

## HOUSING AND HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 JULY 2017

### PRIORITY REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER HOUSING AND HOMES

REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR PETER GRIFFITHS

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities for 2017/18.

#### 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

I have accountability for:

Council housing management services	Oversight and direction of estate management services and best use of housing stock (across all housing providers).  Repairs and maintenance programmes.
Registered Social Landlords	Liaison with the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership on neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda.
Private Rented Sector	Licensing and regulation.  Private Tenancy Unit activities.  Bond and deposit scheme initiatives.
Pre-tenancy Services/ Housing Options	Assessing housing need, options for vulnerable adults, children and young people and offenders.  Temporary accommodation provision/ homelessness.  Initiatives for rough sleepers.
Housing Supply	To review the supply of housing and tenure based on an analysis of housing need including responsibility for BMHT. The Cabinet Member will advise the Deputy Leader in relation to housing supply and tenure.
Tenant engagement in social housing	Tenant engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.
Neighbourhood Management	Wider council and public sector integration at the local level.

### 3. PRIORITIES

In May, Cabinet agreed the Council's vision for Birmingham 'A City of growth where every child, citizen and place matters' with housing being one of four clear strategic priorities:

- **Housing – a great place to live in**  
Provide housing in a range of types and tenures to meet the housing needs of all current and future citizens of Birmingham.

This means:

- Making the best use of our existing stock.
- Delivering through a range of partnerships to support a strong supply of new high quality homes in a mix of tenures.
- Supporting the people of Birmingham to access good quality housing provision.
- Working with our partners to reduce homelessness.

### 4. OTHER PRIORITIES

In addition to the priorities outlined above, there are a number of other portfolio priorities that I will be progressing during 2017/18, as set out in the '*Building Great Homes, Creating Great Places – Birmingham Leads the Way*' pamphlet, launched at the LGA Conference on 5 July, (attached) including:

- Following our collaborative work in developing the Housing Birmingham Strategy, I will work with the partnership to enable more homes, of all tenures, to be built, to meet the housing needs of the city. The strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval on 25 July.
- Work with partners to finalise Birmingham's Homelessness Strategy, to ensure there is better prevention and support for residents who are at risk of becoming homeless.
- Work with resident organisations, HLBs and partners to develop a new shared understanding of neighbourhood and place, developing appropriate communication systems with tenants of all ages.
- Work with the West Midlands Mayor, Leader and others in developing a regional housing deal with the Government.

We will also continue to work to mitigate the impact of welfare benefit changes to Birmingham residents, in particular the impending roll out of Universal Credit. The Welfare Reform Multi-Agency Task and Finish Group, chaired by Councillor Chatfield, Cabinet Member for Openness, Transparency and Equality, has been established to prepare the city for the implementation of the full rollout due to commence in November 2017. Terms of Reference and Membership (Appendix 1)

Over the weeks and coming months we will also continue to undertake fire safety and reassurance visits to residents in 213 tower blocks across the city. We are working closely with West Midlands Fire Service in relation to any appropriate testing and have given a commitment to retro fit sprinkler systems and other fire suppression measures in tower blocks. The Council leader wants Britain's biggest councils to lobby the Government to help pay for fire suppression measures in all of the country's local authority residential tower blocks. We will continue to work with DCLG to establish the position regarding other building owners.

It is right that the initial focus on fire safety should be targeted at Council and Housing Association tower blocks but I am keen to ensure the Government and partner agencies remain focused on conditions in the private rented sector, where some of the most vulnerable citizens are housed. I have recently written to the new Minister of State for Housing and Planning, urging him to deliver the extension of HMO licensing for any property with 5 tenants sharing and to consider removing the 20% of private rented sector stock constraint on councils' discretion to implement Selective Licensing without needing his consent. These measures would help us drive up safety standards for all tenants in the private rented sector.

## **5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The KPIs to monitor progress to deliver on our strategic priorities:

- 51,000 new-build homes by 2031 – annual
- Homelessness will be prevented or relieved – quarterly
- Minimise the number of households living in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households - monthly
- Number of homes built that are affordable – half yearly
- Empty properties that are brought back into use – monthly
- Available council housing as a percentage of stock - monthly

The End of Year Performance against our council business plan targets are listed in appendix 2.

The targets for the 2017/18 Vision and Priorities council plan measures and the service delivery measures and targets relating to housing (April 2017 to March 2018) are listed in Appendix 3.

## 6. KEY BUDGET ISSUES

I am responsible as the Cabinet Member for significant financial resources in 2017/18 to deliver my portfolio of services – these are summarised in the table below:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Net Budget</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
Provision of Social/Affordable Housing for tenants by the Council	281.7	(281.7)	-
Private Sector Housing (including empty properties, private sector licensing, safer places, troubled families and development of new housing for rent at market levels)	3.6	(4.8)	(1.2)
Homelessness (including temporary accommodation)	21.4	(16.4)	5.0

In addition, a total of £466m of capital resources will be invested over the next three years between 2017/18 and 2019/20 across all those services to maintain our existing homes and deliver new housing. This will include:

- £175m for the building of new social/affordable homes (including demolition of some stock that is no longer viable)
- £168m on our existing council homes to ensure that key property elements including central heating, double glazing, kitchens, bathrooms and rewires are replaced as they reach the end of their planned life cycle
- £105m on the building of new market rent homes (through the Council's wholly owned company)
- £18m on other programmes, including the provision of adaptations to promote independent living for Council tenants, returning empty private sector homes into use and refurbishing properties for use as interim accommodation.

I am expecting all services to be provided within the approved financial resources for 2017/18 and that all budgets will be balanced (although there are pressures on our services, particularly demand for social homes, greater use of temporary accommodation as demand increases and potential slippage in the delivery of our market rent homes).

All capital projects are also scheduled to be completed as planned in 2017/18 and the capital budgets will continue to be monitored closely.

My portfolio of services will be facing significant challenges over the next 2-3 years. There is an increasing need for new homes of all tenures, homelessness and the use of

temporary accommodation is likely to increase in part due to the national welfare reforms and the continued reductions in public funding for services.

I, together with tenants raised significant concerns relating to the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and am pleased to indicate that some aspects of the legislation will now not be implemented by the government e.g. 'Pay to Stay'. We will continue to raise our concerns on other aspects of the legislation that should not be implemented e.g. lifetime tenancies and sale of empty social homes.

I also wrote to the DCLG at the end of April as a response to the Housing White Paper – there is much work to do by all concerned to provide good homes across the country. I will continue to develop this financial agenda by working constructively and closely with the Chairs of Birmingham Social Housing Partnership, City Housing Liaison Board, Landlords Forum, the Combined Authority and of course central government.

Our medium and long term financial plans will be under continuous review to ensure the long term sustainability and affordability in the provision of all services and to protect investment in new build and our existing stock.

I want the Council to continue to improve the housing offer in the city, considering innovation in funding mechanisms, housing construction methods and available land in the delivery of mixed tenure housing, including specialist housing.

Councillor Peter Griffiths

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes

## **Terms of Reference for Multi-Agency Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group**

### **Objective of the Team**

To prepare Birmingham for the implementation of the full rollout of UC due to commence in November 2017

1. To work collaboratively across a number of agencies bringing together items of best practice, knowledge, capability, energy and enthusiasm to contribute to the objective.
2. To prepare a series of communications and briefings relevant to citizens, advice agencies, housing providers, landlords, Elected Members to inform of the changes associated with the introduction of Universal Credit
3. To arrange relevant training for affected parties in readiness for the introduction of Universal credit
4. To oversee the arrangements for both the personal budgeting and support and digital assistance services needed in preparation for the introduction of UC
5. Receive briefings from Job Centre Plus in relation to timelines, volumes and updates in relation to turnaround timescales for Birmingham.
6. Collaborating with the work of the Financial Inclusion Partnership and the Child Poverty Action Group in relation to Universal Credit
7. To promote the alignment of Birmingham City Council (and other) employment and skills support programmes/activities with support packages offered to Universal Credit claimants and those affected by the Benefit Cap .

### **Membership**

Chaired by Councillor Chatfield, Cabinet for Transparency, Openness and Equality

Third Sector Agencies

Job Centre Plus

Housing Associations (BSHP)

Local Authority

- Housing
- Benefit Service
- Employment & Skills Service

### **Meeting Frequency**

Monthly commencing June 2017 until March 2018

### **Meeting Support**

Supplied by BCC Customer Services Division