



**LANDLORD SERVICES
COMMITTEE (Cabinet Working
Group): 17th January 2024**

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 25th
January 2024**

CABINET: 6th February 2024

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Pryce-Roberts

**Contact for further information: Jonathan Mitchell (Extn. 5244)
(jonathan.mitchell@westlancs.gov.uk)**

SUBJECT: HOUSING STRATEGY 2024 - 2029

Wards Affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for the publication of the Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and associated Action Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That the Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and associated Action Plan be considered by the committee and agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee be passed to Cabinet for their consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

3.1 That the agreed comments of the Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee, set out in Appendix F to the report, be considered.

3.2 That Cabinet approve the Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and associated Action Plan attached at Appendix A and B for consultation purposes.

3.3 That the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make drafting changes, arising from any consultation responses received and publish any such revised and final version of the Housing Strategy and Housing Strategy Action Plan in May 2024.

3.4 That the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make any changes to the Housing Strategy and Action Plan throughout the operating term of the Housing Strategy to ensure it reflects the Councils operating structures and resource capacity, any legislative and/ or regulatory amendments and/or emerging housing need issues and/or any other related matter that needs to be considered in order to ensure the Housing Strategy and Action Plan remains relevant throughout its operating term.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Councils current Housing Strategy initially covered the period 2014-2019. It was subject to two operating term extensions with the most recent extension, to the end of March 2024, being approved by Cabinet in November 2022.

4.2 Housing strategies can assist in:

- Providing an overview of housing related issues in the area
- Establishing priorities for action and spending priorities for the authority and its partners
- Providing an action plan and policy direction to address the housing challenges and problems in the borough.

4.3 In extending the operating period for the Housing Strategy to the end of March 2024, Cabinet previously considered the Housing Strategy achievements to date and re-endorsed the following Housing Strategy vision and six delivery priorities:

Vision: *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.*

Priorities:

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

4.4 This means that the vision and delivery priorities have recently been considered and re-endorsed.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 The Councils current Housing Strategy operating period ends in March 2024.
- 5.2 While not a statutory requirement, the Council has developed a new Housing Strategy to encompass the period from 2024 to 2029. This strategy is designed to provide insights into the housing challenges within the Borough. It outlines the Housing delivery priorities, all framed around an overarching vision. Additionally, it underscores the Council's unwavering commitment and ambition to enable the provision of high-quality housing, addressing the evolving needs of our residents.
- 5.3 If a Council decides to create a Housing Strategy, they have freedom regarding its content, length of publication, method of publication and duration of operation. This flexibility exists due to the absence of a prescribed format that must be adhered to.
- 5.4 The Councils new Housing Strategy is intended to be a useful and informative document for a range of interested parties such as:
- Residents
 - Council staff and councillors
 - Existing and future partners
 - Local advocacy / charity groups
 - Policy makers and government officials
 - Regulatory teams
 - Neighbouring authorities
 - Developers and housing providers
 - Researchers and academics
 - Businesses and investors
- 5.5 The strategy is structured as follows:
- Foreword.
 - Executive Summary.
 - Introduction.
 - The purpose of a housing strategy
 - National, regional, and local context.
 - What has changed since the last strategy?
 - The challenges in our housing market.
 - Our housing strategy priorities.
 - Resourcing and monitoring the housing strategy.
- 5.6 Each chapter, to a certain extent, offers insights into housing challenges and selected delivery priorities independently. While it's not entirely essential to read the entire strategy, doing so provides a clearer perspective on how priorities interrelate and highlights the changes in the delivery context since the last strategy was published.

- 5.7 The strategy also details some of the positive achievements made under the current Housing Strategy.
- 5.8 A draft Action Plan, presented in Appendix B, has been created and outlines proposed actions corresponding to each delivery priority. At this stage, the Action Plan is summarised, featuring each action alongside its intended outcome description. Before the final publication of the Housing Strategy, the Action Plan will be updated to incorporate specific details regarding delivery schedules and primary responsibility.

6.0 HOUSING CHALLENGES

- 6.1 A desktop review of available data was undertaken, which included consideration of the Council-commissioned Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA 2022).
- 6.2 This review was complemented by engagement with Council officers to ensure consideration of cross-service themes and housing related issues. This approach facilitated the identification of housing issues that needed to be considered.
- 6.3 There was also early involvement with local charities, specialising in supporting vulnerable clients and registered providers of social housing. This formed the foundation for developing the strategy to a stage where public consultation can further refine and shape its content and focus.
- 6.4 Appendix C provides detail of some of the housing challenges experienced in the Borough including some links to further information. They are also summarised below:
- West Lancashire faces various housing challenges, including high demand in both private and public sectors, population growth, an aging population, and affordability issues.
 - There is a need to develop quality housing, including affordable housing and there is increased demand for social housing.
 - Rehousing waiting times have increased, and the number of homeless individuals needing temporary accommodation is rising. The current level of housing-related support is not sufficient when taking account this new demand and the complex needs of some applicants.
 - Maintaining and improving existing private sector housing is important, and Skelmersdale, a former new town, faces legacy housing challenges due to its design and historical development.
 - There are also health inequalities in the Borough, impacting both duration and quality of life and a need to increase the supply of accommodation to address specialist housing needs including the needs of older people.
- 6.5 In developing the strategy and within the context of the above, the strategy needed to reflect the Council's Climate Change aspirations.

7.0 REFINING THE HOUSING STRATEGY VISION AND DELIVERY PRIORITIES

7.1 It is important to establish delivery priorities and a vision that aligns with addressing the housing challenges specific to the Borough.

