

Report to Full Council of the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods

Delivering new homes and affordable homes

Enabling and supporting the delivery of new homes, particularly new affordable homes is a key objective for the council. Officers have been doing this through a range of measures including continued support for the council's Housing Delivery Programme (HDP), working with local stakeholders such as housing associations and developers to maximise delivery in accordance with the emerging Local Plan, promoting the sale of small self-build sites and supporting community-led development and innovative housing schemes. Opportunities are also being developed to deliver new homes through refurbishing, repurposing and improving existing buildings.

Whilst the council's own Housing Delivery Programme cannot deliver all the new homes the city needs on its own, it is both making a significant contribution to the city's housing stock and leading the way in terms of setting the standards for new build homes that tackle climate change and provide high quality, accessible and adaptable living for residents. With a minimum of 40% affordable tenures and high levels of engagement with existing residents to inform the design of each site, the programme is delivering Passivhaus homes on zero carbon sites. A key feature is the commitment throughout the site design to supporting all aspects of low carbon lifestyles including transport, green spaces, design for play, sociability, inter-generational living and live/work options. This has earned the city a place as one of the United Nations Centres of Excellence on High Performing Buildings enabling us to share learning and research at a global level as we continue to develop ways of tackling the Climate Emergency and provide good homes for residents.

So far the Housing Delivery programme (600 homes over 8 sites) has:

- Progressed construction and sales at Lowfield Green;
- Supported community-led development at Lowfield Green, due to start on site very shortly
- Established a Self-Build Register and supported self-builders through the sale of small plots of council land;

- Secured planning permission at Burnholme and Duncombe Barracks and tendered the projects
- Progressed provision of affordable homes through the second hand shared ownership programme and begun to explore options for further extending this very successful programme;
- Obtained grant funding to provide more affordable homes through the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme;
- Obtained grant funding to support the Ordnance Lane project;
- Prepared a planning application and financial business case for the site at the Ordnance Lane and Hospital Fields Road site;
- Commenced design and viability work at York Central;
- Commenced public engagement, design and business case development work at Willow House and the South Walmgate Estate

The team continues to consider other sites for potential inclusion in the programme as well as whether there is potential for progressing development in other ways, for example through the sale of council land for developments with high proportions of affordable housing. So far this includes the 8 homes to be constructed by Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust on land off Fossway; sale of the Chaloners Court Garage site for self-build with £95k of supporting grant funding secured and the approved sale subject to business case of land at Tang Hall Library site for a shared home for 6 young adults with complex physical and mental health needs; and Morrell house for a community-led development to convert the building to rented apartments at below market rent (subject to business case). Preparations are also progressing for the acquisition into the HRA of the 20 new social rented homes that will be part of the Castle Mills development, subject to an Executive decision on whether to progress the development in the Spring.

By the end of 2021 the programme will have delivered 103 new affordable homes with 91 affordable homes due to commence construction in 2022 (including Castle Mills). It will have facilitated the commencement of construction of 25 self-build and community-led homes and attracted £7.5m of external grant funding. The Housing

Delivery Programme is being used by the Local Government Association as an example of best practice in their case studies for other councils.

In terms of new affordable housing across the city allocated Local Plan sites will be the key delivery mechanism along with windfall sites and conversions. Current analysis indicates a further 4,000 affordable homes can be provided via Local Plan sites during the Plan period with overall housing consents over the last 10 years steadily rising. The very recent approval of 302 new homes on the Cocoa West strategic site is a positive development with 36% affordable housing being delivered by the development arm of Clarion Housing Association (16% above the brownfield Plan requirement incorporating the popular shared ownership model).

Improving the quality and energy efficiency of existing homes

Energy Efficiency Retrofit

The capacity of the city's housing stock to meet housing needs can also be enhanced by improving the quality and standards of existing homes. The current steep increases in energy prices along with post-Covid pressures on household incomes for many people underline the need to tackle fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency and comfort of homes in the city. This objective aligns with the Climate Emergency and the fact that emissions from domestic properties account for around a third of York's locally generated carbon emissions.

Housing officers are producing an Energy Efficiency Retrofit Strategy to set out the actions needed to reduce emissions from the city's 90,000 dwellings. Meeting the energy efficiency challenge is a huge task and one that York, the same as other cities hasn't tackled before. The developing draft strategy went to Scrutiny in October for cross party discussion and input. Discussions are also taking place with experts and community partners such as York Community Energy and York Energy Advice and a draft strategy for consultation will come forward in the Spring.

