

**HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
15 MARCH 2022**

**HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-25 - DELIVERY**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Councillor Bob Evans  
**Responsible Officer:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

**Reason for Report and Recommendation:** On 26 October 2021 Cabinet adopted the updated corporate Housing Strategy for the period 2021-25 which was subsequently published on the MDDC website (see link below). This report provides members of the PDG with an update on how delivery of the strategy will be monitored and provided for going forward.

The reason for the recommendation is to ensure that members are aware of and have assurance regards our delivery against the strategic priorities and specific objectives set out in the strategy over its five-year period.

**Recommendation: Members note the update on Housing Strategy delivery and agree the proposals for informing the PDG over strategy delivery on a rolling basis during the delivery period to 2025 as set out in section 4 of the report.**

**Financial Implications:** None directly arising from this report.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** There are no direct budget implications of this report.

This strategy sets out those opportunities and challenges in respect of several key delivery functions; housing delivery, enabling and renewal/standards alongside housing needs and homelessness. As such it links with a much wider policy framework, adopted or in development. It therefore reflects the current and projected priorities, needs and aspirations of our community in respect of having access to affordable, safe and healthy housing.

**Legal Implications:** The strategy has no formal basis and there is no legal requirement for have one. Nonetheless, it provides links to a number of statutory requirements on the Council, for example in acting as the Strategic Housing Authority and as registered social housing provider alongside being the Local Planning Authority.

**Risk Assessment:** The new strategy provides a framework for the delivery of those key functions and priorities outlined above. In doing so, it will help in the development of a coherent and consistent approach to housing across the district.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** A full EIA was completed as part of the formal adoption of the strategy in October 2021 and no protected characteristics were identified as negatively impacted. Conversely, the strategy has several objectives aimed at improving access to suitable housing for vulnerable people, whether this is due to financial circumstances (affordable housing) or physical or mental-health disabilities (supporting specific needs, Housing Assistance Policy and adapting for neuro-diversity in social housing).

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Our Corporate Plan for 2020-2024 has four key priority areas one of which is Homes. Within each priority strand the Council has committed to ensuring we are working towards sustainable and prosperous communities. This includes a recognition that our villages and towns need affordable housing for local people. There are number of specific actions that underpin this commitment includes targets for the delivery of affordable housing, working with community land trusts and private sector landlords and working to improve the supply of quality housing.

**Impact on Climate Change:** Decisions relating to the management and maintenance of the homes belonging to the Council and influence the carbon performance of market or community led housing will enable officers and Members of the Council to influence the direction of travel against appropriate targets. We can use new development as opportunities to help communities to become increasingly sustainable and self-sustaining at neighbourhood level.

There are specific carbon standard and decarbonisation objectives within the strategy in relation to existing and new housing.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Homes are a basic necessity and a fundamental requirement for everybody. Local authorities have a broad role to play in supporting and regulating the housing sector, and in facilitating the delivery of new housing.
- 1.2 All agencies, including the NHS and social care are impacted by housing - in relation to its availability, quality and suitability where poor housing leads to significant health inequalities. In short, good quality housing is the foundation of upon which people can build happy and successful lives. The economy also relies on a sufficient supply of housing in order to attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- 1.3 Tackling our housing needs and requirements are not something that one service or organisation can achieve on its own. Local authorities, registered social landlords, developers, the NHS, social care and the voluntary/ community sectors all have important roles to play.
- 1.4 With budgets are under pressure, and economic reality of the Covid-19 pandemic just starting to be realised there is an increasing demand for our services and safe, affordable accommodation. Having a clear, coherent strategy in place that sets out our leadership and direction is more important than ever where effective internal and external partnerships are in place.
- 1.5 This report follows on from a previous update provided to PDG members in September 2021 and the Cabinet report of October 2021.

## 2.0 Strategy overview

- 2.1 The Housing Strategy sets out our vision a Council for the provision and management of housing over the next five years. In particular, as set out in the document foreword, it puts forward the following vision.

*Our vision is to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our residents through a greater choice of high-quality new and adapted homes. This will help us to support the social wellbeing needs of everyone who lives in Mid Devon and provide high quality growth in a high quality environment*

## **Purpose**

2.2 Building on this vision, the purpose of the Strategy is to provide a clear direction, for the next five years, to offer more housing with more choice by developing new homes and improving existing homes and communities. There is a particular focus on affordable and social rent properties alongside a strong commitment to having low-carbon, accessible and adaptable homes. This means we can support our most vulnerable residents to access and maintain good quality housing which meets their needs.

## **Strategic context**

2.3 The Housing Strategy for Mid Devon does not stand alone and most of the priorities and actions within it operate alongside existing strategies, delivery plans and policies. In particular, it is guided by policies and priorities outlined in the Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 and the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

2.4 This Strategy was developed in the context of the role of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership which aims to boost the regional economy across the Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay region with high living standards and outstanding quality of life.

2.5 It is important that Mid Devon continues to contribute towards regional ambitions for growth by continuing to work with other Local Authorities and regional partners. From a national perspective, in recent years the Government has introduced a raft of new legislation to stimulate and speed up housing supply across all forms of tenure and to reform the welfare system. Most recently, in November 2020 we saw the publication of the Government's Social Housing White Paper which will place new responsibilities on us as a Social Landlord and direct provider of social housing.

