

These minutes are draft and subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the sub-committee

Housing Sub-Committee

23 October 2017

Present: Councillor S Cox (Chair)
Councillors A Arkle, K Bolger, L Darke, John Hunter, M Madden, P Mason, A Newman, P Oliver, M Thirlaway and J Walker

HO16/10/17 Apologies

No apologies for absence were reported.

HO17/09/17 Substitute Members

No substitute Members were reported.

HO18/09/17 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.

HO19/09/17 Affordable Homes

The sub-committee received an update report from the Housing Growth Manager on the delivery of the Affordable Homes Programme. It was noted that since the inception of the Affordable Homes Programme, the total number of new affordable homes delivered stood at 969. In 2017/18 (to date), 119 homes had been delivered and progress was on target to deliver 280 new homes during the financial year. A full delivery programme had been appended to the report. It was highlighted that there were a large number of variables that could see delivery numbers change year on year but that the programme was on target to achieve the delivery of 3000 new affordable homes by 2024. The report detailed how homes had been delivered through the following different avenues: Housing Revenue Account (HRA); North Tyneside Living; Working with Registered Providers; Empty Homes; Volume Builders; North Tyneside Development Company and Specialist Housing.

In March 2016, Cabinet approved an indicative 4-year HRA Housing Growth Delivery Programme 2016-2020 to deliver new homes. At the site of the former Dudley and Weetslade Social Club, work had begun in May 2017 to create 20 homes, which once completed in March 2018, would be known as Clayton Close. In Seaton Burn (on the former Chapelville) 6 bungalows, to be known as 1-6 Railway Close, had been constructed and would be tenanted by the end of October 2017. A further development was Perth Gardens, Howdon, the site of the former Care Call office accommodation. Original proposals for the development were for 3 x 1 bedroom apartments and 4 x 2 bedroom apartments. However, feedback from housing showed that there was low demand for 2 bedroom apartments in the area and the conversion changed to 7 x 1 bedroom apartments, 4 of which would incorporate a study. Members questioned the lack of demand for 2 bedroom apartments in the area as this was not the feedback they received from residents. It was queried whether the study could be classed as a second bedroom (for bedroom tax purposes) and it was explained that the room was not big enough. Members requested that dimensions of the properties and the evidence base for the decision to change to 1 bedroom apartments be circulated after the meeting.

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The sub-committee was informed that the authority continued to work closely with Registered Providers to identify opportunities and funding to meet housing needs within the borough. As part of the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18, North Tyneside Council was successful in securing £7.2 million worth of grant funding to support the development of 300 affordable homes in the borough. It was clarified that this grant had been awarded, in parts, to the Council, developers and RP's. Members asked the officer to provide a breakdown of which parties secured what proportion of the £7.2 million grant funding. In 2017/18, 80 homes were due for completion (by the end of March 2018) through work undertaken with RP's. Members asked for confirmation of the breakdown (by tenure) of the 80 homes to be provided and asked how many of the properties had been adapted. The officer undertook to provide this information after the meeting.

The new Council Housing Strategy had increased the overall target of returning 35 long term empty homes to occupation in 2017/18. This target took into consideration the range of work the council was involved in to help secure the reoccupation of long term problematic empty homes. Work undertaken by the local authority included the provision of specialist advice to owners, support to become landlords, working with RP's, enforcement and through bespoke schemes to secure empty homes as additional affordable housing units. Requests for assistance in relation to 66 properties had been responded to and the owners of 7 long term empty homes had been assisted by working with them throughout the often lengthy reoccupation process. Work continued to target those areas of the borough with the highest numbers of long-term empty homes. Members asked how the 35 properties were identified and it was explained that this was through members enquiries; complaints from members of the public; housing patch teams and via the call centre/envirolink. The sub-committee asked how many long term empty homes there were across the borough. It was agreed that this information would be circulated after the meeting.

It was noted that, to date, 81 affordable homes had been developed through the Specialist Housing Project, which included housing for older people as well as individuals with physical and learning disabilities. Work was due to commence onsite at Charlton Court in Quarter 4 of 2017/18 that would see shared accommodation with 13 beds built for people with learning difficulties. Children's Services secured funding through the Social Care Innovation Programme to convert Elm house from surplus office accommodation to 6 en-suite bedrooms with shared living facilities and support staff for 16-21 year olds leaving residential care. Known as Staying Close, this was a transition into supported housing and will be classed as affordable. These were due to be completed by the end of 2017.

Building on the success of the programme to date, the remainder of 2017/18 would continue to see significant numbers of much needed affordable homes delivered in North Tyneside. The programme was predicted to deliver a further 286 new affordable homes in 2018/19. This would potentially include a further 28 new Council homes. The Affordable Homes Programme would see a significant milestone with the 1,000th new affordable home being delivered during 2017/18. Officers remained confident that the programme would deliver 3,000 much needed new homes by 2024.

It was **agreed** to note the report.