



Subject: Performance Monitoring of Registered Provider Partners

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Cabinet Member: Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment

Report of: Director of Neighbourhoods

Author: Graham Pilling

Author Email: donna.bowler@rochdale.gov.uk

Tel: 01706 924042

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The report provides members with an update on the performance of the Councils Registered Provider Partners in 2015/16 across a range of initiatives and the joint work they are involved in through the Strategic Housing Partnership to deliver strategic priorities at a neighbourhood and boroughwide level

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee notes the important work carried out by the Councils Registered Provider (RP) partners across the borough and the major contributions they make to delivering strategic priorities.

Reason for recommendation

2.2 To ensure that Members are aware of the important role of RP partners

3 Background

3.1 There are currently 14 Registered Providers (formerly known as housing associations) operating across the borough. These organisations manage over 20,000 properties, the majority of which are social or affordable homes for rent, however included in this figure are affordable homes for sale, mainly shared ownership, and supported housing.

3.2 The main RPs operating in the borough, seven in total, are members of the Rochdale Strategic Housing Partnership (RSHP). The seven RPs are:

- Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
- Contour Homes
- Great Places Housing Group
- The Guinness Partnership
- Regenda Group

- Riverside Group
- St Vincent's Housing Association

3.3 The RSHP is the boroughs high level strategic housing group and was established to maximise the contribution of housing towards the borough's broader objectives and the delivery of targets in key Council and Partner Strategies. The RSHP meets on a quarterly basis

3.4 In addition to the RSHP the main RP partners have come together with the Council to fund the boroughs unique partnership company Rochdale Housing Initiative (RHI). The company, which was formed in 1994 adds value to work in the borough by employing dedicated staff who:

- Work with partners to add value to the work they do in the borough
- Develop new and innovative projects
- Secure funding for projects
- Provide a link between the RPs and other organisations in the borough.
- Deliver the Council's Empty Property Programme

Affordable Housing

3.5 A key area of work for RP partners is the delivery of new affordable housing to meet identified housing need. All affordable schemes developed by RP partners involve close working with officers in the Council's Strategic Housing Team to ensure that they meet Council priorities in respect of meeting housing need and supporting regeneration. The majority of new homes built by RP partners are through the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) however some homes are delivered on private developments, secured by the Council through section 106 agreements.

3.6 In 2015-16 RP partners commenced the development of four new affordable housing schemes. These schemes will deliver 62 new homes for affordable rent and investment of approximately £6.2 million. The locations of the four schemes are as follows::

Longridge Drive, Heywood (26 units) - RBH
 Queens Drive, Rochdale (11 units) - RBH
 Daventry Road, Rochdale (11 units) - RBH
 Argyle Street, Heywood (14 units) – Guinness Partnership

3.7 On 31st March 2016 the HCA ceased accepting bids for grant funding from the AHP 2015-18 due to closure of the programme. The reason for the closure was the redirecting of HCA grant funding towards the provision of low cost home ownership products,

3.8 The HCA issued a prospectus for the 2016-21 Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme in April 2016. The programme will provide grant funding totalling £4.7 million to facilitate the delivery of 135,000 help to buy shared ownership homes, 10,000 rent to buy properties and 8,000 specialised housing units. There is no grant funding in the programme for affordable rent developments.

3.9 The grant funding allocations made by the HCA under the 2015-18 AHP will be honoured which means that 5 RP partner schemes in the borough which were included in the programme but had not commenced prior to 31st March 2016 can

still go ahead. The 5 schemes, which are listed below, will provide 208 affordable housing units and investment of approximately £27 million.

Table 1: Remaining Registered Provider Schemes in 2015-18 AHP

Scheme Name	Registered Provider	No of Units	Start Year
Newbold, Rochdale	Guinness Partnership	37	2016/17
Mary Street, Heywood	Guinness Partnership	37	2016/17
Lower Falinge, Rochdale (Phase 2)	RBH	20	2016/17
Keswick Close, Middleton	Riverside Group	98	2017/18
The Strand	RBH	16	2017/18

3.10 The Riverside Groups Scheme at Keswick Close which is an Older Persons Accommodation (Extra Care Housing) Scheme has been delayed due the Governments review of future funding for supported housing. The Government has recently announced proposals for future funding arrangements and in the light of these discussions are to take place with Riverside about taking the scheme forward

Conversions, Disposals and Demolitions

3.11 In January 2011 the HCA published the Affordable Homes Framework which introduced a new funding model based on affordable rents. Under the framework RPs can charge higher rents for affordable housing than previously (up to 80% of market rates) both for new homes and for some new tenancies of existing homes.

