
LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2022

Report by the Service Director Regulatory Services

EXECUTIVE

5 SEPTEMBER 2017

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 due to be submitted to the Scottish Government in September 2017.**
- 1.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy, supported by an assessment of housing need and demand for a five year period.
- 1.3 The strategy brings together the local authority's responses to the whole housing system including; requirements for market and affordable housing; preventing and alleviation of homelessness; meeting housing support needs; addressing housing conditions across tenures including fuel poverty and links with Climate Change.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) Agree to the submission of the LHS and the action plan to the Scottish Government in September 2017,**
 - (b) Agree to implementation of the LHS where there are no additional financial resource implications and;**
 - (c) Note that Officers will bring back proposals relating to those actions identified as potentially having resource implications.**

3 BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2022

- 3.1 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is a local authority's sole strategic document for housing in its area. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy, supported by an assessment of housing need and demand for a five year period. The LHS should set out the joint and strategic approach of the local authority and its partners to delivering high quality housing and housing related services across all tenures, to meet identified need in its area. There are a number of statutory requirements that have to be addressed in the LHS which should set out a local authority's approach to meeting its other statutory housing responsibilities, including fuel poverty, climate change, house condition, and homelessness; as well as its strategic response to national outcomes.
- 3.2 Scottish Borders Council submitted its first Local Housing Strategy in 2004 and a refreshed strategy in 2007. In 2012, the Council produced the Local Housing Strategy covering the period 2012-2017. This new LHS (2017-2022) continues with the strategic directions initiated by these predecessor strategies after being identified through consultation as continuing priorities and updates these with regard to a changing political, economic and financial context¹.
- 3.3 The LHS supports and helps deliver national outcomes and targets, whilst also reflecting the needs and priorities of local people through the Community Planning process. The LHS is therefore set within the wider Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)² for the Council and its partners. The strategy is closely linked to other strategies, both national and local. These include; Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023, SESplan and the Local Development Plan, Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Strategic Plan and the Reducing Inequalities Strategic Plan.
- 3.4 A complex mix of factors and issues influence the operation of the local housing system in the Scottish Borders. Through detailed analysis of the local housing system and the impact of key economic and demographic factors, the LHS develops a framework for addressing housing system imbalances that require to be tackled if the housing system is to work more effectively for everyone in the Borders.

4 VISION AND PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The LHS is central to corporate planning activities and allows a local authority to set out its agreed strategic vision and priorities for the future of housing and all housing related services. The LHS also shows how the housing objectives integrate with the local authority's strategic plans across the range of its functions and responsibilities. This LHS has been developed under the principles of co-production and complies with the LHS Guidance 2014.
- 4.2 The new LHS 2017-2022 comes at an important time for housing and addresses a number of the most significant and important challenges facing the Council, its partners and communities and aims to:

¹ Hard Copy is available in the Members Library

² The SOA will be replaced with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)
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- (a) Provide a background to the local housing system.
 - (b) Explain how recent national and local developments will impact on the Local Housing Strategy.
 - (c) Set out the strategic framework for the future development of the local housing system, through which housing providers and partner organisations can operate, so that needs and demands can be met more effectively with available resources.
 - (d) Sets out the 4 strategic priorities for housing for the next five years.
 - (e) Provides proposed new objectives through a more outcomes based approach to align with the Scottish Government led strategic thinking.
- 4.3 Scottish Borders Council and its partners believe that this Local Housing Strategy will deliver positive housing outcomes by ensuring that the delivery of housing and related services meets the needs of local communities. To achieve this, our priorities focus on the four key issues facing local households including improved affordable housing supply, better housing quality and energy efficiency, a reduction in homelessness and support to enable independent living.
- 4.4 The agreed Vision for the 2017-2022 LHS is that 'Every Person in the Scottish Borders lives in a home that meets their needs'. The four strategic priorities are:
- 1. The Supply of Housing meets the Needs of our Communities.
 - 2. More people live in good quality, energy efficient homes.
 - 3. Fewer People are affected by Homelessness.
 - 4. More People are supported to Live Independently in their own homes.
- 4.5 The agreed housing supply target for the period of the strategy is 348 new homes of which 128 of these should be affordable housing. The strategic priorities have been identified and agreed in order to address a number of key issues. Some of the main issues are identified below:
- (a) Borders population is expected to increase by 1% by 2022 with a projected decline in the working age population (-6%) & increase in older population (+24%).
 - (b) The population aged 80+ is projected to increase by 120% across Scottish Borders by 2035. The projected growth in the number of older people living in the Scottish Borders is likely to increase demand for specialist housing.
 - (c) The average income in the Scottish Borders is 5% lower than Scotland (£32,785).
 - (d) The average house price in the Scottish Borders is £173,575, which is 7% higher than Scotland and households would need income of £43,000 to be able to access a mortgage valued at the average house price.
 - (e) Half of local households cannot afford the average market rent in the Scottish Borders (£519 per month).

- (f) 38% of households in the Borders are fuel poor in comparison with 34% nationally, 33% of Scottish Borders dwellings are off the gas grid and 7% of dwellings in the Scottish Borders have the lowest energy efficiency rating.
- (g) In 2015/16, 618 homeless applications were made to SBC a 5% reduction from 2014/15

5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

- 5.1 As reported at paragraph 4.1 on page 2 the Local Housing Strategy was developed in strict accordance with the published guidance. A diverse range of partners, stakeholders and housing experts have participated in developing the Scottish Borders LHS 2017-22. A wide programme of engagement activity has been undertaken to collect a range of views, and enable these to systematically inform the development of the LHS. This includes:
- (a) Stakeholder conference: The Stakeholder Conference built on the vision, priorities and outcomes from the 2012-17 LHS and assisted in defining the draft LHS aims and objectives. A total of 41 stakeholders attended the one-day event.
 - (b) Options identification workshops: Four half-day workshop sessions were held, to inform the definition of key LHS priorities together with a range of viable options for addressing them. The participants were specialist stakeholders drawn from across the Council and its partner organisations.
 - (c) Option appraisal workshops: Four half-day workshop sessions were held with specialist stakeholders to systematically appraise the LHS options. The outputs from these sessions provide a valuable input into the LHS outcome and action plans.
 - (d) LHS consultation document: The consultation document presented the key issues and the framework for action, together with a series of consultation questions to prompt a structured response. It was widely circulated: it was published on the Council's and partner websites; was publicised through posters and flyers in Council offices and outlets, RSL offices and GP surgeries; and advertised through social media. It was open for three months from August 2016, and the responses informed the final drafting of the LHS.
- 5.2 During the formal consultation stage the draft LHS was also submitted to the Scottish Government for Peer Review. The review process was completed in March 2017 with comments provided by Scottish Government Policy Teams, the Scottish Government More Homes Division Area Team and a colleague from Renfrewshire Council, who undertook the peer review. Feedback set out what the reviewers considered were the particular strengths of the draft LHS and some suggested areas for development.
- 5.3 The peer review noted the draft LHS is a "comprehensive strategy that articulates well the large amount of work that has been put into developing such a document". In particular, the reviewer noted the section on

homelessness has been “clearly articulated with reasons well evidenced, and the LHS clearly demonstrates how the Council intends to continue to provide a service where customers are successfully accessing a more diverse range of rehousing outcomes than is the case across Scotland”.

- 5.4 The review also noted the Council has a “clear strategic direction for its empty homes work through its Empty Homes Strategy which aims to identify empty homes and use resources to bring the properties back into use particularly for affordable rent”.
- 5.5 A suggested area for development was in relation to the Private Rented Sector stating that “overall the LHS would benefit from more detail on the Private Rented Sector in relation to current activity to help improve standards and supply, and the Councils' strategic approach to address these issues”. The final draft LHS has been amended to reflect these comments and the approach to the private sector strengthened. A specific action plan for private sector housing will also be developed and is articulated as a specific action within the LHS.
- 5.6 Feedback and comments have been considered by Officers and are reflected in the final LHS which, subject to Committee approval should be submitted to Scottish Government in September and launched at the Local Housing Strategy Partnership meeting in November 2017.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) There are no direct financial implications as there is no decision required by the report but delivery of the LHS is dependent on SBC’s continuous provision of core services, financial resource allocations from Scottish Government, the continuing support for the affordable housing budget (2nd homes council tax) and resources arising from the affordable housing policy, partner agencies and private individuals.
- (b) However, where there are specific actions considered as having a resource implication for the Council, Officers will bring back proposals to Council as they arise over the period of the strategy.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The LHS 2017-2022 aims and objectives have been developed in co-operation with a range of partners to ensure it is based on evidence and shared priorities.
- (b) Delivery is largely dependent upon a number of variables not least of which relate to resource and other political and organisational decision making processes beyond the control of the Local Authority.
- (c) A Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has been undertaken which determined a full SEA would not be required for the LHS as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.
- (d) Any potential environmental effects from any specific proposals or plans which may relate to the LHS will be individually considered and addressed through the planning process and full SEAs.

6.3 **Equalities**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This shows that there are positive impacts across all equality groups. The strategy is based on a wide range of evidence including the recent SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

- (a) The LHS promotes sustainable development and the ethos of place making. Priorities include making better use of existing stock and promoting energy efficiency.
- (b) By seeking more new affordable houses, improving the quality and sustainability of existing houses, setting targets for homelessness, fuel poverty and climate change the LHS will promote sustainable communities.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

It is considered that there are no direct effects on the Council's carbon emissions arising from the report recommendations. There is likely to be positive effects through fuel poverty and energy efficiency outcomes, as well as promoting sustainability through better use of existing stock.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

- (a) Rural proofing applies to all areas of Scottish Borders classified by Scottish Government as 'remote rural' or 'accessible rural'. This applies to all areas of Scottish Borders out with the towns of Hawick, Galashiels, Peebles, Selkirk, Eyemouth, Jedburgh and Kelso.
- (b) The LHS has been rural proofed and it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report. There is likely to be a wide range of positive outcomes for rural communities, including improvements in health, fuel poverty levels and availability of affordable housing in a variety of tenures.

6.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.
- 7.2 Corporate Communications have been consulted, and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report. It is considered that the Local Housing Strategy may attract media interest and a press release will be issued following Executive approval.

Approved by

Brian Frater
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Author(s)

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Background Papers: Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022

Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies. Contact us at Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 01835 824000 ext 5431, email jwhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk.