

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	13th February 2025	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3591
TITLE:	Bath and North East Somerset Housing Plan	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bath and North East Somerset Housing Plan 2025-20302. DVA Safe Accommodation Strategy 2024-293. Housing Services Charging Policy 2025		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To provide focus and visibility across all housing related work being undertaken by the council, a Housing Plan for Bath and North East Somerset has been developed. The attached Housing Plan for 2025-2030 outlines the council's commitment to providing affordable, safe, suitable, and high-quality homes for residents. It also aligns and supports the broader goals of the Corporate Strategy, Economic Strategy, and Health & Wellbeing Strategies.
- 1.2 Beneath the Housing Plan, there are numerous additional strategies and policies. Two examples include the updated statutory Domestic Abuse Accommodation Strategy 2024-29 and the updated Housing Services Charging Policy 2025, both of which are attached in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, respectively.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

- 2.1 Approve the attached documents for publication and implementation:
 - (1) Bath & North East Somerset Housing Plan 2025-2030;
 - (2) Domestic Abuse Accommodation Strategy 2024-29;
 - (3) Housing Services Charging Policy 2025

3 THE REPORT

Housing Plan 2025-2030

- 3.1 The attached draft Housing Plan for 2025-2030 outlines the council’s commitment to ensuring residents have access to affordable, safe, suitable, and high-quality homes. This plan supports the broader ambitions detailed in the Corporate Strategy, Economic Strategy, and Health & Wellbeing Strategies.
- 3.2 The council’s housing responsibilities are wide-ranging, encompassing not only the development of new homes to meet local needs but also ensuring that existing homes are safe and meet residents’ needs. Additionally, the council allocates social housing, provides housing advice, and works to prevent homelessness.
- 3.3 The Housing Plan identifies five key themes that support our housing responsibilities and details the actions the council will take using a five-pillar approach. Each pillar has a clearly defined objective, supported by a series of necessary actions to achieve it. The five pillars are: releasing land for housing, B&NES Homes & Affordable Housing, affordability across the housing market, housing support, and housing suitability.

THE 5 HOUSING PLAN PILLARS				
<p>Release land for Housing</p> <p>Objective: Release land to deliver homes sustainably, at pace, to respond to need</p> <p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intervene to address market failures in the type, mix and availability of housing 2. Ensure a pipeline of available land for homes prioritising council assets appropriate for housing delivery 3. Deliver strategically providing high quality and sustainable housing fit for future generations 	<p>B&NES Homes & Affordable Housing</p> <p>Objective: Working to unlock and deliver affordable housing</p> <p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scale up B&NES Homes ensuring programme meets the needs of local residents 2. Work with RPs, Aequus, and other partners to maximise the delivery of affordable homes 3. Ensure the new Local Plan policy framework supports delivery & economic need 4. Provide and enable specialist supported housing products to address needs in Adult and Children’s Services 	<p>Affordability Across the Housing Market</p> <p>Objective: Develop a housing offer that is accessible and attractive to all</p> <p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with anchor organisations to release housing land to support the economy 2. Diversify tenure and type of housing to support economically active households 3. Locate housing in areas of economic demand reducing in-out commuting pressure 4. Continue to bring empty properties back into use to expand housing offer 5. Using influence with Government to shape national policy 	<p>Housing Support</p> <p>Objective: Reduce homelessness & ensure supported housing meets local needs</p> <p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refresh and enhance Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2. Reduce use of expensive and inappropriate temporary accommodation 3. Ensure appropriate accommodation for those with long-term care needs 4. Ensure housing and support contracts are strategic and relevant 	<p>Housing Suitability</p> <p>Objective: Ensure residents have access to housing that is safe, warm & accessible</p> <p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tackle fuel poverty for the most vulnerable households 2. Promote affordable warmth and healthy housing across B&NES 3. Maintain & develop an effective enforcement role 4. Develop comprehensive home adaptations and equipment service which responds to community needs

3.4 The Housing Plan is divided into several sections:

- (1) **Foreword:** An introduction to the plan, signed by Cllr Kevin Guy and Will Godfrey.
- (2) **Housing Plan & Local Context:** This section provides an overview of the plan and the local housing situation, highlighting relevant and interesting local housing facts such as tenure splits, housing affordability issues, demand data, and information on housing conditions.
- (3) **Pillars:** This section introduces the five key themes and the actions the council will take to achieve these, using a 5 Pillar approach. Each pillar has its own section within the plan, providing context along with defined objectives, actions, and detailed next steps necessary to meet those objectives.
- (4) **Delivery & Implementation:** This final section explains how the plan will be implemented, including details of external partnerships and the establishment of a new internal Housing Steering Group, which will report to the B&NES Place Group as needed. An Officer Housing Group will be set up to ensure ongoing focus on delivery of the individual Action Plans.

