

Bristol unveils £1.8bn plan to build thousands of new homes

Plans to invest a record £1.8bn in council homes in Bristol have been unveiled in a move that could see more than 2,000 new local authority-owned properties built in the next seven years.

The proposed investment forms part of a 30-year plan that was presented to the city's cabinet and represents the biggest planned investment in council homes the city has seen in more than a generation.

Proposals contained within the Housing Revenue Account business plan have been developed with the input of almost 1,500 local residents who responded to the city's Big Housing Conversation last year.

They were asked how the council should invest in council homes and the top three priorities identified by those who took part were:

- building much-needed new council homes;
- work to make Bristol City Council's existing homes more energy efficient and carbon neutral;
- work to improve the standards in Bristol City Council's blocks, communal areas, and estates.

"We know we have a housing crisis in Bristol, and we want to be part of finding solutions," said Tom Renhard, cabinet member for housing delivery and homes.

"If our plans are approved, delivery of new council homes will be increased, through borrowing, to 2,069 over the next seven years. This will quadruple the current planned Housing Revenue

Account development programme.”

According to the council, two-thirds of those who took part in the consultation were supportive of the local authority increasing rents to be able to invest more.

Government policy currently allows the council to increase rents for the next financial year by 4.1% – an average of £3.34 a week extra for residents. The council said the extra income would allow it to invest more in its existing homes, providing an additional £80m for energy efficiency and carbon-retrofitting measures by 2030.

It brings the committed funding to a total of £97m for energy efficiency and carbon-retrofitting measures, in addition to the £42m that was invested over the previous five years.

Mr Renhard said the council’s plans also include a £12.5m five-year bathroom replacement programme that would deliver more than 5,500 new bathrooms in council homes by 2027, and an extra £8.7m over five years to improve standards in communal areas, blocks and estates.

“These are both investments residents of the city asked us to prioritise,” he added.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan recommendations were endorsed by cabinet on January 18 and will be presented to Full Council at their meeting on February 15.