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 Scottish Borders COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023

A MEETING of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS, TD6 0SA AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS on TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023 at 10.00 am.

All attendees, including members of the public, should note that the public business in this meeting will be livestreamed and video recorded and that recording will be available thereafter for public view for 180 days.

N. MCKINLAY,
Director Corporate Governance,

3 November 2023

	BUSINESS	
1.	**Apologies for Absence**	
2.	**Order of Business**	
3.	**Declarations of Interest**	
4.	**Minute** (Pages 3 - 6) Minute of meeting held on 3 October 2023 to be noted for signature by the Chairman. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
5.	**Monitoring of the Capital Financial Plan 2023/24** (Pages 7 - 36) Consider report by Director – Finance and Procurement. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
6.	**Monitoring of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2023/24** (Pages 37 - 76) Consider report by Director – Finance and Procurement. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
7.	**Balances at 31 March 2024** (Pages 77 - 86) Consider report by Director – Finance and Procurement. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
8.	**Corporate Debts - Write Offs in 2023/24 Mid Year Update** (Pages 87 - 104) Consider report by Director – Finance and Procurement. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
9.	**Scottish Borders Council's Annual Complaints Performance Report:**	15 mins

	2022/23 (Pages 105 - 134) Consider report by Director – Resilient Communities. (Copy attached.)	
10.	**Review of Financial Support to Community Councils** (Pages 135 - 156) Consider report by Director – Resilient Communities. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
11.	**Scottish Borders Council Local Festival Grant Scheme Review** (Pages 157 - 174) Consider report by Director – Resilient Communities. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
12.	**Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028** (Pages 175 - 558) Consider report by Director – Infrastructure and Environment. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
13.	**Grass Management Review** (Pages 559 - 578) Consider report by Director – Infrastructure and Environment. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
14.	**Headstone Safety** (Pages 579 - 608) Consider report by Director – Infrastructure and Environment. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
15.	**Any Other Items Previously Circulated**	
16.	**Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent**	

NOTES
1. **Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.**

2. **Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**

Membership of Committee:- Councillors E. Jardine (Chair), C. Cochrane, L. Douglas, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, J. Linehan, S. Mountford, D. Parker, J. Pirone, E. Robson, M. Rowley, F. Sinclair, R. Tatler, E. Thornton-Nicol and T. Weatherston

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Blended Meeting of the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held in Council
Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown
St Boswells and via Microsoft Teams on
Tuesday, 3 October 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present:-   Councillors E. Jardine (Chairman), L. Douglas, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell,
                   C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, J. Linehan, D. Parker, E. Robson, M. Rowley, F.
                   Sinclair, R. Tatler, and E. Thornton-Nicol(from para. 3).
Also Present:-   Councillors W. McAteer
Apologies:-   Councillors C. Cochrane, E. Robson, T. Weatherston
In Attendance:-   Director – Corporate Governance, Director – Education and Lifelong
                   Learning, Director - Finance and Procurement, Director- Infrastructure and
                   Environment, Director - Resilient Communities, Democratic Team Leader,
                   Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall).

1.   **MINUTE**
      There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 12 September
      2023.

      DECISION
      APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2.   **STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2024-2029 SUBMISSION**
2.1   With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of the meeting held on 4 October 2022, there
      had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – Infrastructure and Environment
      which sought approval of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2024-2029 so
      that it could be submitted to Scottish Government by 27th October 2023 deadline. The
      report explained that Local Authorities were required to submit a SHIP to the Scottish
      Government on an annual basis. Scottish Borders Council, with the involvement of its key
      partners via the SHIP Working Group, had prepared this SHIP submission. The SHIP
      articulated how the Council and its Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners would seek
      to deliver the Border's affordable housing investment needs and outcomes, identified in
      the Council's Proposed Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028, over a rolling 5-year
      planning horizon. Based on available Resource Planning Allocations from Scottish
      Government and resource planning assumptions, RSL partner, private sector borrowing
      and commitment from the Council's Affordable Housing Budget, approximately 201 new
      homes could be delivered during 2023/24 and potentially up to 1,122 new affordable
      homes over the five-year SHIP 2024- 2029 period. The latter figure assumed that all
      identified challenges and infrastructure issues were resolved in a timely manner, funding
      was available, and that agreement was reached between all interested parties and the
      construction sector had capacity to deliver the identified projects.

