



## VIRTUAL SUMMIT III

*DELIVERING HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, QUALITY HOUSING*

### MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

**'DOING HOUSING DIFFERENTLY'**

#### **GH4GM Virtual Summit III**

**Delivering Healthy, Sustainable, Quality Housing**

**Summit Lead: Charlie Norman, Moss Care St Vincent, GMHP**

**10:30 – 12:00 Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May**

## MINUTES

### 10:30 CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Gill Morris, Secretariat, GH4GM

- What are the priorities for Greater Manchester as we look towards recovery?
- How can we embed benefits of the crisis in the city-region?
- There is resilience and innovation across GM housing sector.
- The way we work, rest and play has been turned on its head.
- Link between health and housing has been amplified by the crisis.

### 10:35 KEY QUESTIONS PANEL

**Delivering Healthy, Sustainable, Quality Housing**

**Each to address the BIG Question:**

**'What are the priorities for GM Housing in Recovery?'**

**Charlie Norman, Moss Care St Vincent, Greater Manchester Housing Providers**

- The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that the city-region still has a housing, social care and homelessness crisis. Continuing to leverage the close working and partnership between housing providers, councils, the GMCA and Health & Social Care Partnership will be key to solving these issues at pace.
- Social and health inequalities, and the lack of resilience in many communities have been underlined and exasperated by the crisis. It is a timely and critical moment to address these inequalities as we look towards shaping recovery.
- The housing sector should serve as a key pillar for the recovery, particularly through the economic stimulus created by housebuilding, green investment, contributing to decarbonisation efforts and increasing the supply of social and affordable housing.

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The crisis has also created a window of opportunity to prevent the homeless and rough sleepers across Greater Manchester returning to the streets.

- It is critical that the value of social care is recognised beyond the current lockdown period, which includes highlighting it as a valuable career path.
- Specialist and age friendly accommodation have become increasingly important through the pandemic. The Housing LIN census has helped identify the city-region's need for these housing types, which includes an additional 8,000 sheltered homes and 8,561 care homes by 2035.
- There is a significant supply of existing sheltered housing that requires repurposing and refitting to be made fit for purpose. GM needs to undertake a Government advocacy programme to secure funding for this.
- Creating age friendly spaces is increasingly important, as well as fostering inter-generational living in town centres. The Happy Living scheme in Bury provides a key example of this, and has delivered positive health outcomes for the residents that have downsized to take up this accommodation.
- Long-term care commissioning needs to be considered, higher grant rates are required from Homes England as part of new housebuilding programmes - as well as additional monies for remodelling and retrofitting - and improved access to land for affordable housing delivery is needed. The roll out of smart home technology should also be prioritised in recovery.
- Community engagement will be required to shape the zero carbon approach for housing. Moving forward, housing associations will continue to act as community anchors across the city-region.
- The recovery will require positive responses and accelerated innovation across housing providers, local and national government. A 'Bounce Forward' ethos should underpin this.

### **Aisling McCourt and Sharon Hanbury, GMCA**

- Whilst the primary focus of the GMCA continues to be on co-ordinating the immediate response and management of the crisis, the Mayor and leaders are also planning for how the city-region can Build Back Better in recovery.
- The crisis has provided an opportunity to rethink and set a new course for GM housing and the city-region's society and economy at large.
- GM's strong infrastructure network places the city-region in a strong position to Build Back Better in recovery. The GM Local Industrial Strategy will underpin the GMCA's recovery approach. The four pillars of this – clean growth, digital, health innovation, advanced materials and manufacturing – provide the strategic framework.
- Build Back Better requires cross-sector collaboration and co-creation. A key aim of this vision is to deliver a fairer, greener and more equitable recovery.
- The GMCA will not only look to collaborate and learn lessons at a city-regional level. The process will also involve engaging with organisations and leaders across the country.
- The GM Housing Strategy will also contribute to the strategic framework for building back better. The Strategy has a core ambition to provide safe, decent and affordable

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homes for GM residents. There is a focus on existing stock to meet the needs of renters and also facilitate the retrofitting of housing stock.

