



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-26

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the views of Joint Scrutiny Committee on the new Local Housing Strategy, 'An Agenda for Change 2021-26' prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 27th October 2021.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In the summer of 2020 the Council appointed Arc4 Ltd to assist it to produce a new Local Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 A robust methodology was agreed with Arc4 to complete the various stages of development and a plan was put in place to effectively manage the project.
- 2.3 At various stages of the project consultation took place with key stakeholders, both internal and external. Views of residents were sought via a 9-week public consultation exercise, which took place between July and September 2021.
- 2.4 The Strategy covers the period December 2021 to December 2026. The objectives within the Strategy will be met via a range of actions, which will be outlined in a Delivery Plan.
- 2.5 An investment plan will be formulated by March 2022 and will underpin the Delivery Plan.
- 2.6 Progress on the actions contained in the Delivery Plan will be monitored on a biannual basis by the Affordable Homes Partnership and reported to the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee periodically.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the contents of this report are noted and discussed by Joint Scrutiny Committee and that any amendments or clarifications are raised in advance of the Cabinet meeting on the 27th October 2021.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Housing Strategy sets out the strategic housing priorities of the Council and provides a framework for the Council and its partners to tackle a range of housing needs including homelessness, housing disrepair, a lack of suitable accommodation etc., which prevent people living in safe, good quality, affordable homes located in vibrant and sustainable communities.
- 4.2 To ensure that the Council's own priorities align with Welsh Government's national policy context on themes including homelessness prevention, affordable housing provision, promotion of the foundational economy and reducing carbon emissions.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Welsh Government's Review of Affordable Housing undertaken in 2019 has led to significant changes to the way in which homes are funded, delivered and managed hence a new, updated Strategy which reflects these changes and takes into account the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 is required. The last strategy expired in 2013.
- 5.2 In the summer of 2020 the Council appointed Arc4, consultants experienced in developing housing strategies throughout England and Wales, to assist in the development and production of a new Local Housing Strategy.
- 5.3 A project plan was agreed between the Council and Arc4 to oversee the various stages of development of the Strategy, which included:
- a. A literature review of local and national policy context;
 - b. Interviews with the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing, Council officers and partner organisations to identify issues and priorities;
 - c. Analysis of a robust evidence base to identify key housing issues and highlight key strategic direction;
 - d. Production of a concept document which outlined the proposed principles, sections and key messages of a draft Local Housing Strategy;
 - e. Extensive consultation on the concept document with a wide range of stakeholders;
 - f. Production of a draft Local Housing Strategy and revision of the document following a public consultation exercise;
 - g. Facilitating a series of virtual public consultation events;
 - h. Input into the production of the Integrated Impact Assessment; and
 - i. Formulation of a collaborative draft Implementation Plan.
- 5.4 Following interviews with members, officers and partners, Arc 4 produced a Concept Document, which outlined the principles, sections and key messages the draft Local Housing Strategy would contain. Stakeholders views were sought on the Concept Document in April 2021. 152 stakeholders were contacted, with 27 providing a response (17.7%). The Concept Document was updated in light of responses received.
- 5.5 To ensure that the final version of the Local Housing Strategy took into consideration the aspirations and views of residents and stakeholders, whilst, also complying with statutory requirements, a robust consultation methodology was determined in conjunction with the Council's Consultation & Public Engagement Officer. The type and level of engagement achieved as a result of the process was unfortunately constrained due to guidance issued by Welsh Government in relation to Covid-19.

- 5.6 In order to gain the views of residents and stakeholders on the contents of the draft Local Housing Strategy an online consultation exercise was undertaken between Monday, 12th July 2021 and Friday, 3rd September 2021 (9 weeks in total).
- 5.7 Prior to the commencement of the consultation exercise an A5 poster was delivered to every household in the county borough. The dedicated web page on the Council's website was updated and the Communications team raised awareness of the consultation exercise through an article on the News section of the Council's website, providing a press release to local newspapers, via social media and sharing information with partner organisations. A poster was also displayed in Council leisure centres and libraries throughout the entire period of the consultation exercise.
- 5.8 In order to increase levels of accessibility and to encourage responses from a wide range of people, the draft Local Housing Strategy was also translated into an Easy Read version and a British Sign Language (BSL) video.
- 5.9 The primary method for providing responses on the draft Local Housing Strategy was via an on-line survey, although, alternative methods were made available for people unable to use or access the internet and who wanted to contribute.
- 5.10 In order to try to stimulate a good response rate a prize draw was promoted. Residents completing the survey were entered into the prize draw for a chance to win 1 of 4 high street vouchers to the value of £50. In total, 76 responses were received. The table below provides a breakdown on respondents:

Residents	67
Other, not specified	3
CCBC officers	2
Housing association officer	2
Voluntary organisation representative	1
Business person	1
Total Number of Respondents	76

- 5.11 A consultation questionnaire was produced to provide feedback on key areas of the Local Housing Strategy and to help update the Integrated Impact Assessment. An open question option was provided to allow respondents to comment on areas of the Local Housing Strategy not covered in the set questions.
- 5.12 The consultation showed that:
- 64% said that the housing vision was right, with 28% disagreeing and 8% saying they don't know;
 - 69% said the cross-cutting themes were right, with 23% disagreeing and 8% saying they don't know;
 - 59% said the priorities were right, with 33% disagreeing and 8% saying they don't know;
 - 68% said that the Local Housing Strategy would not have a negative impact on them because of a protected characteristic, with 15% saying it would and 18% saying they don't know;
 - 28% said that the priorities set out in the Local Housing Strategy will help to reduce levels of socio-economic disadvantage in the county borough, with 47% saying it wouldn't and 25% saying they don't know;

- 39% said that the priorities set out in the Local Housing Strategy will have a positive impact on future generations living in the county borough, with 37% saying it wouldn't and 24% saying they don't know; and
- 42% said that the priorities set out in the Local Housing Strategy will ensure that the Welsh Language is treated no less favourably than the English language, with 23% saying it wouldn't and 35% saying they don't know.

NB. Not all respondents answered every question so the percentages will not necessarily total 100% in every instance. The percentage calculations are based on a small number of responses overall.

- 5.13 After each question respondents were provided with the opportunity to qualify their response. A review of these comments found that respondents may not have in every instance answered the question in the context it was set, which may have impacted on some of the percentage levels. However, in general, these comments have been very useful in helping to confirm the key parts of the Local Housing Strategy.
- 5.14 As part of the consultation, respondents were asked to pick a preferred name for the Local Housing Strategy. The highest response (39%) suggested, '*The Caerphilly County Borough Housing Strategy: An Agenda for Change.*'
- 5.15 With no face-to-face engagement permitted, Arc4 also facilitated a series of virtual consultation events for residents. In total, 5 events were arranged between July and August, on various days and at different times to try to cater for people who may have been in work, on holiday, had caring responsibilities etc. Unfortunately, interest in the virtual sessions was poor.
- 5.16 All of the responses received through the consultation exercise have been reviewed and a document summarising the responses has been produced by Arc4. The draft Local Housing Strategy has been revised by Arc4 in light of some of the responses. These amendments, together with the summary document, were sent to key leads across the Council to ensure that all responses have been adequately considered and the Strategy updated appropriately. A copy of the summary document produced will be made available for viewing in the Members' Library.
- 5.17 Despite the extensive consultation and engagement efforts that were made to ensure residents had the opportunity to shape the strategy, the overall response was disappointing. Of the responses that were received, there were some consistent messages which have been reflected in the strategy including;
- Ensuring new residential developments are accompanied by investments in infrastructure.
 - Focus on zero carbon targets and tackling climate change.
 - Rebalance inequity within the housing market to 'level up' areas.
 - Create choice and ensure affordability of housing options.
- 5.18 The draft Local Housing Strategy, revised following the public consultation exercise, sets out a vision for housing throughout the county borough. The vision not only focuses on the provision of new housing and the maintenance and improvement of existing homes but also focuses on those services which support people to access housing and maintain independence to live in their homes for longer. The vision also focuses on the wider community, the environment and maximising the community benefits that can be derived from the investment in housing that will take place over the period of the Strategy.

