

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

19 March 2024

Housing Strategy: 2024-2029

Report of the Corporate Director: Community Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To approve the North Yorkshire Housing Strategy for adoption by Full Council.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 In September 2023, the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing gave approval for officers to undertake a programme of public consultation on the draft Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 for North Yorkshire.

2.2 This report provides details of the feedback from respondents to the consultation and the amendments that have been made to the strategy, following the consultation. The amended strategy is included (**Appendix A**) with this report. In addition, a summary of the consultation feedback is also included (**Appendix B**) with this report.

2.3 This report seeks approval for the strategy to be taken to Full Council for adoption.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Following Local Government Reorganisation, the Council is now responsible for the delivery of the full range of housing services across the county. To meet the diverse housing needs of North Yorkshire and deliver the housing services, the Council must have in place a Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy sets out the objectives, targets, and policies for how the Council will manage and deliver its housing service over the next few years

3.2 Work to develop the draft Housing Strategy was undertaken in 2022/23. The draft strategy recognised the range of both key housing challenges and opportunities that would face the Council. As a result, a draft strategy was developed which set out the Council's vision for housing action and investment across three key themes: People, Places and Homes.

3.3 To take the strategy forward, a programme of consultation was required with key partners, stakeholders, and the wider community to ensure that the final strategy would address the challenges and meet our aspirations. It also ensured that the strategy would be relevant, ambitious, and deliverable.

4.0 OUR ASPIRATIONS

4.1 A wide range of housing aspirations and opportunities that we wish to take forward over the next five years have been identified and are reflected within the proposed strategy. As a stock holding council with over 8,300 homes, there is the opportunity to increase the number of Council homes that we own and manage. The HRA (Housing Revenue Account)

Business Plan has recently been approved and, through the HRA, there is an ambition to deliver 500 new Council homes over the next five years.

- 4.2 Apart from the ambition to deliver new Council Homes, a wide range of aspirations and opportunities have been identified, which include:

Housing Development

- Engagement with the York and North Yorkshire Housing Partnership of over 20 Registered Providers operating locally, with a collective vision to develop at least 800 new affordable homes per annum across North Yorkshire
- The development of more quality Temporary Accommodation for the homeless; work to take this forward has recently commenced

Improving our stock and housing standards

- A detailed draft improvement plan for our own stock, in order to meet the new Social Housing regulatory requirements
- A whole suite of new policies, which are in the process of being developed, or have already been approved (e.g. Allocations Policy)
- Benchmarking our performance against other councils for the first time and use of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which form part of the new regulatory standards
- Bidding for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund resources

Improving the whole housing stock

- Levying of additional Council Tax premium on second homes and long-term empty homes, which will generate extra funding to support key housing priorities
- Improving the Private Rented Sector through the recent Selective Licensing designation, our on-going and future work around regulation, the Pathfinder Programme and taking forward the findings of the assessment of the sector to help inform our future approach
- The development of a countywide Home Improvement Agency (HIA) and Handyperson Service, which will support people to live independently in their own homes
- The successful bid for Sustainable Warmth Funding to support the retrofitting of homes in the private sector

- 4.3 To meet these aspirations and opportunities, the whole housing service is in the process of being restructured, which will bring the seven legacy housing services into one and create the framework and structure to help us deliver our strategic housing ambitions. The restructure is due to be completed by April 1st.

5.0 STRATEGY: VISION AND THEMES

- 5.1 The strategy has the following vision statement:

“Our vision is to ensure good quality, affordable, healthy and sustainable homes that meet the present and future needs of all our communities”.

- 5.2 The strategy is based across three key themes: “Our People”, “Our Places” and “Our Homes”

- 5.3 **Our People:** The strategy has identified the following priorities for this theme:

- Preventing and tackling homelessness
- Recognising the needs of our population at different life stages
- Meeting supported housing needs and the needs of specific groups

- 5.4. **Our Places:** The strategy has identified the following priorities for this theme:
- Growing the supply of affordable and available housing
 - Addressing the rural housing crisis
 - Supporting communities through neighbourhood renewal and regeneration
- 5.5 **Our Homes:** The strategy has identified the following priorities for this theme:
- Decarbonising the whole housing stock, including our Council homes, making them more energy efficient and affordable to live in, reducing fuel poverty.
 - Ensuring that new housing supply of all tenures contributes to our net zero ambitions.
 - Addressing stock condition issues, improving poor quality housing in all tenures.
 - Ensuring that our Council homes meet the decent homes standard and management of our stock is fully compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.

