

Report To:	CABINET	Date:	June 2021
Heading:	HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-23		
Portfolio Holder:	CLLR T HOLLIS, PORTFOLIO MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND ASSETS (AND DEPUTY LEADER)		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	YES		
Subject to Call-In:	YES		

Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the Housing Strategy 2021-23 and to note the achievements of the Housing Strategy 2018-20

Recommendation(s)

- 1. Approve the Housing Strategy 2021-23**
- 2. Note the achievements of the Housing Strategy 2018-20**

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

This Strategy sets out how Ashfield District Council will meet its objective of ensuring the population of Ashfield are living in, or can access, homes that are affordable, warm and within a safe community that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Housing Strategy is an overarching strategy that is supported by the following 4 sub-strategies:

- Affordable Housing Development Strategy
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy
- Private Sector Renewal Strategy
- ADC 30 year Housing Investment Programme

There is an Action Plan for each sub-strategy that sets out the workplan priorities for the year ahead. The priorities include:

- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Developing 100 new Council homes
- Improving standards in the private rented sector
- Maintaining and improving Council homes, including their energy efficiency
- Providing excellent customer service to residents
- Using technology to deliver services more efficiently

The Strategy itself identifies the cross-cutting and emerging issues that affect delivery of the sub-strategies; four key policy areas have been identified for 2021-23:

- Decarbonisation
- Using technology to deliver services more efficiently
- Providing excellent customer service to residents
- Regulatory changes affecting landlord and tenants in the social housing and private rented sectors

Below is a summary of what was achieved under the Housing Strategy 2018-20

- Committed to building over 100 new Council House units by 2025
- Nearly £2m worth of Government grant secured in 2021 alone to provide greater thermal efficiency in both our privately owned and our own housing stock.
- Issued over £75k worth of civil penalties to unscrupulous private landlords in the last 2 years with a further £50k pending
- Completed the first enforced sale of a private property that was in serious disrepair
- Introduced new HMO regulations and Mobile Homes licensing regime to improve rented conditions
- Installed an average of 100 major adaptations per year in private properties to help residents maintain their independence
- Made an offer of accommodation to all street homeless households during the pandemic 2020/21
- Worked in partnership to secure over £1m in external funding each year for rough sleeping services across Nottinghamshire
- Helped secure external funding to continue the Serenity Refuge Scheme for women fleeing domestic abuse
- Increased the capacity of the homelessness team to support as many residents as possible before they reach crisis point

Alternative Options Considered

(with reasons why not adopted)

Not developing a Housing Strategy 2021-23 – this was not considered as it is important to have a roadmap for how the Council will achieve its housing objectives and to ensure services are continually improved and meet the evolving needs of residents.

Detailed Information

A copy of the Housing Strategy 2021-23 is attached as an appendix to this report.

The table below shows the Action Plan for 2021-23

Decarbonisation

Monitor the rapidly evolving national policy context, respond to consultations as appropriate and implement new standards as and when required
Continue to apply for Government Green Homes funding as appropriate
Increase the knowledge and skills of relevant teams in low carbon heating technologies
Explore procurement opportunities to improve the social value outcomes of development projects
Explore procurement opportunities to minimise carbon emissions from development projects
Carry out a fuel poverty impact assessment for any decarbonisation projects that will increase fuel costs for the tenant or resident
Adopt low carbon working practices across Housing & Assets where possible
<i>Using technology to deliver services more efficiently</i>
Monitor the tenant and resident satisfaction with delivery of services using technology
Monitor staff satisfaction and effectiveness of delivering services using technology
Explore options to offer self-appointing repairs
<i>Providing excellent customer service to residents</i>
Complete the Social Housing White Paper Action Plan (See appendix 3)
With support from HR and the Local Government Association, create a workforce talent and skills plan
<i>Regulatory changes</i>
Complete the Social Housing White Paper Action Plan (See appendix 3)
Monitor the rapidly evolving national policy context, respond to consultations as appropriate, and then implement new standards/regulations as and when required
Review the Selective Licence Scheme that is due to expire 31 st January 2022

In drafting this strategy, all Councillors were given an opportunity to comment on the priority areas. The Tenant's Gateway were also consulted.

The context of the four emerging policy areas is summarised below:

Decarbonisation

This section focuses on the zero carbon policies that affect the housing stock in Ashfield, across all tenures. It also highlights the opportunities and challenges to minimise the carbon footprint of the Housing & Assets Directorate.

