire to be a leader in fire safety, resident engagement and environmental sustainability – issues raised repeatedly by residents in their responses to the consultation. We cannot do this alone and while we work to change the way we do things in these areas, I will be calling on regional and national government to make more funding available for these key priorities.

As well as improving standards for our own tenants and leaseholders, I want to encourage Housing Associations and private landlords to join us on this journey. This strategy commits us to working with them to improve the quality of housing for everyone in the borough.

I do not underestimate the scale of the challenges we face, especially on housing supply. We need to be upfront and honest with ourselves and with our residents about what we can do. Homelessness is not just a Kensington and Chelsea problem; it is a London problem. And we simply cannot accommodate everyone in housing need within the boundaries of the borough. That is why we need to lead the charge for a more joined-up approach to the housing crisis at a London-wide level.

This strategy cannot be a list of aspirations. We know that over the next three years we will be judged by our actions, not our words, which is why we have set out a comprehensive action plan alongside this document for residents, partners and others to hold us to account.

We will need the support and challenge of our residents and partners to deliver the ambitions set out in this strategy. I look forward to working with all of you to achieve this vision.

## What we have heard

**“Residents have told us that they want the standard of housing services to be world class, setting the benchmark for other local authorities.”**

# Introduction

The Grenfell tragedy showed us that our Housing services were simply not good enough and that we needed to change. It also highlighted the need for new thinking to address the stark mismatch between housing supply and demand in the borough. This strategy focuses on working with residents and partners to get the basics right between now and 2022, but with a longer-term vision in mind.

Housing will be a major focus for the Council's activity over the next three years and is central to the ambitions set out in our Council Plan<sup>1</sup>. We know that a safe, secure and affordable home is vital for giving people the best possible chance in life, helping to 'narrow the gap' and promote equal access to services and opportunities for all.

The Housing Strategy sets our ambition to be an exemplary Housing authority, supporting mixed communities to thrive and providing services that meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

We have **six strategic priorities** for our work in housing over the next three years as shown below.

## Our six strategic priorities

### Supporting Grenfell survivors

We will focus on supporting survivors in their new permanent homes, providing high quality housing management services to help them feel safe and secure and offering wider support with long-term recovery.

### Delivering resident-centred services

We will provide joined-up, personalised services to our tenants, leaseholders and those in housing need, treating them with dignity and respect and involving them in the design and delivery of services.

### Leading the way on health and safety

We will invest in Council homes to ensure they meet the highest possible safety standards, tackle antisocial behaviour on our estates and promote good neighbours. We will work with Registered Providers and private landlords to improve standards for all residents in the borough.

### Improving the quality and environmental sustainability of housing

We will invest in our housing stock to improve the quality of Council homes and ensure that they are as energy-efficient as possible. We will use all available powers to tackle poor quality accommodation in the private sector and other non-Council housing.

### Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing

We will build new Council homes for social rent on our own land. We will use planning policy to encourage developers to build more homes at genuinely affordable rents and we will maximise nominations from Registered Providers. We will also procure quality temporary accommodation.

### Supporting vulnerable residents and tackling homelessness

We will focus on preventing homelessness by providing specialist and timely advice and support with housing options and linking housing more closely with other services.



These priorities are informed by evidence of housing need in the borough and, most importantly, by what we have heard from our residents, particularly since the Grenfell tragedy.

The strategy has been shaped by the issues raised by residents, partners and other stakeholders in the wide-ranging consultation that took place between July and November 2019 and saw over 100 written responses. The responses to the consultation are reflected throughout this document, but especially in our emphasis on safety and our commitment to improving environmental sustainability.

In addition to the six priorities, we are also committing to **two cross-cutting themes** which reflect what we have learned from the Grenfell tragedy:

- **Working with residents.** Involving tenants, leaseholders and those in housing need in the design and delivery of services to ensure those services reflect their needs and priorities.
- **Joined-up working with partners.** Working more closely in partnership across Council services (Planning, Children's services, Adult Social Care, Environmental Health etc) and with key partners (Health, Housing Associations etc) to ensure that what we do has maximum impact for all our residents.

### Delivering the strategy

The strategy is supported by a clear **action plan**, which sets out what will be done, when and by whom to deliver on each of the key priorities.

We will continue to benchmark the performance of our housing services against other local authorities.

### What we have heard – responses to the consultation

“There are a lot of excellent aspirations within this Draft Strategy. The test will come when the Action Plan is drawn up and RBKC establishes how to monitor and ensure progress towards achieving these aspirations.”



<sup>1</sup> www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/all-council-statements/our-council-plan

# Strategic context

- Facts and figures
- Housing in Kensington and Chelsea: key challenges
- The Council's role in Housing
- Resourcing



# Housing in Kensington and Chelsea

## Facts and figures

### House prices

# £1.2m+

Kensington and Chelsea is the most expensive place to rent or buy in the country, with the average house price currently **over £1.2m**.

### Population per sq km

# 13,000+

We are the **fourth most densely populated** borough in London, with **over 13,000** residents per square kilometre.

