

## Cabinet

23 March 2022

<b>Report title</b>	Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2022-2023	
<b>Decision designation</b>	RED	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Bhupinder Gakhal City Assents and Housing	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	John Roseblade Director of City Housing and Environment	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Housing	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Lynda Eyton Tel Email	Client Relationship Manager 01902 555706 Lynda.eyton@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	City Housing and Environment Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Cabinet Member Briefing	1 February 2022 3 March 2022 9 March 2022

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### Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet recommends that Council approves:

1. The Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2022-2023.
2. The arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan to be reported to Cabinet.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet acceptance of the Wolverhampton Homes Annual Delivery Plan 2022-2023 and its monitoring arrangements and to recommend approval of the plan by full Council.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Under the terms of the management agreement between the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) and its arms length management organisation (ALMO), Wolverhampton Homes (WH), the Council is required to adopt an annual Delivery Plan. The schedules to the management agreement were revised and adopted by Cabinet on 12 September 2018, with 'Schedule 3 - Annual Delivery Planning Process Timetable' amended in support of WH developing an overarching business plan allowing for longer term service and financial planning.
- 2.2 Full Council adopted WH's four-year Business Plan in April 2019, which ends in 2023, aligned to the next break clause in the management agreement.
- 2.3 To set out how this longer-term vision will be achieved, working with CWC, WH are required to provide an annual update by way of an annual Delivery Plan, which sets out how these strategic priorities will be operationalised over the coming year.

## **3.0 Update on 2021-2022 Business**

- 3.1 Whilst remaining aligned to the overarching four-year Business Plan, the annual delivery plan has been developed in the context of the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the changing operating environment, particularly in relation to regulatory requirements. Following the publication of the charter, WH recognises the new regulatory changes alongside increased expectations from the Regulator of Social Housing and the importance of the customer voice. WH have embraced the requirements of the charter in relation to customer expectations with the annual delivery plan focused on the key core priorities for WH.
- 3.2 The impact of the pandemic has brought significant challenges to all sectors but in particular to housing providers, with increased demands upon its services. The changing landscape for housing providers and landlords alongside the pandemic, has meant WH has had to adapt quickly and deliver differently taking into account not only the impact and expectations of its customers but ensuring continued support for its stakeholder the City of Wolverhampton Council.
- 3.3 There has been increased focus on support services and compliance, whilst WH took the opportunity to curb expenditure to maximise efficiencies to ensure services were delivered against a balanced budget. This had to be done in a way that continued to support the business while meeting the changing needs and expectations of its customers.

- 3.4 The forecast outturn position for Q2 2021 - 2022 has been produced following a review of pay and non-pay budgets, to identify efficiencies to support the Medium Term Financial Planning for the future.
- 3.5 Current year 2021–2022 forecasts show a predicted underspend against the budget. Despite operational challenges, there have been some key improvement areas which impact as follows:
- 3.6 The People Deal: A review of terms and conditions across the company was undertaken following staff feedback with Phase 2 being completed in April 2021. This has provided the opportunity to review pay budgets in line with the required efficiencies as part of the Our Future redesign plans which are underway, although there have been significant issues with recruitment and retention, both locally and nationally, particularly in relation to specialist posts.
- 3.7 Repairs & Maintenance: WH has maintained their focus on repairs and compliance, despite the challenges of Covid-19. Work continued post lockdown to address the pandemic backlog created due to a reduction of productivity throughout the periods of lockdown. The increase in costs seen the first year of the pandemic of around £300,000 have continued in relation to the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) which is required to ensure the safety of staff and customers, in line with government guidance.
- 3.8 Office Accommodation: The changes in ways of working have been fully supported by the approach WH took pre pandemic, towards equipping the workforce to have the ability to work from anywhere. Where possible, staff have continued to work from home, with services provided in new and innovative ways. Due to the change in demand, WH are currently working with the City of Wolverhampton Council to review existing accommodation to reflect the requirements and rationalisation of space across the city going forward.
- 3.9 Acquisitions: During the financial year 2020-2021, WH supported the city's housing strategy with the purchase of 19 properties from WV Living, with the use of its reserves. The rental incomes generate an annual rental surplus which is currently put back into company reserves. The company will continue to explore the opportunity to maximise its income, with invest to save opportunities, and expansion of its commercial activity where this aligns to the core offer of WH.
- 3.10 One City: WH supported the City Council in providing volunteers, and also contributed to the Council's fund-raising initiatives during the period of the pandemic. Work is now being undertaken to support the Relight our City priorities particularly in relation to 18-24 youth employment across the city which will continue throughout the next financial year for the benefit of the city's residents.

#### 4.0 Annual Delivery Plan 2022-2023

- 4.1 Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2022–2023 at appendix 1 has been developed with the City of Wolverhampton’s Housing Strategy Team, WH Senior Management Team and WH Senior Leadership Team
- 4.2 The Delivery Plan ensures Wolverhampton Homes deliver services on behalf of the Council to support the Council’s vision and priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2019-2024. Within the Council Plan one of the six key priorities is to deliver **Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods**, with four key outcomes:
1. Work together to deliver more homes
  2. Safe and healthy homes for all
  3. Access to a secure home
  4. Clean, green neighbourhoods and public space
- 4.3 In line with the key outcomes listed in 4.2, the services to be delivered by Wolverhampton Homes as shown in appendix 1, will contribute to these outcomes and include activities such as the continuation of the supply of new builds on infill sites, the development of new single/couples accommodation for former rough sleepers, providing safe and secure homes and environments, supporting residents to live independently in their own home and maintaining housing stock and asset standards.
- 4.4 The Delivery Plan also aligns to the seven pillars of the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the Council’s Relight our City priorities and aims to contribute to improving housing across the City by offering better quality housing choices and safe and secure housing for all.
- 4.5 The delivery plan 2022–2023 is themed by WH service areas: Housing Management, Housing Options, Property and Corporate Services. There is a focus on WH’s core service offering and in line with the Our Future service redesign to ensure the company continues to:
- Enhance community and customer focus
  - Provide safe and secure homes
  - Support people to sustain their tenancies and homes
- 4.6 WH remain committed to responding proactively to the Charter for Social Housing Residents and to deliver the requirements of the national Building Safety Programme, Fire Safety requirements and remains resolute in achieving the highest standards of governance.
- 4.7 The Delivery Plan includes some detail on how the plan will be achieved within the financial and human resources available.
- 4.8 WH draft budget for 2022–2023 is being prepared for presentation to WH Board in March 2022 and will make some assumptions about achievable efficiencies to deliver against a

balanced budget during 2022–2023. Value for Money initiatives are continually sought in line with the Value for Money strategy which was launched in 2021. This will aim to provide contributions to the efficiencies, in particular in reviewing ways of working, service delivery, IT and digital, all of which have seen new opportunities during the pandemic.

## **5.0 Monitoring**

- 5.1 These monitoring arrangements have been in place for a number of years and in light of improvements the Council is making to customer insight and tenant scrutiny, following the findings of the Social Housing White paper, 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents' and the requirements of the Social Housing Regulators Consumer Standards, progress made against the annual delivery is reported to Cabinet.
- 5.2 CWC Housing Strategy have conducted a review of tenant engagement and a new contract has been tendered for the delivery of this function. This will bolster the role of tenant scrutiny of WH in the delivery of housing management services.
- 5.3 Housing Strategy and Policy will continue to monitor WH's performance against agreed key performance indicators, at appendix 2, which are reviewed and updated on an annual basis and in line with recommendations from the Regulator.

## **6.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 6.1 The Council entered into a 15-year management agreement with WH in 2013 to continue to deliver housing management services on behalf of the Council. It is a requirement of this management agreement that the Council and WH work to develop and adopt a delivery plan which sets out how WH will deliver the services delegated to them and help to deliver the Stock Maintenance and Improvement Programme. In so doing WH in conjunction with CWC aim to contribute to improving housing across the City by offering better quality housing choices and safe and secure housing for all.
- 6.2 The alternative option would be not to adopt an annual delivery plan. Where a delivery plan cannot be agreed, the management agreement sets out that it will be determined in accordance with its dispute resolution process.

## **7.0 Reasons for decision**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the WH Delivery Plan at appendix 1 is adopted. It is accompanied by draft performance indicators to be finalised between the Council and WH for 2022-2023, at Appendix 2, both of which have been developed in conjunction with the Council. Appendix 3 sets out WH's procurement plan for 2022-2023 as required by the management agreement.
- 7.2 Additionally, the Council continues to monitor and review WH to ensure that the organisation remains high-performing, well-governed and delivering a housing service in line with the council's strategic objectives.

## **8.0 Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications from this action plan. Wolverhampton Homes receive an annual management fee from the Housing Revenue Account as approved by Cabinet in the 'Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2023 including Rents and Service Charges', to deliver services as contracted in the Management Agreement and receive additional income from trading activities. A balanced budget to deliver the annual delivery plan is approved by the Wolverhampton Homes Board on an annual basis.  
[JM/21012022/D]

## **9.0 Legal implications**

- 9.1 In accordance with the management agreement the Council's in-house Legal Services has provided legal support to Wolverhampton Homes with efficiencies for a considerable number of years. The arrangements for monitoring the delivery of the Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan should be robust and ensure that there are good governance arrangements in place.  
[JA/25012022/C]

## **10.0 Equalities implications**

- 10.1 WH annual delivery plan has equalities implications in terms of the workstreams that the plan describes. Where appropriate any equalities implications have been or will be the subject of equality analysis within WH. This is governed through a schedule of equality analysis which is presented to WH Equality Circle Forum to inform the equality agenda, providing a platform to assess the impact of planned service delivery. As a result of these considerations and analyses Councillors can be assured that Wolverhampton Homes is fully committed to meeting the requirements of the General Equality Duty as created by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **11.0 All other implications**

- 11.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications for this report, however, the delivery of estate and property based programmes will contribute to the improvement of living conditions and enhance the visual appearance of neighbourhoods. WH will develop plans throughout the year to develop a strategic asset investment proposal for Housing in relation to achieving Affordable Warmth and Carbon neutrality, which will contribute towards reducing carbon emissions over the course of the Business Plan.
- 11.2 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications for the report, however WH account for and work to improve the health and wellbeing of the tenants whose homes they manage, as part of their day-to-day delivery of housing management services and their interactions with the Council and other statutory organisations with whom they may work in partnership, make referrals to and sign post tenants to.

## **12.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 12.1 27 March 2019, [Wolverhampton Homes Business Plan 2019-2023](#), Cabinet
- 12.2 12 September 2018, [Wolverhampton Homes Management Agreement Update](#), Cabinet
- 12.3 19 January 2022, [Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022-2023 including Rents and Service Charges](#), Cabinet

## **13.0 Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Wolverhampton Homes Delivery Plan 2022-2023
- 13.2 Appendix 2 – Wolverhampton Homes Suite of Key Performance Indicators 2022-2023
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – Wolverhampton Homes Procurement Plan 2022-2023
- 13.4 Appendix 4 – Wolverhampton Homes Contracts Let 2021-2022
- 13.5 Appendix 5 – Wolverhampton Homes Capital Programme 2022-2023