

Housing 2023/24 Service Area Plan (Housing, Andy Vincent)

Synopsis of report:

This report provides an update on the delivery of the 2022/23 Housing Service Area Plan and a summary of this year's 2023/24 Service Area Plan for approval.

The full proposed Service Area Plan for 2023/24 can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation(s):

- i) **Members approve the 2023/24 Housing Service Area Plan**
- ii) **Members note any business cases requiring growth are subject to approval by Housing Committee (or full Council depending on sums).**

1 Context and background of report

- 1.1 The annual business planning cycle for 2023/24 commenced with each Corporate Head of Service submitting any planned activity for the next Financial Year which requires growth.
- 1.2 In addition, in conjunction with the relevant Service Chair and Chair of Member Working Party, priority areas arising from corporate strategies have been agreed for the 2023/24 MWP work programme. These form the majority of the service area's planned activity for 2023/24.
- 1.3 Business cases for growth items have then been prepared either as outline documents (further refinement and more detailed exploratory work is required during 23/24 before a full business case can be developed), or final business cases. Final business cases will need to be approved by Housing Committee prior to release of any funds, therefore reports will be submitted for approval during 23/24 where at this stage, only outline business cases can be provided.
- 1.4 Subsequent to review of growth bids, Service Area Plans have been further developed to include planned activity that does not require growth, a Mission Statement to document a narrative of the service area's current position and its direction of travel over the lifecycle of the Corporate Business Plan, and a summary of each of the teams that form the service area and their business-as-usual activity and key statistics.
- 1.5 To ensure a 'golden thread' between Service Area Plans and team and individual plans, Corporate Heads of Service will use the planned activity to set team and individual objectives for 23/24.
- 1.6 Any projects identified as part of planned activity will be added to the project portfolio for 2023/24 and progress monitored and reported on a Quarterly basis to Corporate Management Committee as per the project management methodology.
- 1.7 The final non-corporate Service Area Plans go to their relevant service committee for approval first. A final approval is then sought from Corporate Management Committee approving the Corporate Action Plan (which is an amalgamation of all the

plans for the year). In addition, Corporate Management Committee is also asked to approve any business cases requiring General Fund growth because growth cannot be approved by a service committee with the exception of HRA expenditure up to £100,000 which can be approved by the Housing Committee. Any growth exceeding £250,000 will require the approval of full Council.

2 Key Achievements in 2022/23

2.1 The Housing Service Area Plan 2022/23 contained 28 actions; including: -

- Accreditation for the Support Services Function
- Achievement of ISO 9001 accreditation
- Development of a RBC Garage Strategy
- Delivery of the Older Persons and Tenant Engagement Strategies

2.2 Of these 19 are completed and 5 will be completed prior to the end of the financial year (March 2023)

- One has been postponed:
 - Procurement of work to Surrey Towers' roof
- Two are not complete:
 - Accreditation for the income collection service
 - Implementing service charges for the expanded caretaking service
- One will be completed in the new financial year:
 - A survey of RBC owned trees – see the Housing Service Area plan 2023/24

3 Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24

3.1 The full Housing Service Area Plan can be found in Appendix A. A summary is provided below.

3.2 Service Area Mission Statement:

- *We are committed to continuous improvement of the housing services we provide – be that support for homeless households, the allocation of social housing, management of our own properties, our repairs service, the provision of adaptations, improvements to Council owned properties etc.*
- *We aim to provide quality, empathetic and compassionate housing services. We want to get services right first time and put things right as quickly as possible if they go wrong.*
- *We want to build trust by listening more to the views of service users and by being clear about what we can and cannot deliver.*
- *We are delivering on many of the objectives in our corporate strategies – specifically in relation to climate change, health and wellbeing and community empowerment.*

3.3 Key new areas of work in 2023/24: -

- Work required to meet our obligations under the Building Safety Act
- Conduct a survey to identify the condition of trees on Housing owned land
- Undertake a tenant survey to enable the service to report on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Phase 3 of the Housing IT enhancement programme
- Housing Tenancy Agreement Review
- Increase to the Housing Discretionary Fund
- Investment in and upgrade of estate paths
- Upgrade of two boilers in our Independent Retirement Living accommodation
- Establishment of a central Housing Systems Team
- Piloting a Tenant Incentive Scheme
- Reviewing the RBC Tenants Handbook
- Seeking accreditation for a tenant engagement activity

4 Policy framework implications

- 4.1 This Plan supports the delivery of the Corporate Business Plan.
- 4.2 Specifically, those actions arising from Corporate Strategies that will be addressed in delivering the Service Plan can be seen in the Planned Activity list in Appendix A described as CBP Strategy Action in the Type of Initiative column.

5 Resource implications

- 5.1 The following proposed initiatives require growth to be able to be delivered:

Revenue

- Undertaking essential fire safety work
- Resources for an annual tenant satisfaction survey (STAR Survey of Tenants and Residents) - a business case on this initiative will be presented to the March Housing Committee **
- Phase 3 of the Housing IT enhancement programme **
- Review of the Housing Tenancy Agreement - a business case on this initiative will be presented to the March Housing Committee **
- Establishment of a Housing Systems Team
- Piloting a Tenant Incentive Scheme **
- Growing the Housing Tenants Discretionary Fund

Capital

- Improvement of estate paths
- Upgrade of boilers in two Independent Retirement Living schemes to air source heat pumps – rather than replacing with gas boilers **

** still subject to approval by Housing Committee

- 5.2 Provisional budgets for these schemes have been incorporated into the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and budgets will be released upon Committee approval for the schemes to progress.

6 Legal implications

6.1 There are a number of areas within the plan which address issues of compliance. Tenant Satisfaction Measures, preparation for the implementation of the Building Safety Act 2022 etc

6.2 The plan also seeks to strengthen the evidence that the service complies with the regulatory standards: -

The Economic Standards (Governance and Financial Viability and Value for Money are not applicable to a local authority landlord) :

- [Governance and Financial Viability Standard](#)
- [Value for Money Standard](#)
- [Rent Standard](#)

The Consumer Standards:

- [Home Standard](#)
- [Tenancy Standard](#)
- [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#)
- [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#).

6.3 Under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 local housing authorities are established and various powers are granted to local housing authorities to provide and manage housing accommodation they provide. The Service Plan is a document created by the Council which outlines the various actions it will take, in its capacity as a local housing authority, to manage the housing accommodation it provides. Whilst there is no legal requirement to create a Service Plan, such a document provides relevant information to enable the organisation and residents understand the tasks which will be undertaken over a fixed period of time.

7 Equality implications

7.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted for projects impacting on tenants/residents being delivered as part of this plan.

7.2 This will ensure that any equality implications are identified and addressed before new initiatives are introduced.

8 Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

8.1 A number of actions within the Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24 seek to address environmental/sustainability issues. They are included within the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

They include: -

- New homes will be built to an EPC rating of A
- Develop a heating plan to help the service transition away from gas
- Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill

9 Other implications (where applicable)

9.1 A review of the service specific risks impacting on the service have been undertaken as part of compiling the Housing Service Area Plan.

- 9.2 The following risks have been identified impacting on the service:
- Housing Revenue Account income forecast not met
 - Reduction in the number of existing and new PRS opportunities to place households in private rented sector
 - Failure to comply with regulator's code - and new definition of the 'Decent Homes Standard'
 - Claims for disrepair from tenants against the Housing Service
 - Health and Safety requirements are not met within the Housing stock relating to fire risk control, asbestos management, legionella, gas and electrical safety, lifts, safe working practices within the housing stock and building safety in general.
 - Failure to achieve compliance on electrical testing
 - Ensure that vulnerable customers are protected from exploitation
 - Contracts are not properly procured
 - Data collated/ reported may be inaccurate.
 - Disclosure of personal data to someone who is not entitled to that data e.g. via telephone conversation or email
 - Loss of Council owned device containing personal data results in disclosure of personal data
 - Unauthorised access to Council systems which allows access to personal data
 - Failure to dispose of documentation containing personal data in a secure fashion results in disclosure of personal data
 - Critical member(s) of staff unable to attend work due to sickness
 - Regeneration of HRA stock not achieved
 - New development not achieved
 - New IT system not procured
 - Council Garages not maintained
 - Asset Management Plan is not fit for purpose
 - Temporary Accommodation portfolio does not reflect current need
 - A third caretaker is not appointed. Caretaking is not extended to 12 additional blocks.
 - Housing Allocations scheme is not fit for purpose
 - Failure to implement Homelessness Strategy
 - Fraud increases/is not tackled
 - Staff safety from working alone
 - Contracts are not being managed effectively
 - Inability to recruit to key roles
 - Unauthorised alternations to Council owned properties by tenants
 - The resource implications of support to refugees and asylum seekers
 - Rising costs exceeding income

10. **Conclusions**

- 10.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to move the service forward in 2022/23
- 10.2 Three accreditations have been achieved, it is hoped that the Regulatory Notice will be removed in January 2023, work is progressing on the Parkside Regeneration, a new repairs, maintenance, and voids contractor has been recruited and mobilised, the Housing IT system has been upgraded, a bid has been made to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for funding to bring our Council owned properties up to a C energy efficiency rating etc.

10.3 23 additional service improvements are planned for 2023/24. These are focused on meeting the Council's key ambitions for the service:

- Optimising Income and Efficiencies
- Good Quality Housing
- New Council owned homes
- Review and modernise provision for older tenants
- Well managed neighbourhoods

(To resolve)

Background papers

Housing Business Centre Plan (Service Area Plan) 2022/23

<https://democracy.runnymede.gov.uk/documents/s3385/Housing%20Business%20Centre%20Plan%20202223.pdf>