

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting held on Wednesday, 24th November, 2021 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr J.B. Canty (Chairman)
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr P.J. Cullum (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Jessica Auton
Cllr Sophia Choudhary
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.J. Roberts

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Michael Hope and Cllr Prabesh KC.

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September, 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

18. HOUSING STRATEGY

The Board welcomed Strategy and Enabling Officer, Zoe Paine who was in attendance to give a presentation on the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2022-2027. Tim Mills, Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing was also in attendance.

Ms Paine, gave an overview of considerations during the process for compiling the new strategy through a collaborative approach, these included detailing what needed to be included and a summary of themes. The purpose would be to take an objective approach and to scope/reflect on what was right for the Council – would it support the Council's corporate vision and objectives?

A summary was given on the current strategy, which had been set out in four themes and ran until the end of 2022. It was noted that the Council's corporate context had changed since the existing strategy had been agreed and the new Vision for Rushmoor would need to be considered whilst scoping the new document. The Vision had identified, housing for every stage of life, as one of its six major ambitions and the Council's Business Plan had stated that enough homes and types of housing were available in Rushmoor.

It was noted that legislation stated that all housing authorities must update their strategy every five years. As part of the update, a review should be carried out of all forms of homelessness and a plan should be set out on how the Council would secure appropriate accommodation and support for people who may become homeless or were at risk of becoming homeless.

It was proposed that the Council would deliver a well researched document, which provided a clear approach to any housing themes identified as part of the scoping work. Engagement on the strategy would be carried out through work with the Board, consultation with partners and continued review and audit processes. In addition, it was suggested that a supporting delivery plan could help the team monitor implementation and progress of the strategy. Other interfaces and dependencies to consider whilst scoping the strategy were, the Council's Local Plan and Strategic Economic Framework, national housing and planning policies and funding models, partnership working with housing and service providers and the voluntary sector, and the work of other Local Authorities and Hampshire County Council (HCC).

The Board noted that the strategy would not be responsible for the delivery of some specific housing projects which were managed and resourced as part of the Rushmoor Housing Company or as part of the Property, Major Works and Regeneration Programme. Some constraints also needed to be considered such as, the ability to resource and deliver the project, Members' desire to maintain housing as a priority and any significant changes to national housing policy during the lifetime of the project.

Ms Paine shared a number of objectives with the Board, and Members were asked to consider the appropriateness of the suggested objectives and feedback with any additional areas that may be included. The proposed objectives were:

- Set out a clear approach to delivering housing which met a range of housing needs and aspirations in the borough
- Support the Council in its corporate objectives and to support the delivery of the Climate Change and Supporting Communities strategies
- Demonstrate transparency in the way in which the Council met its statutory housing duties
- To ensure that the borough's most vulnerable residents had access to accommodation and support appropriate to their needs

Ms Paine also shared a proposed approach to the process, this included a review of the current strategy, an update on housing needs and market data, an audit of the existing housing service provision, consultation/engagement with partners/stakeholders and drafting, approval, publication and implementation of the new strategy. Suggested scoping considerations were also shared, these included:

- Understanding needs and aspirations
- Adoption of an approach to maximise energy efficient, open market and affordable housing delivery with developers/stakeholders/Rushmoor Homes Limited, in line with Government policy and the Local Plan
- Best use of existing housing stock/empty homes
- Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation Strategies

- Approach to homelessness prevention, advice and housing allocation

The proposed timescale was noted and it was felt that feedback on progress could be made to the Board in Spring 2022. The draft document would then, hopefully, be shared with the Cabinet in October 2022 and presented to Full Council in December for adoption.

The Board discussed the suggested objectives as set out and a number of common themes were identified, these included:

- Commitments to residents rather than objectives
- Affordability across different segments of the population, best use of stock - some residents not in properties that worked for their needs - consideration on how to get the right people, in the right home, at the right time of life
- Improved quality of all housing stock
- Climate change/sustainability priorities
- Identification of future need
- Wellbeing/vulnerability needs
- Constraints on available space to build on – how to maximise

The Board continued their discussions on the suggested approach, the following were highlighted:

- An allocation scheme – it was noted that Members could choose groups to be included in an allocation scheme, and currently military personnel were a priority within the system, however, the scheme was based on fairness for all residents
- Increase building opportunities on brown field sites – the Board were advised of forthcoming government proposals to accelerate the use of brown field sites in the future for development
- Consideration be given to how private sector housing management companies operate

ACTION:

What	By Whom	By When
To bring data collated to inform the strategy to the Board for consideration.	Tim Mills - Head of Economy, Planning and Strategic Housing Zoe Paine - Strategy and Enabling Officer	March 2022

The Chairman thanked Ms Paine and Mr Mills for their presentation and contribution to the meeting.