2.2   The Lead Officer, Housing Strategy and Development, Ms Donna Bogdanovic presented
      the report and responded to questions. In response to a question regarding emergency
      housing for homeless people, Ms Bogdanovic explained that funding for that category of
      homes was not eligible to be included in the affordable housing supply programme. Work
      was ongoing with RSL partners to ensure that emergency accommodation was provided
      to people in need, with a desire to provide people with permanent tenancies rather than
      temporary accommodation. Regarding the appropriateness of reference in the report to
      the slow-down in house sales and low level of building in the region following the financial
      crash of 2008, Ms Bogdanovic explained that the crisis in 2008 had a catastrophic impact
      on the number of houses being built. Whilst Covid-19 had negatively impacted upon the

number of houses being built, the 2008 crisis had a much greater degree of negative impact. Building levels had not returned to pre-2008 volumes. Regarding the potential financial benefits in council tax revenue referred to in the report, Ms Bogdanovic outlined that the figure in the report was a basic calculation using the number of units. There were no allowances made in the figure for council tax exemptions. It was confirmed that officers held regular discussions with Scottish Power Energy Networks regarding plans for the number of houses being built to allow them to plan accordingly. The importance of ensuring that there was an appropriate number of heat-pump trained engineers in the region was acknowledged, and Ms Bogdanovic undertook to provide additional detail on decarbonisation work outside of the meeting.   Members agreed that a briefing should be organised following the passage of the Housing Bill. In response to a question regarding the level of confidence that developments in Coldstream and Westruther would be delivered, Ms Bogdanovic explained that RSLs, Scottish Government and SBC had formed the opinion that they were deliverable. Whilst there was the potential that some projects on the list might not be delivered, there was also the possibility that additional ones could be added to the list. Ms Bogdanovic confirmed that engagement with place-making groups had occurred, and that feedback was sought from all communities. It was recognised that assessing demand for RSL homes was a challenge.

DECISION
AGREED to approve the Strategic Housing Investment Programme 2024-2029 for submission to the Scottish Government – More Homes Division.

MEMBER
Councillor Thornton-Nicol joined the meeting during the discussion of the item below.

3.   **THE IMPACT OF AGILE WORKING ON SERVICE DELIVERY**
3.1   With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of the meeting held on 16 May 2023, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director – People, Performance and Change which sought out the Council's approach to agile working and the positive effect on standards of service deliverability. The report also set out the background in relation to agile working and the benefits to the adoption of that way of working for the Council, employees, and prospective employees. Scottish Borders Council's agile working approach had been developed over the past 15 years and had evolved over that period. Whilst the report discussed some options in relation to our policy and approach to this, with the technology now in place, moving away from agile working was not considered a viable option given the challenges the Council faced in an increasingly competitive employment market.   The Director – People, Performance and Change, Mrs Clair Hepburn, presented the report and responded to Members questions. Mrs Hepburn outlined that SBC's current productivity compared to pre-Covid levels was 88% positive or unchanged. Of the 153 outputs reported, 53 showed a positive change, 82 remained unchanged and 9 had a lower rate. 8 outputs could not be compared and 1 had no data available. It was highlighted that flexible working represented a key strand in the context of employee benefit packages, as well as attracting and retaining staff. There had been benefits to SBC from agile working in the form of increased staff wellbeing and a reduced carbon footprint associated with fewer staff driving to work. Conversely, there had been challenges associated with reduced mental wellbeing and difficulties in interaction, collaboration, and engagement.   Members welcomed the report, expressed their thanks to Mrs Hepburn for the extensive data provided on the impact of agile working on service delivery, and acknowledged that whilst the figures were overall positive there were still some areas of concern. In response to a question Mrs Hepburn acknowledged that there were challenges associated with the public perception of home working and suggested that communications and engagement with the public could be undertaken to demonstrate that Council staff continued to deliver effective services. The Director – Infrastructure and Environment highlighted that business mileage was one of the two key areas in the context of the Council's reduction of its carbon emissions, and that a report would be brought back at a future date. In response to a question regarding teams which had been identified as having low rates of interaction, Mrs Hepburn explained that some teams also