6.0 ACTION PLANS

- 6.1 Each of these themes will be underpinned by a detailed action plan; these are in the process of being developed. The action plans will detail how we intend to meet the key priorities, who will we need to involve and by when. These will be subject to regular monitoring and review.
- 6.2 The action plans will also include a delivery plan, which will set out how we intend to meet our aspiration to deliver 500 new Council homes over the next five years.

7.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 7.1 The consultation took place over 10 weeks from 2 October to 11 December 2023. To deliver the consultation, we developed a communications and engagement plan to help us raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation in the survey. The plan identified the external and internal audiences that we would target.
- 7.2 The consultation comprised of an on-line survey, which asked key questions about the strategy, including about the proposed themes and key priorities. There was also a free text box for additional comments from respondents. It also included engagement with key partners and stakeholders, through a range of forums, meetings and conferences including:
- North Yorkshire wider partnerships conference
 - York and North Yorkshire Housing Partnership
 - York and North Yorkshire Housing Board
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Our housing tenants and leaseholders
 - Town and Parish Councils
 - Members Seminar
 - Care, Independence and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 7.3 Communication of the consultation was via a range of different channels as follows:
- Our website
 - Media releases
 - Our digital resident's newsletter: Your North Yorkshire (October edition)
 - Social media
 - Our internal digital news bulletin
 - Internal communication with all NYC directorates
- 7.4 A midpoint review of the consultation identified lower response rates in some parts of North Yorkshire and amongst some demographic groups compared with others. Targeted social

media posts were sent out to help raise the response rate from these locations and identified groups.

8.0 CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

- 8.1 A total of 499 responses to the on-line survey were received and a further 30 qualitative responses were submitted by various organisations and interest groups.
- 8.2 Analysis of the responses identified several areas in which we have sought to strengthen and improve the strategy. These are summarised below in respect of the vision and key themes.
- 8.3 **Vision:** Nearly 71% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the vision for the strategy. However, analysis of feedback indicated that it could be strengthened by referencing health, and present and future need. As a result, it was proposed that the vision for the strategy be amended as follows:
“Our vision is to ensure good quality, affordable, healthy and sustainable homes that meet the present and future needs of all our communities.”
- 8.4 **Our People:** Just over 60% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that we had the right priorities for People. Feedback indicated that we needed to:
- Greater emphasis on the needs of younger people, families, and first-time buyers
 - Priority given to the need for accessible and adaptable housing to enable people to stay living in their own homes at different life stages
 - Clarity provided in terms of meeting the needs of specific groups and how the Housing Strategy interfaces with other emerging strategy documents, such as the Supported Housing Strategy
 - An understanding of the needs of current and future council tenants
- 8.4 **Our Places:** Almost 64% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we had the correct priorities for Places. Feedback indicated that we needed to:
- Understand our housing markets; there needs to be a comprehensive assessment of housing need across NY (not just the Local Plan area)
 - Focus on quality of place over the quantity of homes delivered
 - Contextualise housing growth within the wider strategic agenda (NYC’s Economic Growth Strategy, the Mayoral Combined Authority’s Economic Framework and YNY Strategic Place Partnership)
 - Emphasise the need to attract and retain working age households
 - Ensure that new homes are accessible and adaptable to accommodate residents’ needs throughout their lives
 - Emphasise the ‘best use of existing stock’ (empty homes, regeneration, conversion of redundant commercial, brownfield development)
 - Prioritise ‘quality in place’ and set out the role of the YNY Housing Partnership in driving change and meeting housing needs
- 8.5 **Our Homes:** 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that we had the right priorities for Homes. Feedback indicated that we needed to:
- Strengthen ambition, targeting EPC C for our own stock with a long-term plan for EPC A/B for existing Council homes, and newly built homes being EPC A where possible
 - Implement the new HRA Business Plan
 - Ensure that Council homes meet the decent homes standard, and that the management of our housing stock is fully compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing’s standards
 - Emphasise the need for the quality of new homes in terms of design, EPC rating, and accessibility to be addressed through the new Local Plan

- Maximise external funding opportunities to improve standards in the PRS (Private Rental Sector) and decarbonise homes across all tenures

8.6 The Housing Strategy has been amended to reflect this feedback in respect of the Vision and the respective Themes.

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

9.1 Within the Council Plan 2023 to 2027, ‘*good quality, affordable and sustainable housing that meets the needs of our communities*’ is listed as a key ‘Place and Environment’ priority; the Housing Strategy also supports other ambitions and priorities within the Council Plan, not least the aim to ensure that North Yorkshire is ‘*a clean, environmentally sustainable and attractive place to live, work and visit*’; decarbonisation of our homes is central to this.

9.2 Similarly, supporting communities through neighbourhood renewal and regeneration actively contributes to the Council priority for supporting communities and working together to improve their local area.

