

Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing 2021-22

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken in Housing since the last portfolio report in 2021.

Council Housing

Jo Wilkinson as Head of Housing continues to drive performance through Service Improvement Plans and quarterly monitoring of data with key staff. This is clearly evidenced through numerous award wins over the past 12 months¹. Significant and ambitious programmes of work are being progressed at pace around redevelopment works, whilst the team also provide focus and support to residents through advice and support with energy bills / usage and improving the fabric of the homes we rent to our residents. Customers have remained central to service delivery with the opening of a new Housing Hub on King Street and the team led the way in promoting and taking on young people through the Kickstart employment scheme. This has been delivered with the backdrop of significant challenges including supporting residents following the devastating gas explosion in Heysham, a fire to the rear of properties on Ryelands and continued pressures faced through covid. Of particular note:

- Pilot phase for Mainway Scheme approved, with additional master-planning including the Skerton High School site to be completed.
- Mount Avenue retrofit programme to 19 properties supporting reducing carbon footprint of existing housing
- Provision of first 'A' rated family home and installation of air-source heat pump. Small redevelopments of existing properties have high EPC ratings
- Planning application submitted for redevelopment of Mellishaw Gypsy and Traveller site including resident voice in scheme design
- Embarked on a thorough review of building safety and compliance in preparation for requirements within the forthcoming Building Safety Act
- Focus on tenancy success and making houses 'homes' with introduction of furniture packages for incoming tenants.

Private Sector Housing

- Reintroduction of the Landlords Forum providing support and advice to landlords around standards and requirements.
- Received funding to help tackle private landlords with the poorest energy performing properties.
- Focus on supporting vulnerable residents through Refugee programmes – significantly through the Afghanistan Refugee Programme in summer 2021, and most recently through assessing properties put forward under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and

¹ Winner - APSE Best Service Team: Construction and Building Services – Income Management Team (Sept 2021), Winner - Council of the Year – Northwest Energy Efficiency Awards (Oct 2021), Shortlisted - CIH Northern Awards Team of the Year – Income Management (November 2021), Winner - National Healthy Homes Award Home Improvement Agency Disabled Adaptations Service of the Year award (Dec 2021), Special Commendation - National Energy Efficiency Awards – Council of the Year (Feb 2022)

linking in with private providers arranging dispersal accommodation for asylum seekers.

Home Improvement Agency:

- Delivered £2.1m DFG programme
- Continued provision of hospital discharge scheme
- Provision of energy advice to private sector homes through dedicated Retrofit Technical Officer and delivery of Energy Redress Scheme
- Introduced Charged for Handyperson Services for those willing and able to pay.

Homelessness Service:

- Strong partnership continues with public sector, voluntary / third sector and lived-experience groups through continued engagement within Homeless Advisory Group and Homelessness Forum
- Parish Nurse supporting the health of our most vulnerable residents taken on
- Continued to utilise powers to provide accommodation for all those sleeping rough within the District
- Successfully bid as part of the wider Lancashire partnership to deliver Changing Futures supporting those residents experiencing multiple disadvantage (going live in March 22)
- Working in partnership to further develop the Street Aid Scheme
- Five-bed city centre scheme for homeless residents opened (Jan 22)

Strategic Housing:

- Working alongside Homeless Service colleagues Kathy Beaton helped secure government funding towards the purchase of 12 x city centre apartments to support longer-term move on accommodation for rough sleepers.
- Promotion of green skills and funding amongst contractors with training available from Lancaster and Morecambe College
- Community-led Passivhaus affordable homes built in Halton, supported by council community-led housing funds
- Funding secured through the budget to employ dedicated Development Manager focussing support on development of More Homes for the Bay.

As can be seen above, the teams continue to support the Councils corporate priorities, Sustainable Development Goals, providing additionality through Social Value and contribution towards tackling the climate emergency. All credit must go to staff throughout Housing for the energy, skill and enthusiasm put into creating change under difficult circumstances. Further achievements of the teams can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/JeUY_P_InrY

Cllr Cary Matthews
Cabinet Member for Housing