inherently had less interaction with their teams due to the nature of their work and highlighted that work was ongoing to create office spaces that would encourage staff back to the office. Mrs Hepburn undertook to share information regarding in-person team induction and team building information with Members. It was confirmed that a policy on hybrid working was already in place and that there was no prescription regarding the number of days that home-working staff were required to be in the office. Individual team managers had responsibility for, and discretion to decide, how their teams would work. In response to a suggestion that home working staff be required to regularly attend the office, Mrs Hepburn explained that an Integrated Impact Assessment would need to be carried out prior to the approval of such a proposal. In response to a question regarding the place of work stipulated in contracts of employment, Mrs Hepburn explained that such contracts stipulated that employees could be asked to work in any location in the Scottish Borders, with the employer designating the work location. In the context of home working and the contract of employment there had been no move to the home being contractually stipulated as the place of work for a variety of reasons. Mrs Hepburn provided assurance that staff were not pressured to work from home, and that, particularly in instances of onboarding and younger members of staff, managers should always choose the course of action which best suits the needs of their team. In response to a question regarding mental health, Mrs Hepburn explained that SBC took the mental health of its staff very seriously, that various avenues of support were available to staff, and confirmed that there had not been an increase in the number of staff absences due to mental health since agile working had been implemented. The Chairman highlighted the importance of staff morale and unity.

3.2   Following extensive discussions on whether the recommendations in the report were adequate, there was a difference of opinion so a vote was required as follows:

VOTE
Councillor Rowley, seconded by Councillor Marshall Douglas moved that the recommendations as contained in the report be approved .

Councillor Leagh Douglas, seconded by Councillor Linehan moved as an amendment that an additional recommendation which stated "this council continued to promote opportunities for office attendance within our overall agile framework for teams" be approved alongside the original recommendations of the report.

On a show of hands Members voted as follows:-

Motion – 5 votes
Amendment – 9 votes

The amendment was accordingly carried.

DECISION
DECIDED:-

(a)   **to note there was significant interest in more flexible forms of working, and agile working, was now an essential tool in attracting and retaining staff. Organisations who support flexible forms of working experience reduced employee turnover, increased employee engagement and improved rates of talent attraction. Agile working could also provide many other opportunities for the Council including reduced estate and facilities costs, improved employee wellbeing, diversity and inclusion as well as being more environmentally friendly;**

(b)   **to acknowledge the mainly positive comparison in performance in 2019 and 2022 respectively across those Services utilising agile working arrangements;**

(c)   to note the adopted agile working principles and supports that were in place to provide a framework to support the effective operation and management of agile working. Our aim was to continue embedding an agile working model that gave our people greater flexibility in balancing their work and home lives whilst simultaneously supporting effective recruitment and retention and the health & wellbeing of our staff;

(d)   to recognise that we want to build a culture where our people are customer focused, feel trusted and empowered, and will have greater freedom on how, where and when their work was delivered. Focus would be placed on outcomes as opposed solely to attendance at our offices. However, that level of flexibility, due to the nature of some roles, would not be achievable for all our people. Nevertheless, there would remain a commitment within the Future Operating Model to explore how a level of agile working could be built into roles across the organisation;

(e)   that teams that can utilise agile working engage in co-designing their Team Agreements which describe how they will work. That included when they were required to hold face to face team meetings, time with new colleagues and how they would collaborate. It was part of the HQ refresh plan to ensure there was the right collaborative and workspaces available for those days, so employees could book desks in the same location or arrange other meetings or collaborative events.

