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**Report to:** Place, Regeneration and Housing Committees

**Date:** 6 September 2021

**Subject:** **Housing Pledge**

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**Director:** Liz Hunter, Director of Policy and Development

**Author:** Judith Furlonger, Policy Manager Housing

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## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To set out the opportunities and challenges of the Mayor's pledge to support the delivery of 5,000 affordable homes in West Yorkshire over the next three years.

## **2. Information**

### **Mayoral Housing Pledge**

- 2.1 The Mayor's primary ambition for housing is to provide at least 5,000 affordable homes over the next three years, with an aim for those to also be well connected, located in sustainable places and built to address the climate emergency.
- 2.2 Affordable housing includes properties available through social rent, affordable rent, intermediate rent, affordable home ownership and shared ownership<sup>1</sup>. Over the last three years for which data is available (2017/18 – 2019/20) 3,997 affordable homes were delivered in West Yorkshire.
- 2.3 With many sites still to be secured and planning permission confirmed, it is too early to say with confidence exactly when and where affordable housing will be built over the next three years. However, detailed work with partners has identified indicative financial and delivery capacity across the affordable housing sector for an estimated maximum of 8,276 affordable homes.
- 2.4 Translating this indicative capacity into delivery of the Mayoral pledge for 5,000 affordable homes will require strong partnership working across West Yorkshire to develop and deliver a strong pipeline of financially and technically viable schemes that meet planning requirements. A package of Combined

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<sup>1</sup> Homes purchased using Help to Buy are not included in the definition.

Authority support has been developed that will be critical to achieving this shared endeavour.

- 2.5 The development process is complex, with technical and practical challenges affecting timescales and delivery plans. For example, financial viability acts as a significant barrier in lower value areas, particularly impacting brownfield and urban sites. This leaves planning authorities with competing priorities to be balanced (e.g. highways improvements to junctions, contributions to local schools and community facilities, drainage solutions to retain surface water on site) to achieve development, which can often see the proportion of affordable homes being delivered on a site being negotiated down to improve the overall financial viability of a development.
- 2.6 The first 100 days of the Mayoral term have been focused on galvanising support for the pledge and gaining commitment to work together with key partners, such as Local Authorities, Housing Associations through West Yorkshire Housing Partnership and Homes England. The CA is working with Directors of Development to coordinate areas of work to achieve the pledge working with Planning Authorities to scope additional tools required which will boost delivery in West Yorkshire.
- 2.7 Work has commenced on establishing a Dementia Ready Housing Taskforce, with the scoping of partner organisations to provide input and objective setting for key outputs; and also included the Mayor visiting the dementia reminiscence pod to establish specific needs and requirements for the specialist accommodation. The Mayor also hosted an episode of Yorkshire Housing's 'Raising the Roof' podcast titled "*Housing & Me: A Mayor's View*", in which the Mayor spoke about her own personal experience of affordable housing and future ambitions for the region.
- 2.8 Indicators and success criteria are now in the process of being established, to enable the Combined Authority to monitor the delivery of the 5,000 starts on site within the Mayoral term. The definition for 'affordable' has been taken from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out affordable housing as social and affordable rent (80% of market value), intermediate rent products, and shared ownership. Defining 'sustainable' requires further work with partners and connects with on-going work to respond to the climate emergency target for the region.

#### Combined Authority role and support to partners

- 2.9 The Combined Authority has several tools to support partners work;

#### **Delivery of Programmes**

- The Brownfield Housing Fund will support the delivery of new homes on underutilised brownfield sites. The programme's affordable home element has been maximised within the available delivery timescales, with around 1,947 affordable homes currently expected to be delivered. This offers an early direct impact on delivery of the pledge while further plans are developed and funding sought.

- Supporting the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme through development of a shared pipeline and continuous engagement with the affordable housing sector and council partners.
- Continue to explore options with districts for land assembly, packaging sites to increase scale and attractiveness to investors, and by sharing risk or/and de-risking sites to build capability and capacity for larger scale delivery beyond 2024.

### **Supporting Partner Delivery**

- The £3.2 million Housing Pipeline Revenue Fund, devolved monies, will increase capacity, technical support and specialist advice to advance developments in the pipeline and where possible seek to maximise affordable and sustainable housing options across key strategic developments.
- Support and work with Local Authority partners to apply local planning policies which seek to maximise delivery of affordable housing on all developments, identifying any additional support that can be offered from the Combined Authority.
- Creating a relationship of shared endeavour between Local Authorities, the affordable housing sector, Homes England and the Combined Authority.
- Establishing a Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England, as outlined in the devolution deal, will develop a resource to support a shared pipeline of housing investment for West Yorkshire.
- The Mayor's pledge is supported by Council Leaders and Chief Executives. The Combined Authority will work closely with Directors of Development to increase the supply of affordable housing and monitor progress to deliver the pledge over the next three years.

## **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

- 3.1 The Combined Authority is developing an action plan that will tackle the climate emergency in line with the emissions pathways required to reach net zero carbon by 2038. Housing sustainability and energy efficiency of buildings is core to this plan, including consideration of options to enhance environmental standards.
- 3.2 Working with partners to further develop tools to address climate change, there will be a financial impact of moving to higher environmental standards ahead of the market, but this should be viewed as an invest to save approach, with the longer-term costs to the climate and the need to avoid retrofit of new houses later post development. As Combined Authority investment programmes progress into the assurance process the Combined Authority's agreed policy position on environmental standards will be incorporated into homes delivered, with further opportunities to enhance sustainability explored project by project to maximise the investment impact where possible. Projects and sites being delivered through the planning system and not requiring intervention will be subject to local planning policy applications.

## **4. Inclusive Growth Implications**

- 4.1 Housing is key to inclusive growth. High housing costs, and especially rising rents, have reinforced inequality between households who rent and those who own their home outright. Housing is also the main driver of wealth accumulation and biggest source of debt among most households. More broadly, living in good quality housing and a safe, well designed neighbourhood improves life chances in terms of health, employment and educational outcomes. The housing market can be a barrier to inclusive growth for some groups, particularly low-income households who spend a larger share of their household budget on housing. Relying on the market to increase the overall rate of housebuilding in response to demand (with prices, in theory, falling as supply increases) is a slow and indirect route to making housing affordable for these groups. Delivering the Mayor's pledge of increasing the supply of Affordable Housing, as set out in this paper, is the most effective way of ensuring more people in West Yorkshire have access to affordable housing which provides a basis for secure and successful lives.
- 4.2 Ensuring new affordable homes are built to high energy efficiency standards helps improve health, reduces heating costs, mitigating rising energy costs and reducing the incidence of fuel poverty. Furthermore, ensuring homes are built in sustainable, well-connected locations ensure families can access work and social opportunities, improving work and wellbeing outcomes.

## **5. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. As projects under this programme move forward, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as part of the business case development for capital funding opportunities.
- 5.2 The Mayor's housing pledges contain many proposals that would improve equality of access to housing, focussing on those in most need. This includes steps to ensure older people's housing is dementia friendly, promoting inclusive design standards, action to tackle homelessness and ensuring access to accommodation for those fleeing domestic violence. These proposals will be developed and presented to Committee in due course.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **8. Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

**9. External Consultees**

- 9.1 The housing pledge has been discussed with Leaders and relevant officers of partner Councils. Officers are meeting with West Yorkshire Directors of Development on 3 September to develop an action plan for delivery of the pledge and a verbal update will be given to the Committee on any significant points arising.

**10. Recommendations**

- 10.1 That the Committee notes and endorses the approach to delivery of the Mayor's housing pledge working closely with Partners, including Districts through their Directors of Development.

**11. Background Documents**

None.

**12. Appendices**

None.