



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 12.01.21

To the Chair and Members of Cabinet

HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE - 2020-2025

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Cllr Glyn Jones	All	Yes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Since the approval of Doncaster's 'Housing Strategy 2015 to 2025', there have been significant changes in the external strategic environment, which have shifted the context on which the Strategy's objectives were based. Key societal changes that influence our approach to housing include the response to climate change, a greater awareness of the importance of housing on health, and major changes in the usage of town centres.

Significant progress has been made since 2015, however some issues remain and new issues have emerged, requiring increased focus and energy to address. This update of the Housing Strategy has refreshed the Strategy's Vision and Aims to reflect the current strategic environment and highlight responses to prominent issues. It also incorporates the learning from studies, needs assessments and other strategies undertaken since 2015.

This report presents the draft updated Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025, for approval. Once approved, a public facing, fully designed version and summary of the document will be developed and launched in early 2021.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not exempt

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that
 - I. The draft updated Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025 be approved
 - II. Following approval, a strategy communication and launch plan be developed, including graphics and design of a publication version of the strategy and executive summary

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Our homes have a powerful influence on health and wellbeing, and enabling access to a good home for everyone is one of the most effective ways of improving the wellbeing of our population. A healthy home is stable and secure, in good repair, warm, comfortable, and free from hazards. Poor quality housing results in a range of physical and mental health problems. Having a healthy, stable housing situation can provide the foundation for people to thrive, remain independent for as long as possible and contribute to their community and society

During 2020, people spent more time in their own homes than they normally would expect to and the quality, stability and security of their home has had an even greater impact than usual. There is evidence of links between housing and the unequal impacts on people of COVID-19, for example, related to overcrowded housing or to homes with no access to private open space. There is also uncertainty around the full impact of the post-Covid recession on household budgets and the wider economy.

Updating the Housing Strategy at this point enables the Council and its partners to refocus resources and efforts. This includes a new emphasis on enabling and supporting people to plan, act and invest in their homes, in order to protect their independence and wellbeing for the future.

BACKGROUND

5. Cabinet approved Doncaster's 'Housing Strategy 2015 to 2025' in July 2015, following extensive consultation and development. Since then, there have been significant changes in the external strategic environment, which have shifted the context on which the Strategy's objectives were based. 2020, as the mid-point in the timescale of the strategy, provides the opportunity to assess the progress made and refocus efforts for the next five years.
6. Significant progress has been made since 2015, however some issues remain and new issues have emerged, requiring increased focus and energy to address. Progress includes: consistently exceeding housing build targets; many new affordable homes provided; the introduction of two Selective Licensing Schemes; maintenance of 100% decency standards in council housing; improved fire safety measures in all council high rise buildings; the introduction of design standards and future proofing in council new build designs.
7. The current strategic context includes
 - The likelihood of an extended period of economic uncertainty: the end of the transition period following exit from the EU; the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of lockdown measures; and, the expected post COVID-19 recession

- The Mayor's Restart, Recovery, and Renewal Plan, responding to the challenge of Covid-19 and looking to build back better
 - Government proposed reform of the Planning system in England
 - The adoption of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024
 - The application of the 2019 Housing Needs Survey
 - The publication of the Social Housing White Paper
 - Sheffield City Region Housing Review recommendations
 - Recommendations from the Local Commission on Climate and Biodiversity Crisis and the Council's Environment and Sustainability Strategy
 - The development of a new Borough Strategy for Doncaster.
8. A Five Year Housing Delivery Plan has been developed alongside the review of the Housing Strategy. The Plan sets out proposals for delivering on the second Aim in the new Housing Strategy, meeting the needs and aspirations for new homes. This will include:
- An accelerated Council House Build Programme
 - Housing Association Development Programme
 - Maximising delivery through S106 Planning agreements and other contributions for affordable housing
 - Engagement with private developers to maximise opportunities for mixed tenure delivery and better choice of homes for all residents
9. During the review of the Housing Strategy, engagement has taken place with:
- The Mayor and Portfolio Holder
 - Chief Executive and Directors
 - Elected members via a briefing session
 - Key stakeholders, including Team Doncaster Partners and St Leger Homes, other council departments, housing developers, social landlords and private landlord representatives
10. The attached Appendix 1 provides the draft version of the updated Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025. It provides an outline of implications of the current strategic context, the revised Vision and Aims, as well as high level actions.
- The new Vision and Aims of the Strategy reflect:
- The response to climate change and the need to work across housing types, and tenures, to meet carbon reduction targets
 - The importance of housing for health and wellbeing
 - Major changes in the usage of town centres, such as changed shopping habits and the likely continuation of home working, giving an opportunity for more homes within our main repurposed urban areas
11. The recommended refreshed **Vision** is:
- Homes that enhance the wellbeing of our residents and our place**

12. The recommended refreshed **Aims** are to:
- i. Enhance the safety and condition of homes, the main setting for our wellbeing throughout our lives
 - ii. Meet housing need and aspirations, support our local economy and help revitalise town centres and communities
 - iii. Make homes greener and more energy efficient to reduce carbon emissions and keep energy costs affordable
 - iv. Enable and support people to plan, act and invest in their homes, to protect their independence and wellbeing for the future
13. Some of the key proposed actions to deliver the Aims include:
- Housing actions in the Mayor's Restart, Recovery, and Renewal Plan: a whole system approach to tackling homelessness; development of the Five Year Housing Delivery Plan
 - An accelerated £100m+ Council House Build Programme, providing new affordable homes at high design and energy efficiency standards
 - The aim to complete a new Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey, as the foundation for a long term Housing Retrofit Programme raising energy efficiency standards for all homes across the borough and improving conditions in the private rented housing sector
 - Responding to new responsibilities on Building and Fire Safety
 - Implementing the housing recommendations from Doncaster's Environment and Sustainability Strategy
 - Working to deliver new homes in key economic growth locations, and in our town centres, to support our economy
 - Working in partnership with our residents and other agencies to help tackle climate change and support independent living, mobilising our shared skills and capacity to improve homes and lives for the future
14. Additional appendices to this report are as follows
- Appendix 2: Draft Executive Summary
 - Appendix 3: Due Regard Statement
 - Appendix 4: Outline Communications Plan

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

15. Option 1: Continue delivery of existing actions and projects to fulfil the Housing Strategy 2015-25 vision and objectives

Option 2: Adopt the updated Housing Strategy 2020-25 Vision and Aims in order to better reflect the current strategic environment and prominent issues, refocussing efforts for the remaining five years of the strategy (recommended)

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

16. Adoption of the refreshed Housing Strategy 2020-25 Vision and Aims is recommended (option 2) as this will ensure that the revised actions and projects reflect the current strategic environment and highlight responses to prominent issues. It builds on the findings and recommendations of studies, needs assessments and other strategies undertaken during the first five years of the Housing Strategy.

It is not recommended that option 1 be taken; continuing with the existing strategy vision, objectives and actions would not meet the current housing aspirations or requirements of Doncaster and its residents.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

17.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>Delivering the planned new homes, with a focus on quality and affordability, will help improve Doncaster as a place, attract more inward investment and lead to more quality jobs.</p>
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	<p>Homes have a powerful influence on health and wellbeing, and providing access to good housing for everyone is one of the most effective ways we can improve the wellbeing of our population.</p> <p>Increasing the number of affordable homes across the borough will provide more good quality, affordable homes, which are energy efficient and larger in size.</p> <p>New homes in our town centres will help to repurpose them for the future</p>
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or 	<p>A healthy, stable housing situation provides the foundations for children and families to thrive and contribute to society.</p>

	<p>better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>Homes have a powerful influence on health and wellbeing, and providing access to good housing for everyone is one of the most effective ways we can improve the wellbeing of our population.</p> <p>Working to achieve behaviour change in the approach to housing and health, will support independence at home for as long as possible</p> <p>Providing better quality affordable housing development schemes allowing children, vulnerable families/individuals and older people to live independently.</p>
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<p>Working to achieve behaviour change in the approach to housing and health will support independence at home for as long as possible</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

18. Due to the required timescales and the restrictions on activity necessitated by the Covid 19 pandemic, there has not been the opportunity for wide scale consultation on the updated Housing Strategy. This may cause concern amongst some stakeholders and members of the public. However, the 'current drivers' for the strategy update include the findings and analysis of substantial public consultation and evidence gathering. The updated Strategy is the response to the findings of this consultation. In addition, two consultation seminars with internal and external partners, and a session with elected members have informed the development of the strategy.
- The update of the Housing Strategy has interdependencies with other strategic developments (such as the new Environment and Sustainability

Strategy, Local Plan and Borough Strategy) which are following various timescales. To prevent any 'misalignment' or contradiction with these strategies, the review team have worked closely with other colleagues to contribute to and take account of implications to the Housing Strategy.

Central government proposals or announcements (such as the Planning White Paper, Homes England funding, Government Spending Reviews) will influence the delivery of the Housing Strategy objectives.

As with other activities, progress may be affected by the Council's on-going response to Covid-19 and the recovery period that will follow.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NJD Date 27.11.20]

19. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the local authority the power to do anything that individuals may generally do.

Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory duty placed on local authorities under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 to provide a housing strategy, but as a key strategic document it is beneficial for one to be in place.

The revised Housing Strategy 2020-2025 will enable the Council to set out its approach to this sector, taking in to account the government's approach and priorities.

Under the Equality Act 2010 the decision maker must also comply with the Public Sector Equality duty to consider the need to promote equality for persons with "protected characteristics": age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and have due regard to:

- i. eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- ii. advance equality of opportunity;
- iii. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

In order to do this the decision maker will need to have sufficient information about the effects of the proposed changes on the aims of the Equality Duty. The Equalities implication section (paragraph 15 below) is designed to assist with compliance with this duty and so the decision maker must take that into consideration and the public sector equality duty before taking the decision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials JC Date 16.10.20]

20. The implementation of the strategy is subject to the availability of both capital and revenue budgets. The capital programme and revenue budget are approved by Full Council each year. The Housing Strategy 2020-25 contains more detail about specific funding being used to support the strategy.

Capital and revenue budget pressures resulting from the implementation of the strategy should be considered as part of the budget setting process, for example the cost associated with undertaking private sector housing stock condition surveys.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KJ Date 22.10.20]

21. There are no HR implications specific to the recommendations in the report, however, any emerging matters that impact on the workforce will require HR engagement at the appropriate time.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 27.11.20]

22. There are no technology implications specific to the recommendations in the report. However, any emerging technology requirements to support the delivery of the strategy will require Digital & ICT engagement at the appropriate time.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KH Date 14.10.20]

23. Good quality, safe and well-designed housing and communities are key to the success of the Borough and essential for building a healthy, engaged and inclusive society. Our homes should feel safe, comfortable, warm and dry, and should provide security and stability. They should meet the diverse needs of individuals and families, and should be of decent quality, regardless of age, type or tenure. Homes should be also be affordable and sustainable, and well connected to vibrant, active and healthy communities.

The revision of Doncaster's Housing Strategy presents a significant opportunity to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of the local population and it is recommended that we maximise the potential of this strategy to bring partners together to improve health and address health inequalities. It is encouraging to see that health and wellbeing features highly in the Strategy. By acknowledging the importance of health and wellbeing as a priority, the legacy of the Strategy could be that it helps lay the foundations for good health and wellbeing in the long term for future generations of Doncaster citizens.

The strategy describes a number of objectives and actions that aim to improve the quality, accessibility and safety of our homes and create supportive and connected communities. In addition to improving housing locally, we must ensure that all communities benefit and that we address inequalities in health, in addition to social and economic inequalities. There are a number of groups who can experience inequalities in relation to health and housing, these include people on a low income, people in areas of high deprivation, BAME communities (including our Gypsy and Traveller communities and refugee and asylum seeker population), older people, people with health conditions or disabilities and people experiencing homelessness or complex lives.

It is essential that any work undertaken to implement the Strategy promotes fairness and inclusion and aims to reduce the inequalities that face these groups at every opportunity. It is also encouraging to see that the Strategy intends to support evidence-based, partnership approaches to improve people's lives through housing, such as COM-B behaviour change, whole systems approaches, design standards and Health Impact Assessment.

We recommend that the focus on health and wellbeing continues during the Strategy's implementation and that all opportunities to improve health

through the home are embedding in all related policies and actions.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SA Date 24.11.20]

24. A Due Regard Statement summarises the process followed to ensure protected characteristics were considered in the development of the revised strategy. This includes needs assessments, in depth analysis of the needs of specific groups, community engagement activities and stakeholder workshops. The proposed actions to deliver the strategy's aims are evidence based and aim to improve people's housing, health and wellbeing.

CONSULTATION

25. The Covid-19 pandemic has severely restricted the scope for consultation on this new Strategy within the timeline for its production. However, the current drivers for the Strategy review include the findings and analysis of substantial previous public consultation and evidence gathering. Consultation has also taken place with:
- The Mayor and Portfolio Holder
 - Chief Executive and Directors
 - Elected members via a briefing session
 - Key internal and external stakeholders at two on-line seminar sessions
 - Consultation with Minorities Partnership Board and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Workers Group

BACKGROUND PAPERS

26. [Housing Strategy 2015 – 2025](#)
Review of Housing Strategy 2020 proposed approach – Directors 07.09.20

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Not applicable

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