(f)   that supporting agile working in the longer term would require more inclusive approaches to remote working, more training and support to workers on cybersecurity and increasing access to digital technologies and infrastructure as well as improving digital skills;

(g)   to endorse the vision to nurture an empowered, resilient, and high performing workforce. A workforce which had the skills and equipment to work flexibly to deliver high quality services in an efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly way, now and in the future. Workplaces with modern, flexible spaces not only encouraged collaboration across functional activity but also strengthened our corporate culture, increase engagement with our partners and supported a better customer experience; and

(h)   that the Council continued to promote opportunities for office attendance and collaboration within our overall agile framework for teams.

4.   **PRIVATE BUSINESS**
AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in Appendix 1 to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

5.   **MINUTE**
The Private Section of the Minute of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 15.45 pm

MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24

Report by Director of Finance & Procurement
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   **This report updates the Executive Committee on the progress of the delivery of the 2023/24 Capital Financial Plan and seeks approval for the virements and reallocation of funds required following the review of funding and forecasts as at the September Month end.**

1.2   The monitoring tables in Appendix 1 report on actual expenditure to 30 September 2023 and the key issues and highlights identified in these numbers are summarised within this report.

1.3   The September month end position reflects a projected outturn of £116.6m against a budget of £130.4m, giving a net budget variance of £13.8m. This budget variance includes net timing movements from 2023/24 into future years of £17.0m offset by funding increases of £3.2m. Further timing movements from 2023/24 are likely as the year progresses and the delivery timescales of major projects becomes clearer. The construction materials supply chain continues to experience disruption which is causing delays in sourcing essential materials and impacting on project timelines, therefore spend projections should be viewed as indicative at this time and may change materially. However, experience has demonstrated we are likely to experience significant slippage at the year end compared to initial budgetary estimates which will offset pressures in year but delay them into future years.

1.4   A number of macro-economic factors continue to affect the Capital Plan in 2023/24. Recent levels of inflation along with disruption in the construction materials supply chain continues to impact on the wider economy and consequently the Council. A surge in demand coupled with constraints on supply has led to price increases, material shortages and longer lead times. The impact on tender prices for major projects and the wider Capital Plan continues to be assessed and built into forecast costs as they are identified.

1.5   Current legally committed projects have a smaller risk of impact and block programmes of work can operate within a cash constrained budget and are considered lower risk; although it is likely to impact on the scale of project delivery within the blocks. The most significant risk therefore lies in the contracts that are being tendered this year, including Galashiels Academy, Peebles High School and Tweedbank Care Home, which will result in budget pressures in future years - as has been highlighted through reports taken to Council during the first 6 months of the year. The financial implications from these unfavourable market conditions will continue to be reported through the regular budget monitoring cycle with the longer term impacts reflected in the financial planning process.

1.6   During the 2023/24 budget setting process a Planned Programming
        Adjustment budget line was added to the Financial Plan, this is offset where
        unspent project budgets became available through the year. The balance to
        address in 2023/24 remains at £0.833m as no further budget has been
        identified as available since the Q1 report was completed. As highlighted to
        Council through separate reports, pressures in new build projects at Earlston
        Primary School, Galashiels Academy, Peebles High School and Tweedbank
        Care Village have increased the Planned Programming Adjustment in future
        years of the plan by £19.8.5m. The funding of these pressures will be
        considered as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process.

1.7   Appendix 2 contains a list of the block funding allocations currently approved
        for this year as well as the approved projects, actual spend to the end of
        September and the movement requiring virements within the blocks.

1.8   Appendix 3 contains a list of estimated whole project capital costs for projects
        which in the main will not be completed in the current financial year.