- The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the need to deliver this strategy. Partnership will be a key enabler for achieving this.
- The emerging tripartite agreement between the GMCA, housing providers and the Health and Social Care Partnership creates an opportunity to incorporate health into the housing response at pace.
- New housing has a role to play in decarbonisation, but existing housing stock poses a major challenge to the Net Zero 2038 target. 80% of the homes we live in by 2050 will already be built, which highlights the scale of the challenge around current housing stock.
- The GMCA is working to increase its understanding of GM housing conditions, overcrowding issues, fuel poverty, comfort levels and home working demands. This work will inform the GMCA's consideration of making costed interventions in the housing sector to help achieve carbon neutrality and Build Back Better.
- Retrofit cuts across a number of areas beyond Net Zero, which include enabling residents to live in their home for longer, boosting economic growth and reducing inequality.
- On PRS challenges:
  - PRS has grown exponentially over recent years. 20% of households are PRS, social housing supply has significantly reduced, and owner occupation has declined to around 60%.
  - There is a high degree of segmentation within PRS in terms of value and quality, and the level and style of stock management.
  - An increasing number of single adults and young families are housed in PRS, as well as a growing number of vulnerable groups and residents dependent on benefits.
  - Affordability, access, housing insecurity and housing condition are key challenges for PRS. These challenges are most acute at the bottom end of the market.
- On PRS opportunity and raising standards:
  - The GMCA sees PRS as playing a key role in providing good quality and accessible housing for the city-region's population, including addressing the homelessness crisis and driving regeneration. PRS is strongly linked to the GMCA's vision for building back better.
  - PRS is identified as a strategic priority in the GM Housing Strategy and there are planned and existing works across the gamut of the sector.
  - There are a number of key areas of work:
    - Strategic partnership and lobbying
    - Good landlord scheme for GM, which has the potential to unlock benefits across the city-region's PRS.
    - Tackling the bottom end and rogue elements of PRS through introducing new methods, such as an ethical letting agency and stronger enforcement.

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- Place based intervention, with a focus on areas with high concentrations of inequality.
- On the immediate COVID-19 response:
  - GMCA has delivered a communications and information campaign around eviction protection and available support for landlords and tenants.
  - Homelessness has been a key priority for the GMCA via the Everyone In scheme. The GMCA has also been engaging with private landlords around the opportunities for supporting the GM homeless population.

### Jack Gould, Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership

- On the Mental Health Housing Strategy:
  - Evidence shows that there are clear links between mental health and housing, and this has risen up the agenda of NHS priorities.
  - There are ongoing efforts to deliver parity of esteem between physical and mental health.
  - The Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation has produced its 2019-2022 Housing Strategy, which sets out plans for improved collaboration between the mental health and housing sector, opening up mental health pathways for homeless residents and families, and embedding mental health and wellbeing into housing policies.
  - Housing Associations, landlords, tenant organisations have a large public interface and, therefore, have a key role to play in joining up mental health care, housing and residents in need.
- COVID-19 has highlighted the level of inequality across the GM housing market, particularly in respect of overcrowding, access to green space and general housing conditions. There are an estimated 18,000 overcrowded homes in GM.
- Evidence shows that poor quality housing and overcrowding has a negative impact on mental health, individual coping strategies and school readiness.
- Building a robust evidence on the linkages between housing and mental health is challenging as these issues often exist within a wider frame of vulnerabilities.
- Resolution Foundation analysis shows the labour market shock caused by the crisis is hitting oldest and youngest worker hardest, as well as those living in social rented accommodation and PRS. For example, 80% of social rented tenants couldn't work from home or had a school child to look after.
- Language across health and housing policy must be made as accessible as possible, and the evidence base must be robust enough to inform decisions about resourcing.
- On Dementia Friendly Housing:
  - Health and Social Care Partnership is preparing a response to the APPG inquiry on dementia friendly housing and the wider ageing well agenda. This area requires consideration of the role for technology, enabling people to live independently for longer, and encouraging proactive engagement with people on housing choice at the earliest possible point in their life.