### Total households

# 70,000

Of the borough's 70,000 households, about **38 per cent** own their own home, **26 per cent** rent from a social landlord and **36 per cent** rent privately.

### Waiting for a home

# 3,000+

There are **over 3,000 households** on the Housing Register waiting for a more suitable home, with an average waiting time of **almost three years**. For three- and four-bedroom properties, the average waiting time is **seven to 10 years**.

### Temporary accommodation

# 2,000+

Currently there are over **2,000 households** placed by the Council in Temporary Accommodation, awaiting permanent settled homes. Of these, **about half** are placed locally but only **a quarter** within borough boundaries.

### Council owned homes

# 9,000+

The Council owns **more than 9,000 homes**, of which about **6,500** are occupied and **2,500** are leasehold properties.

# Housing in Kensington and Chelsea: key challenges

The Council has to deliver this strategy against the backdrop of major challenges. The most important of these is the limited supply of genuinely affordable housing, above all social housing. This means that many residents struggle with high housing costs in the private rented sector or are placed in temporary accommodation while they wait for a suitable home.

The most recent analysis shows a stark mismatch between supply and demand, with the overall number of households in need of 'affordable' housing estimated at over 1,000 per annum, after affordable supply is taken into account. The majority of those in need are towards the lower end of the income spectrum, indicating that a similar majority of new supply should be properties at social (not just 'affordable') rent.

The same challenges around supply and demand are mirrored across London and reflect a broader national housing crisis, but they are particularly acute in Kensington and Chelsea. We are a small, densely populated borough with high land values and limited land available for new developments. The Council has also shifted its focus from regeneration and redevelopment of existing estates to building homes on new sites. While this shift rightly reflects what we have heard from residents, it does further limit options for generating new supply, except where there are opportunities for infill on existing estates.

We must be creative in our approach to providing new homes (for example, exploring ways of adding additional storeys to existing blocks), while ensuring that new homes are supported by amenities, transport links and infrastructure and that all residents benefit.

In this context, we must focus overwhelmingly on the provision of more social housing. There is a place for more affordable intermediate products as part of the tenure mix on some developments (including key worker housing, for example) but this is an expensive borough with a very limited range of housing options and the provision of more social housing is vital to ensure we can build mixed communities where all residents can thrive.

This strategy sets out the concrete steps we are taking to maximise new supply, including an ambitious New Homes Programme, our work to increase nominations from Registered Providers, and our plans for a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to encourage developers to build more homes at social rent. We will actively encourage integrated mixed tenure schemes and will use the viability process to hold developers to account to ensure they deliver the maximum amount of social housing.



## DEFINITIONS

**Social rented housing** is housing owned by local authorities (such as the Council) and private registered providers (housing associations), for which guideline target rents are determined through the Government's rent policy.

**Affordable housing** is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market, including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers. In broad terms, it includes social rent, affordable rent and intermediate housing.



However, even with these initiatives, it is clear that we cannot keep pace with demand. We recognise that this is a London-wide problem and there is a clear need for national and regional government to do more to address this fundamental challenge.

In the meantime, we must focus on having open and honest conversations with those in housing need, offering specialist advice and support to prevent homelessness wherever possible. Our priority must be to ensure that as many people as possible are in high quality homes which they can afford. This is at the heart of our Housing transformation programme, which aims to shift the focus of the services we provide.

We must also concentrate on delivering excellent housing management services to our tenants and leaseholders in partnership with them and supporting them to stay in their homes, as well as working with Registered Providers and private landlords to drive up standards for all our residents, not just Council tenants.



## DEFINITIONS

**Intermediate housing** is more expensive than social/affordable rent but less expensive than market housing. It can include homes for rent, such as London Living Rent (set by the Mayor of London) or home ownership products, such as shared ownership, some equity loan schemes or other low costs home for sale.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What is missing from the priorities?

“Social housing. So-called ‘affordable’ housing is NOT affordable for most of us here.”

## Focus on equalities and diversity

Our approach to housing is crucial for delivering the commitment in the Council Plan to work to narrow the gap between communities and ensure equal access to services.

Of the 6,500 households who live in Council homes, over 60 per cent live in just three wards (Golborne, Notting Dale and Chelsea Riverside). These are also among the most deprived areas of the borough, with deprivation across multiple indices, including income, health and employment. Residents who live in Council homes are also more diverse than the borough as a whole, with over 40 per cent from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background.

Households on the Council's Housing Register are also a very diverse group, with a range of housing needs. In 2018, 68 per cent were women, 51 per cent had dependent children and over 37 per cent were single parent families. Sixty four per cent of households were from a BME background. In each case, these percentages are higher than the wider population of the borough, indicating that those in housing need are more likely to have protected characteristics.

The Housing Strategy supports the wider ambitions set out in the Council Plan and the new Corporate Equalities Strategy.

# The Council's role in Housing

The Council has a number of statutory and key roles in relation to Housing, including:

- Strategic housing authority with responsibilities for homelessness and housing allocations
- Landlord to Council tenants and leaseholders
- Builder of new Council homes
- Local planning authority, with responsibility for setting planning policy and determining planning applications in the borough
- Licensing and Environmental Health authority, with regulatory and enforcement roles in the private sector
- Specific responsibilities for vulnerable adults and children

This is a **cross-Council strategy** which addresses all these areas, with a particular focus on our role as strategic housing authority and our responsibilities as landlord to Council tenants and leaseholders. However, the strategy commits us to using all of our powers to improve housing in the borough for all.

The Council cannot address the challenges we face alone. We are part of a wider system, including Registered Providers and private landlords, and many of the solutions are in the gift of regional and national government. We will continue to press these partners to achieve positive change for our residents.

## DEFINITIONS



**Registered Provider** is the formal collective name given to Housing Associations and similar organisations.



### A new directorate

From 2020, the Council will have a dedicated Executive Director for Housing and Social Investment which will bring together work in housing and property and social investment. The new directorate will lead the implementation of this strategy, working closely with other Council teams (e.g. Planning,

Environmental Health and others) and key partners (such as Registered Providers and the NHS).

The directorate will develop a new ground-breaking approach to investment which is based on delivering social and community benefit alongside investing for the public interest.

# Resourcing

The Council has committed substantial funding to support the strategy in addition to revenue budgets for Housing Management and Housing Needs and Supply services. This includes:

**£200m+**

acquiring social housing for Grenfell survivors, with properties not needed for survivors added to the Housing Register and made available to other households.

**£300m**

for our housing stock over the next seven years<sup>2</sup>.

**£20m**

to acquire former Council properties, to provide both new permanent homes and local temporary accommodation.

**£100m**

to support the New Homes Programme (including section 106 funding), plus over **£30m** of Greater London Authority (GLA) grant.

Despite this level of investment, we face formidable financial challenges. The recent lifting of the borrowing cap on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a welcome development for local authorities. However, the borrowing required to bring our existing stock up to a good standard and to ensure it meets or exceeds new safety standards will place significant pressure on the HRA.

We will continue to lobby central and regional government for more funding to support the refurbishment of existing estates, including the delivery of new homes where there are opportunities for infill.

Alongside this, the Council will have to make £40m of revenue savings over the next three years, meaning additional pressure on the General Fund, which funds our housing needs and homelessness services and the temporary accommodation budget.

We will therefore need to work more efficiently in Housing and in other areas, reducing spend where possible, seeking external sources of funding to support our work, and making the most of opportunities for prevention and early intervention.

### What we are asking for from central Government

- To provide grant funding for local authorities to purchase properties in borough to address local housing need.
- To provide London-wide solutions to meeting homelessness demand, rather than relying on individual boroughs to solve the problem.
- To provide clear guidance on building safety, including the highest possible standards of fire safety with funding to support improvements.
- To unfreeze Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that it is set according to the 30th percentile of local rents and then uprating it in line with increases to local rents in subsequent years.

<sup>2</sup> This is funded through a combination of borrowing and General Fund capital receipts. The full investment programme is set out at in the Council's *HRA Business Plan*, published in February 2019.



# Our key priorities

- Supporting Grenfell survivors
- Leading the way on health and safety
- Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing
- Delivering resident-centred services
- Improving the quality and environmental sustainability of housing
- Supporting vulnerable residents and tackling and preventing homelessness



# Supporting Grenfell survivors

## Key outcome

Grenfell survivors feel supported in their new homes and receive the highest possible standard of housing management services.

Grenfell recovery is the number one priority in the Council Plan and is at the heart of this strategy.

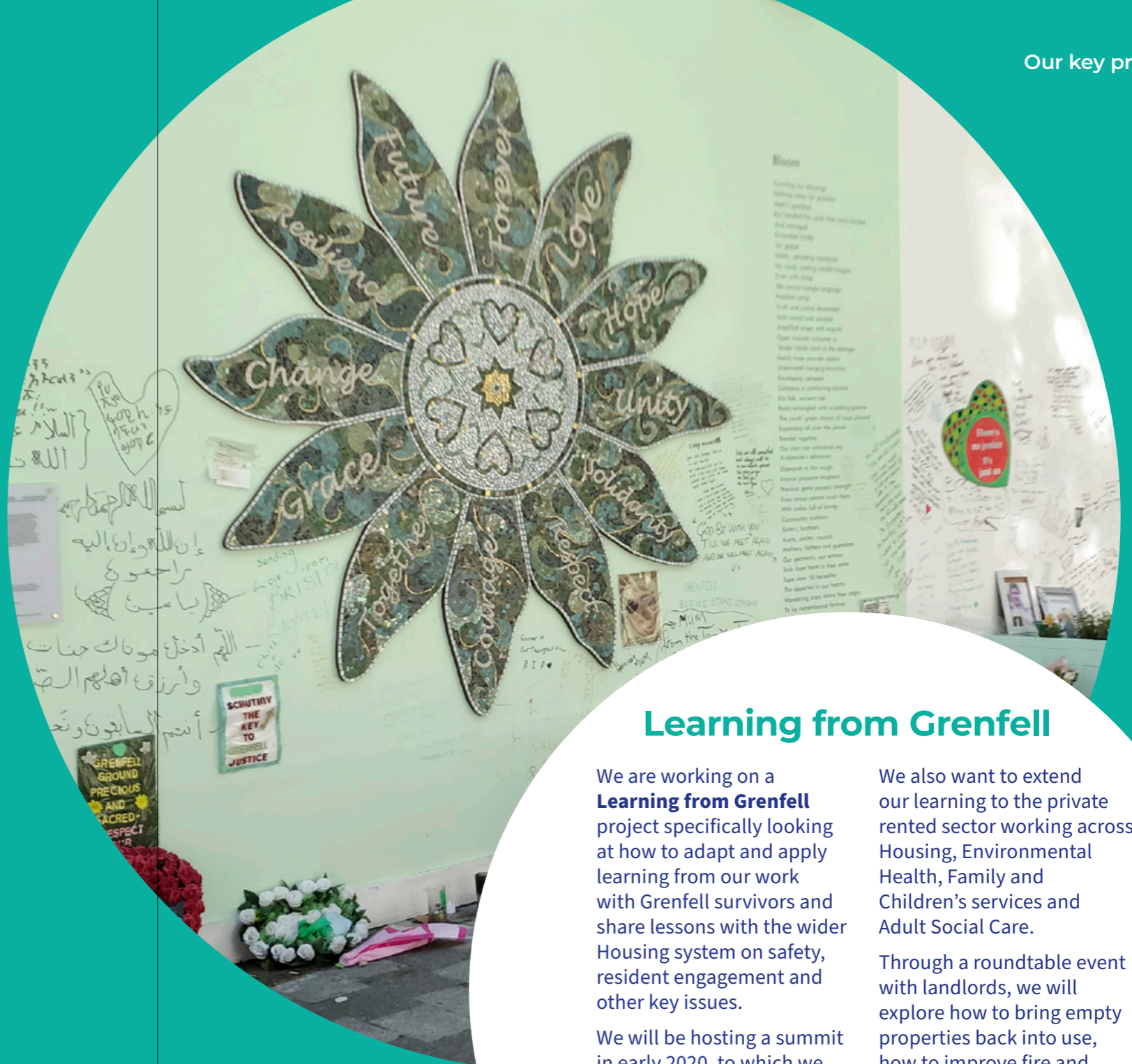
Over the past two and a half years, we have worked with survivors in a highly personalised way and have sought to meet individual needs wherever we can. Of the 201 households from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk, 192 are now in permanent homes and we are working closely with the remaining households to support them to move into a new home.

We have acquired more than 300 properties to replace the homes that were lost in the tragedy and properties not needed for Grenfell survivors are now being made available to households on our Housing Register who need a more suitable home.

We recognise that for many survivors this is just the first stage of a long process of rebuilding their lives and our focus moving forward will be to continue to support survivors in recovery.

## What we will do

- Implement the Grenfell Rehousing Policy, with long-term commitments to survivors on rent and service charges, tenancy rights and long-term security.
- Provide a bespoke Housing Management service for survivors, including a responsive repairs service, working closely with Registered Provider landlords to ensure a common standard that meets residents' expectations.
- Work closely with the Dedicated Service to provide high quality support with tenancy sustainment and other housing issues.



## Learning from Grenfell

We are working on a **Learning from Grenfell** project specifically looking at how to adapt and apply learning from our work with Grenfell survivors and share lessons with the wider Housing system on safety, resident engagement and other key issues.

We will be hosting a summit in early 2020, to which we will invite ministers and registered providers to discuss how we can work together to address the challenges we face on safety, supply and meeting homelessness demand.

We also want to extend our learning to the private rented sector working across Housing, Environmental Health, Family and Children's services and Adult Social Care.

Through a roundtable event with landlords, we will explore how to bring empty properties back into use, how to improve fire and safety standards, and how to maximise the number of in-borough properties in use as Council temporary accommodation through our lettings agency.



# Leading the way on health and safety

## Key outcome

Residents feel safe and secure in their homes.

The Grenfell tragedy highlighted fundamental national questions about fire safety and building regulations and it raised urgent issues for all landlords, including local authorities.

Since the tragedy, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the safety of our buildings and completely overhauled our approach to health and safety as a result. We have committed to adopting the key recommendations of the Hackitt Review and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and have responded promptly to new fire safety guidance and appointed a new dedicated fire safety team.

As we move forward, we will continue to focus on driving improvements in fire safety in the 9,000 homes we manage directly and the 2,000 temporary accommodation properties which we use to place residents in housing need.

We will also work closely with Registered Providers and private landlords to drive up safety standards for other properties in the borough.

We want to be a leader in health and safety, setting a benchmark for other local authorities to follow and working in partnership with our residents to ensure that they feel safe in their homes and have confidence in our approach. The actions set out in this strategy are just the start but they signal our commitment to getting the fundamentals right in this area, in order to lay the foundations for a world-class service.

In the meantime, it is vital that we receive clear guidance from government in this area, who must set the highest possible standards at a national level. We therefore support calls for wide-ranging reform of building safety legislation and will be calling on the government to address this urgently.



### DEFINITIONS

An **HMO (House in Multiple Occupancy)** is permanent residential accommodation occupied by more than one household and characterised by the shared use of facilities, normally of a WC or bathroom or both.



## What we will do

- Deliver a refurbishment programme with safety at its heart, to ensure that we meet or exceed all health and safety standards.
- Implement a new Council-wide Fire Safety Policy and fire risk management system in line with best-practice guidance (BS 9997, 2019), which will be subject to continuous review, evaluation and revision by appropriately certified third parties.
- Increase capacity in our new Housing Fire Safety Team to provide training, support and advice to our residents and partners.
- Put residents front and centre of our approach to health and safety, ensuring they are able to shape our approach and hold us to account through the Resident Safety Panel.
- Ensure that providers of temporary accommodation comply with high health and safety standards by putting this at the centre of our procurement process.
- Work with Registered Providers and private landlords (especially HMO landlords) to improve safety standards, using the full range of our legal powers to force them to bring their properties up to a minimum standard where landlords do not respond to formal approaches.
- Implement our new approach to antisocial behaviour developed with residents, including a better use of enforcement tools and promoting good neighbours.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What’s most important to you?

“Being safe in my home.”

“That the Council discharge its statutory duties including mandatory maintenance and health and safety, and in all actions and all comms treat residents with dignity and respect.”

## Fire safety

Our ambition is to be a national leader on fire safety, learning from current best practice and sharing learning with residents and partners.

The Council has developed the highest standard of corporate fire safety management and we aim to be the first local authority to achieve BAFE-SP205 accreditation. Our new Fire Safety Policy applies to all property we own, use, manage and operate from and includes:

- A commitment to achieve the best standards of fire safety in British Standard 9997 (2019).

- Early adoption of the recommendations arising from the Hackitt review and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
- Engagement with residents on fire safety to ensure they have the necessary information to feel safe in their homes and to enable and empower them to engage in the process of managing fire safety.
- Robust processes to ensure that fire safety-related incidents and complaints are reported, recorded, investigated and lessons are learned where necessary.

# Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing

## Key outcome

There is a significant increase in the number of genuinely affordable homes in the borough.

Kensington and Chelsea is the most expensive place to live in the country and even so-called 'affordable' homes are often still beyond the reach of many. We have heard emphatically that residents want more social housing in the borough and we know that there is a particular

shortage of family-sized properties, meaning that larger households may spend many years on the register waiting for a home. We cannot overcome the dramatic mismatch between supply and demand but we can focus on providing more social housing.

An ambitious **New Homes Programme**, delivering 600 Council homes ourselves for the first time on Council-owned land, with at least half at social rent. The Council will manage this programme directly, working with local residents and our tenants and leaseholders to develop high quality new homes.

A number of sites have been identified across the borough that are suitable for development of mixed tenure homes including for social rent, intermediate rent and market rent. Programmes of local consultation are helping to plan each individual project and we expect planning consents to be granted for the first four Stage 1 schemes in Spring 2020.

A new **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** on affordable housing. The SPD will look at the split between social rent and intermediate homes for affordable housing secured as part of new developments. The emerging London Plan supports provision of 70 per cent social/affordable rent and 30 per cent intermediate. At this stage, we are aiming to ensure that as much of the 70 per cent is at social rent (or broadly similar) levels. The SPD will also provide guidance on Local Plan policies: for example, to make clear that where (in exceptional circumstance) affordable housing is to be provided on another site, it must be within the borough. The SPD will provide definitions of affordable housing products that are genuinely affordable and will be secured from residential development in the borough. A draft SPD will be published for consultation in early 2020.

**A targeted acquisitions programme** to purchase larger properties for social rent and for us as temporary accommodation. We will focus on buying three- and four-bedroom properties, which are in short supply in the borough; in 2018, over 20 per cent of households on the Housing Register required a property with three or more bedrooms but we only have around 10 four-bedroom properties a year available to let.

We will be actively seeking additional funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) to support this programme. We will also call on the Government to make more funding available for local authorities to purchase properties in areas like Kensington and Chelsea where this can help to increase supply.

We will increase supply through the delivery of new Council homes on Council-owned land and changes to planning policy to require developers to build more homes at social or equivalent rents. Our 600 new homes are just the start of this journey.

We will also increase supply in other ways, bringing empty properties back into use, making more efficient use of our stock and working closely with Registered Providers to secure more nominations.