2   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

   2.1 **It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**

        **(a)   Agrees the projected outturn in Appendix 1 as the revised
                capital budget and approves the virements required;**

        **(b)   Notes the list of block allocations detailed in Appendix 2 and
                approve the required virements;**

        (c)   Notes the list of whole project costs detailed in Appendix 3.

Executive Committee, 14th November 2023

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Council approved the Capital Plan for the period 2023/24 to 2032/33 on 23 February 2023, which has subsequently been updated to reflect budget adjustments, associated timing movements and other approvals.

3.2   The table below shows the movements in the resources of the Capital Plan through 2023/24 so far:

	£000s
Capital Plan 2023/24 as approved at Council 23 February 2023	**123,705**
Timing movements and budget adjustments reported as part of out-turn 2022/23	11,427
Executive Committee 13th June – Peebles Swimming Pool	40
June Executive Committee timing movements and budget adjustments	(4,767)
Revised Capital Plan 2023/24 as at 30th June 2023	**130,405**
September virements proposed within the report	(13,847)
Proposed Revised Capital Plan 2023/24	**116,558**

3.3   The presentation of the monitoring tables in Appendix 1 focuses on the three year Operational Plan of the approved 10 year Capital Financial Plan with the following 7 years amalgamated for presentation purposes. For 2023/24 the variance between the latest approved budget and the projected outturn is analysed between timing movements between financial years and absolute changes in costs (budget movements). Of the total £13.847m, £17.053m is due to timing movements offset by £3.206m cost increases. Of this £1.921m is because additional external funding has been received.   For 2024/25 and 2025/26 the table presents the total variance projected between the latest approved budget and the current projected outturn. Below the tables for each service, explanatory narrative is provided where appropriate.

3.4   This report is the second quarterly monitoring report in the Capital reporting schedule for 2023/24.

4   MONITORING THE PLAN

4.1   Appendix 1 to this report shows the current financial position of each Capital project. The actual expenditure to 30 September 2023 is shown together with the projected outturn for the full financial year and where appropriate an explanation of budget movements is included.

4.2   Appendix 2 contains detail of each block allocation within the 2023/24 Capital Plan of approved and proposed budget movements for various projects and programmes.

4.3   Appendix 3 contains a list of estimated whole project capital costs for single projects where the project will not be completed in the current financial year, this represents the latest approved budgetary position before the virements requested today.

5   HIGHLIGHTS

5.1   Key highlights from variances in Appendix 1 are:

a) Plant & Vehicle Replacement

Continued procurement of new plant and vehicle is progressing well with an additional £1.754m being drawn down from the replacement fund to meet forecast spend in the current year of £5.754m based on current manufacturer delivery timescales.

b) Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces

The creation of budgets to reflect additional funding of £1.172m from Scottish Government for the Play Park Renewal Programme across financial years 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

c) Jedburgh High Street Building

Timing movement of £632k into 2024/25 to align with procurement timelines. Tender award profiled for early 2024.

d) Road Safety Improvement Fund

The creation of budgets to reflect additional funding from Scottish Government of £322k for the Road Safety Improvement Fund which supports the delivery of Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030.

e) Community Bus Fund

The creation of budgets to reflect additional funding from Scottish Government of £243k. Options for spend are currently being explored by the service but include vehicle and real time information screen purchases.

f) Roads & Bridges Block

The creation of budgets to reflect additional funding of £515k from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) to undertake works at B6357 Lawston to Longrow and B709 Berrybush.

g) Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels

Planned contribution from the Roads & Bridges Block (£250k) and budget transfer from Emergency & Unplanned Schemes (£285k) to cover increased costs due to high inflation and the increased costs of public utility diversion works.

h) Eyemouth Primary School

Timing movement of £3.171m to reflect revised project timescales due to the project being on hold whilst feasibility options for location and build are investigated.

i) Earlston Primary School

Timing movement of £4.237m to reflect revised project timescales resulting from a three month delay to allow for financial close, value engineering and confirmation of material variation for planning.