2.6 These changes, opportunities and strategic direction of travel were taken into account within the development of the document. It is also important that we are responsive to further legislative changes as they emerge and shape these policies to meet the needs of our local housing market. The Strategy sets out Mid Devon District Council's considered housing plans and actions for the period 2021-2025 taking into account the national, regional and local context as discussed in more detail in the introduction to the Strategy itself.

## **Priorities and objectives**

2.7 In recognising the above context, the following 'HOME' priorities were developed, taking into account the supporting evidence and documents that underpin the Strategy.

**Housing** - increase delivery of quality designed, well-built homes across the housing market to meet identified needs

**Optimise** - fit for purpose healthy, sustainable, adaptable homes optimised for high energy efficiency and low carbon impact

**Making the most** - making the most of our existing homes across the private and public sector in all forms of tenure

**Engage** - engaging and working with others including partner organisations to deliver our aims

2.8 Consequently, the Strategy is divided into four chapters which expand upon each of our key housing priorities. All priorities have equal weighting; each impacts on the other and much of the work around these priorities will necessarily be overlapping and interdependent.

2.9 Within each chapter are specific objectives and targets to deliver the different elements that make up each priority.

2.10 Overall, some 40 objectives are described within the Strategy and ultimately this provides a detailed but strong framework; setting direction for each of our partners and stakeholders involved in housing; residents, ward members, housing associations, developers, government bodies, regulators, investors, private landlords, charities, voluntary groups and the Council – to provide the right type of homes that are needed.

2.11 Members will therefore need to consider the document and the objectives set out holistically within boundaries of where we have an influencing, commissioning or direct delivery role with regard to the provision of housing. Within the latter, members have previously expressed a direct interest in the delivery of new Council Houses. These are covered in Chapter One of the document and Objectives 5 and 6 specifically.

### 3.0 **Proposed delivery plan**

3.1 In January 2022, the original officer project group responsible for producing the strategy met again in the guise of refocussed working group to develop a plan for the monitoring and delivery of the strategy going forward. The proposals of this group are set out below and the group itself will be informally reconvened to form a strategy delivery working group.

3.2 Given the scope of the strategy, then it's proposed that specific components and goals within the document will be led by the same specific lead officers/roles for the relevant area to ensure continuity whilst maintaining and developing core knowledge and ownership going forward.

3.3 The internal and external development of the strategy has been thorough with effective and strong joint-working across services, functions, officers and members. This was been welcomed and supported in adopting the strategy. It is therefore important we continue this approach to secure success in delivering against those priorities and objectives we are now committed to as an

organisation. Overall, it's proposed the project will operate under the following, familiar management structure:



3.4 Within the above standard project structure the following roles are proposed:

- Project Board
  - Executive – Director of Business Improvement and Operations
  - Senior User – Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services
- Project Manager – Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing
- Project Team - specific lead officers from Mid Devon Housing, Asset Management, Climate and Sustainability, Forward Planning and Development Management and Public Health/Private Sector Housing
- Project Support – officers from the above teams to provide specific support and input on an ad-hoc basis as required
- Project Assurance – wider Corporate Management Team

3.5 Within the project team, one or more identified lead officers will take responsibility for an overarching priority/chapter of the strategy and develop an action plan for the specific objectives therein, linking in with wider internal and external partners as appropriate.

3.6 This action planning will sit within a shared, combined action plan document broken down of each year of the delivery period and visible to the wider project group. It will therefore act as the core reference point for project management and oversight. An initial version of this combined action plan is currently under development by the project team and will incorporate progress made to date.

3.7 Overall, this structure provides for continued wide cross-department and functional working and assurance that objectives will be underpinned by specific actions which are monitored. Within this there is a process of reporting achievements and any exceptions to a project board and to members.

This is key to driving forward and achieving the targets set out on the strategy on a coherent basis.

3.8 The structure also recognises that as targets and objectives are delivered and/or new guidance, legislation or opportunities emerge then these can be reviewed and proposals put forward to update the strategy annually. An example of this is the ongoing Mid Devon Local Plan Issues consultation which may inform future iterations of the strategy. This reflects that the strategy is a living, forward-facing document that will change over its delivery period and will link into a full strategic review and update in 2025.

#### 4.0 **Monitoring and reporting**

4.1 On a planned basis between 2022 and 2025, it is proposed that the PDG will receive two key reports each year on a rolling basis regarding progress:

- an update report with the combined action plan for review in May (or nearest meeting)
- full annual review report in November (or nearest meeting) with any recommendations to Cabinet for relevant updates, changes or amendments to the strategy, in particular with regard to strategy objectives and targets

4.2 The Project Manager will also set up a core Housing Strategy item on the corporate risk register for any wider and relevant reporting of exceptions and delivery risks as directed by the project board.

#### 5.0 **Recommendations**

5.1 In accordance with the above, the following recommendation is therefore made:

Members note the update on Housing Strategy delivery and agree the proposals for informing the PDG over strategy delivery on a rolling basis during the delivery period to 2025 as set out in section 4 of the report.

**Contact for more Information:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk)

#### **Circulation of the Report:**

Members of the Housing PDG  
Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services  
Leadership Team  
Corporate Management Team  
Service/Operations Managers  
Legal Services  
Housing Strategy Officer Working Group

#### **List of Background Papers:**

MDDC Housing Strategy 2021-25

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-strategy/>