- 5.19 Underpinning the vision are 5 strategic priorities:
1. Creating better choices;
 2. Creating great places to live;
 3. Creating healthy homes and vibrant communities;
 4. Delivering new homes; and
 5. Supporting specialist housing needs.
- 5.20 In addition to the 5 strategic priorities there are 3 themes which will cut across everything the Council and its partners will do over the period of the Strategy:
1. Sustainable development – achieving a better and more sustainable future;
 2. Health and wellbeing – improving health outcomes and promoting wellbeing; and
 3. Equality, diversity and inclusion – providing services without barriers, which respect difference and promotes inclusion.
- 5.21 The Local Housing Strategy will be accompanied by a Delivery Plan. The purpose of the Delivery Plan will be to outline the range of actions which the Council and/or its partners will undertake to realise the 5 objectives set out in the Strategy.
- 5.22 It is proposed that the Delivery Plan will be monitored on a biannual basis by the Affordable Homes Partnership, with periodic update reports being presented to the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. The Delivery Plan and supporting Investment Plan will be formulated over the next few months and presented to the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee later this year.
- 5.23 Upon receipt of approval by Cabinet the Local Housing Strategy will be sent to the Graphic Design team for professional design. The Strategy will also be reproduced in an Easy Read version and as a BSL video.

Conclusion

- 5.24 The Local Housing Strategy clearly sets out the strategic housing priorities of the Council and aligns with Welsh Government's national policy context.
- 5.25 The Local Housing Strategy will provide a framework from the provision of housing and related services throughout the county borough over the next 5 years.
- 5.26 The Delivery Plan will set out those actions to be undertaken by the Council and/or its partners to improve the housing situation throughout the county borough.
- 5.27 The Investment Plan will detail how the actions contained within the Delivery Plan will be resourced.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The Local Housing Strategy is based on an in-depth analysis of housing needs throughout the county borough. The housing vision outlined in the Strategy assumes that a series of actions will be undertaken in order to realise this vision.
- 6.2 The Delivery Plan will set out the actions that the Council and/or its partners will undertake over the period of the Strategy in order to improve the housing situation throughout the county borough. Where noted, it is assumed that sufficient resources will be made available to undertake those actions.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Integrated Impact Assessment suggests that the Local Housing Strategy will have a positive impact upon the residents of the county borough.
- 7.2 By providing a framework to meet the diverse range of housing needs throughout the county borough the Local Housing Strategy will have a positive impact on equality, diversity and inclusion, on tackling social disadvantage and on promoting the wellbeing of existing and future generations. The actions that will be contained within the Delivery Plan are expected to contribute, both directly and indirectly, to several of the Council's wellbeing objectives and will not have an adverse impact on the promotion of the Welsh language.
- 7.3 [Hyperlink to IIA.](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The successful outcome of the Local Housing Strategy is dependent on the availability of resources to achieve the successful delivery of each of the specific actions that will be outlined in the Delivery Plan.
- 8.2 The funding required to take the actions that will be outlined in the Delivery Plan forward will come from a variety of sources including Welsh Government grants, the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, partner organisations own funding streams and private finance. An investment plan will be formulated to underpin the Delivery Plan thereby detailing which resources will be allocated or sought and from where.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications arising directly from the report. However, there may be personnel implications arising out of the actions that may be included within the Delivery Plan. Such implications will be considered by the relevant organisation prior to the commencement of said action.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 Consultation has been carried out at various stages of development of the Local Housing Strategy, as outlined in section 5 above.
- 10.2 Comments from Consultees are reflected in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2014, Housing Wales Act 2014

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Consultees:

- Cllr Lisa Phipps, Cabinet Member for Housing
- Cllr John Ridgewell, Chair – Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny
- Cllr Mike Adams, Vice Chair – Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny
- Dave Street, Acting Chief Executive & Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing
- Richard (Ed) Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education & Corporate Services
- Mark S Williams, Corporate Director of Communities
- Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
- Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer
- Mark Williams, Interim Head of Property Services
- Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
- Rhian Kyte, Head of Regeneration & Planning
- Fiona Wilkins, Housing Services Manager
- Kerry Denman, Housing Solutions Manager
- Lesley Allen, Principal Group Accountant (Housing)
- Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer – Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation
- Liz Sharma, Consultation and Public Engagement Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Local Housing Strategy 2021-2026