j) Peebles High School

As noted by Council on the 31st August 2023, the forecast spend for this project has increased by £10.858m as a result of continued high inflation affecting the construction industry, the pressure has currently been included within the Planned Programming adjustments pending consideration through the 2024/25 financial planning process.

k) Borders Town Centre Regeneration

Create budgets to reflect an additional grant from Scottish Government of £552k for the 2023/24 Place Based Investment

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Programme. Detailed project plans will be presented to Members at a future date.

l) Care Village Tweedbank

Continued high inflation affecting the construction industry has resulted in identified pressures of £4.606m which were noted by Council on the 28ᵗʰ September 2023. The pressure has currently been included within the Planned Programming adjustments pending consideration through the 2024/25 financial planning process.

5.2 **Emergency & Unplanned Schemes**

The table below provides an update on the position for Emergency & Unplanned Schemes showing the movement from the budget approved in February 2023.

Emergency & Unplanned	£000s
Budget as Approved at Council 23 February 2023	0.175
Available budget from Energy Efficiency Works	0.220
Transfer budget to Easter Langlee Roundabout, Galashiels	(0.285)
Transfer of budget to Asset Rationalisation & Demolition for demolition of Gunsgreen Hill Squash Courts, Eyemouth	(0.100)
Current balance	**0.010**

5.3 **Future Years**

During the 2023/24 budget setting process a Planned Programming Adjustment budget line was added to the Financial Plan which is offset throughout the year where unspent project budgets become available. The remaining balance to address in 2023/24 remains £0.833m. Identified pressures in new build projects at Earlston Primary School, Galashiels Academy, Peebles High School and the Tweedbank Care Village have increased the Planned Programming Adjustment in future years of the plan from £16.140m to £31.604m. The funding of these pressures will be considered as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Financial**

There are no financial implications beyond those contained in the report and Appendices 1-3.

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

At the end of September 2023, actual expenditure totalled £30.8m which represents 26% of the projected outturn, excluding the impact of year end accruals. There is a risk of further timing movements this financial year some of which has already been highlighted in narrative in Appendix 1. It is vital that capital budgets continue to be monitored carefully through the Project Managers and that their outturn projections are as accurate as possible. This is important as optimism bias by managers with respect to spend profiles may result in the council borrowing in advance of need and thereby incurring the cost of carrying surplus funds.

6.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

No Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to the contents of this report; it is, however, expected that for individual projects this work will have been undertaken by the relevant project manager/ budget holder prior to budget being approved.

6.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report although there may be within individual projects and these will be identified and addressed as appropriate as part of their specific governance arrangements.

6.5 **Climate Change**

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this monitoring report; however, there may be within individual projects and these will be identified and addressed as appropriate as part of their specific governance arrangements.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

6.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

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

No changes to the Scheme of Administration or Delegation are required as a result of the report.

7 **CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Director of Corporate Governance, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director of People, Performance & Change, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and comments will be reported to the meeting.

7.2 The Director Infrastructure & Environment has been consulted in the preparation of this report and the content of the detailed appendices.

Approved by

Suzy Douglas   Signature ………………………………….
Director of Finance & Procurement

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Lizzie Turner	Chief Officer - Finance & Procurement

Background Papers: n/a
Previous Minute Reference: n/a

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Suzy Douglas can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Lizzie Turner, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA; Tel: 01835 824000 X6056.

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Capital Financial Plan

SUMMARY	Actual to 30/09/23 £000	Projected Outturn £000	Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000	Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000	Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000
	2023/24				**2024/25**			**2025/26**			**2026/27 - 2032/33**		
Plant & Vehicle Fund	3,093	5,754	4,000	1,754	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	14,000	0	14,000
Non Plant & Vehicle Fund	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flood & Coastal Protection	10,433	25,150	25,150	0	828	0	828	1,251	0	1,251	2,604	0	2,604
Land and Property Infrastructure	996	4,991	6,638	(1,647)	3,511	1,602	5,113	2,207	981	3,188	16,432	241	16,673
Road & Transport Infrastructure	3,988	10,797	9,572	1,225	9,407	40	9,447	7,667	0	7,667	52,969	0	52,969
Waste Management	54	251	251	0	106	0	106	112	0	112	956	0	956
Total Infrastructure & Environment	**18,565**	**46,953**	**45,621**	**1,332**	**15,852**	**1,642**	**17,494**	**13,237**	**981**	**14,218**	**86,961**	**241**	**87,202**
Corporate	2,699	13,896	13,896	0	184	0	184	121	0	121	1,146	0	1,146
Total Corporate Services	**2,699**	**13,896**	**13,896**	**0**	**184**	**0**	**184**	**121**	**0**	**121**	**1,146**	**0**	**1,146**
School Estate	7,977	37,724	53,441	(15,717)	66,533	5,386	71,919	29,899	19,022	48,921	59,402	2,167	61,569
Total Learning Estate	**7,977**	**37,724**	**53,441**	**(15,717)**	**66,533**	**5,386**	**71,919**	**29,899**	**19,022**	**48,921**	**59,402**	**2,167**	**61,569**
Sports Infrastructure	124	718	902	(184)	595	(185)	410	2,007	0	2,007	4,868	0	4,868
Culture & Heritage	0	297	292	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Culture & Sport	**124**	**1,015**	**1,194**	**(179)**	**595**	**(185)**	**410**	**2,007**	**0**	**2,007**	**4,868**	**0**	**4,868**
Economic Regeneration	1,130	15,249	14,367	882	21,369	(330)	21,039	14,195	0	14,195	24,347	0	24,347
Housing Strategy & Services	131	984	984	0	500	0	500	500	0	500	3,500	0	3,500
Total Economic Regeneration	**1,261**	**16,233**	**15,351**	**882**	**21,869**	**(330)**	**21,539**	**14,695**	**0**	**14,695**	**27,847**	**0**	**27,847**
Emergency & Unplanned Schemes	0	10	175	(165)	175	0	175	175	0	175	1,225	0	1,225
Total Emergency & Unplanned Schemes	**0**	**10**	**175**	**(165)**	**175**	**0**	**175**	**175**	**0**	**175**	**1,225**	**0**	**1,225**
Social Care Infrastructure	174	1,560	1,560	0	27,406	1,738	29,144	466	2,868	3,334	301	0	301
Total Social Care Infrastructure	**174**	**1,560**	**1,560**	**0**	**27,406**	**1,738**	**29,144**	**466**	**2,868**	**3,334**	**301**	**0**	**301**
Planned Programming Adjustments	0	(833)	(833)	0	(7,454)	(1,738)	(9,192)	(3,063)	(11,555)	(14,618)	(5,623)	(2,171)	(7,794)
Total Planned Programming Adjustments	**0**	**(833)**	**(833)**	**0**	**(7,454)**	**(1,738)**	**(9,192)**	**(3,063)**	**(11,555)**	**(14,618)**	**(5,623)**	**(2,171)**	**(7,794)**
Total Scottish Borders Council	**30,800**	**116,558**	**130,405**	**(13,847)**	**125,160**	**6,513**	**131,673**	**57,537**	**11,316**	**68,853**	**176,127**	**237**	**176,364**

