

**Report of** Environment and Housing  
**Report to** Housing Advisory Board  
**Date:** 28 February 2017  
**Subject:** High Rise Strategy Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected City wide	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

### Summary of main issues

1. In October 2016, Executive Board agreed to implement a new High Rise Strategy for the city. Whilst the majority of people living in our multi storey blocks are satisfied, the aim of the High Rise Strategy is to recognise specific needs that are not currently being met. The Strategy sets out the approach Housing Leeds are taking to achieve this, including more intensive housing management, a clear investment strategy for improving the blocks and a number of initiatives being piloted across the city to help deliver a step change in tenant satisfaction.
2. The strategy outlines a number of proposals to improve the standard offer across the city, and sets out plans for the council to develop and invest in three specific models over and above the standard offer for the future management of high rise blocks. This paper provides a progress update on implementation of the strategy.
3. An Implementation Plan has been developed which will be used to monitor delivery of the High Rise Strategy.

### Recommendations

Housing Advisory Board is invited to note progress to date on delivery of the High Rise Strategy.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

1.1 To provide an update to Housing Advisory Board on progress with implementation of the High Rise Strategy, which will include the delivery of a number of initiatives, including:

- The development of new Housing Management models;
- A range of multi-agency actions to deliver a more joined up, improved service to high rise tenants;
- A programme of physical investment;

## **2. Background**

3.1 High rise housing is a substantial part of Council Housing in Leeds, with over 7500 households in 116 blocks across the city. Housing Leeds faces a number of challenges linked to high rise flats, including high investment need, energy efficiency, community safety, under-occupation, communal and grounds maintenance, day to day management issues and refuse and recycling.

3.2 A project group was established in 2013 to investigate the issues and to develop a strategy for high rise housing. Full time project management was put in place from April 2015 to help drive the high rise work forward and develop a clear strategy and investment plan.

3.3 In October 2016, Executive Board agreed to implement a new High Rise Strategy for the city. Whilst the majority of people living in our multi storey blocks are satisfied, the aim of the High Rise Strategy is to recognise specific needs that are not currently being met. The Strategy sets out the approach Housing Leeds are taking to achieve this, including more proactive housing management, a clear investment strategy for improving the blocks and a number of initiatives being piloted across the city to help deliver a step change in tenant satisfaction.

3.4 The strategy outlined a number of proposals to improve the standard offer across the city, and set out plans for the council to develop and invest in three specific models over and above the standard offer for the future management of some high rise blocks:

- Family Friendly;
- Enhanced support;
- Retirement Living.

3.5 This paper provides an update on progress to date in implementing these models, and the actions and investment needed to support them.

### **Update on progress**

- 3.6 An implementation plan has now been agreed to deliver the proposals set out in the strategy. The plan sets out a number of clear actions, timescales and lead officers responsible for delivering the aims set out in the high rise strategy.
- 3.7 To ensure accountability, progress against the plan is reported monthly to joint Housing Management/Property and Contracts Senior Management Team, with regular briefings proposed for the Director and Executive Member, and to Housing Advisory Board.
- 3.8 Significant progress has been made in delivering the aims of the High Rise Strategy over the past couple of months. There are two clear workstreams; Housing Management actions and Physical Investment actions. An outline of progress against each of the workstreams is set out below:

## **4. Housing Management Actions**

### **4.1 Enhanced Management model**

- 4.1.1 The High Rise Strategy recognised that in a small number of blocks with concentrated issues and low levels of tenant satisfaction, for a defined period of time, a high level of support would be required to tackle specific issues and turn the blocks around. Executive Board agreed that this approach would be rolled out to 19 blocks across the city. These blocks will receive a different type of investment, focusing on increased security, (CCTV, controlled entry); a more intensive housing management approach with dedicated housing officers; an increased level of support to address specific issues and greater links with other agencies to help address issues quickly.
- 4.1.2 Significant progress has been made in the development of the enhanced model. A new Team Leader has been appointed to lead on the development of the model to ensure consistency and accountability. The approach has now been agreed and roles and responsibilities for the new intensive role has been shared and agreed with staff. The Team Leader is now responsible for matrix managing the enhanced high rise team, as well as leading on further development of the model, performance management, training and development.
- 4.1.3 The enhanced management model offers an intensive wrap around service within each of the identified blocks, with the enhanced team playing a much wider role in supporting tenants across all areas of their tenancy, including enhanced income work, lettings, liaising with support providers and playing a lead role in partnership working within the locality.
- 4.1.4 The enhanced role is currently in operation in the Clydes and Wortleys blocks as part of the ongoing pilot programme. Roll out of the remaining blocks has now commenced and all remaining enhanced blocks will be operating on the new model by April 2017. Regular review meetings have been set up and an away day to brief Housing Managers on progress and outline how the new model will work has been scheduled for February.
- 4.1.5 To support the new model, patches have been amended and officers identified to undertake the Enhanced role. The Team Leader is responsible for the delivery and performance management of the new model. The team will meet

on a regular basis during the roll out of the model across the remaining blocks, and to monitor outcomes going forward.

