

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 11 July 2022

Report Title

Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2022-25

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

Jane Davies, Head of Strategic Housing and Development
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Ward(s) Affected

Boroughwide

Report Summary

This report presents the new Housing Strategy for 2022-25. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with tenants and residents, officers and key stakeholders. Its purpose is to set out the Council's strategic priorities for housing over the next three years.

The Strategy recognises the key issues affecting housing in Rotherham and the impact these have on local residents, sets out how the Council will work in partnership to address the issues identified, and demonstrates alignment with other key strategies and plans.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves the Housing Strategy 2022-25

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2022-25
- Appendix 2 Initial Equality Screening (Part A)
- Appendix 3 Equality Analysis Form (Part B)
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Rotherham's previous Housing Strategy for 2019-22: [rotherham-housing-strategy](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
Members consultation session 28th February 2022

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2022-25

1. Background

1.1 Rotherham's 30 year Housing Strategy was published in December 2012 and set out the Council's long term vision for housing in the borough until 2043:

- People living in high quality homes
- Rotherham Council being the best housing provider in the country
- Reducing the gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods, so that everyone can live in safe, healthy and vibrant communities
- Households living in energy efficient homes
- A revitalised town centre with a new urban community

1.2 The Housing Strategy is refreshed every three years to ensure it remains up to date and addresses the current challenges and opportunities and references the most recent statistical evidence.

1.3 Excellent progress has been made with delivering the commitments set out in the previous Housing Strategy which covered the period between April 2019 and March 2022. A summary of key achievements follows:

- 646 new homes were delivered either by the Council or with support from the Council between April 2018 and March 2022.
- These included the following large council-led housing developments: The Site Clusters programme (217 homes), The Bellows (58 homes) and Broom Hayes (44 homes).
- The Council has commenced a major housing development programme in Rotherham Town Centre, which will deliver 171 homes across three sites and the first homes have already been completed.
- The Council has also worked with housing association partners to bring forward affordable housing on council land, for example in August 2021, Arches Housing completed ten bungalows on various small Council sites in Wickersley and Bramley, and Great Places and Sanctuary housing associations are providing 157 affordable homes at Chesterhill Avenue in Dalton and Whinney Hill in Thrybergh. The Council receives nomination rights for the majority of housing association homes which means people on the Council's Housing Register can access them.
- The Council has entered into a partnership with Equans and Mears to provide high quality repairs and maintenance services, and delivered a major investment programme including energy efficiency improvements.
- The Council has published an Empty Homes Plan and recruited an Empty Homes Officer, to help bring long-term empty homes back into use.
- The Council has built and purchased homes suitable for a range of needs including older people, young people and people with support needs.
- Through the Council's Social Value Policy, housing development schemes have generated significant benefits for communities including training and employment opportunities, upgrades to community facilities and a community led housing initiative.

1.4 The next three year 'instalment' has now been developed, please see Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy, and this reflects the views of people living and working in Rotherham.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The Housing Strategy reflects the following key challenges that have arisen since the Strategy was last refreshed:

- The response to the pandemic led to changes in government policy, including an increase in funding to support those in financial difficulty and an initial drive to house everyone sleeping rough. However, as these temporary measures are withdrawn, alongside the rising cost of living, increasing house prices and private rent levels and the ongoing impact of changes to the welfare benefits system, it is likely that the number of people facing fuel poverty, eviction and homelessness will increase. It is therefore important that the Council provides excellent financial advice and support to its residents, as well as keeping up with an increasing demand for affordable housing.
- The Strategy also reflects the importance of investing in Rotherham's existing homes, in order to work towards delivering the Council's target for Rotherham's carbon emissions to be 'net zero' by 2040. The Housing Strategy includes key over-arching priorities to ensure new homes are built to high quality standards (safe, comfortable, affordable and energy efficient), and that the Council also invest in Rotherham's existing homes.
- The charter for social housing residents: Social Housing White Paper 2020 focuses on the strengthening of regulation and compliance to create safer homes in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy, and this is reflected in the Strategy's focus on investing in existing homes. It also aims to ensure that tenants' voices are heard, and landlords are held accountable. So, the Council must continue to embed resident engagement in everything that it does. This is set out in detail in the Council's Tenant Engagement Framework and Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, but the Housing Strategy also reflects this through the priority of *Strengthening Communities*.

2.2 The six priorities of the new Housing Strategy are:

- High quality new homes
- Affordable homes to meet local need
- Investment in existing homes
- Bringing empty homes back into use
- Supporting people to live independently
- Strengthening communities

2.3 The Housing Strategy reflects the Council's priority to significantly increase the number of homes for council rent, to provide affordable homes for people on the Housing Register.

2.4 The Housing Strategy recognises the links with other key strategic plans, in particular the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. Each key priority directly links to the five themes in the Council Plan 2022-25 and will contribute to delivering its vision of: Every neighbourhood thriving, People are safe, healthy and live well, Every child able to fulfil their potential, Expanding economic opportunity, A cleaner, greener local government.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Option 1: That Cabinet approve the new Housing Strategy for 2022-25 to address the current key issues affecting housing in Rotherham. This is the recommended option.

3.2 Option 2: That Cabinet do not approve the Housing Strategy prepared for 2022-25. This option is not recommended because it will not adequately address the issues highlighted in section 2.1 of this report.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Between November 2021 and February 2022, consultation was carried out with Rotherham residents, Council staff and a wide range of partners and stakeholders on the Housing Strategy. Evidence from the following was used to develop the Strategy:

- An online survey and postal survey
- Staff sessions
- Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum
- Housing Involvement Panel
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Cascading information / survey info to key groups and forums
- Social media coverage / press release
- Review of recent consultation feedback including the new Council Plan
- Existing evidence and intelligence
- Consultation session with Elected Members

4.2 The feedback from this consultation exercise was used to develop the six themes of the Housing Strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The Assistant Director of Housing has overall accountability for delivering the Housing Strategy's commitments.

5.2 Progress will be discussed regularly at Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum meetings and an annual report will be prepared for the Improving Places Select Commission.

5.3 The next Housing Strategy refresh will commence during autumn / winter 2024 and be reported to Cabinet in spring 2025.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications due to the recommendations detailed in the report. The HRA Business Plan provides a financial assessment over 30 years, taking into account planned actions as part of the Housing Strategy, and its impact on the management and financing of the Council's housing stock.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in the report. However, any identified need to procure goods, services or works in relation to delivering against the strategy must be procured in line with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) as well as ensuring social value commitments are secured.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no substantive legal issues arising from the content of this report other than as may be dealt with in the body of the report.

7.2 As implemented by the Deregulation Act 2015, there is no longer a legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy; however such a strategy is deemed as good practice to set out the Council's approach to housing and allows Members to scrutinise delivery.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications specific to this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Children and Young Peoples Service, and Adult Care and Public Health have been consulted and have had an input into the Housing Strategy. By ensuring a range of affordable homes are delivered to meet a wide range of different needs, the Housing Strategy will help to provide safe, high quality homes for children and young people, and vulnerable adults, allowing them to live safely and independently.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Having access to good quality and affordable homes is important for all of the borough's diverse communities, and the Housing Strategy seeks to remove barriers people can face in accessing a home to meet their needs. Data and consultation are used to understand Rotherham's communities, and through all the priorities within the Housing Strategy will deliver homes that meet the needs of older people, people with disabilities, larger families, single people and couples. The Council will continue to engage with communities and make sure the homes provided and enabled, meet their changing needs.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on local, national, and international scales. In recognition of this the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040.
- 11.2 Through its own delivery programme, the Council has the ability to ensure that the new homes are high quality and energy efficient, which will contribute to reducing domestic carbon emissions.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The aims set out in this Strategy will only be achieved by working in partnership with a range of local and regional stakeholders. The Council works strategically with partners through the Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum and with preferred Housing Association partners to help meet the wide range of housing need across the borough. Working with Homes England and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to access funding opportunities is vital to make housing delivery schemes viable.
- 12.2 The Housing Strategy has been developed in collaboration with, and will be monitored by, Rotherham's Strategic Housing Forum, which includes representation at a senior level from Adult Care, Children and Young Peoples Services, Planning, Public Health and Policy. Other partner and voluntary sector organisations, social housing providers, landlords and developers are also represented on the Forum.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The risk of failing to deliver the commitments set out in the Housing Strategy and action plan will be mitigated by ensuring the correct staff resources and processes are in place, and through regular and robust progress monitoring including an annual report to the Improving Places Select Commission.
- 13.2 The risk of the Housing Strategy becoming out of date due to policy and context changes at the national and local level, is mitigated by refreshing the Housing Strategy every three years.

14. Accountable Officers

Paul Walsh, Acting Assisting Director of Housing
Jane Davies, Head of Strategic Housing and Development
Sarah Watts, Strategic Housing Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	27/06/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	27/06/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	Click here to enter a date.

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