

HOUSING BOARD

9th JANUARY 2020

PHASE ONE OF HOUSING REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose

This report updates the Board on progress with the first phase of the SCR Housing Review.

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. Note progress to date; and
2. Comment on the issues and opportunities generated by this work.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Housing Board previously agreed to help oversee the development of a SCR wide Housing Review. Overall, the Review is intended to take a fresh look at housing across the city region, with no pre-defined ideas or assumptions. It seeks to address some of the more open-ended questions on housing and develop findings and recommendations 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.
- 1.2** Following discussions at previous Board meetings in August and October, the Think Tank Respublica has been commissioned to provide expertise and offer a fresh perspective and new insights on the issues being considered by the Review – adding value to the housing debate rather than simply just reproducing evidence and previous ideas. This report provides an update of progress with the Review to date.

2. Proposal and justification

Recent progress

- 2.1** Following the Infrastructure Board meeting in October, discussions were held with a range of different policy experts and think tanks to firm up the aims of this first stage of the Housing Review, and consider the type of external support required and how this could best be deployed. Based on a detailed brief (specification attached at Annex 1), a procurement process was undertaken to commission this external support and the social reform think tank Respublica was selected to work on the housing review.
- 2.2.** Respublica is an independent organisation that brings expertise in a wide range of public policy areas as well as experience of working with national, regional and local government – including other Combined Authorities. Working alongside officers in the SCR team and local authorities, advisors from Respublica will help to ensure that the housing review generates new ideas and encourages connectivity between different policy areas. The intention is to build knowledge and capacity within South Yorkshire as well as test emerging proposals and recommendations with a broader network than would otherwise be reached, including within Government.
- 2.3** To complement this appointment and ensure that the housing review is well grounded in issues and opportunities specific to South Yorkshire, an Advisory Panel has also been set up for the project. The Panel is made up of experts and experienced practitioners from across South Yorkshire, including from the public, private and not for profit sectors. It will inform and shape the work as well as provide a useful sounding board.

Ongoing work

- 2.4** Rather than a traditional research exercise, with a linear methodology and a narrow approach, the aim of the housing review is to put in place a more interactive and collaborative process. This aims to add value to existing activities, raise levels of understanding through the work as it develops, and result in some widely supported proposals. As such, the process itself will need to remain flexible in order to respond to ideas as they emerge, and the views of the Advisory Panel.
- 2.5** At this stage, therefore, a small number of high-level milestones have been agreed in order to manage the progress of phase one. These are:
- Initiation of review began in November 2019
 - First meeting of Advisory Panel in December 2019
 - Development of Housing Market Report over January 2020
 - Further engagement with stakeholders over February and March
 - Production of propositions and proposals by late March/April 2020
- 2.6** Reports will be brought to future meetings of the Infrastructure Board so that Members can be kept up to date. Following conclusion of this first phase, a fuller report will be prepared with all the findings from the work as well as some recommendations for phase two.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** The work outlined will consider a range of strategic housing issues and potential alternative solutions to help address them. The work will be closely project managed and include stages at which to 'take stock'. This will allow for alternative options to be considered as part of the process, with these tested by the Advisory Panel and reported to the Infrastructure Board.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The work will be led by the SCR Executive with funding for the commission 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 review will include 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

Annex 1 – Phase one specification

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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: