1. **Background**

The current Housing Framework 2013 – 2018 is due for renewal and in agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Head of Housing a new approach was proposed and endorsed by Cabinet in May 2018.

This approach is to set out, within a concise Housing Statement, broad overarching priorities and provide a foundation to produce detailed strategies and plans that address specific areas of housing delivery and management.

2. **The draft Housing Statement**

The draft Housing Statement sets out the overarching priorities that are driven by the challenges and opportunities identified for delivering quality homes across all tenures. The emphasis is on enabling residents to make suitable housing choices that meet their needs, especially for local people unable to access homes through the open market.

The Housing Statement reflects the dynamic relationship between itself and the Local Plan in meeting local housing needs and that planning policy is also a contributing factor in delivering the priorities of the Housing Statement.

Access to a secure, suitable, safe, affordable home is a key factor in achieving personal wellbeing, educational attainment and economic prosperity for the occupiers, which also benefits the wider community.

Coordination between housing services and activities delivered by other council services (such as, stimulating job creation and the promotion of health and wellbeing projects) will strengthen achieving the overarching priorities set out below:

- Increasing the supply of homes that residents can afford and will help meet local housing need.
- To ensure housing enables independent living and promotes good health and wellbeing
- To support housing initiatives that stimulate prosperity, employment opportunities and economic activity.

3. **Consultation**

In January 2018 an email was circulated to all members with a copy of the Annual Report of the Housing Framework. This presented an opportunity to seek members’ views on the proposed approach to a concise Housing Statement supported by a range of more detailed strategies and plans.

One comment was received. This lent support to the priorities and direction of the draft housing statement and sought that more emphasis be given to the reduction of housing stock through the right to buy and the difficulties faced in replacing these homes.
At the Cabinet meeting in May 2018 approval was given to undertake a wider consultation on the draft Housing Statement with key partners and stakeholders with an interest in housing in the borough.

The consultation ran for six weeks from 18th June to 30th July 2018.

The draft Housing Statement was circulated by email to:

- All ABC Members
- All Parish Councils
- Managerial Staff at Ashford Borough Council
- The Kent Housing Strategy and Enabling group
- The Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board
- The Ashford Community Safety Unit
- 85 partners and stakeholders including Housing Associations, Kent County Council, Homes England, Police and the voluntary sector.

The consultation asked for comments on:

1) Our overarching priorities in our Housing Statement
   and

2) The subjects covered by the series of strategies

Consultees were also asked if they wished to be involved in the development or review of any strategies.

The Ashford Borough Council website included a copy of the draft Housing Statement and how to respond on the Strategic Housing page [https://www.ashford.gov.uk/housing/i-want-a-home/our-strategic-approach-to-housing/](https://www.ashford.gov.uk/housing/i-want-a-home/our-strategic-approach-to-housing/)

4. Responses to the Consultation

Eight responses were received:

3 x staff members
1 x elected member
1 x member of the public
1 x Housing Association
2 x charitable/voluntary sector

3 respondents expressed an interest in being involved in the development of specific strategies in the future.

1 respondent highlighted a grammatical error

Comments from the other 4 respondents raised the following points:
• Concern that the draft housing statement focus on new housing. More needs to be included about a strategy for areas of ageing housing stock and community facilities to ensure these do not fall into decline and the consequent issues of social cohesion and deprivation.
Response: The HRA Asset Management Strategy will cover the upkeep and maintenance of the council’s own housing stock. The Private Sector Housing Strategy will consider where, within its statutory responsibilities the council can contribute to maintaining appropriate standards within privately owned and rented homes.

• Consider making stronger links to the priorities of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and being clear about the different channels of funding (Housing Revenue Account and General Fund) and which aspect of housing activity each supports.
Response: The Housing Statement has been amended to show clearer definition of services provided by funding from the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund.

• Would the council be able to meet demand for accommodation following a major incident involving substantial loss of residential property? Does there need to be Kent wide contingency.
Response: A useful comment which will be considered in the Homelessness Strategy and the HRA Asset Management Strategies for accommodating people who through a major incident are likely to be displaced from their home for a significant period of time.

• Support for the 3 priorities and suggestion for a fourth priority with regard to aesthetic and technical design, including energy efficiency and sustainability.
Response: Design, energy efficiency and sustainability are covered in planning policy.

• To recognise the emphasis from central government towards developing community led housing. For the council to demonstrate strong leadership in supporting community led housing initiatives to achieve housing that is affordable in relation to local incomes.
Response: The Housing Statement has been amended to give specific reference to community led housing and will be developed further in the Housing Supply and Allocation Strategy.

• Feedback on young person’s ideas to help homeless people.
Response: welcome input of engagement with young people that will be used in the review of the Homelessness Strategy.
5. **Amendments to the draft Housing Statement**

The comments received have been considered and the following amendments made to the draft Housing Statement:

Pages 5/6 – included supporting local communities to deliver community-led housing solutions and to take a holistic view to housing and community regeneration incorporating all tenures.

Pages 6/7 – replace strategy diagram to show separation of functions funded by HRA Business Plan and General Fund.

Page 7 – inclusion of community-led housing as key area of the Housing Supply and Allocation Strategy.

6. **Remarks**

The comments received are welcome and broadly supportive of the proposed approach. The draft Housing Statement has been amended to reflect these where they are inline with the overarching nature of this document.

As the more detailed strategies are developed, refreshed or reviewed in due course, further consultation will be undertaken as appropriate for each of these.

*September 2018*