National context

In the last 12 months alone, there have been a range of policy announcements relating to achieving the Government's legally binding target under the Climate Change Act 2008 to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Housing is a key area of focus as it is responsible for around 20% of UK emissions – the target for emissions reduction will not be met without near complete decarbonisation of the housing stock.

Recent announcements include:

- A target to install 600,000 heat pumps per year by 2028
- Introduction of the Futures Homes Standard by 2025 which requires a significant improvement to new build housing standards
- To upgrade existing homes to achieve EPC Band C by 2025 in the private rented sector and 2035 in other sectors
- Phasing out the installation of new gas boilers
- To power every home in the UK with offshore wind energy by 2030

There have also been a range of funding announcements made in recent months, many of which ADC is eligible to apply for.

Using technology to deliver services more efficiently

This section considers both the changing expectations of residents to access services online, at a time to suit them, as well as how technology can support ADC to deliver services with fewer resources.

Local context

It is a corporate objective to increase the use of technology to deliver services to residents and enhance the way in which staff work on a day to day basis. It is the aim of the Housing & Assets Directorate to provide services via digital channels to as many tenants as possible, and the remainder will be provided through a face to face appointment in their own home, rather than being asked to visit a town centre office.

Providing excellent customer service to residents

This section focuses on the national policy position around professionalism and the ADC position around recruitment and retention of top performing staff.

National context

The Social Housing Green paper, published in August 2018, highlighted that too many of the residents that engaged in the development of this paper felt they were treated with contempt by their landlord – that they were spoken down to, or treated as a nuisance, and that this contributed to a sense of stigma. To address this, the paper suggests social landlords embed a customer service culture and professionalise housing management teams.

The Chartered Institute of Housing launched a [Professional Standards Framework](#) in March 2021 that housing professionals can use to assess their knowledge, skills and behaviours in 7 areas of competence, these are:

1. Integrity
2. Inclusive
3. Ethical
4. Knowledgeable
5. Skilled

6. Advocate
7. Leadership

Regulatory changes

Social housing regulation

A significant change in the regulatory landscape for social housing providers has been announced in the Social Housing White Paper. The White Paper introduces a significant number of changes that will require investment of considerable time and resources across the Council in order to achieve compliance.

In addition, a number of changes to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme came into effect on 1st September 2020 to improve awareness, accessibility and speed of complaint resolution.

Private Rented Sector regulation

There have been a range of changes to the regulations affecting the private rented sector. The pace of change in regulation looks set to continue meaning that the Private Sector Enforcement (PSE) team are constantly having to adapt and evolve their working processes. A number of these changes provide opportunities to raise income to fund the work of the team.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The strategy supports the Council's housing vision to: "ensure the population of Ashfield are living in or can access homes that are affordable, warm and within a safe community that promotes the health and wellbeing of residents".

Legal:

There are no significant legal implications associated with the recommendations in the report. Advice and support regarding specific legal issues relating to the actions contained in the plan will be provided as necessary.

Finance:

There are no financial implications to approving this strategy. Any financial implications applicable to the action plan will be addressed as each action is taken forward.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Not applicable
General Fund – Capital Programme	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	Not applicable

Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	Not applicable
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Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
The availability of resources to deliver the action plan may be affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic response	Resources will be prioritised appropriately and the timescales, resources or actions set out in this report will be amended accordingly. Delivery of critical services will always be prioritised.
Policy areas are rapidly evolving and actions may become quickly outdated as a result	Policy areas are regularly monitored and a monthly update provided to Housing & Assets DMT. The timescales, resources or actions set out in this report will be amended accordingly.

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications contained within the report.

Environmental/Sustainability *(to be completed by the author)*

A key focus of this strategy is decarbonisation, both regarding housing stock across all tenures and working practices across Housing & Assets.

Equalities: *(to be completed by the author)*

This strategy has a positive impact on a range of households with protected characteristics as it seeks to ensure they are living in, or can access, homes that are affordable, warm and within a safe community. Those with protected characteristics are more likely to experience poor housing conditions or have a landlord that breaches regulations.

Other Implications: *(if applicable)*

Reason(s) for Urgency *(if applicable)*

Reason(s) for Exemption *(if applicable)*

Background Papers *(if applicable)*

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