7.2 The data indicated that the delivery priorities endorsed by Cabinet in November 2022 were still applicable, though some minor adjustments would be advantageous to ensure their ongoing relevance.

7.3 The vision considered by Cabinet in November 2022 has been amended slightly by the addition of the words in bold and removal of the words in italics:

- The provision of **environmentally sustainable** and **high**-quality housing, in *the right* locations which *also* support our economic, regeneration **and health** priorities, meets people's changing **housing** needs and is situated within pleasant, safe, and sustainable communities.

7.4 The following priorities remain unchanged:

- Achieve the right supply of new homes including maximising affordable housing.
- Deliver Priority 4, the Residential Sector objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

7.5 The priorities for:

- Make the best use of all existing homes and
- Encourage well managed and maintained homes across all tenures.

Have been merged to:

- Make the best use of all existing homes while encouraging well-managed and maintained homes across all tenures.

7.6 In the previous Housing Strategy, the following priority was used to support investment for specialist client groups, including the housing needs of older people. Reference to older people is now included in the priority wording. This means that:

- Encourage investment to meet specialist housing requirements.

Has expanded and changed to:

- Attract investment for ending homelessness, addressing older persons housing needs and residents with specialist housing requirements, including the provision of housing-related support.

7.7 The new wording also captures the need to increase the provision of housing related support and attract investment for ending homelessness.

7.8 To reflect that there is a need for continued regeneration in Skelmersdale but also a need to deliver place-based regeneration in other parts of the Borough when appropriate, the priority for:

- Regenerate and remodel areas of Skelmersdale.

Has been changed to:

- Drive investment in place-based regeneration for the Borough including continued regeneration of Skelmersdale.

7.9 Following the minor adjustments mentioned above, the vision is:

Vision

- The provision of environmentally sustainable and high-quality housing, in locations which support our economic, regeneration and health priorities, meets people's changing housing needs and is situated within pleasant, safe, and sustainable communities.

7.10 As a result of merging two delivery priorities and incorporating the previously mentioned amendments, the revised list now consists of five delivery priorities, outlined as follows:

Delivery Priorities

- Achieve the right supply of new homes including maximising affordable housing.
- Drive investment in place-based regeneration for the Borough including continued regeneration of Skelmersdale.
- Make the best use of all existing homes while encouraging well-managed and maintained homes across all tenures.
- Attract investment for ending homelessness, addressing older persons housing needs and residents with specialist housing requirements, including the provision of housing-related support.
- Deliver the Residential Sector objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030

8.0 HOUSING STRATEGY – NEXT STEPS

8.1 Strategy Development and Stakeholder Engagement - When developing strategies and policies, various methods can shape their development and content, involving stakeholder engagement at different stages.

8.2 Foundation of the Strategy - Given the prior consideration of the housing strategy vision and delivery priorities by the Cabinet in November 2022, it appeared reasonable to use these as the foundational basis for this strategy,

unless data drastically contradicted the Borough's housing challenges. Fortunately, the initial approach aligned well.

8.3 Presenting the Strategy for Feedback - We have now reached a stage where it is important to present the strategy to residents and stakeholders for their feedback on the housing challenges and priorities outlined. To enable this and allow sufficient time for consideration, a 12-week consultation period is proposed, spanning from 12 February 2024 to 6 May 2024.

8.4 Incorporating Feedback and Finalising the Strategy - The Housing Strategy will be amended to incorporate any necessary changes based on feedback received. These proposed amendments will be subject to approval by the Head of Housing and Housing Portfolio Holder. The final version of the strategy is anticipated to be published by the end of May 2024.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Housing Strategy vision and delivery priorities are in harmony with the following housing related Corporate Priorities:

- Provide opportunities for regeneration, housing and economic business growth.
- Identify the housing needs of the borough and work with partners to address them.
- Provide safe, quality and affordable homes as a social landlord.

9.2 Appendix D shows the Housing Strategy vision and priorities within a National, Lancashire and local / Corporate context as well as additional links to the corporate priorities, where housing can influence the outcome.

10.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Housing Strategy is aspirational in nature with many of the delivery actions based, initially, upon existing staff capacity across service areas.

10.2 At this stage no specific resource related impacts have been identified. Key actions will need to be considered through future Service Action Plans including the evaluation of required resources.

10.3 These plans will align with the budget cycle and may involve seeking additional resources as needed. Furthermore, opportunities for securing external funding will be explored as required.

10.4 It is also recognised that collaborating with others might be necessary while carrying out the strategy. These partnerships could bring in various resources that will help us in successfully achieving our housing strategy aspirations.

11.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 Failure to develop a housing strategy which has clear evidenced based housing delivery priorities will mean that the Council will not be able to target resources effectively to address the housing requirements of the Borough.
- 11.2 The consultation outlined in this report will play a part in shaping the Housing Strategy's development, including whether the proposed vision and priorities are suitable for the period from 2024 to 2029.

12.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Housing Strategy's vision, mentioned in paragraph 7.9, outlines the Council's aspiration for housing in West Lancashire. It's believed that striving to attain this vision will lead to positive effects on health and wellbeing. This is especially because living in a secure and well-maintained environment can significantly impact both physical and mental health positively. Conversely, substandard housing can contribute to health issues like chronic diseases and injuries, and negatively impact 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 E to this report.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Housing Strategy 2024-2029
- Appendix B - Housing Strategy 2024-2029 Action Plan
- Appendix C - Summary of Housing Issues
- Appendix D - Housing Strategy Links Diagram
- Appendix E - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix F – Minute of Landlord Services Committee (Cabient Working Group)
- Appendix G – Minute of Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee