

# Response to Council Motion

## **Action on Social Housing**

12<sup>th</sup> September 2018

## Full Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 debated the following motion:

“This Council notes the delayed publication of the Government’s Green Paper ‘New deal for social housing’ which finally appeared in August 2018 and the promise that this would be ‘the most substantial report of its kind for a generation’ by the then-housing secretary Sajid Javid.

While this Council welcomes the stated commitment to improve access to social housing and some of the individual proposals in the Green Paper e.g. dropping the forced sale of high-value homes and the limitation of the introduction of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants to a trial in the Midlands, we also believe that this is a missed opportunity falling far short of the action needed to address the housing crisis in Oldham and across the country. One significant contribution would be to suspend the ‘Right to buy’ legislation. Nor does the Green Paper offer any proposals to mitigate the adverse impact of Universal Credit on landlords and tenants.

Oldham Council remains committed to working in partnership with housing providers and using all the resources available to meet the urgent and increasing housing need in the borough. Work is underway to produce a revised and updated Housing Strategy for Oldham to be completed by March 2019.

### **Council resolves to:**

**Continue to press the Government to provide additional resources to both replace the homes lost to social rent by ‘Right to buy’ and to provide badly needed new homes at a social rent both in our response to the Green Paper and through working with the GMCA and the LGA to bring forward proposals that meet local needs.**

### **Response:**

The Government has fallen behind in its pledge to replace council housing sold under the Right to Buy on a 1 to 1 basis. Changes to the rules on Right to Buy receipts will make it a little easier for councils to use their Housing Revenue Account to replace homes sold. However this measure alone is not going to have any significant impact in increasing numbers. GMCA have submitted a response regarding this. A further consultation response on the other key components of the Housing Green Paper is currently being drafted. Oldham Council has agreed, supported and fed into this response.

From a lobbying point of view it is felt that a response to Government as a GMCA collective would hold with it more weight and therefore more impact. A further consultation response

Oldham Council are currently developing their new housing strategy and this strategy will be evidenced based looking at housing need within the borough versus stock availability. This sound evidence base will enable an action plan to be devised and developed which will determine how local housing need will be met set within a

specific time period. We have identified various sites across the borough that could be utilised for potential housing related developments.

**Council resolves to:**

**Develop Oldham's Housing Strategy to provide a comprehensive housing offer for local people with an emphasis on increasing the numbers of homes available for social rent.**

**Response:**

Oldham Council have commissioned Campbell Tickell and arc4 to prepare a comprehensive housing strategy for the Borough in a three stage approach. This work commenced August 2018 and is due to be completed December 2018. Once ratified, the new Housing Strategy will be adopted 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. One key emphasis for the new strategy will be to identify where and how best the Oldham Partnership can increase the numbers of homes available for social rent.

- **Stage One – Evidence Base and Local Housing Needs Assessment- Forecast to complete end of October**

This stage is currently live and is on track to conclude in November 2018 and includes a household postal survey to sample size of Oldham residents.

It is envisaged that the evidence base gathered in this stage will provide the Council with detailed insights into 7 housing markets (based on districts and town centre) and will help inform the outcome in stage three of a robust housing strategy and action plan that will improve the housing circumstances of all residents.

- **Stage Two – Drafting the key themes and analysis for the Housing Strategy- Forecast to complete end of November**

This second stage will overlap with stage one and will involve a wide range of stakeholder workshop events and include consultation with all elected members through a drop in session on the 20 November 2018 at the Civic Centre.

It is forecast and planned that this stage will conclude at the beginning of November.

- **Stage Three- Final drafting, production and public consultation on the new Housing strategy**

This final stage will include the writing and production of the strategy which will have been informed fully by the earlier stages. This final stage includes a formal public consultation period.

**Council resolves to:**

**Explore new ways of providing homes in partnership with local providers including investigating the option of setting up a Housing Development Company”**

**Response:**

The Council is working with existing providers to develop new homes within the borough. Currently, there are 100 starts planned for this financial year. Last financial year 40 completions were achieved.

During phase 1, the Primrose Bank site achieved the completion of 16 units for outright sale which have now all be sold. Phase 2 plans to deliver 19 units for outright sale in partnership with Engi and is due for completion December 2019.

Working in partnership with Great Places Housing Group, the Rose Mill site achieved 14 homes for shared ownership and 28 for affordable rent out of a development of 123 homes.

Registered social landlords (RSL) struggle to compete with obtaining land on the open market due to increased prices. We will work with our RSL partners through the affordable homes programme to help with the delivery of new affordable homes for the borough. Oldham Council currently has a grant allocation to assist with the delivery of 50 new units of shared ownership / affordable homes within the borough from Homes England. Oldham Council has recently secured Investor Partner status with Homes England which enables us to bid for future opportunities that may arise.

We continue to make best use of our own assets and have recently procured the development of a supported housing scheme for 20 apartments for people with learning disabilities (SHALD). In order to make this development work we have added our own capital and sought grant funding from the NHS.

With Governments recent announcement that the HRA cap will be lifted, this could allow for further opportunities in the future including joint ventures and/or the development of a local housing company. We are yet to be provided with the detail from Government on what lifting the HRA cap will entail. This should be detailed in the upcoming budget.