3.5 Throughout the plan, we have aimed to highlight key topics, best practices, and achievements, notably around B&NES Homes, Net Zero Commitments, Damp & Mould, and Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Domestic Violence and Abuse Accommodation Strategy 2024-29

3.6 The purpose of this strategy document is to address the critical need for domestic abuse support and safe accommodation within our community. As mandated by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, our local authority is committed to providing a comprehensive and coordinated response to domestic abuse. This strategy focuses on prevention, early intervention, and robust support for victims, survivors, and their families.

3.7 The strategy outlines evidence and statistics on domestic abuse in the district and findings from the Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment. Key points include increased demand for suitable accommodation referrals, a need for larger family housing, and enhanced cross-border support.

3.8 The strategy ends with fourteen recommendations, including improve data collection and analysis, ensure refuges are accessible, consider dispersed housing for large families, and seek hostel accreditation based on national standards.

Housing Services Charging Policy 2025

3.10 Housing Services charge fees to cover the costs of certain services. These fees include charges to private landlords for administering the HMO licence scheme, discretionary property inspections, fees to housing developers for work related to affordable housing, and marketing fees to housing associations for vacant homes.

- 3.11 The Council, under the B&NES Homes brand, manages shared ownership and social housing, as well as temporary and supported housing. Residents pay rents and service charges as per legal and regulatory requirements, with annual reviews.
- 3.12 To align with government guidance and increased service costs, the following changes are proposed:
- Changes to HMO licencing refund fee structure.
 - B&NES Homes rents (excluding shared-ownership homes) to increase by 2.7% per the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing. Shared-ownership rents to rise by 3.2% per the Homes England Capital Funding Guide and lease agreements.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Housing Plan is not required by statute, however many of the plans feeding into the Housing Plan are required under statute, for example, the Domestic Abuse Accommodation Strategy; Homelessness Strategy; Homeseach Policy etc.
- 4.2 The Housing Plan includes reference to the delivery and management of housing, which is supported by the following:
- Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 which allows Councils to develop land for the benefit or improvement of their area.
 - Local Government Act 2000 (section 2) which allows Councils to act to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their area.
 - Localism Act 2011 (sections 1) which provides the local authority's general power of competence.
 - Housing Act 1985 (Part IV) and Housing Act 1996 (Part V) which sets out how Council tenancies operate.
 - The Council is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing as a Local Authority Registered Provider of Social Housing.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The plans are designed to be delivered within the existing revenue framework. However, the Housing Plan references the delivery of Affordable Housing which typically requires significant subsidy. This can be in the form of free land and/or additional financial subsidy. As such any capital scheme will be subject to individual business case and sign-off through existing corporate governance procedures.
- 5.2 The Charging Policy aims to recover reasonable costs and therefore the impact of the revised charges is budget neutral.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Risk Area	Comment & Mitigation
Capacity – Insufficient staff capacity to deliver Housing Plan ambitions.	Currently reviewing structure within existing financial framework to ensure capacity.
Financial – delivery of B&NES Homes Affordable housing financially unsustainable as programme scales.	The focus on smaller and challenging sites, day 1 annuity cover, and social rent makes schemes challenging. Consider focusing on simpler sites and more financially efficient delivery models.
Regulatory/Legal – Government policy changes presenting opportunities and risks.	Policy changes on Planning reforms, Right to Buy, Renters Rights etc. present both risks and opportunities. Changes broadly positive, but time will be needed to better understand implications.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted, and it has been determined that there are no significant negative impacts stemming from the B&NES Housing Plan. This is due to our existing housing policies, which already incorporate considerations of equality and diversity.
- 7.2 A key issue highlighted in the Housing Plan is ensuring residents have access to affordable, safe, suitable, and high-quality homes, all of which will provide positive benefits to residents throughout B&NES. Nationally, poorer quality and unsuitable housing is disproportionately occupied by residents from minority ethnic groups, particularly Black households; low-income individuals, including carers and those with disabilities; and single parents.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The plan improves housing suitability with affordable warmth initiatives and ensures B&NES Homes developments meet high energy efficiency standards. New builds will follow AEBE standards, and refurbishments will achieve the highest practicable standards. This commitment helps reduce energy consumption and promotes sustainability, contributing to our climate goals.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 There has been extensive consultation on the development of the Housing Plan, including:

- Cross-departmental officer consultation
- Informal Cabinet
- Sustainable Places Board
- Health & Wellbeing Board Members

Contact person	Graham Sabourn, Head of Housing. Tel: 01225 477 949
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	