

Leeds Housing Strategy update

Date: 25th November 2021

Report of: Head of Housing & Homelessness

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The current Housing Strategy has been in place since 2016 and sets out the long-term plans for providing housing that is of a good standard, that meets the needs of the city's growing population, protects the quality of the environment, and fosters cohesive communities. There needs to be an appropriate level of affordable housing, and all the city's housing stock needs to be energy efficient and play its role in helping the city to meet the zero-carbon target by 2030. As the strategy expires in 2021 a review of the strategy is underway.
- Housing has a critical role to play in helping the Council to achieve its overarching goal of meeting its 'Three Key Pillars' outlined in the Best Council Plan of delivering Inclusive Growth, improving the Health and Wellbeing of all our citizens, and tackling Climate Change.
- The condition of the city's housing stock directly affects each of these three pillars. A good supply of affordable housing, that has high energy efficiency, helps to deliver inclusive growth. Good housing fosters good health and wellbeing in many ways, affecting both physical and mental health. The energy efficiency of the city's housing stock, in both the social and private sectors, will play a huge role in determining how the city progresses in reaching its zero carbon goals.
- Since the last strategy was developed, the Council has declared a Climate Emergency. Climate change is increasingly having an increasing impact globally and locally. Whilst the Council is already taking steps to reduce carbon emissions of housing stock, such as targeted energy efficiency improvements, e.g. cavity wall insulation, air source heat pumps and external wall insulation, and major schemes such as the Leeds PIPES network, the need to do the utmost to mitigate the impact of the climate emergency must be a key part of the Housing Strategy.
- The current Strategy is comprised of six key themes which represent the priorities for the city. It is proposed to largely retain these themes, but with some tweaks from the previous strategy. The proposed updated themes are:

- **Affordable Housing Growth** – to maximise the number of affordable homes available to buy and rent, through measures such as help to buy schemes, promoting starter homes and to increase the quality of new housing.
 - **Improving Housing Quality** – to improve the quality and energy efficiency of homes, particularly in the private sector, and reducing the number of empty homes.
 - **Reducing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping** – formerly called ‘Promoting independent living’, this theme has been renamed to reflect the fact that its fundamental aim is to reduce homelessness in the city. Elements of the old theme that are not directly linked to homelessness will be included within the health and housing or Age Friendly theme.
 - **Creating sustainable communities** – to create confident communities through effective management the neighbourhood environment and tackling anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and crime. Links to the Inclusive Growth Strategy will be identified within this theme.
 - **Improving health through housing** – promoting healthy lifestyles, reducing health inequalities, and supporting people to meet health needs through housing options. Links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be identified within this theme.
 - **Age Friendly Housing** – formerly ‘Meeting housing needs of older residents’, this theme seeks to ensure that the right housing options are available which allow older people to remain active and independent in their homes and communities.
- These themes we are proposing are broadly in line with those of the other Core Cities. It was considered whether the new strategy should include a theme directly addressing climate change and the role housing can play in reducing carbon emissions, but it was felt that this agenda is sufficiently embedded and considered in the six themes proposed above so a standalone theme is not necessary.
 - This report outlines the planned approach to reviewing the Leeds Housing Strategy. The strategy will be for the next five years, 2021-2026, to ensure that there continues to be a framework that guides the city in meeting the housing needs of all citizens. The planned approach will include the following:

October–December 2021 - Consultation and engagement phase:

Significant engagement took place with partners and Council teams on each theme of the 2016-21 Housing Strategy during 2018-19 via a series of Leeds Strategic Housing Partnership workshops. These workshops helped to identify a series of collaborative priorities and organisational commitments. In most cases these priorities remain very relevant and actions are underway to progress these commitments. The focus of this consultation and engagement phase will therefore be on reviewing whether there is any change to these priorities over the last couple of years. Consultation and engagement will take place via the following:

- An online workshop is planned for 16th November, to which a wide range of stakeholders both internal and external. Breakout sessions will be held to give stakeholders the opportunity to engage directly on particular themes.
- Discussions are taking place with Council’s Policy Network members and Directorate Leadership Teams to ensure that the Housing Strategy is closely aligned to other Council strategies and policy.
- As part of the Equality Impact Assessment, the city’s five Equality Hubs have been approached to ensure that consideration is given to the equality impacts of the strategy.

- The Health and Wellbeing Board will be considering the strategy at their December meeting.
- A website will be launched, via the Council's Your Voice Leeds portal which will offer the opportunity for citizens to provide input into the Housing Strategy. It will be publicised via the Council's social media channels and via email directly to Council tenants.

January 2022 – Collation and Drafting of the Housing Strategy

The outcomes of the consultation phase will be brought together, and a draft strategy produced.

February – April 2022 – Final Consultation and Scrutiny

- A workshop will be held with the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board in February to provide an update on the consultation and engagement phase and provide an opportunity for the Board to scrutinise the draft strategy priorities. A particular focus will be placed on the improving housing quality, reducing homelessness and rough sleeping and age friendly housing themes at the workshop.
- The draft strategy will be shared with the Leeds Strategic Housing Board for final comment.
- The draft strategy will be shared with Executive Board in April 2022 for final consideration and decision making.

