

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Environment Select Committee**

**8<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

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#### **Update on Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership**

1. The Council's Housing Enabling Team works in partnership with Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs) to facilitate a range of Affordable Homes to meet the needs of Wiltshire's residents (including households on the Council's Housing Register) with a target of delivering 650 homes per year.
2. The target is derived from the Wiltshire Core Strategy which anticipates delivery of 13,000 affordable homes within the plan period. However, effective provision of Affordable Housing not only delivers a sufficient number of units, but also reflects the mission of the Business Plan in ensuring that 'we have the right housing'. The Housing Enabling Team therefore engages with the planning process, and liaises with developers and RPs, to ensure that the housing delivered meets local demonstrable need in terms of tenure, unit size and provision of adapted units.

#### **Role of Registered Providers**

3. Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs) play a vital role in helping the Council to provide Affordable Housing to meet need by:
  - Purchasing Affordable Housing units delivered by developers which have been secured through S106 planning obligations.
  - Developing Affordable Housing units on small 100% Affordable Housing sites.
4. An effective partnership between Wiltshire Council and RPs is therefore important in ensuring the delivery of Affordable Housing.

#### **Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership (2021 to 2026)**

5. Wiltshire Council has had an established partnership arrangement with RPs since 2009. In August 2021, following agreement of Cabinet (Cabinet Report attached), the Council renewed the Wiltshire Housing Development Partnership (RP Partnership). In adopting a more formal approach to selection, we have ensured that we have the right partners to assist in focusing on the Council's key priorities, such as climate change, in addition to meeting the strategic affordable housing delivery requirements of the Local Plan.

6. A selection process was undertaken which involved the Cabinet Member for Housing. Any RP able to demonstrate a willingness to assist in working towards the aims of the Partnership was invited to join, with no limit on the number of RPs in the Partnership. The aims of the Partnership are as follows:
7. Wiltshire Council and the Provider Members will work in partnership to:
  - meet strategic Affordable Housing delivery in accordance with the Local Plan
  - accelerate the provision of affordable homes
  - improve the environmental standards of Affordable Housing stock (including its resilience to climate impacts) and to assist Wiltshire Council in responding to the climate emergency and mitigating climate change
  - support the wider aims and objectives of Wiltshire Council
  - ensure delivery and maintain provision of affordable homes across the whole of Wiltshire and in both urban and rural areas
  - address issues of affordability
  - meet the demonstrable needs of a range of client groups
  - ensure high standards of service for occupants of Affordable Housing
  - ensure equality of opportunity in all aspects of its housing service
8. The selection process resulted in 11 provider partners joining the Partnership, comprising a broad range including larger national and regional RPs and smaller local RPs. Provider partners include:
  - 10 Registered Providers
  - The Council's Residential Development Team (which, in development terms, performs a similar function to RPs).
9. RP partners pay an annual partnership fee of £4,500 (index linked) with a reduced fee for partners with stock of less than 1,000 units.

### **Effectiveness of the RP Partnership**

10. The partnership continues to effectively facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing:
  - Partnership meetings are held quarterly and are well attended by senior RP management.
  - A new format to partnership meetings focuses on the Council's key priorities such as climate change and rural housing delivery. It draws on the expertise of Council teams such as the Climate Team and Planning teams who have attended partnership meetings for focused sessions.
  - The partnership continues to adopt a joint approach to problem solving, sharing expertise and experience, for example RP presentations relating to modern methods of construction and improving environmental standards.

- The Housing Enabling Team provides support to partner RPs on an on-going basis to facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing and to ensure that delivery meets demonstrable need. In 2021/22, the annual target was exceeded with 688 Affordable Homes being delivered in Wiltshire. The two main tenures delivered were:
  - Affordable Rented Housing allocated to households on Wiltshire's Housing Register;
  - Shared Ownership Housing sold to eligible households with a household income of less than £80,000 in accordance with government policy;

In future, Affordable Housing provision will include an element of First Homes as required by a recent change in government policy.

11. The Housing Enabling Team is confident that, subject to the continued commitment of the Council and RPs, the renewed Partnership offers the potential to continue to assist the Council in working towards its key priorities.

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Report (16 March 2021) Registered Provider Partnership Review

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**Cllr Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer**

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