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- In respect of mental health / housing and building back better, there is a need for closer and more joined up working between localities.
- The city-region must be proactive in meeting housing needs, which requires resourcing decisions to be made at pace. Housing Associations may need to develop at risk to meet immediate needs.
- The housing cost to income ratio has risen fastest for low income families, which compounds income inequalities and has a significant impact on health. The current crisis requires local government to deliver bold and wide reaching schemes to address housing and public health challenges, which are comparable in scale to the inter-war social housebuilding programmes of the inter-war period.

## 11:00 RESPONSE, CONTRIBUTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Led by:

### Dr Daniel Slade, Town and Country Planning Association

- The majority of strategic powers in the GM Housing Strategy require additional powers and funding, or policy reform, to deliver.
- Against this background, to what extent does the GM Housing Strategy and vision for delivering healthy housing and neighbourhoods rely on securing additional powers and policy reform at the national level, and how can this be achieved?
- The TCPA supports securing more powers and policy reforms. For example, the TCPA support the introduction of legally enforceable national minimum standards for housing and increased protection of resident well being.
- A conversation should start on what shape new legislation should take, which will also inform planning for what the built environment should look like in a post-COVID world.
- Currently, only Greater London has the powers to deliver a dynamic healthy housing and neighbourhood agenda.
- One recommended immediate intervention would be to end office to residential Permitted Development Rights, which have negatively impacted vulnerable groups in particular.

### Richard Blyth, Royal Town Planning Institute

- The country has been in a similar socio-economic position before, most recently with the financial crisis. Professor Mazzucato has compellingly argued that “normal wasn’t good enough” and, therefore, a ‘Bounce Forward’ ethos should be adopted in addressing housing challenges post-COVID.
- The Government’s Planning White Paper intends to accelerate the planning process. Against this background, the RTPI published 5 five priorities for planning in England:
  - 1) Invest in place, which includes all housing types and associated infrastructure.
  - 2) Refocus the planning system on 21<sup>st</sup> century issues, such as decarbonisation and the design, connectivity and heating of homes. The current system is outdated and most suitably fits volume housebuilding in the 1980s.
  - 3) Display leadership on the digital transformation of planning.
  - 4) Clear direction for and support of strategic planning

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- 5) Support a strong plan led system
- The current crisis asks the question of whether the country requires a new National Planning Policy Framework?
- Reported that a Government official has recently commented that it might be necessary to allow variations of national planning policy in different parts of the country.
- Despite it being a challenging process, the GMSF provides a case study for how you can draw key investment issues together into one strategy.
- The crisis has raised key questions on the future of mobility and public transport.

## 11:15 Q&A DISCUSSION

### Jonathan Cox, Anthony Collins

- Modular housing – has its time come?
- Modular housing could allow the city-region to build in a more controlled manner.
- What is the potential for temporary social housing and specially supported housing? There is a unique opportunity to support some of the most vulnerable and hardest hit residents by the crisis through temporary social housing.

### Cath Green, GMCA

- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) should be considered as a priority in recovery.
- Homes for the North – a consortium of Housing Providers – has started dialogue with the GMCA on a new investment model.
- On the retrofitting of existing stock:
  - o Zero carbon housing stock requires investment. A joined up lobbying effort will be required to secure this funding.
- The GM Housing Strategy is clear on its priorities around MMC, decarbonisation and health.

