

Executive

30 June 2016

Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Portfolio of the Executive Leader, Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods

## **Review and Refresh of the York Private Sector Housing Strategy**

### **Summary**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Executive about the outcomes of the previous Private Sector Strategy 2008 -13 and to seek approval of the refreshed strategy and action plan which has taken into account :
  - a) The new evidence base for private sector stock from the Building Research Establishment (BRE) including Health Impact Assessment
  - b) The recent government consultation on extending HMO licensing and our response to that consultation as well as our proposed approach towards HMO licensing and the review of the city wide accreditation scheme
  - c) Comments and views made by the steering group, Scrutiny Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016 and from the wider consultation.

### **2. Recommendations**

Executive are asked to:

- Approve option one and sign off the Private Sector Housing Strategy and action plan
- Reason: To use the most up to date evidence base to ensure that the strategy focuses on the issues which cause the most impact on the health of the occupant and that private sector rented housing in York continues to be maintained and managed to a high standard.

## Background

3. Since 2003 York has had a 5 year Private Sector Strategy. The strategy focuses on the largest housing sector in the city, which forms 86% of the total housing stock. It is developed with the input of a Steering Group, internal and external partners and uses the evidence base provided by stock condition surveys to identify areas of work. Other areas of work such as housing development work are picked up in the wider housing strategy.
4. The 2008-13 Key achievements of the strategy were
  - For home owners: following the removal of private sector renewal funding in 2010 we have focused on expanding the role of the Age UK York Home Service Directory and the provision of advice and assistance to the most vulnerable homeowners to help them maintain their homes including the provision of a limited number of loans funded through the recycling of grant/loans. The most recent being the development of the new Energy Repayment Loan due to be launched in Summer 2016
  - For landlords and tenants: the making of an Article 4 direction to control and manage the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) across the city and the renewal of the Mandatory HMO licence scheme to ensure that the HMOs are safe to live in. The introduction of the accreditation scheme **YorProperty** just before Christmas 2013 aimed to raise standards throughout the private rented sector by recognising landlords who provide well managed and well maintained properties. The introduction and growth of the **YorHome** Social Lettings Agency also aims to help residents access the private rented sector.
  - For the most vulnerable residents: an increasing number of residents have been helped to access the disabled facilities grant. A direct comparison of the same period under the previous strategy (2003- 2008) saw nearly 37.8% more residents helped to remain safe and independent at home, this was complimented by the expansion of the York Handyperson scheme.
  - For all residents: the introduction of the separate Empty Property Strategy has enabled the council to maximise the amount of funding

through the New Homes Bonus and resulted in the council obtaining its first compulsory purchase order in recent years.

- Partnership work has resulted in successful funding bids for example;
  - a) Two successful Warmer Homes Healthy People Fund bids (Age UK York/Yorkshire Energy Partnership/Public Health).
  - b) Fuel Poverty Fund bid led by York on behalf of York and North Yorkshire enabled more than 200 energy efficient boilers to be installed, by the Yorkshire Energy Partnership, in vulnerable residents' homes across York and North Yorkshire.
  - c) There have been several schemes in York which have seen an improvement in the energy efficiency of private sector homes with the aim of reducing carbon emissions and fuel poverty in the city. The most significant recent ones being:
    - a. More than 1600 private homes insulated under the Wrapping up York Scheme 2012-13.
    - b. 2012/13 also saw the completion of the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) in the Hull Road area of the city. The following measures were installed across all tenures

Scheme	Loft	Cavity	Solid Wall	Heating	PV panels
CESP	221	19	30	47	32

- c. The Warming up York scheme (DECC funding) helped 31 homeowners to install external solid wall insulation.
- d. Launch of the collective switch in spring 2013 helped over 1000 residents to switch to energy suppliers offering cheaper tariffs. This has helped more than 1000 households in York save an estimated £200,000 off their energy bills.

## Refresh of the Strategy

5. The refresh of the 5 year Private Sector Housing Strategy was delayed in March 2013 as officers were concerned that the proposed strategy was based on aging evidence, namely the Private Sector Stock Condition survey 2008.
6. In July 2015 the council was in a position to commission the BRE to provide two key reports giving the new evidence base.
  - a) On the condition of the private sector housing stock- For the full report see information on the website
  - b) To provide a Health Impact Assessment of poor housing conditions in terms of their effect on occupiers and visitors- For the full report see information available on the website
7. These reports were commissioned at the same time as other Leeds City Region Councils. The report was received in December 2015.
8. We have used the new evidence base to draft a new strategy and action plan with Partners (see appendix A and B) and there is a now a stronger emphasis on the impact of poorer housing on the health of occupants.
9. In line with previous strategies we have outlined a number of aims and objectives which seek to maintain and improve the condition of private homes (across the owner- occupied and the private rented sector) which forms nearly 85% of the city's total housing stock. The new objectives are:
  - Encourage and support owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards
  - Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards. Inform and support tenants around what they can expect
  - To allow people whose independence may be at risk, remain safely in or return to their home
  - Maximise use of the existing housing stock to increase the supply of decent affordable homes
  - Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty

## Consultation

10. The steering group of Partners has met to consider the new evidence base to develop the new strategy and action plan
11. The strategy and the action plan were also considered at Scrutiny committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. The members were broadly supportive of the strategy but asked that further consideration was given to enhance the policy in particular in relation to objective 2 of the strategy relating the private rented sector.
12. A wider consultation capture views from others including the private rented sector e.g. Landlords, Landlord Association, tenants, other stakeholders and residents concluded on 20<sup>th</sup> May. **A list of who was consulted is attached in Appendix C.** The Feedback from the consultation was disappointing with only five responses.
13. Two of the five responses supported the strategy one was from a homeowner and second from the York Green party; The green party did suggest amendments about objective 2 and 5 and in particular in relation as to how we can better use enforcement powers to tackle conditions in the private rented sector and how we can better prepare landlords for the changes due to be implemented in 2018 regarding renting inadequately insulated and heated homes. We have accepted these comments and amended the strategy and action plan to clarify our approach.
14. The other three responses were from the representatives from the private rented sector and were less supportive, two of the responses were from landlords, the first advising that they hadn't been contacted as part of the research and the second advising that most landlords are very good and that they don't need further regulation. The remaining one was from a private tenant asking the strategy to consider looking at issues beyond the safety of the home and consider the availability of longer term rental contracts. This latter aim although not explicit in the strategy is part of our ongoing work via schemes such as YorHome.

## Options

15. There are two options which Executive are being asked to consider.

- Option 1 – To approve the refreshed strategy and action plan as set out in appendix one
- Option 2 – Not to approve the refreshed strategy and action plan as set out in appendix one

## Analysis

16. Option 1 – This recognises the recent research carried out by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). A full copy of the evidence is available but the key evidence is -
  - A) Around 86 per cent of York's 87,507 homes are in the private sector, which equates to 72,814 dwellings. This includes 58,999 owner occupied (80 per cent of private sector) and 15,906 rented from a private landlord (20 per cent of private sector).
  - B) Of these, 11,444 dwellings in the private sector have a category 1 hazard, most commonly excess cold or a fall hazard, which equates to 15 per cent of dwellings.
  - C) That nearly a third of these category 1 hazards are in the private rented sector.
  - D) That the highest concentrations of all hazards and fuel poverty are concentrated in the Guildhall, Micklegate and Clifton Ward
  - E) The total cost of mitigating these is estimated to be £24.2 million, while the estimated cost to the NHS of treating accidents and ill-health caused by these hazards is £2.3m each year and the wider costs to society £5.7m.
17. It outlines plans to work closely with partners and residents to tackle poverty and disadvantage and to ensure that homes are healthier for their occupants focusing on area approaches and how we can raise standards in the Private Rented Sector.
18. It recognises feedback from scrutiny which in particular highlighted the HMO element within the private rented sector. Our approach will be to await the outcome of the national government's response to the consultation to extend licensing of HMOs to smaller HMOs. Dependant on the outcome we will seek to review our approach to the whole HMO sector including the efficacy of the current voluntary accreditation scheme.
19. Option 2 – Without a refreshed strategy and action plan it is unclear how the council and partners will continue to tackle the key issues outlined by the BRE report.

## Council Plan

20. The Private Sector Housing Strategy ties in to the three key priorities for the council

- **a prosperous city for all** - where local businesses can thrive and residents have good quality jobs, housing and opportunities
- **a focus on frontline services** - to ensure all residents, particularly the least advantaged, can access reliable services and community facilities
- **a council that listens to residents** - to ensure it delivers the services they want and works in partnership with local communities

## Implications

21.

- **Financial** –None
- **Human Resources (HR)** –None
- **Equalities** – attached is the Community Impact Assessment (Appendix D)
- **Legal** –None
- **Crime and Disorder** –None
- **Information Technology (IT)** –None
- **Property** –None
- **Other**–None

## Risk Management

22. There are no risks associated with this report

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**

**Date** 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### Background Papers:

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Proposals Regarding the Introduction of a Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme in York – report to Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012  
“YorProperty” – The Introduction of a Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme in York – report to Cabinet Member 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
Approval steps for additional and selective licensing designations in England – DCLG Guidance Document  
Relevant research documents and details relating to specific schemes – details available from the author on request  
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2008  
Findings of York Private Rented Sector Consultation Oct/Nov 2014  
Controlling the Concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document Review – report to Cabinet 7<sup>th</sup> January 2014  
Called-in item Pre- Decision: Private Sector Housing Strategy

### Annexes

Appendix A Proposed Private Sector Housing Strategy  
Appendix B Proposed Action plan – *available online only*  
Appendix C Consultation – *available online only*  
Appendix D Community Impact Assessment – *available online only*  
*Copies available on request from report author*



## **Abbreviations**

BRE – Building Research Establishment

CESP – Community Energy Saving Programme

DECC – Department of Energy & Climate Change

HMO – Houses in Multiple Occupation

NHS – National Health Service