Alongside the strategy development the council has been getting on with bringing in external funding wherever possible and delivering projects on the ground. This approach has helped to inform the development of the strategy; started to develop local skills and supply chains and a pipeline of work and is also establishing new staff capacity, knowledge and skills inside the council.

So far the council has secured just over £5m of Government funding for energy efficiency retrofit for works in the private rented, homeowner and social housing sectors – around 3 times the average per capita award across the country. A further bid for £280,000 to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund has been submitted which will be match-funded by £353,000 of council funding from the energy efficiency allocation in the Housing Revenue Account. By using match-funding carefully the council will be able to deliver energy efficiency improvements to 78 council homes whilst still retaining £1.2m of the previously allocated £2m HRA investment to use to draw in future funding.

Housing officers also collaborated with the Carbon Reduction Team to deliver a very successful event on decarbonising all types of buildings, bringing many stakeholders together during the recent York Business Week.

Private Rented Sector standards

The council's Private Sector Housing and Adaptations Team has been continuing with further work to improve energy efficiency standards in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and is a leading authority in this area of work. National Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) require a minimum EPC level of E for new tenancies. In March 2020 the council was awarded Government funding to be part of a pilot project to produce a national 'toolkit' to help local authorities enforce the regulations. This identified 300 non-compliant homes and helped 123 to improve their energy rating with an estimated £33,900 saved on energy bills. A further consortium bid leading 8 other councils in the region to extend this work through to 2022 has recently been successful and will help to develop a Northern MEES Forum to add value to energy efficiency work in the region.

The team continues to enforce overall housing standards regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation under the mandatory scheme for HMOs with 5 or more occupants and also responds to complaints raised by tenants in rented accommodation that is in poor condition and/or poorly managed. In 2020/21 170 inspections were carried out of newly licensed HMOs. 84 properties were found to be up to standard, 4 category 1 hazards were found (fire safety, crowding, fall hazard) and 103 category 2 hazards. 79 inspections were carried out of previously licensed HMOs due for renewal; 48 were up to standard and 1 category 1 hazard, 15 category 2 and 12 in breach of management regulations were found.

The first stage of a statutory consultation on extending additional licensing to HMOs with 3 or 4 occupants was carried out between 16th April and 27th June 2021. Whilst the outcome of the consultation demonstrated broad support for the proposals in principle it was decided to undertake a second round of consultation allowing respondents to consider the more detailed proposals that have now been formulated and offering those people likely to be affected by the proposals a further opportunity to make comments. A report on the outcome of the consultation will be considered by Executive later in the Spring.

The Adaptations Team continues to support adaptations and improvements to private and council housing where needed to enable people to continue living in their own homes, whether on discharge from hospital or in other circumstances. In 2019/20 over £1.8m of Disabled Facilities Grant was allocated to individuals for this purpose, rising to over £1.9m in 2020/21. Work costing less than £5k (eg. simple stair lifts, level access showers, some ramps etc) is not means tested and urgent needs are fast tracked wherever possible. Additionally the Falls Prevention Service continues to install smaller quick items such as grab rails and improved bannister rails to help prevent falls. A new dedicated OT (Occupational Therapy) post is now working to support council tenants including looking at how additional accessibility measures can be included in existing work programmes and to ensure that the new Housing ICT system will enable easy identification of accessible/adapted properties.

Housing for older people

The construction and capital property projects that make up the council's Older Person's Accommodation Programme have now been completed. The programme has delivered the refurbishment and extension of independent living accommodation at Lincoln Court, providing 35 accessible, modern and energy efficient homes with large communal spaces; the extension of Marjorie Waite Court extra care apartments with the development of 30 apartments, 4 bungalows, residents communal facilities, a community hall and a large community café and social area; the transfer of Haxby Hall care home to Yorkcare Homes with planning approval to modernise to provide specialist dementia care; and the procurement of a care home on the Burnholme Hub site which is now completed and open – the council has nomination rights for 25 beds at actual cost of care rates including nursing and dementia beds.

The programme has also conducted city wide research to determine how and where residents want to live in older age, which is now being used to inform projects across the city, working with social landlords, commercial developers and the council's own Housing Delivery Programme to help meet needs for housing for older people. The benefits of the programme include a net increase of 187 new, modern, accessible care home beds in the city and an increase of 285 extra care apartments with a further 50 with planning approval and others coming forwards. Covid has had and is still having a significant impact on the care sector and further work will be done to assess how this impacts on housing needs for older people.

Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness

Covid has clearly had a significant impact on the numbers of people in need of re-housing or on the verge of homelessness, as well as impacting on the council's approach to providing emergency, temporary and resettlement accommodation in order to remain Covid safe.

The council has continued to provide a high quality Housing Options Service and a nationally recognised advanced Resettlement Service with a major emphasis on preventing homelessness, as well as providing support and pathways for people who do become homeless to

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find their way back into settled tenancies and permanent accommodation.

Supporting rough sleepers

During Covid the homelessness team worked hard to ensure that everyone had a place to sleep which was safe and minimised the risk of infection. The preventative work being done by the council and its partners continues to keep the number of rough sleepers low, so that despite the continuing need to avoid the use of shared accommodation for emergency response this winter, there will still be sufficient capacity to ensure additional emergency winter beds are available for everyone in need – 14 additional winter beds will be available in council hostels with extended provision at Ordnance Lane currently providing 10 extra rough sleeper beds. The council's directly managed and commissioned hostels provide beds for up to a total of 115 people all year round.

The team has continued to successfully win Government funding to support rough sleepers and those in hostels/on the verge of rough sleeping back into settled accommodation. £560,000 Rough Sleeper Initiative funding supports a Rough Sleeper Coordinator, 4 'Housing Navigators', several mental health support workers and 2 Private Rented Sector Officers. This work has significantly reduced our rough sleeper numbers from 29 in 2017 to 3 last year. The rough sleeper count for 2021 took place in early December and has now officially been signed off as 4. Funding has also recently been secured along with Scarborough, Harrogate, Ryedale and Selby councils for a 12 month pilot to help ex-offenders access private rented accommodation.

Preventing homelessness

Currently, the number of requests for advice and help to the Housing Options Team has increased from around 80 per week pre pandemic to around 200 per week. Wherever possible housing advice will prevent homelessness. In 2019/20 the team achieved 294 successful homelessness preventions; in 2020/21 209 preventions and up to 3rd Dec 2021 132 preventions.

Housing waiting list

Despite prevention efforts the current economic situation, Covid, Brexit and inadequate Government Welfare Support are all combining to increase the pressure on the Housing Waiting List. In October 2021 the list had increased from 1,500 in 2019 to 2,000 with a backlog of over 500 new applications to be managed by the Housing Options Service.

In October 2021 an Action Plan was implemented by Housing Services in response to this situation and in the context of the forthcoming introduction of a major new ICT system throughout housing services and the switch from North Yorkshire Home Choice to a York Based lettings system, which will happen in the Spring. The Action Plan includes triage of all applications to focus on those most in need; a plan to ensure the most urgent cases receive new home offers during the down time between the transition from the existing IT and allocations policy to the new York based IT and allocations policy planned to 'go live' in April 2022; renewed efforts to recruit staff to fill vacancies and increasing the capacity of the lettings team; and providing regular information and advice to those who are currently in the lower priority band. Future policy work will look into the possible suitability of supporting some people categorised as lower priority into low cost home ownership (such as shared ownership) as an alternative to social housing (building on recent work on affordable housing carried out by Scrutiny).

The total number on the waiting list has now decreased to 1,800. However there are now 825 applications to be assessed meaning the Action Plan will continue to focus on this work.

Temporary accommodation

There is also an increased number of individuals and families who are vulnerable and with complex needs who require support to enable them to acquire and/or retain tenancies. Whilst we have 57 new purpose-built apartments housing up to 160 people at James House for families and other statutory homeless in need of temporary accommodation, post-

Covid pressures mean that this accommodation is now generally full. Crombie House has been re-opened on a temporary basis to provide additional supported family accommodation for up to 7 households, pending its later development as specialist supported accommodation for mental health needs.