19. BUSINESS PLAN

The Board welcomed John McNab, Policy and Performance Manager and Rachel Barker, Assistant Chief Executive who were in attendance at the meeting to provide a presentation on the development and progress of the Council’s Business Plan 2022-25 and the details of the findings from a series of workshops held with Heads

of Services throughout October and November, 2021. The Board were being asked to consider the workshop findings and provide comment on what might be taken forward for consideration and inclusion in the next stages of the process.

Mr McNab, reported on the workshops that had been undertaken with Heads of Service and the Executive Leadership Team. Consideration had been given to significant cross-cutting issues which could impact the Council, existing plans and strategies and any proposed changes within individual services. The structure, content, priorities and activities of the existing business plan and the 2021 Residents' Survey feedback and PESTLE horizon scanning opportunities were also considered.

It was noted that feedback from the workshops had highlighted the following as potential areas for development:

- Community Engagement – suggestions included the use of a residents' panel, specific resident surveys and/or public consultation, however it was proposed that a Community Communications and Engagement Plan be developed and linked with the Business Plan in 2022.
- Business Plan Structure – suggestions included a reduction of levels (i.e. themes, priorities and key activities) making it a clearer, relatable and cohesive document that did more to articulate the outcomes the Council were aiming to achieve. The modernisation and transformation programme and equality and diversity work were also suggested as areas to include within the Plan.
- The way we work – it was suggested that a stronger narrative could be used for:
 - Organisational values – to include the Council's new organisational values
 - Information governance and security – data protection, data security and/or information governance should feature as a common principle in the way Council services are delivered
 - Financial stability – affordability and flexibility should be reflected in the delivery of activities within the Plan
 - Performance arrangements and measures – to include principles on how the priorities are delivered in a measured way to ensure tangible outcomes
- Key Priorities and Activities – a number of activities had been identified from the existing Business Plan that could be considered for retention and/or inclusion in the revised Plan (Appendix A). A list had also been consolidated of suggested new activities to be considered (Appendix B). The Board reviewed the lists.
- Guiding Principles – given the feedback and comments made on the structure and content of the Business Plan the following themes had been identified as guiding principles for the future refresh of the Plan:

- Focus on a smaller number of priorities and activities
- A simpler and more succinct document
- Balance in terms of affordability and capacity
- Focus of key outcomes and deliverables

The Board noted the next steps, which would be to present the principles and key activities identified as part of the evidence gathering phase to Informal Cabinet on 16th December, 2021 and subject to further refinements, a draft document could be presented to the Board at its meeting in January, 2022.

The Board discussed the findings from the workshops and made a number of comments. In summary, it was felt important to produce a clear, simple, succinct document that was easily understood by residents. It should have clear and achievable outcomes/commitments, underpinned by strong evidence and should take into account affordability and capacity. In response to a query, it was noted that it was yet unknown which of the items in Appendix B would be affordable and consideration of this would be made in the next phase of the refresh. A costing exercise should also be considered for each activity to assess its affordability.

Public engagement with hard to reach groups was also discussed, in particular with young people, where it was felt there had been a gap. This would be considered further as part of the next phase and as part of the potential for a Community and Communications Engagement Strategy.

ACTION:

What	By Whom	By When
To consider the best way to share the evidence from the officer workshops with Members	Rachel Barker – Assistant Chief Executive John McNab – Policy and Performance Manger	January, 2022

The Chairman thanked Ms Barker and Mr McNab for their presentation.

20. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board **NOTED** the current Work Plan.

The Chairman report that an update would be sought on the work of GT3 and the Farnborough Civic Quarter for the next meeting of the Progress Group.

Other items that were raised for consideration by the Progress Group were:

- Section 215
- Government Policy - Levelling Up White Paper
- Housing Strategy Group – request for meeting in early January, 2022

The meeting closed at 8.56 pm.

Cllr J.B. Canty (Chairman)