

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Louise Fox, Phil Smith, Rita Turner and Vicky Waplington.

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement), Sarah Kay (Assistant Director Planning and Planning Policy), Chris McKinney (Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing), Neil Oxby (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Joanne Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer), Alison Bluff (Governance) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting were Councillor Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and Councillor Jane Yates, Junior Portfolio Holder for Housing.

### **CS54-23/24      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Amanda Davis and Lisa Powell.

### **CS55-23/24      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **CS56-23/24      HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-24 - ACTION PLAN MONITORING UPDATE: MARCH 2024**

Committee considered the third and final update on the Council's Housing Strategy 2021-24, and the delivery of its action plan, presented by the Housing Strategy and Development Officer.

The strategy had been adopted in March 2021, and set out the Council's strategic framework to meet the district's housing growth ambitions and housing related support needs. The strategy was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, with the update attached at Appendix 2.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained that from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the duties of the former Joint Team had been transferred to the Council's Housing Management Team and Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Team; the general split was as follows:

- a) Housing Management Team – to undertake duties relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, private sector lettings and tenancy strategy; and,

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- b) Planning Policy and Housing Strategy Team – to undertake duties relating to the preparation of strategic housing policies, housing stock analysis and work on empty homes.

It was noted that new posts had been established within both teams.

Out of the 25 Actions to be achieved, 5 had not been fully completed; these 5 Actions would be transferred to the new Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

For the previously raised query on vacant properties being reused, it was noted that empty properties and other buildings could be reused for short term lets. The Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing stated that the Council would continue to tackle wasted resources and staff were working closely with the Revenues Team to identify empty properties and provide tools, and incentivise owners to bring their properties back into use, which would also alleviate pressures on homelessness and the development of the countryside.

The Chair noted her concern regarding the lack of available affordable housing for care leavers at the age of 18, and for many leaving their parental/guardianship home at 17/18.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing stated that the Council was increasing the number of properties it owned, and although some of these were one-bed properties, they were quite spacious as the focus on any new builds was on the quality, usability, and the wellbeing of future occupants.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained that Bolsover Homes was working towards 400 new Council properties, and as of March 2024, 103 properties had been completed. Dragonfly Development Ltd had been in place since December 2022, and one of the reasons why the target would be carried over was due to the disruption of global supply chains in recent years. Two substantial build sites would be created in the next 18 months to get the project back on track.

The Chair noted that staffing issues had also played a part in delays and queried if this had been resolved. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained that in terms of recruitment, Dragonfly Development Ltd. had been working to resolve this, though private contractors were also being worked with to ensure projects remained on track.

The Chair stated that priorities were good accessibility, affordability and what families needed to ensure a safe, healthy living area with green and play areas.

In relation to Gypsy/Traveller sites, the Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing, explained that due to a reclarification of the definition of Gypsy/Traveller by the UK National Government, and following new data from Derbyshire County Council, a draft assessment of sites had been completed with publication due in May 2024. He added that the District was providing the number of sites required to meet demand.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington  
**RESOLVED** that the Housing Strategy 2021-2024 be noted.

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### CS57-23/24 DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained that the current Housing Strategy 2021-24 was due to expire in 2024 and a revised strategy was required.

The Committee were referred to the table on Page 82 of the document which showed the potential timeframes for the development and implementation of the new strategy; this may have been subject to change pending the completion of external data assessments/housing needs analysis, and the level of engagement during the consultation period. The Committee were then referred to Appendix 1 of the document, which was what the new strategy would look like.

There were 4 Priorities in the new strategy: Priority 1 – Providing Good Quality Housing; Priority 2 – Enabling Housing Growth; Priority 3 – Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People; and Priority 4 – Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the district contributed towards better health outcomes for all.

To deliver the priorities in the corporate plan, 10 objectives had been set. These would be acknowledged within the relevant section of the strategy and supporting delivery plan:

1. Prepare and adopt new Council Housing Strategy by October 2024.
2. Deliver 200 new homes through a new Bolsover Homes Programme using Dragonfly Development Ltd. by March 2028.
3. Maintain high levels of tenant satisfaction with council housing and associated services as assessed under the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) with the aim to be above the national average.
4. Work towards compliance with the Social Housing Consumer Standards, ensuring tenants' voices was key when developing new council housing policies, procedures, and improvements.
5. Commission and complete an appropriate council housing stock condition survey by April 2025, and upon completion develop an improved rolling programme of stock inspections to inform future repairs and maintenance programmes.
6. Annually monitor housing delivery in the District and take steps if required to continue to meet the annual target of 272 new homes set out in the Local Plan for Bolsover District.
7. Commission and complete Local Housing Needs evidence by August 2024 to better understand the District's affordable housing needs.
8. Work with partners to increase the supply, quality, and range of affordable housing to meet identified local needs.
9. Develop strategies to support the private rented sector in supporting the Council in its duties.
10. Deliver the actions within the Council's Homelessness Strategy by December 2027.

The Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing stated that the Council had outlined the plan, so while ambitious the Housing Team were happy to receive Member input. A Member agreed that timelines looked challenging.

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington  
**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

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The meeting concluded at 10:27 hours.