

REFRESHING OUR HOUSING STRATEGY

Our current Housing Commissioning Strategy ended in 2016, so a new strategy is being developed for 2017-2021 to provide a framework and action plan to continue to tackle housing needs in the district.

The existing strategy needs refreshing due to changing national housing policy, and the difficult financial climate that the Council and its partners are operating in. Government funding policy has moved away from affordable renting to focus on the private market and home ownership. Demand, sales, and low build rates have reduced affordable housing supply, and ownership is unaffordable for many in Kirklees.

The strategy will provide a structure for the council and delivery partners to plan and enable investment in housing and related services. This interim statement outlines the headlines and challenges, and the housing, health and social care issues informing our objectives.

OVERVIEW

Kirklees Council is working hard to become a very different council - 'New Council'. It will:

- support communities to do more for themselves and each other
- keep vulnerable people safe and helping them to stay in control of their lives
- provide services – but focusing on the things that *only* the council can do

Our vision is a strong, sustainable Kirklees economy, offering a great quality of life to its residents - leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality, where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.

As well as budget reductions, the council faces increased demand for expensive services like social care. Our population is growing, ageing and more people live with complex, long-term conditions. In response, we need to work differently, and carefully prioritise resources. We face some very difficult decisions, but these will be based on what local people value most.

The Council has an ambition for housing growth, and more good quality, energy efficient market and affordable homes. Secure, warm, affordable homes support our communities' health and wellbeing, helping to meet their aspirations. Housing supports economic growth and resilience, job creation and it retains business. We want people to achieve their 'housing of choice' by enabling growth, and good quality affordable, sustainable and suitable homes.

The new housing strategy will describe challenges and responses, placing housing at the centre of economic and wellbeing investment. It will support the work of New Council and Economic Resilience, aligning with the Economic Strategy and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This will support Kirklees' economic resilience, reduce inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

KEY HOUSING HEADLINES, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Problems (difficult situation that needs to be resolved)

- Demand and need outstrip supply. 1730 homes are needed each year; 1049 affordable homes needed
- 61% of Kirklees households earn under £26,000 a year and home ownership is out of reach for many.
- For some groups, their housing and support needs are increasing, including rising homelessness levels
- The number of low quality, energy inefficient homes in the private rental sector is high.
- Fuel poverty is 11.6% in Kirklees compared to the 10.6% England-wide
- Low build rates across all housing tenures results in less Council Tax revenue to support services.
- Reduced resources requires evidence led prioritisation, enabling and commissioning
- The Council's interventions must achieve value for money and cost savings as key outcomes.
- Extending the 'Right-to-Buy' will reduce Council housing and housing association housing supply.
- The Local Plan will boost land supply but land value expectations are a barrier to development.
- Developer confidence is starting to climb and needs to be maintained.

Challenges (difficult or demanding task)

- Growth in 65+ population adding to other specialist needs pressures such as learning disabilities, and children in, or leaving care
- Prioritising resources for households in greatest need
- Significant budget pressures being faced by the public sector, and financial uncertainty from 'Brexit'.
- The White Paper requires Councils and partners to adopt creative ways to deliver new homes.
- Innovative use of public funding, and co-investment opportunities to bring sites forward
- Reducing ownership and 'Generation rent' in the market is forecast to grow.
- Poor quality stock and management issues in the low end private rented sector.
- Impacts of welfare reform affecting Council rent arrears and increasing levels of homelessness – new "burdens" also arising from Homelessness Reduction Act
- Rent reductions and potential high value stock levy impacts on the HRA and maintaining housing stock
- Uncertain future around supported accommodation funding
- Implementing legislative changes to council tenancies
- Having a Local Plan in place by 2017 to help to provide a supply of housing land.
- Returning empty homes into use.

STRATEGY AREAS

The Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Policy has 3 overarching housing policies. These align with our evidence and strategic priorities for housing, the Kirklees Economic Strategy, the Joint Wellbeing Strategy.

1. **HOUSING GROWTH** – Enable and develop a range of housing products to deliver housing growth and the long-term supply of market and affordable housing
2. **HOUSING NEED** - To meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable groups by maintaining and strengthening our focus on prevention and early intervention to enable people to access a suitable home of their own and to live there as independently as possible
3. **HOUSING CONDITION** – Protect and make the best use of the existing housing supply across all tenures of homes in Kirklees to support good health, wellbeing and drive up quality and standards.

SPECIFIC STRATEGY ACTIONS

The next step is to develop actions for each area of the new Housing Strategy. These will form the basis for the action plans setting out our ambitions and how they will be delivered.

Housing Growth: Actions

- Work with agencies (e.g. the HCA, NHS) to release land to accelerate housing supply
- Pursue funding through the HCA, LEP and WYCA enabling housing and infrastructure
- Investigate new delivery models to promote housing supply
- Promote flexible and creative approaches with partners to build confidence and to stimulate development such as the North Kirklees Growth Zone
- Continue with our 'Homescape' approach: a range of housing delivery approaches through council land to enable and drive the pace of development, and working with land owners and developers to develop stalled housing sites.

Housing Need: Actions

- Maintain robust evidence of needs, issues and demands affecting vulnerable residents.
- Prioritise and target resources with internal/external partners across Health, Adults and Children's services, securing specialist housing to meet the needs of vulnerable groups
- Develop a more co-ordinated approach to seek and bid for funding for specialist housing schemes
- Work with KNH and other housing partners to implement the welfare reform changes and the Housing and Planning Act 2016, and develop a focussed approach to help to anticipate risk and identify mitigating action where the impact is most significant
- Review the council's Housing Allocation Policy and Tenancy Strategy to support people in the greatest housing need, and comply with Government policies and legislation
- Enable more vulnerable groups to live more independently and successfully at home
- Develop more innovative early intervention approaches to preventing homelessness, with partners contributing significantly to this agenda
- Work with partners to establish an integrated strategy for the delivery of equipment, assistive technology and adaptations, to enable independent living at home for longer.

Housing Conditions: Actions

- Work with developers to improve building standards to reduce the future running costs and energy consumption of the property to help tackle fuel poverty issues
- Work with partners to reduce health inequalities arising from poor housing conditions
- Work with partners to tackle energy costs affecting fuel poverty and health/wellbeing
- Continue to work and develop our partnership arrangements with private landlords to encourage a high standard within the private rented sector
- Ensure the delivery of effective services for council tenants, developing a 5 year vision and action plan in conjunction with KNH and potential service delivery partners
- Work with partners to ensure that empty or 'recycled' housing can be retained or brought into the affordable housing supply pool for as long as possible.