## What we will do

- Deliver an ambitious new build programme, building 600 homes on Council land, of which at least 300 will be at social rent.
- Deliver a targeted £20m programme to purchase former Council properties on estates to provide new permanent social housing and local temporary accommodation for those who need it.
- Explore opportunities for infill on existing estates, with no loss of existing homes except where there are possibilities to create larger homes by combining smaller ones.
- Use planning policy to require developers to deliver more genuinely affordable homes, including:
  - Developing a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Affordable Housing;
  - Initiating a full review of the Local Plan to update planning policies in line with housing needs.
- Push developers to deliver integrated mixed tenure schemes and hold them to account for the delivery of on-site affordable housing.
- Through the emerging Local Plan and other planning guidance, identify sites in the borough which can be optimised for the delivery of new homes.
- Ensure that the two Opportunity Areas in the borough at Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court are optimised for new home development as well as providing desirable spaces to live, work and spend time.
- Develop a key worker housing policy to help public sector workers find housing they can afford in the borough.
- Maximise the use of our current stock by developing an enhanced incentive scheme (including financial and practical assistance) to support moves to address underoccupation and free up larger properties.
- Develop an Empty Homes Strategy, increasing Council Tax from 200 per cent to 300 per cent to encourage owners of properties that have been empty for a number of years to bring them back into use.
- Develop stronger partnerships with Registered Providers (RPs) to ensure those on our housing register have maximum access to existing affordable housing in the borough and to support RPs to address underoccupation in their own stock.
- Seek further funding from the Greater London Authority to support the provision of new homes, including new build and acquisitions.
- Explore the use of modular and pop-up housing and other modern construction methods to provide temporary housing more quickly, especially on larger sites when development plans will take time to develop.
- Establish a direct lettings service to increase access to more affordable private rented properties.
- Ensure that existing permanent residential accommodation is not lost to commercial short-term letting accommodation by lobbying for a London-wide registration scheme. This would record how long a property is being let out for short-term letting which should be no more than 90 days in any calendar year.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What do you think is missing?

“Providing more social housing rather than ‘affordable’ as it really never is in this area of London.”

“I’ve been waiting on the list for more than 10 years. There needs to be more Council housing.”

“Better management of council housing stock, ensuring that empty flats are made available for rent asap and encourage people in larger properties to swap them for smaller ones if the resident no longer need to occupy family sized property.”

# Delivering resident-centred services

## Key outcome

Tenants, leaseholders and residents in housing need feel that services are there to help them and feel positively involved in the design and delivery of services.

We have over 9,000 Council tenants and leaseholders and 3,000 households on our Housing Register. We want to ensure that our Housing services reflect the needs and priorities of our residents and that we treat everyone fairly and with dignity and respect at all times.

Since housing management services were handed back to the Council in 2018, we have transformed the way we work with our tenants and leaseholders, re-establishing the Tenants' Consultative Committee and setting up resident-led Task and Finish Groups in key areas, including the procurement of major works, repairs and maintenance services, antisocial behaviour management, fire safety, and complaints and customer services. We have agreed a Residents' Charter with our tenants and leaseholders to set out clearly what they can expect of us. We want to build a new model of resident-led Housing Management services and have pioneered this on the Lancaster West Estate and at Bramley House.

We also want to make sure that residents in housing need are offered the best possible advice and support.

This means having honest and open conversations with residents about their housing options, supporting them to make informed choices and being transparent about the basis on which the Council makes decisions about housing.

We support the ambitions set out in the Government's recent Green Paper, *A new deal for social housing*, especially around improving and speeding up responses to complaints and empowering residents and ensuring their voices are heard so that landlords are held to account<sup>3</sup>.

**Housing transformation programme**, including plans to improve the quality of services and the experience of our residents who are in housing need through providing regular outreach housing advice and options services in communities where there is demand so that people don't have to come to the Town Hall.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What is missing from the strategy?

**“The time has come to place resident views at the heart of the strategy and showcase to the wider world how RBKC works with their residents by listening to them and involving them in how their homes are managed and maintained. RBKC can become a model borough and a shining example to other local authorities [of] how [to] rebuild trust with their residents which ultimately makes for better and stronger communities.”**

## What we will do

- Develop a new Resident Engagement Strategy in Housing Management to ensure we engage effectively with Residents' Associations and involve as wide a range of tenants and leaseholders in our plans as possible.
- Continue to embed our Residents' Charter and share best practice in this area with Registered Providers and other partners.
- Review our Allocations Scheme to ensure homes are allocated to those who need them most.
- Implement a Housing transformation programme to change the way we work with residents in housing need, shifting the focus to early intervention and specialist advice and support at an earlier stage.
- Review our approach to communications in Housing Needs to ensure, that all communications are clear and helpful and that advice and information is more widely available.
- Work with advice agencies and other key local stakeholders to ensure that residents in permanent, temporary and private sector accommodation know their housing options and are supported to make informed choices.
- Reintroduce lifetime secure tenancies for all Council tenants to give them greater security.
- Share best practice in resident engagement with Registered Providers and other landlords across the borough and encourage them to involve residents more effectively in the management of their homes.
- Consult widely with residents on our plans for new homes and embed a new Statement of Community Involvement setting out how we intend to involve residents in planning decisions.
- Improve resident satisfaction levels among tenants, leaseholders and those to whom we provide support and advice with housing options.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What aspect of Housing in Kensington and Chelsea matters most to you?

