

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Full Council 2nd March 2016

Title

Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2016-19

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Graeme Betts, Interim Strategic Director of Adult Care and Housing

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

This report presents the new draft Housing Strategy 2016-19. The document has been produced in liaison with various teams across the Council and extensive consultation has taken place with RMBC staff, partners, residents and other stakeholders. It was recommended by Cabinet on 15th February 2016 that the strategy be sent to Council for approval.

Recommendations

That Council approve and adopt the Housing Strategy 2016-19.

List of Appendices Included

1. Draft Housing Strategy 2016-2019

Background Papers

- Previous / current Housing Strategy and Cabinet report December 2012
- Rotherham Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Members' Seminar held on 4th February 2016

To go to Full Council

Cabinet 15th February 2016, agreed to recommend the strategy to Council for approval

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Rotherham's Housing Strategy

1. Recommendations

1.1 That Council approves and adopts the Housing Strategy 2016-19.

2. Background

2.1 In 2012 the Strategic Housing Team produced Rotherham's current Housing Strategy, which was formally signed off and published in December 2012 following a thorough consultation process. This introduced a 30 year vision, linked to the 30 year HRA investment plan, but with a focus on the key deliverables over a three year period, 2013-16. The Strategy has now been refreshed and the new draft, which covers the period between January 2016 and December 2018, is attached as appendix 1. The Strategy is based on a sound evidence base and reflects the views of people living and working in Rotherham.

2.2 The draft Housing Strategy provides residents with a clear and accessible document setting out how the Council is responding to the various housing challenges and what it intends to do. It also pulls together in a single document, the key housing aims and objectives from other more detailed plans, including:

- Housing growth plan
- Homelessness prevention strategy
- Older people housing delivery plan
- Private sector empty homes policy and action plan
- Asset management plan

3. Key Issues

3.1 The Council has to operate with a much lower level of resources than in previous years due to Government public spending cuts, and the social rent reduction (announced in the July 2015 Budget) further reduces our Housing Revenue Account capacity to deliver housing growth. This will be compounded by the Enforced Sale levy which Government intends to impose on local authorities to pay for housing association Right to Buy discounts. The Council must therefore work in innovative and entrepreneurial ways with partners to deliver on our housing growth ambitions.

3.2 The Government's keen focus on starter homes will support Rotherham's ambitions to help people into affordable home ownership; however this programme will also result in lower levels of new social rented housing stock. A key challenge is to find new ways of delivering affordable rented stock within these constraints.

3.3 Alongside the issues affecting new supply of social housing, the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 is proposing several potential new policies which will contribute to reducing levels of existing social housing:

- The extension of the Right to Buy to housing associations
- Forced sale of high value local authority Council homes / a levy to pay for the housing association discounts.
- The end of 'lifetime' secure tenancies – future tenants must be allocated a fixed term tenancy of between two and five years, which may encourage more tenants to exercise their Right to Buy.
- Likewise more may choose to buy their Council home as a result of the 'Pay to Stay' policy meaning that households earning over £30K will be required to pay higher rents.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 Consideration was given to simply updating the previous Housing Strategy but the format was no longer relevant and a re-write was the preferred option. It is recommended that this Housing Strategy be finalised and published following approval by Advisory Cabinet and Full Council.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Over 2000 individuals, Council teams and partner organisations have been consulted in the development of the Strategy and their views have been taken into account in this draft. Members have been engaged in the review and refresh of the Housing Strategy with a Members Seminar held on 4th February 2015.
- 5.2 The Homes and Communities Agency has also considered and influenced this strategy.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 Once approved by Council the document will be published on the Council's website and launched via various existing consultation routes.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The financial implications are summarised in the 'resources' section of the draft Housing Strategy. There are no procurement implications specific to this report.
- 7.2 There will be a cost associated with having the document professionally designed, which will be met from within existing resources.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 As implemented by the Deregulation Act 2015, there is no longer a formal, legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy. However the Housing Service feels that it is imperative for a range of transparency, strategic and operational reasons to have a

detailed process of engagement in drawing up our housing plans and to make the outcome from these considerations widely available.

8.2 The implications for Rotherham of the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 are taken into account in the Housing Strategy.

9. Human Resources Implications

None

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 The Children and Young Peoples Service have been consulted and had an input into the Housing Strategy. The Strategy has been developed with particular attention to the Council's commitment to becoming a child centred borough. Several of the proposals in this Strategy support this commitment. Under the specialist housing chapter the specific accommodation requirements for young people are set out.

10.2 Children require safe, warm homes to grow up in if they are to learn and fulfil their potential. Housing cuts across each of the themes identified to ensure Rotherham is a child-centred borough, for example:

- We will consult with and engage children and young people on housing issues
- We will work with the Early Help team to support families with children
- Staff and partners will be trained on safeguarding and tackling child sexual exploitation so they can spot the signs and make referrals
- We will increase and improve the accommodation available for children and young people

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 The housing needs of various groups including young people and disabled people will be addressed by the provision of specialist housing.

11.2 Consultation process – our survey captured equalities and diversity monitoring information and having cross-referenced this data against the Census data for Rotherham, the sample was broadly representative of Rotherham's diverse communities.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 The Housing Strategy includes projects that will be delivered in partnership with other Directorates particularly Adult Services and Children and Young People Services. The Housing Strategy will be monitored by the Strategic Housing Forum which includes representation at the director / senior management level from Adult Services, Children and Young Peoples Services, Planning, Economic Development, Public Health and Policy. Other partner and voluntary sector organisations are also included on the Forum.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There is a risk that some elements of the document will become out of date, as national legislation and policy is changing rapidly under the current Government. Where this happens we will include a note on the Council's website explaining any updates.
- 13.2 There is a risk of not being able to deliver on our housing growth ambitions due to the impact on the Housing Revenue Account of social rent reductions and other recent policy changes. However we will look for innovative ways to work in partnership to deliver new housing which is key to the Borough's overall economic development.
- 13.3 In addition to monitoring via the quarterly Strategic Housing Forum meetings, reports will be provided on specific projects referenced in the Housing Strategy to the Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Graeme Betts, Interim Strategic Director of Adult Care and Housing.

Dave Richmond, Assistant Director Housing, Asset Management and Neighbourhoods

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