Resettlement Accommodation and Complex Needs Housing

The council and its partners continue to operate resettlement accommodation in a number of houses with support that helps people move on from hostels into independent tenancies. However, the growing demand for housing with support for people with complex needs is a significant challenge. The council's new mental health housing pathway is now starting to become available and packages of wrap around support can be provided with Housing First places. The teams are also continuing to explore options for further increasing Housing First places working with partners across York. A total of 12 new Housing First placements are being put in place this year. Six additional properties for providing long term supported accommodation for people with complex mental health needs are currently being purchased following a successful funding bid.

Managing council homes and supporting tenants

The Covid pandemic has had significant impacts on the management of the council's 7,500 council homes as well as support to leaseholders. During the earlier lockdowns housing services staff focussed a great deal of effort on supporting vulnerable tenants, for example phoning the majority of tenants to check on their welfare. More recently they have been supporting tenants in financial difficulties and struggling to pay bills. Rent arrears have increased from £975k in March 2020 to £1.25m in October 2021. Along with many other sectors Housing Management has been facing recruitment problems and increasing demands for support.

As part of the Housing and Building Services Action Plan officers are triaging housing management work to focus on the most urgent issues

for customers e.g. letting new homes, progressing urgent moves, supporting people in financial difficulty and taking action on serious Anti-Social Behaviour. Work has also been continuing on Tenant Engagement as far as Covid has permitted (for example, the production of a new Tenant and Leaseholder newsletter 'Open Door') and tenant engagement will be a key focus for future work, alongside plans to review the delivery of Housing Management Services so as to ensure that Housing Management Officers are able to support our tenants as effectively as possible.

Repairs

Covid and other pressures outlined above have also led to a significant backlog of work on routine repairs, planned repairs and voids (empty council properties waiting to be relet). During the first Covid lockdown and summer months of 2020 a backlog built up of around 6,000 routine repairs and maintenance jobs that couldn't be done due to Covid. This was made worse in July/Sept this year by a big surge in demand as Covid restrictions eased combined with housing repairs staff being significantly impacted by Covid and the need to self-isolate. In October the surge in demand for repairs also resulted in up to a third of tenant phone requests being missed. The planned maintenance programme (roofing, kitchens, bathrooms, standing water programme) was off-site for 5 months during lockdowns with additional time needed to get back on site in a Covid safe way.

The Housing and Building Services Action Plan instigated in October included triaging repairs to prioritise emergencies, procuring additional contractor support for planned maintenance, prioritising internal staff to housing maintenance away from traded schools work and focussing those teams on reactive repairs to prevent any further backlog; providing additional staff to handle customer calls and additional staff capacity to manage contractors; and communicating as much as possible the situation to tenants. At present the triage approach is working as planned and target times for emergency repairs are being met. It is estimated that the backlog of repairs will take several months to resolve. The additional staff capacity for taking calls is still in place. In the fairly

near future it is hoped that the new ICT system will enable tenants to log and track their own repairs and book a convenient timeslot.

Voids

The impacts on repairs services have been one of the factors in the increased number of voids, which in turn of course has had an impact on the housing allocations and temporary accommodation system. This has been treated as a key priority as part of the Housing and Building Services Action Plan with a piece of parallel strategic work on how to better manage voids in future also being undertaken. The Action Plan included procuring several different additional contractors to bring void properties back into a lettable state and putting in place additional voids management capacity and a dedicated Voids Coordinator. The number of voids peaked at 171 a few weeks ago and is now down to 120 and continuing to move in the right direction. The 51 properties so far made available are helping to relieve pressures for those in the most acute housing need. Of the 120 remaining voids 57 are in the general voids process whilst 32 are in need of major works before they can be relet. A further 31 are held back for a planned refurbishment programme starting next year or are in extra care schemes where tenants need a care support offer around their tenancy. The current care staff market is very overstretched nationally and we will consider short term options in the New Year.

Community Safety

Anti-Social Behaviour

The council's Neighbourhood Enforcement Team continues to work in partnership with the police as part of the Community Safety Hub. Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers work across 3 geographic patches to align with North Yorkshire Police's neighbourhood policing boundaries with a remit to tackle environmental crime and low level anti-social behaviour including domestic noise nuisance, fly tipping, litter, dangerous dogs and nuisance behaviour associated with the city centre. Enforcement Action can range from issuing a fixed penalty notice

through to prosecution. The team are also able to issue Community Protection Notices in response to persistent ASB. In 2020/21 108 warnings and 3 notices were issued following a written warning. In 2020/21 partly as a result of Covid a particularly high number of noise related warning letters were issued (689) with 23 noise abatement notices. In 2020, 2721 complaints of noise were received compared to 2376 pre-covid in 2019. In 2021, 2547 complaints had been received between January and November and the year is not yet complete. In general the principle of the council's approach to enforcement is to educate, encourage and warn before moving to formal enforcement and this continues to be effective whilst perpetrators are aware that formal enforcement will and has been taken where necessary.

