

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Title

Housing Strategy progress report: September 2016

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

Rotherham's new Housing Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 15th February 2016 and this is the first progress report.

Recommendations

That Members note progress made to date against the commitments in the Housing Strategy.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Housing Strategy 2016-19

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

This will also be presented to Rotherham's Strategic Housing Forum on 14th October 2016.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Housing Strategy progress report: September 2016

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Members note progress made to date against the commitments in the Housing Strategy

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing Strategy was approved by Cabinet in February 2016 and launched in spring / summer 2016. A commitment was made to provide biannual progress reports to both Improving Places Select Commission and Rotherham's Strategic Housing Forum. Section 3 sets out headlines under each of the five themes of the Strategy.

3. Key Issues – summary of progress against the five themes

3.1 Housing growth

Progress since February 2016

- In May 2016, the Council submitted a bid to the Government's new £1.2 billion Starter Homes Land Fund to help prepare brownfield land for new homes.
- Following a comprehensive review of Council-owned sites that are suitable for residential development, ten have been sold which are expected to lead to the creation of 30 new homes, and other, more substantial sites are being prepared for informal tender to deliver larger numbers of homes.
- The Council has taken an innovative approach to unlocking the potential of sites with lower market values, by combining them with more attractive sites in a 'cluster deal'. Tenders for developers to take on the seven-site cluster deal were evaluated on 10th May and a Tender acceptance report will be presented to Cabinet on 12th September.
- Other sites are being prepared for sale to individuals and small builders for self-build / custom build projects.
- In addition to stimulating private sector development the Council has also purchased more than 90 new-build homes for Council rent, in areas of high demand.
- The Council continues to develop its residential strategy for the Bassingthorpe Farm site and in July 2016 submitted a funding bid to the Government's Garden Villages programme (currently awaiting outcome).

Current priorities

- Housing Masterplan development and prospectus of sites to attract inward investment
- Shared Ownership and Affordable Housing Programme bid

- Continuing to explore options for creating a Housing Company / joint venture partnership to accelerate the rate of new homes.

Measuring our success

- Annual indicators – available in April 2017

3.2 Social housing

Progress since February 2016

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan updated and Asset Management Strategy produced
- New Tenancy Agreement DVD produced
- Tenant Involvement Strategy published
- Successful and well-attended Tenant Conference held in July 2016 in partnership with RotherFed
- Strategic Housing Advisory Panel established comprising tenant representatives, RotherFed and senior officers, and chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- STAR tenant satisfaction survey completed with excellent results:
 - 83% are satisfied with the overall housing service provided by the Council.
 - High levels of satisfaction for quality of home (83%), value for money (76%), repairs and maintenance (78%) and neighbourhood as a place to live (83%).
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Accreditation – completed and submitted accreditation self-assessment (currently awaiting final feedback report from TPAS).
- Good progress made against the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan (2014/2016)
- Established and led a multi-agency working group to develop accommodation solutions for single under 35 year olds affected by welfare reform
- Sheffield City Region Social and Affordable Housing Compact drafted – Rotherham has led on co-ordinating this on behalf of all 48 social housing providers in the region

Current priorities

- Exploring new ways of delivering social housing in the future
- Exploring a transitional landlord scheme to improve sustainability of tenancies
- Implementing new initiatives to reduce Right to Buy fraud
- Marketing affordable home ownership opportunities as an alternative to social housing to promote flexibility between tenures

- Developing a new Strategic Tenancy Policy to take into account mandatory fixed term tenancies, introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Preparing to implement the “Pay to Stay” policy whereby higher earning tenants must pay higher rents (awaiting secondary legislation to the Housing and Planning Act)
- Implementing a new Housing Protocol for Care Leavers
- Completion of the Council’s financial inclusion strategy
- Completing project to improve the profiling information we hold about tenants and other members of their household

Measuring our success

Indicator	2015/16	2016/17 (projection / target)	Q1 update Apr-Jul 16
Overall social housing stock (Council and housing associations)	25315	n/a	25309
Number of homes sold through the Right to Buy	145	170	38
Number of people on the housing register	6135	n/a	6464
Number of homes allocated to people in ‘band 4’ (not in housing need) on the housing register	99*	n/a	59
Percentage of Council housing stock that is non-decent	0%	0.5%	1.3%
Average re-let time for Council properties	35.75	22 days	27.74
Percentage of repairs to Council properties carried out right first time	96.66%	96%	94.66%

3.3 Private rented sector

Progress since February 2016

- On the Little London Estate in Maltby, where 24 privately owned properties have stood empty and in need of substantial investment for an unacceptable period of time, the Council has decided to take action and negotiate with the owner to acquire the properties for Council rent if necessary. This decision was taken by Cabinet on 11th July 2016.
- Strategic review of Selective Licensing initiated.
- Further contract awarded to deliver loft and cavity wall insulation for private householders, funded by Central Government.
- Continuing to work with private landlords through forums and working groups to improve partnership working and improve the private rented sector.

Current priorities

- Working in partnership to deliver improvements to the Little London Estate
- Concluding the review of Selective Licensing

- Developing new products including Rent to Buy, to diversify the offer of private rented housing and increase opportunities for affordable home ownership
- Identifying opportunities to stimulate improvements to areas with high concentrations of low quality private rented housing, for example by acquiring empty properties to refurbish and let as social housing and / or affordable home ownership options

Measuring our success

The number of long term empty properties is measured annually via the Council Tax database.

3.4 Affordable home ownership

Progress since February 2016

- In May 2016, the Council submitted a bid to the Government's new £1.2 billion Starter Homes Land Fund to help prepare brownfield land for new homes.
- Extensive work has been carried out on understanding the markets for various home ownership products and developing a comprehensive communication strategy

Current priorities

- Complete and implement the communication strategy to promote affordable home ownership products, including the launch of a new galaxy website
- Continue to develop the Starter Homes Programme
- Submit a bid to the Homes and Communities Agency's Shared Ownership and Affordable Housing Programme

Measuring our success

- Annual indicators – available in April 2017

3.5 Specialist housing

Progress since February 2016

- Vision for housing older people developed, linked to the Adult Social Care Strategy and Public Health team's 'Safe and Well' initiative
- Work carried out on developing options for extra care on two sites in the borough
- Six units of short stay accommodation allocated in Shaftesbury House

- HRA sites identified for development of a wide range of specialist housing schemes
- New childrens' homes approved, being developed in partnership with CYPS
- The first residents are set to move into six of the units in the new development for young people at Rawmarsh Hill. A further nine units will be completed by November and the final phase (taking the total to 39 supported accommodation bed spaces) will be completed by May 2017.

Current priorities

- Continuing work to develop extra care housing for older people
- Developing the housing offer for people with learning disabilities
- Holding an event in October 2016 to engage with developers and stimulate the market for specialist housing in Rotherham
- Completing new childrens' homes in partnership with CYPS

Measuring our success

- Annual indicators – available in April 2017

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

N/A

5. Consultation

In producing the Housing Strategy we took into account feedback from:

- Consultation carried out during 2012 on the previous Housing Strategy, much of which is still valid
- The results of the wide scale 'where do you want to live' survey carried out in 2012 which generated 3295 responses and provided a statistically representative sample
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, part of which was a survey which generated 1751 responses and focus groups specifically looking at the town centre, and specialist housing
- An additional report produced by the University of Sheffield which combined Rotherham's and Sheffield's market assessments
- The 27 Commissioner roadshows of 2015 which led to the 'views from Rotherham' report and includes feedback from residents on housing issues
- Consultation carried out during 2015 on the new Housing Strategy
- Extensive consultation was carried out regarding Selective Licensing and over 1700 responses were received

Consultation was carried out with Rotherham residents, RMBC staff and a wide range of other partners and stakeholders, during autumn 2015. The main consultation methods were:

- Online survey
- Discussions at various groups and forums, and information distributed by email to wide range of groups and contact lists
- Strategic Housing Forum with partners and stakeholders
- Resident focus groups

The key messages arising from consultation can be summarised as follows:

- We need to prioritise housing for first time buyers
- More housing options are needed for older people
- Selective Licensing has had a positive effect in some areas and better regulation is generally needed for private rented housing
- The allocation system needs to be fair for all and while the poorest people must be prioritised, Council housing shouldn't only be for people on benefits
- The town centre needs to be improved particularly in terms of its housing offer
- The Council needs to be tough on antisocial behaviour

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 Progress against the Housing Strategy will be monitored continuously and a further report will be provided to the Improving Places Select Commission in March 2017.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 None arising from this progress report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 None arising from this progress report.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 None arising from this progress report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 Delivery of the Housing Strategy will contribute to the Corporate Plan priority of *Every child making the best start in life*. 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

10.2 The Strategy also significantly contributes to the Corporate Plan priority *Every adult secure, responsible and empowered*. Decent housing underpins positive physical and mental health and can help older people to remain in their own homes for longer, potentially reducing costs in health and social care services.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 The Housing Strategy will have a positive impact on addressing homelessness, affordable housing targets, economic regeneration, positive landscape and environmental improvements in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods around the town centre, and support young people and older people to live independently and with a choice over their housing options.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 As shown in section 10, the Housing Strategy's objectives have implications for Children and Young Peoples Services and Adult Services, and there are significant links to the work of the Environment and Regeneration directorate with regards to housing growth, corporate asset management and regeneration. The delivery of our housing growth plans will contribute significantly to the overall economic growth of Rotherham, by providing homes for people who will be attracted to work in Rotherham as well as meeting local need, and creating jobs and training opportunities

12.2 The Housing Strategy has clear implications for our partners and was developed in liaison with colleagues in the housing association / developer sectors, health services and voluntary / community sector. Biannual progress reports will be presented to Rotherham's Strategic Housing Forum, whose members include representatives from all our key partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 The key risk is failure to deliver against the commitments in the Housing Strategy. This is mitigated by ongoing monitoring, built into departmental and team service plans.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Tom Bell, Interim Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhoods

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