### Charlie Norman, GMHP

- It is important to have a clear strategy on how funding will be sought and where/how partnerships need to be leveraged to achieve this.
- GM benefits from significant devolved powers – and uniquely holds health and social care powers – as well as strong civic leadership. It is vital that the city-region takes advantage of this within the context of planning the GM housing response in recovery.
- Commissioning must improve and become more sophisticated in GM, specifically in respect of revenue funded activity, and the provision of wrap-around support.
- Support for young people and meeting their housing needs should move up the policy agenda.

### Cllr Linda Robinson

- Public transport to the doorstep needs to be factored into future housing development.

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- Concern on how decarbonisation and retrofit could increase bills for vulnerable groups and, in particular, the elderly. The Net Zero agenda raises the question about how the cost is shared across the consumer, Government and business.

#### **Tamara Hooper, RICS**

- RICS has launched a policy document around decarbonising existing housing stock.
- The COVID-19 crisis has the potential to impact consumer confidence and their willingness or ability to move home. As such, some consumers may choose to invest in their current home to better meet their needs.
- Home renovation and retrofit could provide a healthy pipeline of work for SME builders in recovery and plug the gap left by stalled new development.
- It will be important to offer homeowners incentives on options to decarbonise their homes in order to accelerate Net Zero ambitions.

#### **Andrea Swanwick, Irwell Valley Homes**

- Creating employment opportunities for young people will be a major challenge in recovery.
- Decarbonisation and retrofit are likely to be active areas in recovery and keen to understand more from GMCA on how this agenda will move forward.

#### **Mike Leonard, Visiting Professor, Birmingham City University**

- 80% of materials required to construct a house are made in the UK.
- MMC predominantly relies on importing materials and a modular home's typical lifespan is less than half that of a traditional home. Modular housing is not greener than traditional housing and also often has performance issues around heating efficiency and fire safety.
- There should be a renewed commitment to supporting British businesses, suppliers and innovation.

#### **James Stevens, HBF**

- MMC is viewed as a magic bullet, but this premise is not supported by research.
- Agreed with Richard Blyth's sentiment on 'normal not being good enough' and a need to 'Bounce Forward'.
- The crisis has exposed social inequality, particularly in how data shows that the lowest paid workers and most deprived areas have been the most negatively impacted. With this taken into consideration, a new social contract is needed.
- Investment in R&D and innovation will be key to recovery in the housing sector and economy more widely.
- Whilst further powers may be required to fully realise the aims of the GM Housing Strategy, a number of objectives can be met in the short term such as minimum standards and decarbonisation. The GMSF will play a key role in achieving this and embedding it in planning policy.
- As such, it would be valuable to consider and establish what can be achieved in the short-term and status quo, and then co-ordinate a lobbying programme around

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what policy changes are required to achieve outstanding strategic objectives on the housing agenda.

#### **Aisling McCourt, GMCA**

- There is a power deficit for achieving the GM Housing Strategy in full. The document was also geared to amplifying the GM voice and adding value on housing policy. For example, on welfare provision and linking housing benefit and universal credit to the quality of property in PRS. The strategy has been effective in being a lobbying piece as well as setting strategic policy objectives for the city-region.
- It is important to show the success of the powers GM has received. An example of this will be the previously mentioned tripartite agreement between the GMCA, housing providers and the Health and Social Care Partnership that will bring together health and housing in a codified way.

#### **Charlie Norman, GMHP**

- GM must use its strong collective voice to lobby for additional powers and funding, as well as investment in existing housing to push retrofit and green recovery.
- Utilising existing partnership to steer recovery will also be vital. .

#### **Gill Morris, GH4GM**

- There is uncertainty over the scale of impact that the crisis will have on the housing sector and economy as a whole.
- There is likely to be a large scale reprioritisation process of Government policy and spending priorities. As such, GM advocacy in Parliament and Government will be critical in the recovery period to ensure that the city-region receives the support, powers and funding required to achieve its policy objectives and vision.
- There is a clear connection between housing, lifestyle and health and it is timely that GM moves this agenda forward.
- Thanked all speakers and attendees. The next session on 12 June will focus on delivering innovation, investment and powers.

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