



2021 - 2024

Business Plan

Rykneild 
HOMES
at the heart of communities

Executive Summary

Access to good quality housing is seen as the bedrock of strong and stable communities. North East Derbyshire District Council has set out a clear, strategic vision for our district that will enhance the quality of life for its residents.

As the Council's key housing partner, Rykneld Homes is playing a central role in taking forward the over-arching housing ambitions set out in the Council Plan and detailed in the recently published Housing Strategy for 2021-2024.

Both documents outline the drive to provide good quality, mixed tenure housing that is accessible and affordable for all. The Government's Social Housing White Paper will also impact on Rykneld's business plans as new management and delivery regulations are rolled out across the sector.

Rykneld is well placed to deliver on both local and national housing ambitions. It is proud of its award-winning work to engage with local communities and place tenants at the heart of the decision-making process. It is also proud of its work to build new homes, regenerate older properties and address climate change and carbon reduction issues.

We will continue to look to new technologies and building techniques to increase the supply of homes in our district and provide warmer and more energy efficient properties to help the most vulnerable people out of fuel poverty.

In 2020 the Council received £570,000 in government Green Homes funding to improve some of its older housing stock for low income households. Further funding streams are on the horizon and Rykneld looks forward to making more successful bids to increase housing supply and quality for our communities.

This Business Plan sets out how we will deliver on the Council's housing ambitions for North East Derbyshire and their vision for a successful and sustainable district.



CONTENTS

- Executive Summary
- Foreword by the Chair and Managing Director
- About us
- Our Organisation
- Performance Management Framework
- Financial Management
- Supporting communities and vulnerable people
- Improving existing homes
- Increasing housing growth and promote home ownership

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Delivery Plan

2021/24

- Performance Indicators
- Revenue Budget 2021/22
- 10 year Capital

Programme 2021/31

FOREWORD

By the Chair and Managing Director



Welcome to the Rykneld Homes Business Plan for 2021-24

In September 2020 I was delighted to take over as Chair and become part of a great team that continues to deliver excellent services to thousands of people in our district.

Customer satisfaction ratings have been outstanding over the years and a credit to the professionalism and dedication of our management team and staff.

Housing is not just about bricks and mortar. It plays a vital role in the life blood of our communities and contributes towards people's health and wellbeing.

At Rykneld Homes we are very proud of the part we have played in delivering on the Council's vision for housing in our district and its wider ambitions of creating stronger communities where people feel secure and are happy to live and work.

This Business Plan sets out the opportunities and challenges that face Rykneld Homes and our plans for an agile company able to respond to the demands of local communities which are facing one of the most challenging periods in a generation.

Significant changes are facing the housing sector at local, regional and national level over the coming years, but we believe we are well placed to deliver on the new regulations which place tenant safety and involvement front and centre of housing delivery.

Customer service excellence and tenant engagement have always been at the heart of Rykneld Homes – our work has seen us win national awards – and we will continue to work with tenants and communities to ensure their voice remains at the core of our business.

We are excited about the possibilities offered by new technology to improve our engagement with tenants and residents. We are expanding our on-line presence to enable more people to become involved in our work and share their views on our service delivery and future plans.

We will continue to look for new funding opportunities to take forward the Council's house building ambitions and the on-going regeneration of older properties to make them more energy efficient and help contribute towards national carbon reduction targets.

Rykneld has an award-winning portfolio of new build and regeneration schemes under its belt and we look forward in the next few years to starting new projects that will increase housing choice in the district – whether for rent or market sale.

Our work to support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities will continue. We are proud of the strong partnerships we enjoy with many organisations in our area – together we can make a difference.

This Business Plan has been written against a challenging backdrop of uncertainty as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. 2020 has posed difficulties for everyone, but we stand ready to take forward an ambitious and exciting programme that will deliver important benefits for the people of North East Derbyshire.



Lorraine Shaw - Managing Director



Oscar Gomez-Reaney - Chair of the Board

About Us



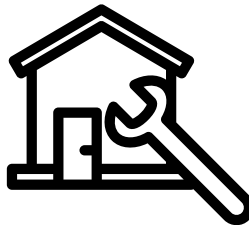
Rykneld Homes manages approximately 7,600 properties on behalf of North East Derbyshire District Council.