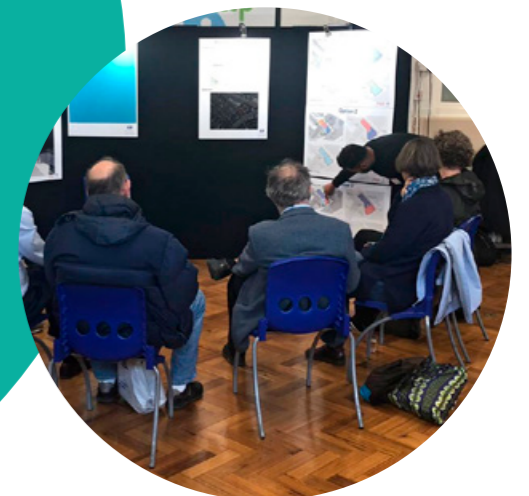
**“The Council being honest and looking at housing allocations in an honest and respectful way and not dodging real needs. As a current person with a disability and a disabled son in need of urgent housing I feel ignored and that the Council is not looking at my case properly.”**

**“Resident involvement and giving people a say in how their homes are managed and maintained and for RBKC to adopt a borough-wide gold standard which encourages all social housing providers... to provide genuine and sincere opportunities for their residents.”**

We have delivered a **new model of neighbourhood management on the Lancaster West Estate and at Bramley House**, putting residents at the heart of decisions about management of new homes and the plans for the refurbishment of the estate. We are working with residents in radically new ways, involving them in decisions about recruitment and procurement and using a range of channels (including a new mobile app) to keep them

informed about what is going on on the estate.

We have developed a new in-house repairs service rooted in the local community and are employing local people as part of the Neighbourhood Team. In partnership with residents, we want to focus on providing excellent customer services, repairing and refurbishing every home and creating opportunities for the whole community.



<sup>3</sup> www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing

# Improving the quality and environmental sustainability of housing

## Key outcome

Residents live in good quality homes and neighbourhoods, which are energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable.

Our ambition is to work with partners to improve the quality of housing across the borough. This means improving the quality of our own housing through investment in our own stock and improvements to repairs services, building new homes to a high standard and using our powers to encourage Registered Provider and private sector landlords (especially in HMOs) to improve standards for their residents.

The issue most frequently raised during the consultation on the draft strategy was the need to ensure that housing is environmentally sustainable, in order to meet the challenges of the climate crisis.

We have therefore expanded this priority to include environmental issues, in relation to both our new build programme and the refurbishment of our housing stock.

We will continue to work with all parties to identify ways we can reduce emissions, acknowledging the challenges we face given the age of our stock, over half of which was built during or before the 1960s. The Council has officially declared a climate crisis and this is now a key cross-cutting priority for the organisation.

The Council will be producing further guidance in the form of a **new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Greening**. This will expand on zero carbon but also cover a range of other issues, such as living with extreme weather, energy efficiency (both existing and new), tackling fuel poverty, air quality, recreation, food security, self-sustainability, waste minimisation, biodiversity and sustainable construction.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What is missing from the draft strategy?

**“Making the borough a healthier, greener, and more sustainable place for current residents and future generations matters most to me.”**

**“Environment, energy efficiency, air quality, mental and physical health, wellbeing – we need a housing policy that incorporates all elements of the environment.”**

## What we will do

- Deliver a £300m refurbishment programme across our Housing stock to improve and maintain the quality of the inside of tenants’ homes and communal areas.
- Use the refurbishment programme to improve sustainability, including retrofitting to reduce carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency.
- Invest in environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient materials and technologies across our New Homes Programme.
- Plan our new housing to link to local amenities, such as green space, community spaces, shops and transport links.
- Continue to improve our in-house repairs service, to ensure a timely and responsive service which meets residents’ needs.
- Engage with Registered Providers to tackle disrepair and poor management, using both proactive working in partnership and enforcement.
- Encourage Registered Providers to adopt the National Housing Federation’s ‘Together for Tenants’ Charter and share examples of best practice with them.
- Invite private landlords to join us for a summit focusing on how we can work together to improve standards in the private rental sector.
- Investigate complaints from private sector residents and target poor performing landlords and HMOs through intelligence led interventions and enforcement.
- Use smaller providers to improve the quality of temporary accommodation.
- Join London Councils’ “Setting the Standard” initiative to ensure the quality of emergency TA.
- Support private renters through the Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker and Redress schemes.
- Empower residents’ associations to manage community rooms on Council estates, with income reinvested in community facilities.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What is missing from the draft strategy?