May 22 onwards – Roll Out and Promotion of the Housing Strategy

- Once approved the updated Housing Strategy will be promoted across Council teams and with partners. The strategy will be published on the Leeds City Council website and promoted via social media.
- The Leeds Strategic Housing Board is overseeing the development of the new strategy and has approved the process that is being followed.
- The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board is asked to note that there is a separate review is currently underway of the Affordable Housing Delivery Plan. To prevent duplication of consultation and engagement the Housing Strategy Review will not include engagement on the 'Affordable Housing Growth' theme. This consultation will be undertaken as part of the review of the Affordable Housing Delivery Plan.

Recommendations

- a) The Scrutiny Board is asked to:
 - Note and comment on the proposed approach to reviewing the Housing Strategy.
 - Agree to hold a workshop with the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to consult in detail on key themes of the strategy in February 2022.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The current Housing Strategy was finalised in 2016 as a five-year strategy from 2016 to 2021.
- 2 Originally scheduled for review in 2020, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for the Council to meet the operational demands it brought has led to a delay in reviewing strategy.
- 3 Therefore, a review of the Strategy is now a priority area of work.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: All wards.

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 4 The condition of the city's housing stock, and the communities those homes are embedded in, have a huge role to play in the wellbeing of the city. Housing of a good standard helps to promote good health, mental and physical. Affordable housing helps to promote financial stability, which in turn aids good mental health. A good supply of affordable housing helps people to join the housing ladder, promoting inclusive growth.
- 5 The updated strategy will help the city to meet the 'Three Pillars' of delivering Inclusive Growth, improving the Health and Wellbeing of all our citizens, and tackling Climate Change. The city's Housing Strategy has a direct impact on each of these pillars.
- 6 The Council has an important role to play in providing good quality housing across the city, both in its role as a landlord and in its responsibilities in monitoring the condition of private sector rented housing. Whilst approximately 60% of the housing stock in the city is owner-occupied, this number is dropping over time and the proportion of privately rented housing is increasing. The Council is directly responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 54,000 properties.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 7 As outlined above, an online workshop is planned for 16th November to discuss the new Housing Strategy, that was attended by a wide range of stakeholders, both internal and external. This gave representatives from the housing sector and other stakeholders such as third sector organisations, universities, and the NHS the opportunity to have their input to the proposals.
- 8 The city's five Equality Hubs have been approached and meetings have been arranged to discuss the proposals with their members, to gain their input. This will form part of the wider Equality Impact Assessment that will be carried out. It is important that the Strategy is inclusive and considers the diversity of the city and its communities.

- 9 As part of the Council's Your Voice Leeds portal, developed to give an effective way of consulting with the citizens of Leeds, a Hub has been launched that looks at the Strategy update and seeks input from all the citizens of Leeds on the proposals. This consultation on the Strategy is being promoted across the Council's social media to all citizens and to tenants directly via their regular update email, to give all citizens of Leeds the opportunity to have their say.

What are the resource implications?

- 10 The Housing Strategy will help outline the city's housing priorities over the next five years, and as such will help the city to focus its resources on the city's biggest priorities and make sure efforts across all sectors are focused on the Key Pillars of delivering Inclusive Growth, improving the Health and Wellbeing of all our citizens, and tackling Climate Change.

What are the legal implications?

- 11 The Council has a range of statutory duties relating to housing, homelessness, and reviewing housing conditions. This strategy will assist the Council in meeting those duties.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 12 The main risk is that the updated Strategy fails to meet the housing needs of the city in the coming years in the areas it is considering. The Strategy's themes have a major impact across all the city's communities and all age groups. If the Strategy fails to reflect the needs of the city, then there is the risk that the development of housing in the city doesn't properly reflect the city's needs.
- 13 This risk is being managed by carrying out an extensive consultation and engagement exercise, that is aiming to get the input of the widest number of stakeholders, communities, and citizens as possible, to tailor a strategy that is robust and has the buy in from stakeholders across the city. The Leeds Strategic Housing Partnership will help to ensure continued engagement with the wider sector during the period of the updated Housing Strategy.
- 14 Another risk is that we do not finalise the Strategy within the planned timescales. This risk is being managed by putting in place a clear project plan to cover the consultation and decision-making phases. This plan will be overseen by the Leeds Strategic Housing Board.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 15 The city's Housing Strategy plays a key role in supporting the Council's Three Key Pillars as outlined earlier in the report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 16 None. It is important that the city's Housing Strategy is updated to reflect the current needs and demands of housing across the city.

b) How will success be measured?

17 Success will be measured by having a Strategy that is fit for purpose, is agreed by partners and stakeholders, and provides a framework for progress over the coming years. Success will see progress in the areas contained in the Strategy's themes and strategy targets being met. Ongoing progress in meeting the Housing Strategy priorities and targets will be monitored by the Leeds Strategic Housing Board.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

18 It is intended to that the Housing Strategy will be finalised for consideration by Executive Board in April 2022. Once finalised the strategy will be promoted across the Council, with key partners and published on the Council's website.

Appendices

19 None.

Background papers

20 None.