Social housing accounts for around 21% of homes in the district.



In March 2020 there were 2,443 applicants on the Council's housing register.



Around 40% of the housing stock is of a non-traditional construction type posing long term issues.



Many of Rykneld's customers are classed as vulnerable, including a high proportion of older people with one in five of the population having some day to day activity problem.

North East Derbyshire District Council is the sole shareholder of Rykneld Homes.

The company's principal activity is to provide housing services for the Council. Rykneld Homes is also a Registered Provider and has 142 of its own properties. It is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

The Board is made up of four Council appointed members and three professional independent members. The formal governance structure also includes a customer led Operational Board. This is an important part of its co-regulatory approach to tenant involvement and engagement and ensures customers are fully involved in developing, shaping and scrutinising services.

The strategic direction of the company follows the Council's key priorities, set out in the Council Plan, Housing Strategy and specified policies such as Allocations and Lettings.

NEDDC Housing Priorities:

- * Support the most vulnerable in our communities
- * Improve existing housing
- * Increase housing growth and promote homeownership.

Policy development and the operational day to day delivery of services is delegated to the Managing Director and the Senior Management Team. The team is held to account by the Board and Operational Board against the Business Plan priorities and Service Standards.

Overall performance is reported to the Council and published on a quarterly basis against Key Performance Indicators and projects supporting specific Council priorities.

Our Organisation

We firmly believe that our year-on-year high customer satisfaction ratings could not be achieved without the professionalism and commitment of our staff.

Rykneld Homes is a customer focused organisation with customer care and service delivery at the heart of what we do.

We are one of the biggest employers in the district and want to be recognised as an employer of choice. Investment in staff is a key priority. We want to give them the knowledge and confidence to be the best ambassadors we could have.

Continuous personal development is encouraged with employees able to take advantage of the many opportunities available to further their skills and professional knowledge.

Rykneld has a positive team ethic and offers practical welfare support as part of our company culture to support people to be successful. This includes 20% of our staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders.

We have developed policies to support flexible working and promote a healthy work life balance and introduced benefits such as MOT health checks and the provision of flu jabs.

Communication and consultation are key when supporting our staff to provide excellent quality services. We undertake formal consultation with recognised trade unions and have regular communications with staff through team meetings, annual reviews and 1:1s.

Regular staff briefings, emails and newsletters allow us to communicate in a more informal way. 64% of the workforce responded to a staff survey with 88.20% stating they are satisfied or very satisfied with Rykneld Homes as their employer and 96.20% said they understood the corporate objectives.

"Continuous personal development is encouraged with employees able to take advantage of the many opportunities available to further their skills and professional knowledge."

Performance Management Framework

We have a robust Performance Management Framework to ensure that procedures and decision-making processes are in place to deliver Business Plan objectives and successful services.

The framework sets out how we monitor the effectiveness of the organisation, how customers can shape services, our approach to risk management, Value for Money and how our staff personal objectives link to those of the business.

Our performance is monitored against a suite of indicators and the results are published on a monthly and annual basis through performance dashboards, and the Customer Annual Report.

The indicators govern areas such as rent collection, contact centre response times, gas and fire safety checks. Health and Safety is central to all our work at Rykneld Homes and an embedded part of our culture to comply with legislation and best practice to keep customers and staff safe. We report Health and Safety performance across all parts of the organisation to the Board on a quarterly basis.

The framework pulls together Rykneld's approach to Value for Money and Risk Management and supports the Regulators drive to ensure that Social Housing Assets are not placed at risk.

The Board sets the approach to risk appetite by approving the framework annually. This includes setting the gearing ratio for assets Vs liability to ensure the business is not over stretched when considering new business opportunities. Corporate and Operational risk registers are in place to make sure risks are identified and appropriate mitigating actions are put in place to protect the business, services delivery and performance.

Our services and performance are subject to external scrutiny from the Council and our Operational Board made up of residents and involved tenants. Customer feedback is an important part of our business planning.

Satisfaction levels are monitored through customer surveys and our website. Comments, complaints and satisfaction are considered through the Business Planning process ensure our services remain relevant and that good practice is identified and shared within the business.

