

**Housing and Community Safety Care Policy & Scrutiny
Committee**

22 July 2019

Report from the Executive Member for Housing & Safer
Neighbourhoods

Challenges/ambitions/priorities

Summary

1. There are many challenges and also opportunities in this portfolio area at present. Below is a summary of some of the key points. My approach is that ambitions should be high, whilst also recognising very clearly that there are no 'magic bullets' and I can make no promises to make changes overnight. I am very keen to work collaboratively with all relevant partners in the city including residents and look forward to working collaboratively with this policy and scrutiny committee to delve deeper into some challenging issues and engage constructively with recommendations for further action.

Influencing housing supply

2. **Challenges:** to begin to bridge the affordability gap between average incomes and average house prices in York, both to rent and to buy – and to provide sufficient, appropriate and affordable housing for everyone in the city.

Ambitions:

- For the Council to directly deliver as much high quality, sustainably built, affordable housing as possible – both Council housing and shared ownership, to meet everyone's needs (younger people, families, people with disabilities and older people).
- To explore whether the current Housing Delivery Programme can be expanded to additional sites and to maximise the proportion of affordable housing that can sustainably be delivered on each site.

- To explore other potential models of affordable housing delivery via CYC involvement, whether via partnerships with housing associations, support for community-led housing models or more innovative models such as community share issues/housing bonds or some kind of housing company - whilst maintaining the positive financial health of the Housing Revenue Account.
- To engage with the possibilities for achieving above Development Plan levels of affordable housing on key development sites in the city through innovative approaches.
- Work with Planning (within the statutory planning frameworks) to ensure our approach as a planning authority is maximising affordable housing delivery wherever possible via planning gain.

Priorities

- Ensuring the new Housing Delivery Programme – initially for 600 new homes with 40% affordable - gets off to a sound start both through delivering the first site at Lowfield as effectively as possible and through developing detailed forward plans for the next sites to come forward.
- A Design Guide to underpin the development of future sites is in the process of development. It will emphasise early consultation with local residents, quality of the overall development and sustainable building standards.
- Engaging with options for possible new sites that might fit in the programme.
- Ensuring that currently planned developments through the Older Person's Accommodation Programme are delivered effectively and then building on the work to be done this Autumn to establish a clear local needs assessment for older person's accommodation in York.
- Establishing greater clarity on the options for CYC (as outlined above) for delivering larger numbers of affordable dwellings than currently planned in the Housing Delivery Programme.
- Clarify the options for CYC influence on limiting the use of new build housing for short-term holiday lets and AirBnB.

Housing contribution to meeting zero carbon by 2030

3. **Challenges:** energy use in domestic housing accounts for more than 14% of the UK's climate emissions. A significant number of residents in York also suffer from fuel poverty and would benefit hugely from warm, low carbon homes and very low energy bills.

Ambition

- To ensure that all CYC direct build housing is built to the highest possible standards of energy efficiency, delivering very low energy bills for residents.
- To work in partnership with others to the same ends.
- To ensure that the Council's own homes achieve the highest possible standards of energy efficiency (see below).
- To examine all options for retrofit energy solutions in the private rented sector and for home owners.
- To ensure via the planning system that all new homes achieve the highest possible standards of energy efficiency.

Priorities

- To deliver a Design Guide for the Council's Housing Delivery Programme that is in keeping with our Climate Emergency objectives and that will help us to tackle fuel poverty in the city.
- Focus on starting to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's 7,500 properties. £1m of extra investment has been allocated to this in the July Interim Budget. Officers will be coming forward with further details on how this can be progressed in conjunction with £1m additional funding allocated to speeding up planned repairs and refurbishments as part of meeting the Decent Homes Standard.
- The emergency budget also includes some additional funding to speed up the production of Supplementary Planning Guidance on zero carbon building.

Meeting housing need, homelessness and complex needs

4. **Challenges:** We currently have 1,476 people on the housing waiting list. Whilst we have lower numbers of people officially presenting as homeless than in many other cities, homelessness is still a very

significant problem both for those who are experiencing it, those who fear they might experience it and for many other residents in York. Street homelessness is very visible and concentrated in our relatively small city centre. Lack of sufficient social rented housing combines with other issues (substance mis-use, changes to Probation) and a reduction in dedicated supported housing provision for people with complex needs to both fail to meet individual needs and have negative impacts on the wider community.

Ambition

- To ensure that whilst we continue with our successful preventative approach, we also ensure that we have sufficient emergency accommodation and sufficient temporary accommodation to meet needs in the city throughout the year.
- To better understand how the Council can work with city partners to help so-called 'entrenched' street sleepers and develop positive initiatives and alternatives to significantly reduce street homelessness.
- To better understand how we can most effectively provide for people with complex needs, whether street homeless or via other pathways – where the gaps in our service are – and how we can best work with partners to improve provision.
- To investigate the role of innovative strategies such as the extension of the Housing First approach and more 24/7 supported care facilities, as part of our wider homelessness strategy.

Priorities

- To fully understand the issues around street sleeping in York by engaging further with frontline service providers and service users.
- To further investigate potential responses to providing services more effectively for people with complex needs, including the options for integrating an extended use of Housing First and 24/7 supported accommodation into our wider strategies.
- To monitor levels of need for emergency and temporary accommodation and whether more is needed.

Managing our Council housing

5. **Challenges:** the Council is in a good position relative to many other authorities in that we still own 7,525 Council homes and our Housing Revenue Account is in a healthy financial situation. Our challenges are to ensure that every one of those properties is of a high standard, that both reactive repairs and planned repairs and refurbishments are carried out quickly and to a high standard and that the views of both tenants and leaseholders are fully taken into account in terms of housing and estate management.

Ambition

- To speed up reaching the Decent Homes Standard for all Council properties;
- To ensure that reactive and planned repairs are carried out as efficiently as possible;
- To increase the energy efficiency of Council homes as much as possible, thus reducing energy bills;
- To ensure that all tenants and leaseholders can communicate effectively with the Council about problems and are kept up to date and consulted about any changes planned for their homes or estate management.

Priorities

- To build on the Stock Condition Survey currently underway, combined with the introduction of the new housing management ICT system to take forward the ambitions above.
- Additional investment (in the interim budget) will kick start the process of combining energy efficiency measures with maintenance and refurbishment.
- Review tenant engagement processes and how these could be improved.

Influencing private sector housing

6. **Challenges:** naturally private sector housing is very varied in York but there are challenges with regard to high rents and a perception that a number of properties in the private rented sector, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) don't provide the standard of accommodation they should and sometimes have a negative impact on neighbours. Naturally there are limitations on how directly the Council can influence private sector housing but there are opportunities via advice and training for landlords, partnership working, funding streams (for example for energy efficiency) and the Council's licensing and standards functions.

Ambition

- To increase the supply of alternatives to private rented sector accommodation.
- To improve standards across the private rented sector, exploring all means at our disposal and working with partners to identify and tackle criminal activity.
- To improve energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector and in private owner occupier housing by maximising all possible funding streams (local, regional, national).
- To reduce the number of empty properties in York.

Priorities

- To continue to support the very successful adaptations work carried out by CYC which helps to keep people in their own homes
- To explore the options for additional HMO licensing
- To explore the potential to identify more funding for energy efficiency – private sector retrofit will be crucial in tackling the climate emergency – and would also mean warmer homes and lower energy bills
- To consider if some capacity to restore general access energy efficiency advice can be identified
- To consider the need for more capacity for tackling empty homes, including options for an up-to-date local audit of current empty homes.

Community safety

7. **Challenges:** Whilst York is still one of the safest cities in the country, recent crime figures have reported some increases and Anti-Social Behaviour is a concern for many residents. There are specific challenges around the city centre and the balance between residents, visiting families and hen and stag parties. At the same time Serious Organised Crime has taken more of an interest in York particularly through so-called 'county lines' which take advantage of vulnerable people in the community as a base for drug dealing, with very negative effects on the surrounding neighbourhood. Modern Slavery is also an increasingly important issue in York.

Ambition

- To work with others to support active communities across York which help to reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- To work via the Safer York Partnership with the police and other agencies to identify issues where we can make a difference.
- To work constructively in partnership with all stakeholders in the city centre and York residents to secure a positive future for our city centre.
- To improve Council responses to anti-social behaviour.

Priorities

8. To encourage effective use of the additional £250,000 in ward committee funding included in the Interim Budget for a Safer Neighbourhoods Fund to assist ward councillors in promoting a wide range of activities in their wards that will promote safer and inclusive neighbourhoods.
9. To encourage engagement with the wide-ranging public consultation on the future of the city centre, set to begin later in the year.
10. To ensure that progress on the implementation of counter-terrorism measures in the city centre, advised as necessary by the Security Services, is accompanied by continued engagement with disability groups and the development and implementation of plans to provide better provision for people with disabilities accessing the city centre.

11. To ensure that the additional funding in the interim budget to provide capacity for the Council's cleansing teams to remove graffiti from (public facing) private land is effectively implemented.

Cllr Denise Craghill,

July 2019

Executive Member for Housing and Safer Community