**“RBKC should be setting an example by obliging new homes to be zero-carbon and retrofitting existing buildings to achieve better thermal performances.”**

**“These are all important but what’s missing here is a commitment to environmentally sustainable building. You can build affordable homes and maximise energy efficiency, use sustainable materials etc too.”**

The Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team is looking at environmentally sustainable options as part of the plans for the refurbishment, including a feasibility study for a **zero-carbon district heating system** using renewable energy sources.

This proposal is being developed with residents and is supported by funding from the Mayor of London’s Energy Efficiency Fund.



# Supporting vulnerable residents and tackling and preventing homelessness

## Key outcome

Residents are able to live independently in their homes for as long as possible, households receive specialist advice and support to prevent homelessness wherever possible and homeless families are supported to find suitable settled accommodation.

Housing services are vital to supporting our borough's most vulnerable residents, especially older people, care leavers, residents with disabilities or medical needs, and those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

By making sure that Housing is closely joined up with other services (including health, Adult Social Care, Family and Children's Services, Environmental Health and employment support),

we can support residents to remain independent and thrive in their homes.

Prevention and early intervention is one of the core themes of the Council Plan and housing can play a critical role in supporting this. Nowhere is this more important than in our work on preventing and relieving homelessness, which is the focus of our wide-ranging Homelessness Review.

Our **Housing transformation programme** will shift our focus to early intervention and preventing homelessness and focus help on those who need it most, providing a more comprehensive housing advice and options service and improved temporary accommodation where there are no other housing options.

A **direct Council-managed Temporary Accommodation service** to ensure that we can guarantee the standard of accommodation that we place homeless households in.



## What we will do

- Review our Allocations Scheme in consultation with residents to ensure our limited stock of social housing is allocated to those who need it most.
- Develop and deliver a new Homelessness Strategy informed by the recent Homelessness Review and focused on preventing and relieving homelessness at an earlier stage.
- Shift the focus of our Housing services to provide more tailored, specialist advice to support residents to make informed decisions about their housing options.
- Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and particularly those in unsuitable temporary housing.
- Provide a comprehensive support service for rough sleepers and work with partners to reduce the number of rough sleepers returning to the street.
- Work with Family and Children's Services to ensure that care leavers have move-on options into stable and secure housing.
- We will support those affected by the Grenfell tragedy who are in Housing need, including households eligible under the Wider Grenfell Rehousing Policy who are in temporary accommodation and did not feel able to return to their homes.
- Deliver new initiatives to promote high quality, independent living for those with complex needs, including new housing provision for people with SEND currently in institutional care.
- Continue programme of visits to all Council tenants to focus on general health and wellbeing issues, giving officers the opportunity to identify issues relating to mental health and wellbeing, loneliness and isolation, physical impediments that might require alteration, or any other issues.
- Engage early with Council tenants to manage arrears and support tenancy sustainment.
- Continue to learn from tenants and leaseholders through our Disability Forum, focused on issues facing disabled residents in Council homes, including fast-tracking of repairs and joined-up occupational therapy support.
- Increase capacity to provide specialist advice and support to residents to prevent homelessness in the private rented sector.
- Review and improve the accessibility of our housing stock and work with developers to build new homes that are wheelchair accessible, not just adaptable.
- Commission appropriate services for a range of vulnerable groups through our supported housing programme.
- Offer joined-up support for residents looking for work through our dedicated Housing and Employment team.

## What we have heard – responses to the consultation

### Q: What is missing from the draft strategy?

“Homelessness should be a priority... especially vulnerable and those wanting to get employment or training.”

### Q: What aspect of housing matters most to you?

“Homeless, beggars, street sleepers and those who do not have a sustainable place to call home. A place where they can sleep, eat, shower and have a correspondence/voting address. Even if it is in a hostel or community setting.”

The Housing Team has a dedicated **Dual Diagnosis (DD) worker** who provides targeted support for rough sleepers who are struggling with both mental health problems and substance abuse issues.

As part of the broader outreach team, the DD worker meets people

out on the street and helps to ensure that they get the right support to access the treatment they need and to find somewhere to stay. The worker continues to support them when they move into accommodation and helps to prevent them from returning to the streets.

# Delivering the strategy

The strategy is supported by a clear action plan, which sets out what will be achieved, when and by whom in each of the key priority areas identified. This will be monitored regularly and reviewed on an annual basis.





## English

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance please use the contact details below.

## Arabic

يمكن توفير المعلومات التي وردت في هذا المستند بصيغ بديلة ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت في حاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة، الرجاء استخدام بيانات الاتصال الواردة أدناه.

## Farsi

اطلاعات حاوی در این مدارک به صورتهای دیگر و به زبانهای مختلف در دسترس می باشد. در صورت نیاز به کمک بیشتر لطفاً از جزئیات تماس ذکر شده در ذیل استفاده کنید.

## French

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

## Portuguese

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

## Somali

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

## Spanish

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

Visit [www.rbkc.gov.uk/housing-strategy](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/housing-strategy) for more details

Or contact us via email: [housingpolicy@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:housingpolicy@rbkc.gov.uk)