9.3 The Housing Strategy also actively contributes to our “Health and Wellbeing” ambition. It is well documented nationally that there are close correlations between housing and health and our ambitions around improving the quality of the housing stock across all tenures will deliver improved health outcomes. In addition, our ambitions around ensuring more accessible and adaptable new housing will also have positive health outcomes.

9.4 The Housing Strategy also actively contributes to our “Economy” ambition. Sustainable housing growth has a direct and positive influence on economic growth, by bringing in significant levels of investment into North Yorkshire. More specifically, the strategy seeks to address the housing needs of more economically active younger households and families in North Yorkshire, which would support economic sustainability.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10.1 **Do Nothing:** The lack of a housing strategy would potentially result in delivering a series of more ad-hoc uncoordinated actions, which may not meet identified needs and key housing challenges. It would also mean that there would be no consultation with key partners, stakeholders, and other parties to help shape our approach. We would not be making best use of our resources.

10.2 **Utilise the previous district and borough council strategies:** This would result in a disjointed approach as the previous legacy council strategies were concentrated on meeting the needs of those localities and would not address the wider needs of North Yorkshire. Not all localities had a dedicated housing strategy. The pre-existing strategies were also on different timescales to each other, with some due to end soon, which would necessitate new strategies for those individual localities to be developed.

10.3 **Undertake an initial short-term review:** This approach was considered as an option to undertake over an initial period of 2 years, prior to developing a longer-term strategy once the new council was properly established. However, a considerable amount of background work had already been undertaken to develop a North Yorkshire Housing Strategy prior to Local Government Reorganisation, which meant that this option was not required. In addition, the proposed strategy will be subject to a review after three years

11.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

11.1 The strategy outlines the key partnerships and wider strategic alignments, which will be crucial to ensuring the successful delivery of the strategy. Within the Council itself, the

alignment is especially crucial with Planning in terms of the Local Plan. Equally, there will be strong relationships with Economic Development in terms of alignment with the Economic Growth Strategy, and with Health and Adult Services in terms of taking a holistic approach to meeting supported housing needs and the needs of a wide range of specific groups. Finally, there is a strong link to the Council's Climate Change Strategy in respect of achieving our wider Net Zero ambitions through decarbonisation and energy efficiency improvements.

- 11.2 Externally there are crucial relationships with partners such as the Mayoral Combined Authority in terms of developing a wider Housing Investment Plan across the devolved authority. Allied to this are the relationships with both Homes England and Registered Partners through the York and North Yorkshire Housing Partnership in terms of delivering new affordable housing and the Housing Investment Plan. The relationships with the two National Parks are also crucial in addressing the rural housing crisis and delivering affordable housing in the National Parks.

12.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no immediate financial implications in respect of adopting the Housing Strategy and its priorities. Delivery of the strategy, action plans and individual projects will have budgetary implications which will be assessed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- 12.2 In January 2024, the Executive agreed the HRA Business Plan which allows significant investment into the HRA stock.

13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 In carrying out the public consultation and giving consideration to the feedback received the Council is seeking to ensure that its decision making is open, transparent, and fair.

14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 We have undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (**Appendix C**). The assessment identified that the strategy would have no negative equalities implications. However, it did identify that there would be some positive equalities implications in terms of age, disability, households living in rural areas and low-income households.

15.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 We have undertaken a Climate Change Impact Assessment (**Appendix D**). The assessment identified that there would be positive climate change implications in respect of emissions from travel and from the running of buildings. It also identified a positive climate change implication in terms of enhanced resilience to the effects of climate change.
- 15.2 The assessment did identify one potential negative implication in respect of the emissions from construction of new homes. However, the strategy also outlines a range of measure to mitigate against this, including the use of low carbon methods of construction, an aim to achieve the highest possible energy efficiency standards for new homes, and making use of existing stock/buildings/brownfield land where feasible.

16.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 The Housing Strategy will be a new strategy document for the Council and will require Full Council approval to be adopted.

17.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1 The Housing Strategy has been subject to a broad consultation exercise; responses to the consultation have resulted in a sharper more focussed Housing Strategy that is fit for purpose. The Strategy sets the priorities for both the Council's Housing Service and its partnership working going forward.

18.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

The recommendations for Executive are as follows:

- i) Consider the detailed consultation that was undertaken on the draft Housing Strategy, along with the analysis of the feedback and the consequent revised Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029.
- ii) Bring forward a report to Full Council recommending the adoption of the North Yorkshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – North Yorkshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029

Appendix B – Summary of consultation feedback

Appendix C - Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix D - Climate Change Impact Assessment

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Northallerton

19 March 2024

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.