

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 04 June 2024

Report Title

Housing Strategy 2022-25 Progress Report Year 2 (2023-24)

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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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Housing Strategy 2022-25 was approved by Cabinet in June 2022 and published in July 2022.

The Strategy recognises the key issues affecting housing in Rotherham and the impact these have on residents and sets out how the Council will work in partnership to address the issues identified.

The report is presented for information and provides an update on progress for year 2, from March 2023 to April 2024.

Recommendations

1. That progress against the Housing Strategy priorities is noted.
2. Improving Places Select Commission will receive a final progress report at the end of the strategy period, as part of the consultation for the new Housing Strategy, which should be complete during Spring 2025.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Housing Strategy Action Plan

Background Papers

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Housing Strategy 2022-25 Progress Report Year 2 (2023-24)

1. Background

- 1.1 Rotherham's 30-year vision for housing was established in 2013, and the Housing Strategy is refreshed every three years to ensure priorities reflect current views.
- 1.2 The aim of the 30-year strategy is to see;
- People living in high quality homes, whether in the social rented, private rented or home ownership sector
 - Rotherham Council playing its part by being the best housing provider in the country, delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well-managed neighbourhoods
 - A smaller gap between the most and least disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that all of Rotherham's people can live in safe, healthy and vibrant communities
 - No households living in homes that are poor in terms of energy efficiency
- And the fifth aim was introduced in 2015 following consultation;
- to create a revitalised town centre with a new urban community.
- 1.3 The Housing Strategy 2022-25 is the fourth instalment of the 30-year strategy. It was approved by Cabinet in June 2022 and published in July 2022.
- 1.4 The current Strategy recognises the key issues affecting housing in Rotherham and the impact these have on residents and sets out how the Council will work in partnership to address the issues identified.

The six priorities for 2022-2025 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. Key Issues

2.1 Housing Strategy Year 2 Commitments (2023-24)

An update report was presented to IPSC March 2023, which included the following commitments.

- All three town centre developments complete, handed over and occupied.
- Complete outcomes report and customer satisfaction surveys for Town Centre developments.
- Support partners to complete the final phase of the Chesterhill /Whinney Hill Development.

- Continue to work with Homes England and the MCA to access funding to deliver more homes.
- Responding to and implementing the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper.
- Continuing to address the needs of homeless households.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy refresh complete.
- A review of the Aids and Adaptations Policy.
- Empty Home Plan refresh.
- Mid-point review of the selective licensing scheme.
- Hold the annual Developer Summit.
- Zero-carbon prototype project at Thrybergh.
- Continue our programme of tenant engagement and support.

2.2 Housing Strategy Year 2 Progress (2023-24)

Progress on each of the commitments is reported against the six priorities of the Housing Strategy.

2.2.1 High quality new homes

Commitment	Progress
All three town centre developments complete, handed over and occupied.	All three sites in the town centre are now complete and in Council ownership. All Council rented homes have been let, and only 4 properties remain unreserved.
Complete outcomes report and customer satisfaction surveys for Town Centre developments	The outcome reporting process has been reviewed and regular internal challenge sessions are in place. The Town Centre development review will be completed in year 3.
Continue to work with Homes England and the MCA to access funding to deliver more homes	Work has been undertaken with HE/MCA to develop a pipeline of development sites.
Zero-carbon prototype project at Thrybergh.	Planning permission has been granted for the project, but increased costs have impacted viability. The project remains on hold, but other efficiency measures are being explored across housing investment and development programmes. At the same time, a separate project at East Herringthorpe has developed ten zero carbon ready Council homes.

Other achievements

- The 500th new Council home milestone was achieved.
- A total of 217 high quality new homes built across the borough, including.
 - 56 new council homes for rent, including 42 s106 acquisitions.

- 161 new homes enabled through local providers and developers.

2.2.2 Affordable homes to meet local need

Commitment	Progress
Support partners to complete the final phase of the Chesterhill / Whinney Hill Development	The development is complete and fully let, including nominations from the councils housing register.
Hold the annual Developer Summit.	Engagement with the developer / provider sector to continue throughout year 3.

Other achievements

- New Market Acquisition Policy was agreed, and Cabinet approved the acquisition of 100 homes from the open market to support the development programme and address local housing pressures.
- Completed the first market acquisition.
- 24 new rented homes added to the council portfolio.
- Continued promotion of the Councils shared ownership offer, to assist first time buyers and people downsizing, plus a further 18 new shared ownership homes acquired.
- Planning applications submitted for a further 110 new council homes.
- 4 SME Home Building Initiative networking events
- Secured external funding to provide 14 supported accommodation units for 18–25-year-olds with complex needs.

2.2.3 Investment in existing homes

Commitment	Progress
Responding to and implementing the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper.	The whole service is involved in preparing for inspection, in response to the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

Other achievements

- A new Damp and Mould Policy has been published, which led to 28% of inspections undertaken within 10 working days in April to 94% in October.
- £27.3m of capital investment into the Council's existing housing stock during 2023/24 including;
 - 1,400 A-rated boiler installations
 - 350 re-roofs
 - 127 kitchen refurbishments
 - 400 replacement fire doors
 - 10 environmental improvement schemes
 - 431 void property upgrades
- Plus, the completion of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Pilot, has improved the thermal efficiency of 130 council homes in Maltby, 125 of which are now EPC C.

2.2.4 Bringing empty homes back into use

Commitment	Progress
Empty Home Plan refresh.	To be refreshed 2024/25 (Q2).
Mid-point review of the selective licensing scheme.	The scrutiny review is complete and was presented to Cabinet Nov 2023.

Other achievements

- A permanent Empty Homes Officer is now in place.
- 33 empty properties were brought back into use with Council intervention.
- Council void properties brought back into use faster, moving from an average of 40 days to 25 days during this period.

2.2.5 Supporting people to live independently

Commitment	Progress
Continuing to address the needs of homeless households.	An improvement plan in place to increase homelessness interventions and accelerate access to a broader range of housing options
Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy refresh complete.	Strategy published in April 2023.
A review of the Aids and Adaptations Policy.	Consultation took place Q2 & Q3, and the new policy was approved by Cabinet in Dec 2023.

Other achievements

- 1,381 properties have been let to applicants on the housing register.
- 7 new council bungalows have been built to support tenants as they age.
- The Aids and Adaptations Team have facilitated 810 major adaptations, and 4,973 minor adaptations, fixings, and key safes.
- The Council have supported 1,111 new homeless applicants and where homeless cannot be avoided, provided temporary accommodation to 716 households.

2.2.6 Strengthening communities

Commitment	Progress
Continue our programme of tenant engagement and support	Various ongoing programmes around tenancy support.

- Over £380K spent via the Ward Housing Hubs, which includes estate improvements, security upgrades, planting, and lighting, to uplifting shared spaces and improve community safety.
- Around 4,000 tenancy health checks have been carried out

- 2,147 energy crisis support payments have been made, with a total value of £536,750 paid in 23/24.
- 956 referrals have been taken by the Employment Solutions Team, resulting in 199 people getting back into work and a further 165 into training for 2023/24.
- The social value return for the Town Centre housing developments exceeded £10m.
- A further £10m in social value was achieved by Mears and Equans as part of the repairs and maintenance contract.

2.3 Housing Strategy Year 3 Commitments (2024-25)

- Continue to deliver the Council's commitment to 1,000 new homes through the Housing Delivery Programme. Including completion of specialist homes at East Herringthorpe and Canklow.
- Complete an outcomes report for all new developments, to help shape future homes.
- Continue to work in partnership with Homes England and SYMCA.
- Undertake a programme of targeted engagement with private developers and housing associations.
- Ensure the Council is well prepared for inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Commission a programme of stock condition surveys to help understand how the council will meet decency standards.
- Begin to develop an investment strategy to retrofit existing homes.
- Strengthen assurance that the Council is compliant with property compliance requirements.
- Review of Allocations Policy.
- Implement the next phase of the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy, including a review of temporary accommodation options.
- Deliver a plan for long-term empty homes.
- Refresh Rotherham's Housing Strategy
- Develop a Temporary Accommodation Policy

2.4 The Housing Strategy 2022-25 will end in March 2025. Consultation for the new Housing Strategy will commence towards the end of the year.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The report is presented for information.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The report is presented for information.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The report is presented for information

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from 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.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no substantive legal issues arising from the content of this report.

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 voluntary sector organisations, social housing providers, landlords and developers.

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

Accountable Officer(s)

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).