At Rykneld performance management is seen as everyone's job, affecting all employees who are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their work. Annual appraisals reinforce our company objectives and we are pleased that our latest staff survey showed employees were aware of their service aims and objectives and how they fit into the wider corporate picture.

Strong partnership working with the Council together with Rykneld's performance driven culture has enabled us to deliver step change improvement to old services and develop new ones to meet changing customer expectations. Effective and productive relationships between customers, the Council, the Board and staff are what drives service improvement and the delivery of the objectives in the Business Plan.

"At Rykneld performance management is seen as everyone's job, affecting all employees who are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their work."

Financial Management

Sound Financial Management is key to the success of any business

Rykneld Homes has a proven track record over many years of delivering within budget and on target to deliver year on year planned efficiencies.

Any cost savings are reinvested in improving housing services in consultation with the Council.

The budget setting process starts during annual business planning in September, with the aim of providing a draft budget for inclusion in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan in February of each year.

Rykneld Homes is paid a management fee by the Council to manage and maintain their housing stock. The draft Revenue Budget for 2021/22 is included in the Delivery Plan (Appendix 1).

We also manage a large proportion of the Council's HRA Capital Programme in consideration of a fee.

The Capital Programme is developed using detailed stock condition information to ensure that major programmes of work improve the Council's housing stock.

Improvements to the Council's non-traditionally constructed housing stock requires significant investment and the 7-Year Capital Programme includes a proposal to spend £83m on improving this stock.

Key projects include options to replace some non-traditional housing with an element of new build affordable properties as well as homes for shared ownership.

In previous years investment has been available to develop new properties for market sale but this is more likely to be provided by the newly formed Development Company in future years.

The 7-Year Capital Programme for 2021/28 is included in the Delivery Plan (Appendix 1).

"Key projects include options to replace some non-traditional housing with an element of new build affordable properties as well as homes for shared ownership."

Supporting communities and vulnerable people

Customer Services

Customer care sits at the heart of everything we do, and we are proud to have achieved national standards of excellence. We are holders of the Customer Service Excellence accreditation and have been named Customer Service Provider of the Year in national housing awards.

The service is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of our customers who have gradually been switching from more traditional access routes - such as over the counter services - to telephone and online access. To meet this change in demand we are investing more resources into the service.

The largest area of service enquiry is requests for repairs. To streamline the customer experience and provide a more responsive service we are upskilling our contact centre team to deliver more of the repairs ordering process. This means when a customer phones we can make a repair appointment for customers and book the work in with our trade operatives at the same time. This will enable us to complete more repairs at the first visit.



Neighbourhood Services

Building a positive and trusting relationship with our customers is a key part to successful tenancy management. Our Housing and Support Teams are out and about across the district talking and listening to our customers and working with partners agencies to achieve positive outcomes for both individuals and local communities.

We want to help people to sustain their tenancies and remain within the supportive environment of their estate or neighbourhood. Our teams work with some of the most vulnerable people in the community and we look to use all the resources available to signpost customers to support networks.

Estate management is part of the Neighbourhoods Team role to ensure the external environment beyond someone's front door is clean and attractive. Our team delivers regular estate walkabouts and invites customers and partner agencies to give feedback on the external appearance of our estates.

Our staff will work with other agencies such as the Council, Derbyshire County Council and the Police and Fire Service to address any issues identified. Our teams have an excellent working relationship with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service who have worked with us to ensure we have appropriate fire safety measures including evacuation plans for all flats. We undertake monthly Fire Safety Inspections of all blocks of flats and publish this monitoring in our monthly Performance Dashboard.



Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is one of the more challenging parts of our work. In 2021 we will be promoting our new ASB Policy that will make clear where our team can support victims and take action against perpetrators and where we work with the Community Safety Partnership to resolve more serious ASB.

Supporting communities and vulnerable people



Community Involvement

We are proud of our work to support local organisations and communities who want to improve the quality of life for people in their area.

Through our Community Involvement Team (CIT) we are able to reach out across the district and offer everything from hands on help to financial assistance for projects ranging from community galas to litter picks. Our award-winning community involvement work has seen us support and deliver around 100 events and meetings every year so customers can engage and shape our services.

The service delivers a wide range of outcomes for customers of all ages, including confidence building, developing crucial life skills and combating social isolation. In 2020 this has proved a difficult challenge given the Covid-19 restrictions.

However, we have a full plan of activities and events scheduled for 2021/22. This will include litter picks, Digital Involvement Group surveys, Chair Yoga and Zumba, one to one IT sessions for older customers, community projects to combat holiday hunger and food poverty.

Customers have always been involved in the work of Rykneld Homes and in 2020 we established a new Operational Board. This is a key part of our governance structure which will place customer involvement at the heart of service design, scrutiny and performance.

In 2021 the Operational Board will carry out a review of the Community Involvement Strategy to create new links between customer feedback, involved tenant groups and the Board.

The Operational Board will also lead on the adoption of the National Housing Federation's new Together with Tenants Charter. This will help to ensure our services are developed to meet the Charter and the Operational Board will report on this to the Board and customers.



Supporting communities and vulnerable people

Community Alarm Service

Through our Community Alarm Service, we can assist people to live independently in their own home.

It is available to anyone living in the district and enables access to help if someone feels unwell, falls, feels unsafe or in need of help from the emergency services.

The service was crucial to those during lock down providing peace of mind to customers, family and friends. It provides enormous benefit to those suffering social isolation.

We currently have approximately 600 customers but will look to increase this through promotion in 2021/22. This is one of the priorities identified in the Council's draft Housing Strategy.



Income Collection and Financial Inclusion

2020 has seen some of the biggest challenges to providing a rental income collection service in the district for decades.

We moved from a 48-week rent charge to a 52-week rent charge making it consistent with the payment periods of Universal Credit. This has enabled customers to match their benefits to rent payments. Covid-19 brought forward a future decision to close the Area Housing Offices by two or three years.

We successfully supported customers to switch to direct debit or payments through the contact centre.

Covid-19 has unfortunately created financial pressures for many customers through furlough, job losses and reduction of working hours. The impact of this will stretch into 2021 making the role of our Income Collection and Financial Inclusion Teams critical.

Our aim remains the same - to continue to support people to sustain tenancies by making sure they claim all the benefits they are entitled to, provide money management workshops so they can budget effectively and seek additional sources of income through financial inclusion.

We will review our Income Collection Policy and process to ensure that customer support remains central to the service and build in new processes and match resources to support the move to alternate payment methods



Improving Existing Homes

Repairs and Maintenance Service

At Rykneld Homes we want to ensure the Council's housing stock continues to provide high quality and sustainable homes in the local area.

Repairs and maintenance are key services for our business - enjoying an enviable high customer satisfaction rating. We are also proud to report excellent performance against the customer target repair response times.

We are sensitive to the new challenges facing housing providers, including issues around demographic changes, increased customer expectation and the need to create a more sustainable asset base and this will impact on our approach to repairs and maintenance investment.

The Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy is central to our Business Plans and delivering the Council's long-term ambitions for housing in the district, especially around local and national carbon reduction targets. The long-term sustainability of housing will play an increasingly important consideration when deciding on the future of some of the stock.

Customers are central to the design of our services. In 2021 we will be reviewing our Repairs and Maintenance Service to make sure it continues to be successful and meets increasing expectations.

Our Operational Board will review satisfaction levels and consult with involved tenant groups and the Digital Involvement Group to make sure that all customers can access our services through their preferred channels.

Each year we deliver over 30,000 responsive repairs investing around £5m in properties to keep them in good repair and meet regulatory Housing Standards and statutory health and safety requirements. Delivering Value for Money in terms of repairs and maintenance is an ongoing exercise to make sure we invest customer rental payments in the most effective way.

In 2020 we introduced changes to the procurement and supply chain arrangement for repairs and maintenance to increase efficiencies. Embedding this and making sure we make the most of this new arrangement will continue in 2021 to simplify back-office functions and the repairs ordering process.

Moving to a standardised component list from one supplier will bring future maintenance efficiencies in terms of component replacement and repair. A key change in the procurement of the partnership with our new supplier – Travis Perkins is that materials will now be delivered directly to site.

Materials supply and management are part of an integrated approach to improving efficiency. This will deliver a significant reduction in transport cost, fuel and time. We have a key role to play in helping the Council to realise the carbon reduction target identified in their Climate Change action.

Our new supply chain arrangement cuts down transport costs and carbon emissions.

We want customers to know the kind of service they can expect so we will review our customer facing Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Service Standards.

Void Property Management

Moving home is a stressful time for anyone and we want to help our new customers to feel settled as quickly as possible.

Our Voids Property Management service ensures that when we let a property it is in good condition for the new tenant, in accordance with the Lettable Standard – recommended and developed with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

The standard has been well established for over six years and we have re-let on average around 600 properties each year.

In 2021 we will review the standard through our new Operational Board to ensure that it is continuing to support customers to sustain tenancies and deliver value for money.

Housing Register Management and Allocations

Our Choice Move Service manages the housing waiting list and allocates properties according to the Council's Lettings Policy.

There are approximately 2,400 applicants registered on the Council's waiting list seeking rehousing.

Each year we support the Council to review the Allocations Policy to ensure that it remains effective - correctly prioritising housing to those in the greatest need.

"In 2021 we aim to speed up the application process by enabling customers to submit applications and supporting information online so they can be registered and bid for properties more quickly."

Increasing housing growth and promote home ownership

Ryknel Homes and North East Derbyshire District Council have proved a successful delivery partnership for the provision of new homes.

To date the partnership has delivered over 320 new homes for social rent, affordable rent, for sale and shared ownership.

The Council's draft Housing Strategy has adopted a target of 100 affordable low-cost homeownership and rented properties per year.


The Pine View project in Danesmoor, which is already in progress, will include nine new bungalows - two with enhanced facilities to support customers who have additional needs.

Homeownership Management

Our Homeownership team deals with the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire processes, leaseholder and Shared Ownership management.

Our new regeneration projects will include a mix of shared ownership and homes for sale.

With the proposals in the Social Housing White Paper to introduce a new Right to Shared ownership we will be upskilling the team to deal with a greater number of enquiries, meet legislative requirements and promote homeownership.



Development projects already in progress that will continue through 2021/22 include the Whiteleas Avenue regeneration project at North Wingfield that will include 70 new build homes for sale and shared ownership.

Regeneration and Climate Change

The Council's Climate Change Plan sets out a vision that North East Derbyshire is: "A district that balances economic prosperity with environmental sustainability, improving the lives of our people and our environment today and in the future."

North East Derbyshire District has one of the highest percentages of non-traditionally built Council-owned homes in the UK. Their construction makes them difficult to heat and keep warm.

Rykneld Homes has delivered a range of regeneration programmes to improve their energy efficiency and help to reduce fuel poverty issues experienced by some customers. To date over 1000 properties have benefitted from External Wall Insulation (EWI) – part funded through Green Home Grant. The quantity of carbon saved by the project is estimated to be more than 48,000 tonnes.

The programme has provided a comprehensive solution for these hard to heat properties. The occupants have warm, comfortable homes and in some cases the works have resulted in energy efficiency rating upgrades from F to C.

This project is continuing with works to a further 113 non-traditional homes in Mickley scheduled for EWI in 2021.

Developing new parking solutions

We will continue to review the parking provision on estates and work to create new parking as part of our regeneration projects.

Neighbourhood parking provision and the current outdated garage sites will be included in these considerations. In 2020 we received our first request to install a charging point and drive from the owner of an electric car. This will increase with the Council Plan to tackle climate change and the move away from diesel/petrol to electric cars.

The current Capital programme has set aside approximately £250k each year to improve new parking.

Protecting green spaces

The Social Housing White paper has put a renewed spotlight on the importance of green spaces.

These have particularly become more valued to people during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. We will undertake a review of these contained in the Housing Revenue Account to ensure they provide an appropriate facility for the community.

To support biodiversity our regeneration projects include protection for Britain's swift population. The works can have a negative impact by blocking up swift nesting holes. To protect this remarkable little bird, we have worked with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and our contractors to install specially designed swift boxes on the eaves of houses we know have swifts nesting in them.

