

HOUSING BOARD
29th AUGUST 2019
HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE

Purpose

This report updates the Board on work to undertake a housing review, seeking support from the Board for the focus of this work and the steps outlined.

Thematic Priority

This report relates to the following Strategic Economic Plan priorities:

- Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth.

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme

Recommendations

Board members are asked to:

1. Comment on the focus of the work to date and the types of questions and issues that could be explored as part of the housing review.
2. Note the contribution that Homes England and other stakeholders could play as these issues are investigated.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Following discussions at the first meeting of the Housing Board in July, Members agreed to support an evidence gathering exercise across different strategic housing issues, as part of a wider housing review. This will seek to capture and rehearse the key facts on important issues like affordability and funding at the SCR scale, as well as assemble information across a much broader sweep of issues around the state of the wider housing market.
- 1.2** The review of strategic housing issues across SCR is intended to take a fresh look at housing with no pre-defined ideas or assumptions, seeking to address open-ended questions with findings that can be used by the Mayor, the Combined Authority and individual districts to support the delivery of the right housing, in the right places, and of the right quality and price for communities.
- 1.3** The Housing Board agreed to lead this work and this report updates Board members on progress to date, seeking discussion and input as action is taken forward.

2. Proposal and justification

2.1 As noted in July, any discussion on housing needs to take an evidence-based approach so that a broad range of issues can be properly considered, including the potential for new or radical interventions for the future. In particular, the evidence gathering work proposed will provide an opportunity to explore new ideas and initiatives, such as the role of housing in renewing our town centres and contributing to 'place'; the potential to adopt more modern methods of construction so that we can deliver housing at scale; and the role of new social or council house building alongside private sector housing development.

2.2. Based on this approach, and points raised in July, officers have begun to prepare a brief for commissioning support from an external organisation that can offer a fresh perspective and new insights. It is envisaged that the work commissioned is focused on two main elements:

i) Housing Need: The first element of the commission will be to draw together current evidence on housing 'need' in its broadest sense, capturing and rehearsing key conclusions from Local Plans and other locally derived data. This element would address questions such as:

- How many new homes do we need in the future?
- Where are new homes being developed and where are we planning to develop new homes in the future?
- How affordable is housing in different parts of the city region and how much more affordable housing is required?
- What type and tenure of homes would best serve the needs of local communities and the wider economy?

ii) Housing Market(s): the second element would be a mix of quantitative and qualitative work that would take our understanding of housing into a new area. It would assemble evidence across a broad sweep of issues on the state of the housing market(s) and require a range of more open-ended questions to be explored and analysed to test more radical approaches:

- What is the true state of the housing market(s) across South Yorkshire, when compared against each other or benchmarked against other areas?
- How do different housing issues play out differently across different localities?
- What do consumers really want and are their housing preferences being met?
- How far does new market housing offer support or impede business investment and growth in the region?
- Is the supply of quality and affordable housing likely to deliver the economic, social and environmental objectives, in particular the ambitions and priorities emerging through work on the refreshed SEP?
- How does housing impact on health and wellbeing in local communities and how could work with local Health Services be improved?
- With 20% of the existing housing below minimum acceptable energy efficiency standards, what are the options to upgrade this and future proof existing stock?
- What is the potential for more innovative approaches to deliver new homes and address the underlying needs of the city region, eg
 - uptake of Modern of Construction Methods for building at scale?
 - a more direct role for local authorities in housing development?

Overall, the work would be focused on bringing together and interpreting the base evidence on both social and privately developed/market housing, seeking to identify radical interventions that can improve the quality of both.

2.3 Rather than commission this work through the usual procurement routes, the nature of the work provides an opportunity to form a more meaningful partnership with experts in the housing field. This would build a longer lasting relationship and help to build capacity and knowledge within SCR whilst also developing some fresh ideas and perspectives. As such, several discussions are being held with policy experts and think tanks to explore how they could work with alongside officers in SCR and local authorities to fulfil the brief outline above.

2.4 Alongside this, conversations have also been held with senior representatives at Homes England to strengthen relationships with SCR and engage their expertise more directly. Given the recent change in Government and potential for new national priorities to be developed, it will be important to ensure that Homes England also play a full and meaningful role in this and other work being led by the Housing Board and can advise the Board on changing Government Policy.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

3.1 The work outlined will consider a range of strategic housing issues and a range of potential alternative solutions to help address them. The proposal to 'take stock' at the end of the evidence gathering phase will allow for alternative options to be considered in how to proceed with a potential review and what issues further exploration will focus on.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The work will be led by the SCR Executive with funding for any external support being provided from the Mayoral Capacity Fund.

4.2 Legal

There are no specific legal issues arising from this report.

4.3 Risk Management

Key risks:

- Partners and Stakeholders unwilling to participate in and/or contribute to the Review.
- The outputs from the work will not be sufficient to warrant progression to the next phases.
- Review conclusions not supported by key housing policy, investment and delivery bodies.
- Availability of budget to undertake the necessary exploration and analysis for a robust Review.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

The Review and its conclusions will take into account issues relating to equality, diversity and social inclusion.

5. Communications

5.1 The recognised National Housing Crisis shows that housing continues to be a sensitive issue with a range of views as to how the Crisis should be tackled. The housing evidence base work proposes the engagement and involvement of a range of bodies so as to seek to gather a broad range of views and perspectives. There will also be

opportunities throughout the work timetable to publicise progress and emerging findings.

6. Appendices/Annexes

None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: