

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 26 September 2022

Present:

Councillors A Percy, M Thirlaway, J Walker, E Parker-Leonard, L Bartoli, L Ferasin, M Fox, G Madden, R O'Keefe and O Scargill

Apologies: Councillors John Hunter and A Newman

HO8/22 Appointment of Substitute Members

Pursuant to the Council's Constitution the appointment of the following substitute members was reported:

Councillor T Mulvenna for Councillor A Newman

HO9/22 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Matthew Thirlaway declared a non-registerable interest in Item 6, Empty and Derelict Properties, as his father works for North Tyneside Council and a registerable personal interest in Item 7, Consultation on the Emerging Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy 2022, as he is employed by Parkside Care Ltd.

HO10/22 Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 4 July 2022 be agreed as a correct record subject to the addition of apologies from Councillor Matthew Thirlaway.

HO11/22 Affordable Homes Programme - Update

The sub-committee received a report providing an update on the delivery of Phase One of the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2022/23 and identifying emerging opportunities for Phase Two.

The Affordable Homes Programme was launched in 2013 and had delivered 1,934 affordable homes to date, including 573 new Council homes. This represented a 145% improvement on the ten years prior to the programme starting. Work to support private landlords and tackle empty and derelict properties continued to improve communities and since 2019 the number of empty homes in the borough had reduced by 39%.

The Our North Tyneside Plan, approved by Council on 23 September 2021, increased the affordable homes delivery target to 5,000. To meet this challenging target, the programme would be delivered in two phases. Phase One would see delivery of a further 2,000 affordable homes bringing the Phase One total to 4,000 by 2032. This included the delivery of a ten-year Housing Revenue Account plan that would aim to deliver at least 350 new

Council homes, utilising new technology to reduce carbon emissions. The indicative programme for Phase One was appended to the report.

In 2022/23, it was forecast that 215 new affordable homes would be delivered. A full breakdown of the delivery programme was appended to the report.

The Authority had continued to bring back derelict and empty homes for use as affordable homes. This included targeting long-term empty properties and working with owners who may struggle to maintain rental properties. Phase One of the AHP would see at least 60 derelict homes targeted with further plans being developed to increase this number significantly.

It was explained that the Authority worked in partnership with Registered Providers to provide affordable homes. Schemes due to be completed later in the year included West Chirton Industrial Estate South Phase 2 – 33 new homes expected to be completed at Riverside's development of Norham Road – and Action Building Maintenance, Oswin Road – 16 affordable homes for vulnerable clients with mental health issues.

The largest volume of homes within Phase One of the AHP would be delivered by private developers who were subject to ever changing market conditions. The Authority worked proactively with Private Developers to facilitate bringing sites within the Local Plan forward and ensuring that planning applications were submitted with the maximum level of S106 affordable homes that met the needs of the area. It was expected that private developers would contribute around 1,500 homes in Phase One of the AHP.

The report detailed emerging plan for Phase Two of the Affordable Homes Programme. These included:

- Identifying potential windfall opportunities for both the Authority and private developers
- Exploring the potential of brownfield sites that could be used to provide new affordable homes
- Increasing the number of derelict properties that are brought back as affordable homes
- And further increasing the delivery of affordable homes through the North Tyneside Trading Company Limited

Members were informed of emerging opportunities for new housing sites at the former West Farm Public House, Killingworth and the former landfill site at Howdon. Both sites had significant known constraints and were subject to a North of Tyne Combined Authority bid for brownfield funding to support further site investigations and potential remediation work.

The report outlined key challenges to the delivery of the AHP. It was noted that housing and construction industries continued to deal with market volatility due to several factors arising from the legacy of the global pandemic and the current war in Ukraine. Whilst sale prices and demand for homes remained strong, there was a risk that higher inflation and interest rates may lead to developers slowing activity, reducing the provision of affordable homes.

It was **agreed** to note the update on affordable homes.

The sub-committee received a presentation updating on the Council's approach to tackling empty and derelict properties. The Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-25 included a priority to reduce the number of derelict properties across the borough.

Members were informed of how many long-term empty properties there were across the borough by ward. It was noted that an empty property would initially be left for around six months to allow the market to resolve the situation. After that timeframe, if a solution had not been identified, there would be a role for the Authority to play. There were different levels of assistance that could be provided by the Authority when dealing with an empty or derelict property including the NTC Empty Homes Leasing Scheme, an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO), Council Tax Premium and support to landlords. In some instances a bespoke approach would be used. The homes at Charlotte Street were cited as an example of this.

An EDMO allowed the Authority to take over the management of a property to get it back to use. The Council Tax Premium allowed the Authority to issue an increase in Council Tax for properties that stood empty for in excess of 2 years. Local authorities could charge a premium of 300% on properties that had been empty for 10 years or more. The money from such premiums was used to support schemes to bring empty properties back in to use.

The sub-committee was informed of regional and national performance in relation to empty properties. There were currently 2,733 empty properties in North Tyneside from a total of 100,611 dwellings. This represented 2.7% of all properties. It was considered that there was only an issue with empty properties in a Local Authority area when this figure was above 3%.

It was noted that legal proceedings in relation to empty properties could be lengthy and complicated. For some properties this related to the process of probate. Members of the sub-committee were advised to contact the housing team if they were aware of any long-term empty properties in their wards.

It was **agreed** to note the information presented.

HO13/22 Consultation on the Emerging Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy 2022

The sub-committee received a presentation in relation to the emerging Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy 2022. The presentation set out the background to the strategies, information on the profile of the borough and housing context, emerging themes and priorities for inclusion, and a timeline with next steps.

It was explained that national, regional and local frameworks and strategies needed to be taken into consideration and combined when developing a new Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Members were presented with information related to the population of the borough and the make-up of housing stock. The population of the borough had increased by 4% since 2011, from 200,800 to 209,000 in 2021. The number of residents aged over 65 had increased by 21% since 2011 to 42,800. The working population (15 to 64 years) had fallen by 1% to

131,000 over the last 10 years. The total number of homes in the borough in 2015 was 95,730; this had increased to 99,500 in 2021.

The sub-committee was informed that there was a high demand for all types of housing in the borough, particularly for affordable housing, with over 5,000 households on the Housing Register (for Council Housing).

In relation to homelessness, figures presented to the sub-committee demonstrated that homeless applications had increased since 2019/20, along with the number of temporary accommodation placements made. Homeless applications in relation to domestic abuse had increased during the Covid 19 pandemic and had continued to do so. This continuation in the increase of cases was attributed to more people being aware of how to report instances of domestic abuse and greater knowledge of recording the information.

Members asked officers how people are informed that they are able to present as being at risk of homelessness. It was explained that information was available on the Council's website and on social media and that anyone could contact the housing team via phone or email. Information was also available via the Customer Service Centres and referrals could also be made by nurses or GPs.

It was highlighted that the Housing Strategy for North Tyneside would support the Authority's ambition to Build a Better North Tyneside by delivering the following key priorities:

- 5,000 affordable homes
- Support the regeneration of the borough
- Reduce derelict and empty properties
- Low carbon homes
- Continue to improve standards in the private rented sector
- Prevent homelessness and meet specialist housing needs
- Provide support and advice to tenants and residents
- Create safe and welcoming communities and tackle anti-social behaviour

In relation to the theme of delivering more affordable homes and supporting regeneration, it was noted that proposed actions included increasing delivery through the North Tyneside Trading Company and an Affordability Plan to increase low-cost home ownership. In relation to preventing homelessness and a specialist housing offer, proposed actions included a review of night shelter provision in the borough, further work with private sector landlords and increased support for the mental health and well-being of residents.

In relation to improving the private rented sector and tackling derelict and empty properties, actions included continuing to work with private landlords to drive up quality in the private rented sector and exploring options for a new Landlord Accreditation and Licensing Schemes. In order to support carbon zero by 2030 some of the actions proposed were to improve the energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock and maximise grant funding to deliver energy efficiency measures in homes across the borough. In relation to supporting residents and improving communities, it was noted that support and advice would be provided to tackle fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.

Consultation on the emerging themes contained within the presentation would be undertaken between September and November 2022. It was noted that the consultation would be pushed as wide as possible and would largely be online. It would not just be

council tenants but all residents that the consultation would be aimed at, as the strategy related to all housing need. The aim was for final drafts of the new Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy to be completed by December 2022. The strategies would be considered by Housing Sub-committee prior to approval from Cabinet.

It was **agreed** to note the information delivered in the presentation.