- 4.1.6 This model offers a significant change in the way that we currently manage high rise blocks and will be closely monitored to ensure that it can evolve as necessary to deliver the impact intended. Progress reports will be presented to SMT on a monthly basis.

## 4.2 Retirement Living model

4.2.1 The High Rise project identified some areas with a lack of suitable properties for older people, and particularly sheltered accommodation for older tenants who have support needs. At the same time, Housing Leeds is reviewing its existing offer to older tenants to ensure that it is fit for purpose and sustainable.

4.2.2 The High Rise Strategy outlined a new approach to older tenants in high rise stock, through the development of the Retirement Living model. This retains an age related focus, primarily aimed at the 55 plus age group, and will maximise choice to enable older tenants to live independently for as long as possible in their home and avoid the need for them to move.

4.2.3 In particular, this model will offer:

- the opportunity to live in an environment with people of a similar age;
- Enhanced security (door entry systems and CCTV) to provide increased safety and peace of mind;
- Communal and social facilities– this would create a neighbourhood environment which can help dispel loneliness and isolation in retirement years
- Enhanced Annual Home Visit to identify additional support needs and referrals made to appropriate services;
- Enhanced programme of activities and support for tenant groups;
- The option to apply to receive Flexible at home support where needed;

4.2.4 This Model is currently being developed as part of the Review of Support Models for Older Housing Leeds Tenants, details of which are contained in a separate report on the agenda for this meeting.

4.2.5 A pilot for the Retirement Living model will be undertaken in three blocks; Brecon Court and Rise in Gipton; and Barncroft Towers in Seacroft. This will be undertaken from April to September 2017.

## 4.3 Family Friendly model

4.3.1 The High Rise Strategy agreed by Executive Board agreed to pilot a family friendly block approach in 4 blocks in Burmantofts (Appletons and Saville Green). This approach will target significant investment in those blocks to ensure they are safe and meet the needs of families, as well as working with Children's Services to develop a tailored management approach that better meets the needs of families.

4.3.2 Targeted investment of around £2.5m has been identified and will include:

- Enhanced security – including controlled access and CCTV;
- Enhanced play facilities within the grounds;
- Enclosing rear private balconies to the properties;
- An enhanced lettable standard when properties are void, including opening up the kitchen and living room to make them more appropriate for family use, and enhanced storage.

4.3.3 Initial discussions have taken place with Children’s services to look at what enhancements could be made to our management models in the family friendly blocks and a Team Leader has been identified to lead on pulling this together. Further meetings are scheduled over the next 3 months to further develop the approach.

4.3.4 It has been agreed that the management model will not be put in place until the required investment has been completed.

4.3.5 The High Rise Strategy also proposed a number of changes to the Lettings Policy to further the family friendly approach, including protecting preferences and proposing restrictions on lettings to families with children in certain blocks. This is currently being developed and will be presented to Executive Board in June as part of proposed changes to the wider Lettings Policy.

#### 4.4 **Multi agency actions:**

4.4.1 To support the models, particularly in the enhanced blocks, work is currently underway with colleagues in Safer Leeds to develop a business case to provide enhanced security in the blocks, including trialling a remote concierge function, agreeing a process for monitoring CCTV in blocks, and security patrols for enhanced blocks. Visits have been arranged to look at best practice in Doncaster and Sunderland who currently operate similar models. This should be completed by April 2017.

4.4.2 Work is also underway to update the block profiles that were completed for all blocks last year. These profiles present a range of data on each block and key actions that need to be addressed. The refreshed profiles will include a detailed Action Plan for all 116 blocks to help drive improvements and improve tenant satisfaction. The refreshed profiles and action plans will be completed by the end of March 2017 and will form part of the new standard management model which is now in operation. This also includes a weekly block inspection, further training for staff, and monthly reviews against the agreed action plan, alongside the investment programme referred to later in this paper.

4.4.3 As part of an ongoing Waste management review across the range of high rise blocks, we are working with the service to agree an approach to targeted waste management solutions for the 4 different management models. It has been agreed that we will look to pilot a new approach to explore the impact of closing chutes in a particular block and providing enhanced waste facilities. We are currently exploring the best option for where this pilot will take place and will undertake consultation with tenants before commencing the pilot.

#### **4.5 Performance Framework:**

- 4.5.1 A performance framework is currently being developed to enable clear outcomes to be measured as the programme develops. It will also allow resources to be used flexibly to support blocks where they are struggling. The framework will be agreed in February and monthly updates against the agreed outcomes will be reported to SMT.
- 4.5.2 To Support the performance framework, the high rise tenant survey that was undertaken in 2015 will be repeated in March/April 2018 to determine the impact of the full range of measures outlined in the High Rise Strategy on tenant satisfaction.

#### **5. Physical Investment Actions:**

- 5.1.1 The majority of investment in high rise over the last 15 years has been focussed on the interior of dwellings (kitchens, bathrooms, rewires etc) to achieve the Decent Homes standard, rather than on communal areas and facilities. As a result, the council managed blocks require improvements to lifts, externals, and communal areas. We aim to develop an investment strategy for high rise that will address the strategic needs of all 116 blocks in a much more coordinated, planned way.
- 5.1.2 Capital funding has been identified to deliver the proposals set out in the High Rise Strategy over the next two years. Housing Leeds remains committed to the investment programme outlined in the report. In total there are c£56m of works to high rise blocks proposed in the Housing Leeds capital programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20. These include the safety and security works and family friendly works as outlined as well as installing RERF-connected and independent district heating schemes, cladding/insulation, lift replacements, structural works and concrete repairs, communal electrical upgrades, re-roofing and works to facilitate electrical heating and hot-water upgrades. We expect this to be approved by Executive Board/Full Council as part of the budget setting process.
- 5.1.3 Work is now underway to programme in the physical investment that needs to take place to support the delivery of the new management models. A Project delivery team has been established and meets fortnightly to oversee progress. A full programme for delivering the investment needed to support the new housing management models is currently being developed and will be finalised by April 2017. The full programme will be presented to a future Housing Advisory Board meeting.

#### **5.2 Enhanced Security**

- 5.2.1 An indicative schedule has been identified for the security upgrade programme, including enhanced CCTV (including video handsets), controlled entry and secure doors. It is anticipated that these will be installed and operational in the following blocks by March 2018:
- Clayton Court and Grange;
  - Gledhow Towers;
  - Raynville Court and Grange

- Cottingley Heights and Towers;
- Ramshead Heights
- Alderton Heights;
- Burnsall Grange;
- Lovell Park Grange, Heights and Towers
- Parkway Towers

5.2.2 It is envisaged that work in all of the remaining blocks will be completed during the 2018/19 financial year. This will be confirmed when the full programme has been finalised.

5.2.3 Details for the installation of the controlled access system to stairwells and an airlock entry system are currently being developed and will be included in the full programme of works when it is finalised. The Cottingleys and Lovell Park blocks will be front loaded into the programme due to recent issues experienced in those blocks.

### **5.3 Family Friendly**

5.3.1 Housing Leeds are committed to addressing the issues faced by families living in High Rise blocks. Significant capital expenditure of £2.5m has been identified to deliver the pilot scheme and a detailed scope has been developed to deliver the works required to progress the family friendly block pilot to the Appletons and Saville Green blocks (Burmantofts) as detailed in section 4.3.

5.3.2 We are currently in discussions with two organisations who are working up designs and costs for consideration for enclosing balconies to the proposed family friendly pilot blocks. This piece of work should be completed by end of February. A project plan has been developed for both options. We are aware that the blocks are on the RERF District Heating project and plans are in place to meet with the successful contractor once agreed in order to explore how we can best run both schemes within similar timescales to avoid delays to the pilot programme.

5.3.3 An options paper will be presented at SMT in March 2017 to determine which route is taken to ensure the work can start on site as soon as possible.

### **5.4 Free Wi-Fi project**

5.4.1 Housing Leeds is currently rolling out an 18 month pilot scheme working with a number of internet providers to offer free Wi-Fi provision in a small number of blocks across the city. The purpose of this pilot is to work with selected telecom companies to pilot the benefits for tenants of the council waiving the standard rental income for having telecommunications equipment on the roof of a block in favour of a free Wi-Fi provision being provided for the use of tenants within that block.

5.4.2 It is anticipated that providing free Wi-Fi to tenants will help reduce the digital divide in Leeds, enabling internet access to those who don't currently have it.

5.4.3 The free Wi-Fi trial will also allow us to look at more innovative ways of communicating with tenants, and support them to access more services online

where appropriate.

5.4.4 Installation of the free Wi-Fi network in Clyde Court is now underway and is planned for activation by the end of February. The infrastructure is already in Clyde Grange but relies on an antenna at Grayson Crest which is currently being reinstalled. It is anticipated that both blocks will be live by the end of February. The Tenant Involvement team are working with the delivery team to ensure tenants are aware of the service and how to use it.

5.4.5 The following blocks will also receive free Wi-Fi access during the first quarter of 2017:

- Lovell Towers;
- Malborough Towers;
- Naseby Grange;
- Holborn Towers.

## **6. Repairs and Maintenance**

6.1 Responsive repairs to communal areas in high rise blocks are reported via a number of sources including; tenant reports; daily checks by the cleaning teams; and quarterly audits by Housing Officers. As there is no fixed postal address on the computer systems for communal areas, there is no confirmation slip sent when the repair is raised as there would be for a repair to an individual home. This has been commonly raised by residents as a problem as it causes uncertainty as to whether repairs have been reported.

6.2 To address this issue, the High Rise Strategy included the development of a planned approach to carrying out communal repairs in high rise blocks with our partners. The new approach involves a small multi-skilled team of operatives visiting each block on a scheduled basis, assessing the block and aiming to complete all outstanding repairs during the visit where possible.

6.3 This model is now running across all Housing Leeds blocks with the schedule of visits tailored to meet the varying demands of the blocks across Leeds. Following the pilot, an evaluation was undertaken of the effectiveness and cost sustainability of the proactive repairs programme. An initial evaluation of the programme has identified that although the programme required some areas of adjustment in order to ensure that it offers maximum value for money, the model is sustainable over the longer term and provides a robust way of carrying out routine repairs to high rise communal areas.

6.4 The format has evolved from the original proposal and the operatives are empowered to identify and complete repairs within the scope of the service with the client checks carried out through the normal post inspection procedures. A further evaluation will take place by April 2017 to ensure that the model continues to offer value for money.

## **7. Corporate Considerations**

### **7.1 Consultation and Engagement**

7.1.1 Tenants, staff and wider stakeholders were fully involved in the development of the MSF Tenant Survey and this engagement with tenants will continue



throughout the implementation of the high rise strategy. The High Rise Advisory Group, the citywide tenants group representing the views of high rise tenants, was actively involved in the development of the strategy and will be fully involved during the implementation of the project as well as exploring opportunities for wider tenant engagement.

## **7.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 7.2.1 Housing Advisory Board members are being asked to note the progress being made with delivery of the High Rise Strategy and as such, a decision is not being made. Individual EIAs will be carried out on particular areas of work where required.
- 7.2.2 The proposals seek to better meet the needs of children, families, people with support needs and older people, as well as improving community cohesion and integration.

## **7.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 7.3.1 High rise housing is a priority of the Housing Advisory Board. Implementation of the high rise strategy and investment plan will be delivered in line with the Council's policies and procedures and is designed to deliver an improved and more cost effective Housing service for high rise tenants across the city.
- 7.3.2 The strategy will contribute towards the delivery of a number of Best Council and City priorities, notably for everyone in Leeds to be able 'to live in good quality affordable homes within clean and well cared for places', 'to live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible' and to 'be safe and feel safe', thereby also contributing to the Safer Leeds Plan.

## **7.4 Resources and value for money**

- 7.4.1 The Council aims to ensure its housing stock is managed efficiently and best use is made of the limited resources.
- 7.4.2 One of the main aims of the high rise project is to determine the most efficient and effective way of using resources to develop the best offer for high rise tenants. The High Rise Strategy will ensure that all investment is determined in a consistent, fair and effective way across the city.
- 7.4.3 A number of the actions identified throughout this report will need significant resources to be delivered. These resources have been identified through efficiencies in better working practices to allow additional staffing resources to be engaged in this work, with additional Capital investment being identified as part of the Asset Management Strategy with Capital investment being identified as part of our High Rise Investment Strategy.

## **7.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 7.5.1 None at this stage. The report is an update paper and is not subject to call in.

## **7.6 Risk Management**

- 7.6.1 A Risk Register is being developed to deliver the changes and manage any associated risks, particularly around planning of the physical investment works.
- 7.6.2 There are also risks associated with the implementation of the Housing and Planning Act which mean that the delivery of the investment programme for high

rise may need to be reviewed/adjusted in future. This will be reviewed when guidance and regulations have been made available by DCLG.

## **7.7 Conclusions**

**7.7.1** We are making good progress in implementing the proposals outlined in the High Rise Strategy. It is anticipated that by April 2017 we should have a detailed block profile for each block which would include management models, a schedule of works to be delivered, and a clear action plan to address tenancy management issues. Further updates on progress will be presented to HAB on a regular basis throughout the delivery of the implementation plan.

## **7.8 Recommendations**

**7.8.1** Housing Advisory Board is invited to note progress to date on delivery of the high rise strategy.

## **Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.