



EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY: 3 November 2022

LANDLORD SERVICES: 9 November 2022

CABINET: 15 November 2022

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing and Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Pryce-Roberts

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SUBJECT: HOUSING STRATEGY

Wards Affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update about the Councils Housing Strategy.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet endorsement of the Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the report and that the agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Housing Strategy report be passed to Cabinet for their consideration

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the current position as it relates to the development of an updated Housing Strategy.
- 3.2 That Cabinet endorse the use of the Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives as shown in Section 6 of this report until March 2024.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 In March 2014 Cabinet approved a new Housing Strategy for the period 2014-2019 which was subsequently extended to June 2021, following Cabinet consideration in March 2020.

4.2 Housing strategies can assist in:

- Providing an overview of housing related issues in the area
- Identifying any mismatch between housing supply and demand and identify issues such as matters related to housing conditions, affordability, needs of vulnerable groups etc
- Setting out the key housing objectives for the authority and its partners
- Establishing priorities for action and spending priorities
- Providing an action plan and policy direction to address the housing challenges and problems in the borough

4.3 To enable Cabinet to consider whether to extend the Housing Strategy operating term in March 2020, they were informed that:

- If a new housing strategy were to be developed at this time (March 2020) it would be based upon the existing evidence base which will soon become superseded, within the next 18 months, by the new evidence and research that will be undertaken as part of Local Plan formulation.
- That would create a situation where the Housing Strategy and Local Plan would each be based upon different evidence strands which could undermine Local Plan formulation and any subsequent planning appeals.

4.4 Cabinet's endorsement for the extension of the Housing Strategy, meant that the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) which had been commissioned to support the development of a new Local Plan could be used as an updated evidence base to both inform development of the new Local Plan and an updated Housing Strategy. From a Housing Strategy perspective this is because the HEDNA provides an Affordable and Specialist Housing Need study as part of its reporting outputs.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

5.1 Cabinet will be aware that the timetable for the development of the new Local Plan has changed with Cabinet approving amendments to the Local Development Scheme timetable in March 2022.

5.2 Work on updating the Housing Strategy has not commenced as it remains prudent to wait for the publication of the HEDNA, as this will provide the baseline housing need information which would ordinarily inform strategy development. The publication of the HEDNA will take place in line with the amended Local Development Scheme timetable.

5.3 In the meantime Officers feel it would be helpful at this time to:

- a) Provide this short report to explain the Housing Strategy development position and its links to the publication of up-to-date evidence
- b) Advise that once up to date evidence, has been published, a new housing strategy delivery timetable will be developed
- c) Confirm that progress continues to be made against the current Housing Strategy delivery objectives in the form of inward investment and day to day activity which is supporting the delivery of new affordable housing and supported housing for vulnerable client groups
- d) Seek Cabinet endorsement to amend one of the six delivery objectives and continue with the remaining Housing Strategy delivery objectives and vision until such time that an updated Housing Strategy, (based on up to date and published evidence) has been developed and subsequently considered by Cabinet in the future.

5.4 In relation to bullet point c and achievements, the Council has worked directly and with partners to deliver a number of positive Housing Strategy related outcomes all of which aim to improve the lives of our residents. The list below is not a full list but presents some achievements:

- Secured Homes England Investment Partner status, enabling the Council to directly benefit from Homes England grant funding of £4,345,000 to date, to develop 117 units across five affordable housing schemes
- Established Tawd Valley Development Company which supports the development of Homes England grant funded units referred to above as well as other residential / commercial development opportunities in line with its Business Plan
- Assisted the Liberty Centre, as part of a Lancashire wide bid, to secure £200k one off funding from the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government which enhanced Domestic Abuse service provision in the Borough
- Made available two Council properties to the Birchwood Centre to operate a complex needs service funded by Lancashire County Council
- Provided Council land and worked with the Birchwood Centre, Registered Provider (Calico Homes) and Homes England to enable the development of a 24 bed Foyer for young people, leveraging into the Borough £750,000 Homes England grant. Building work started on site in December 2021. with the scheme nearing completion.
- Developed a new Tenancy Strategy 2022 – 2025
- Using new burdens funding to fund a Domestic Abuse Co-Ordinator to assist the Council meet its obligations under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Continuing to provide timely input into section 106 agreements and deed of variations where affordable housing is to be provided
- Redeveloped the former Westec Council Offices site in Ormskirk developing 27 residential dwellings, including 9 affordable
- During the periods shown below, a total of 785 affordable homes have been completed:

• 2014/15 = 16	• 2018/19 = 23
• 2015/16 = 92	• 2019/20 = 210
• 2016/17 = 95	• 2020/21 = 133
• 2017/18 = 71	• 2021/22 = 155
<i>The above provides the total year-on-year affordable housing outturn figures which include affordable homes developed by the Council, Registered Providers and market housing developers, through affordable housing planning obligations.</i>	

5.5 In Cabinet re-affirming the Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives, it will enable Officers to communicate a continuation of those delivery objectives with confidence to partners and those interested in developing housing in the Borough. This is helpful, given that Cabinet had previously agreed an extension to the existing Housing Strategy to June 2021 with an expectation that by then an updated Housing Strategy would have been prepared. That has not been possible for the reason outlined above.

6.0 HOUSING STRATEGY VISION AND DELIVERY OBJECTIVES

6.1 It is proposed that the current Housing Strategy vision as shown below remains:

- The provision of good quality housing, in the right locations which also supports our economic and regeneration priorities, meets people's changing needs and is situated within pleasant, safe and sustainable communities

6.2 It is proposed that the five delivery objectives that would remain are:

- Achieve the right supply of new homes including maximising affordable housing
- Regenerate and remodel areas of Skelmersdale
- Make the best use of all existing homes
- Encourage well managed and maintained homes across all tenures
- Encourage investment to meet specialist housing requirements

6.3 The following delivery objective of:

- Deliver the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012- 2020 Residential and Domestic Sector objectives.

Would be replaced with:

- Deliver Priority 4, the Residential Sector objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

6.4 The replacement is being proposed because the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012- 2020 has expired and has been replaced by the Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 of which delivery priority 4 relates to the residential sector.

7.0 STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

7.1 Although the Council has not yet updated its Housing Strategy, it is not in breach of any Government requirement as there is no statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Housing Strategy.

7.2 Councils that decide to develop a Housing Strategy have full discretion about when to do so, and how they document their Housing Strategy.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives are in harmony with the Council's overall Corporate Priorities particularly those which aim to:

- Create empowered, engaged, and inclusive communities
- Become a Greener West Lancashire
- A clean, safe environment with affordable homes to buy or rent for everyone in West Lancashire
- Everyone to be healthy, happy, safe and resilient

9.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial and resource impacts by virtue of this report.

10.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 To date, the absence of an updated Housing Strategy has not created a risk to the Council making progress in meeting housing need. This is because Officers have been able to successfully engage with stakeholders based on the previously established and endorsed Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives. It is, however, important for Cabinet to re-affirm their commitment to the Housing Strategy vision and delivery objectives in Section 6 of this report. In doing so, it will provide up to date confirmation and in turn, will give confidence to our partners that the vision and delivery objectives remain relevant at this time.

10.2 Going forward, and to avoid the risk of the existing delivery objectives potentially becoming outdated, it will still be necessary to review and refresh the Housing Strategy to take account of the latest evidence base (once published). This is to ensure that the Housing Strategy and its delivery objectives remain strategically relevant for the term of the new strategy.

11.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Housing Strategy vision referred to in paragraph 6.1 sets out the Council's aspirations for the housing offer in West Lancashire. It is considered that by working to achieve that vision there will be positive benefits in respect of health and wellbeing, particularly as it is recognised that living in a safe environment in good quality housing can have positive benefits on good physical and mental health. In contrast, poor quality and inadequate housing contributes to health problems such as chronic diseases and injuries and can have harmful effects on childhood development.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal Equality Impact Assessment is attached as an Appendix A to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment