

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	11 September 2023
Title:	Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group
Report of:	Joe Powell, Head of Housing and Regeneration
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To recommend a new Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group be formed to inform the shape and direction of the Council's Housing Development Strategy and action plan.

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 1) a Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group be established; and
- 2) the Terms of Reference at Appendix A be approved.

Introduction

1. The Council presently has a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that expires at the end of 2024. One of the three main aims of the strategy is to increase the supply of all forms of housing within the district. In addition, maximising opportunities for new housing in Rother is identified as a key issue in the Local Plan 2039: Early Engagement Document. Proposals to achieve this will be a key part of the draft Local Plan consultation in Spring 2024; finally, it remains a priority objective of the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-27 to increase the supply of affordable homes throughout the district and to bring Rother above a 5-year land supply by the end of 2023.
2. It has been agreed between the Senior Leadership Team and the portfolio holder for housing that, in order for the Council to continue to achieve its ambition to increase the supply of housing effectively, it requires a stand-alone Housing Development Strategy, separate from its homelessness strategy.
3. The current Strategy and its action plan were developed in 2019 following an extensive research and consultation exercise, with key stakeholders and the public. Recommendations from a Member 'Task and Finish Group' were also used to shape three key priorities of the final Strategy, including the need to increase housing supply while improving measures to address homelessness and the quality of accommodation.

Terms of Reference

4. The draft Terms of Reference for the Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group can be found at Appendix A.

5. The main objectives of the Terms of Reference are:
 - a. Review and acknowledge the impact of low levels of housing and affordable housing delivery in Rother
 - b. Consider relevant data and information relating to the range of housing needs in the district, with the support of officers and commissioned specialist consultants
 - c. Collaborate with group members and wider stakeholders to gather evidence and testimony of the main housing development related challenges and constraints facing the district
 - d. Consider a range of strategic opportunities informed by officers, specialist consultants and best practice from elsewhere
 - e. Make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for onward recommendation to Cabinet that support the development of a Housing Development Strategy and Action Plan for Rother
 - f. Recommend the final draft of the Strategy to the OSC for approval by Cabinet and full Council
 - g. Ensure effective communication with internal and external stakeholders through information sharing, consultation and collaboration.

Conclusion

6. The Council has ambitious aims in regard to increasing the supply of all forms of housing in Rother. The impact of the current housing crisis on the wellbeing of many residents is significant and the Council continues to see an increase in the cost of increased homelessness. It is therefore recommended that the Council set-up a Member-led Task and Finish Group in order to hear from community stakeholders and statutory partners to lead in the development of a stand-alone strategy and action plan to achieve its housing development ambitions and better meet the needs of its residents.

Financial Implications

7. There is a budget allocated for the development of housing strategy which will be allocated to the commissioning of a consultant to support with the development of a Housing Development Strategy with the proposed Task and Finish Group.

Human Resources Implications

8. The Task and Finish Group will be resourced from within the Housing team with support from specialist external consultants where required.

Equalities and Diversity

9. Equalities impact will form part of the development of the Strategy and an Equalities Impact Assessment will accompany any final Strategy.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	Yes
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	A - TASK AND FINISH GROUP: Draft Terms of Reference
Relevant previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

**Rother District Council
Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group
Terms of Reference**

1. Introduction

Rother District Council (RDC) is an ambitious local authority that is seeking to increase the levels of housing development that takes place in its area. In order that the housing developed best fits the aims and aspirations of the residents of Rother it is proposed that a Housing Development Strategy and action plan is developed to monitor and demonstrate that the aims of the strategy have been met over the lifetime of the strategy.

2. Purpose of the Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group

The purpose of the Housing Development Strategy Task and Finish Group (HDS T&FG) is to gather evidence from a range of stakeholders and make recommendations that will inform the shape and direction of the Strategy.

3. Aims and Origin

a. The Council plays a key role in enabling housing development and specifically the development of Affordable Housing. Increasing housing supply, affordable housing and community led housing are all key elements of the current Corporate Plan 2020 – 2027:

- i. Increase the supply of Affordable Homes throughout the district
- ii. Bring Rother above a 5-year land supply by the end of 2023

b. The aims of the HDS T&FG are to:

- i. Inform the shape and direction of the Council's approach to increasing rates of housing development in Rother
- ii. Build upon and improve the Council's response to the deficit in suitable and affordable housing available to residents of the district
- iii. Ensure the strategic objectives of the Housing Development Strategy compliment the Council's wider Corporate Plan objectives and, in particular, its carbon reduction and bio-diversity commitments.

4. Objectives

- a. Review and acknowledge the impact of low levels of housing and affordable housing delivery in Rother
- b. Consider relevant data and information relating to the range of housing needs in the district, with the support of officers and commissioned specialist consultants
- c. Collaborate with group members and wider stakeholders to gather evidence and testimony of the main housing development related challenges and constraints facing the district
- d. Consider a range of strategic opportunities informed by officers, specialist consultants and best practice from elsewhere

- e. Make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) for onward recommendation to Cabinet that support the development of a Housing Development Strategy and Action Plan for Rother.
- f. Recommend the final draft of the Strategy to the OSC for approval by Cabinet and full Council
- g. Ensure effective communication with internal and external stakeholders through information sharing, consultation and collaboration.

5. Background

- a. There is a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in place to the end of 2024. The strategy has an associated action plan that includes housing development related objectives.
- b. It is felt that housing development requires greater prominence as a work area to secure greater levels of delivery. As such a separate and distinct Housing Development Strategy is envisaged.

6. Resources

- a. The external members of the HDS T&FG will be invited by RDC officers
- b. Six Non-Executive RDC Councillors
- c. RDC officers from Housing, Planning, Corporate Policy & Projects teams and others as required
- d. The OSC will be invited to input into the review and will be kept informed of the HDS T&FG's progress.
- e. The appointed housing development consultancy

7. Timetable

Terms of Reference approved by OSC	September 2023
HDS T&FG Members invited to join	September 2023
HDS T&FG initial meeting	October 2023
Meet with HDS T&FG and set out strategy development programme	February 2024
Stakeholder Consultation as part of HDS T&FG process	May 2024
Public Consultation event(s)	June 2024
Final draft complete and agreed by HDS T&FG	November 2024
Strategy approved by OSC and Cabinet	January 2025
Strategy adopted by full council	February 2025

8. **Membership** – Six Non-Executive Councillors as nominated by the Committee (not necessarily Members of the OSC).

9. **Officer Lead** – Joe Powell, Head of Housing and Regeneration

10. **Quorum** - 2