3.12 The framework requires RPs to finance a greater proportion of the cost of new affordable homes themselves, through increased borrowing. In order to fund this borrowing RPs are encouraged to convert existing social rented homes to affordable rent which will provide higher rental income.

3.13 Strategic Housing is monitoring both the level and impact of rent conversions across the borough. The table below shows the numbers of affordable rent conversions for each partner RP since 2011.

Table 2: Numbers of Affordable Rent Conversions for each Partner RP since 2011

Registered Provider	Townships			
	Heywood	Middleton	Pennine	Rochdale
Contour Housing	0	29	0	0
Great Places Housing Group	6	11	8	52
Guinness Partnership	9	0	0	26
Regenda Group	0	0	0	0
Riverside Group	0	417	0	0
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing	19	170	35	233
St Vincent's Housing Association	0	0	0	20
TOTALS	34	627	43	331

3.14 In addition to monitoring conversions the Council also keeps a record of property disposals and demolitions by RP Partners. In 2015/16 the total number of property demolitions was 57 and the number of property disposals was 121,

the majority of which were Right to Buy sales.

Welfare Reform

- 3.15 A major challenge over the past four years for all RPs has been addressing the impact of welfare reforms on people and places. All the partner RPs have taken a proactive approach to helping tenants affected by the welfare reform changes by focussing on an early intervention and offering comprehensive and tailored support.
- 3.16 Examples of some of the financial inclusion working being undertaken by RP partners to assist tenants affected by welfare reform includes:
- Offering Debt and welfare benefits advice
 - Offering advice regarding budgeting and money management
 - Assisting tenants with applications for Discretionary Housing Payments
 - Offering downsizing incentives
 - Making available financial support through the provision of hardship funds
 - Helping tenants improve their employment skills through the establishment of job clubs, providing access to training courses and signposting tenants to appropriate support/service providers.
 - Participating in training schemes to offer opportunities of paid work placements within their organisations
 - Setting up direct debit and standing order arrangements with tenants for rent payments
- 3.17 The Council has been working closely with its main RP partners to monitor the impact of welfare reform on the borough. The partners provide half yearly information to the Council on the level of arrears and possession action carried out. The provided data is fed into the Welfare Reform Dashboard which contains a suite of indicators and information which is submitted to the Council's Welfare Reform Board.
- 3.18 A summary of the Welfare Reform data received from the main RP partners over the last four years is provided in the table below. As many of the welfare reform changes came into effect in April 2013 the partners were requested to provide data for 2012/13, (before the changes commenced) so that a comparison could be made on the potential impact the changes had on arrears and possession action and more recently on property void levels
- 3.19 The figures provided by the main RP partners show a continuation in the reduction of both the level of rent arrears and number of tenants in arrears. Partner RPs feel that the proactive work they have been undertaking to assist and advise tenants affected by the welfare reform changes and the effective partnership working with Council's Housing Benefits Team has helped achieve this reduction.

Table 3 – Registered Providers Welfare Reform Monitoring Data

WELFARE REFORM MONITORING	Financial Year End Figures			
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No of “live” rent arrears cases at year end	10,080	12,411	11,389	7,092
Total amount of rent arrears at year end	£3, 947,296	£5,211,539	£5,086,672	£4,429,885
Court Orders Obtained – annual figure	211	595	721	576
Evictions Carried Out – annual	131	203	222	197
No of voids at end of year	Not collected	Not collected	369	311

Common Housing Register

3.20 Eight RPs are currently participating in the Common Housing Register and the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme. In 2015/16 a total of 1,570 properties were let through the CBL scheme.

Health and Housing

3.21 The RP Partners play a key role in helping to tackle the health inequalities in the borough and adding value to the work of the statutory agencies. With RPs managing over 20,000 homes across the borough they are in a unique position to engage with and support some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough.

3.22 In 2014 the RP partners, supported by Rochdale Housing Initiative, established the Health and Housing Forum, the objective of which is to work closer with the Council and Health Agencies to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the borough.

3.23 Members of the Forum were involved in putting together housing proposals for inclusion in the Rochdale Locality Plan and attended consultation events.