High Risk Anti-Social Behaviour

The Community Safety Hub is developing a new approach to the most serious ASB through more closely aligning its work with the York City Centre and York Outer ASB multi-agency meetings. Closer working with housing officers is being developed so that more serious cases can be escalated earlier to the Hub.

Serious Organised Crime

Fortnightly intelligence meetings take place with the NYP Intelligence Unit, Neighbourhood Policing Teams, CYC Legal, Childrens Social Care and Community Safety. These focus on exploitation and county lines/drugs activity and are supported by a proactive approach to intelligence gathering. The forcewide Serious Organised Crime Board continues to meet quarterly, supported by a Disruption Panel focused on disrupting organised crime groups across the districts and city.

In recent months there have been a number of very serious instances related to the exploitation of vulnerable people with potential links to alcohol, drugs and organised crime. Lessons learned processes are still underway and I am having further discussions with the Police Commander for York and Selby and the council's Head of Community Safety about future approaches to policing particularly in the central areas of York and the potential to further improve the effectiveness of

multi-agency working involving an appropriate wide range of agencies in this very important issue for the city.

Domestic Abuse

Public Health now lead on the council's response to Domestic Abuse. In keeping with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 a new draft York and North Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy has been drafted and is currently out for consultation with the final strategy to be published by 5th January 2022. The intention is for this to be a 12 month strategy pending incorporation of safe accommodation into a new Domestic Abuse Strategy focussing on city ward partnership working, prevention and strengthening support for victims of abuse.. A new Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board for the City of York is also being established via a paper to Executive this month.

Financial Inclusion

As a result of Covid the council's Financial Inclusion work has become even more crucial than ever in order to support our residents who are struggling the most financially. This is both through emergency funding direct to those who need it most via the York Financial Assistance Scheme and other hardship funds and through working with partners to support and fund advice services and projects which can help residents manage and improve their financial situation and access employment and a more resilient financial position.

Early in the pandemic an additional amount of £1 million was added to the York Financial Assistance annual budget of £200k. It has been used to both directly supplement payments to individuals and to support other initiatives to tackle the immediate impacts of Covid including support for free school meals during school holidays when Government funding has been lacking. YFAS payments help mainly with emergency food and fuel costs as well as items such as white goods which enable people to stay or move into the community. Support for essential access to mobile phones and internet connectivity is also included.

The council also provides Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments and has been responsible for distributing the Government's Covid Support funding to those most in need to help with

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food, energy and water bills. Through the Local Covid Support Grant we provided funding for free school meal vouchers and other related school activities throughout school holidays in 2021 as well as one off payments to Council Tax Support claimants with dependent children under 18, as well as other York residents in need of assistance and with minimal savings. In addition through the CTS Hardship Scheme each resident on CTS has received a £75 contribution to their council tax in 21/22. Further Government funding of £1m to support families through the winter was belatedly announced at the end of October. The Household Support Fund (HSF) is being distributed in a similar way to the local covid support grant with two payments (December & Feb) been made directly to residents on CTS and other welfare benefits along with an open application process for all residents. In addition there is a fuel voucher scheme that will see vouchers distributed in partnership with local energy efficiency advice givers.

The first HSF payments were issued w/c 6th December both direct payments and one off applications. There were 2,634 payments to individual families with a value of £370k paid directly into their bank accounts.

The Financial Inclusion Steering Group has continued to oversee a great deal of networking and partnership working, as well as awarding over £113,000 of funding to 7 projects for 2021/22 to support residents struggling with financial challenges. These included advocacy for older residents; financial literacy training and support for homeless people; advice delivered through GP surgeries; employment skills and training for over 50s; and training for financial advice workers. A detailed six monthly report on the council's financial inclusion provision is going to the Executive Member for Finance and Performance Decision Session on 13th December.