3.24 RP partners are committed to contributing to the delivery of a number of Health related projects and strategies/plans in the borough, these include:

Contributing to the 5 Ways to Wellbeing Action Plan through:

- Promoting 5 ways to wellbeing
- Signing up to the Workplace Wellbeing Charter
- Monitoring impact of our interventions through WEMWEBS

Contributing to the Healthier Lives in Rochdale Strategy through:

- Participating in the ‘Health Chats’ programme
- Sharing behaviour change messages
- Participating in the Ageing well Programme
- Developing wellbeing Champions

Contributing to the Premature Mortality Project

- Helping to improve uptake of NHS Health Checks in target groups
- Engaging with people who have multiple health problems and assisting them into clinical services

Empty Homes

3.25 During 2015/16 RP partners brought 25 empty properties back into use through leasing agreements with property owners

Investment

3.26 In addition to the amount of funding RP partners invest in building new affordable homes or helping to reduce the number of empty homes they have also invested over £28 million on improvements to their housing stock, the environment on estates and supporting the communities they work in. The table below shows the total investment by RP partners across a range of areas.

Table 4 – Total Investment by RP Partners across a range of areas

Investment Area	Amount
Investment on improvements to properties in the Rochdale borough	£23,747,087
Investment on improve the energy efficiency of homes in the Rochdale borough	£1,431,250
Investment on environmental improvements schemes in the Rochdale borough	£1,509,067
Investment on grounds maintenance in the Rochdale borough	£1,382,532
Investment on initiatives involving supporting communities in the in the Rochdale borough	£676,295
TOTAL	£28,746,231

Local Initiatives

3.27 The RP partners are involved in providing a wide range of services and projects across the borough many of which are not widely publicised yet their impact is extremely positive and the outcomes beneficial for the targeted communities. The table attached (please see appendix 1) sets out some of the excellent work undertaken by the partner RPs during 2015/16.

Development of Local Memorandum of Understanding

3.28. Work has been ongoing between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Housing Providers Group to develop a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) which creates a framework to enhance the contribution the Greater Manchester Housing Providers can make to growth and reform in a decentralised environment. This document sets out a programme of collaborative working and provides an overview of the detailed work which will be needed to achieve this.

3.29 Discussions have taken place at the Rochdale Strategic Housing Partnership regarding the development of a local MoU between the Council and the partner RPs. The MoU would facilitate joint working and investment to deliver growth and key priorities across the borough complementing the GM wide approach. In

addition the Council and RBH are proposing to develop a high level document setting out shared priorities for the next 5 years to coincide with the end of the initial stock transfer Offer Document promise term in March 2017. The Council's Chief Executive recently attended a joint meeting of RBH's Board and Representative Body to begin a dialogue on this.

3.30 A presentation on the "Rochdale MoU" was given to Cabinet members in early October 2016.

Alternatives considered

3.31 Not applicable.

Consultations proposed/undertaken

3.32 Not applicable

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no specific financial implications relating to this monitoring report

5 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications relating to this monitoring report

6 Personnel Implications

6.1 There are no personnel implications relating to this monitoring report

7 Corporate Priorities

7.1 The RP partners play a key role in supporting and facilitating the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives. The services and joint working that RP partners are involved in delivering contribute to the following Corporate priorities:

- Strategic Housing targets as set out in the Council's Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Empty Property Strategy
- Tackling deprivation through supporting Council strategies and initiatives aimed at reducing the boroughs overall deprivation levels particularly on the estates they manage
- Working with the Council and partners to address the impact of welfare reform.
- Contributing to the sustainability agenda in terms of reducing the carbon footprint, tackling fuel poverty, improving building standards and business practices
- Promoting and enabling healthy lifestyles and achieving good health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging people to take personal responsibility for their neighbourhoods and developing our communities to make them more resilient and cohesive.
- Promoting and supporting efficient and effective land use by ensuring that RP developments are consistent with the Council's overall objectives.
- Working with the Council to deliver the objectives of Public Service Reform

8. Risk Assessment Implications

8.1 There are no specific risk issues for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider arising from this report

9. Equalities Impacts

9.1 Workforce Equality Impacts Assessment

There are no workforce equality issues arising from this report.

9.2 Equality/Community Impact Assessments

There are no equality/community issues arising from this report.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
None	Not Applicable