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	RAG	2023/24				2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
		Actual to 30/09/23	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Plant & Vehicle Fund														
Plant & Vehicle Replacement - P&V Fund	A	3,093	5,754	4,000	1,754	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	14,000	0	14,000
		3,093	**5,754**	**4,000**	**1,754**	**2,000**	**0**	**2,000**	**2,000**	**0**	**2,000**	**14,000**	**0**	**14,000**
Non-Plant & Vehicle Fund														
Other Fleet - Electric Vehicles	G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Fleet - Electric Vehicles - Infrastructure	G	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		0	**10**	**10**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Flood & Coastal Protection														
Flood Prevention Works & Scheme Preparation	G	171	678	678	0	372	0	372	372	0	372	2,604	0	2,604
General Flood Protection Block	G	94	94	94	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawick Flood Protection	G	10,169	24,228	24,228	0	456	0	456	879	0	879	0	0	0
Coastal Change Adaptations	G	0	150	150	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		10,433	**25,150**	**25,150**	**0**	**828**	**0**	**828**	**1,251**	**0**	**1,251**	**2,604**	**0**	**2,604**
Land and Property Infrastructure														
Asset Rationalisation & Demolition	G	43	618	688	(70)	0	170	170	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Upgrades	G	14	540	540	0	437	0	437	397	0	397	4,368	0	4,368
Energy Efficiency Works	G	(88)	1,025	1,245	(220)	720	0	720	795	0	795	7,065	0	7,065
Health and Safety Works	G	159	337	337	0	400	0	400	400	0	400	3,500	0	3,500
Free School Meals	G	261	721	721	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces	G	574	969	1,694	(725)	858	800	1,658	615	981	1,596	516	241	757
Jedburgh High Street Building	A	32	317	949	(632)	1,000	632	1,632	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cemetery Land Acquisition & Development	G	1	0	0	0	96	0	96	0	0	0	983	0	983
Land at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	G	0	111	111	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nature Restoration Fund	G	0	353	353	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		996	**4,991**	**6,638**	**(1,647)**	**3,511**	**1,602**	**5,113**	**2,207**	**981**	**3,188**	**16,432**	**241**	**16,673**

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	RAG	2023/24 Actual to 30/09/23 £000	2023/24 Projected Outturn £000	2023/24 Latest Approved Budget £000	2023/24 Movement requiring Virement £000	2024/25 Latest Approved Budget £000	2024/25 Movement requiring Virement £000	2024/25 Projected Budget £000	2025/26 Latest Approved Budget £000	2025/26 Movement requiring Virement £000	2025/26 Projected Budget £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Latest Approved Budget £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Movement requiring Virement £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Projected Budget £000
Road & Transport Infrastructure														
Cycling Walking & Safer Streets	G	95	741	741	0	407	100	507	407	100	507	1,729	0	1,729
Road Safety Improvement Fund	G	0	322	0	322	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Bus Fund	G	0	243	0	243	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Engineering Minor Works	G	0	14	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lighting Asset Management Plan	G	68	154	154	0	160	0	160	160	0	160	1,120	0	1,120
Peebles Bridge	G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	420	0	420
Reston Station Contribution	G	0	0	0	0	1,740	0	1,740	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roads & Bridges -inc. RAMP, Winter Damage & Slopes	G	3,746	7,734	7,609	125	7,100	(60)	7,040	7,100	(100)	7,000	49,700	0	49,700
Drainage, Kelso	G	0	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Galashiels Transport Interchange	G	0	17	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Union Chain Bridge	G	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	A	80	914	379	535	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eddleston Water Path	G	0	600	600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		3,988	10,797	9,572	1,225	9,407	40	9,447	7,667	0	7,667	52,969	0	52,969
Waste Management														
New Easter Langlee Waste Transfer Station	G	0	41	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Closed Landfill Site- Health & Safety Works	G	37	57	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wheeled Bins (100 in total) - Street Cleansing	G	9	52	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Containers	G	0	101	101	0	106	0	106	112	0	112	956	0	956
		54	251	251	0	106	0	106	112	0	112	956	0	956
Total Infrastructure & Environment		18,565	46,953	45,621	1,332	15,852	1,642	17,494	13,237	981	14,218	86,961	241	87,202

Plant & Vehicle Fund	
Plant & Vehicle Replacement - P&V Fund	An additional £1.754m is being drawn down from the replacement fund, to fund a forecast spend in the current year of £5.754m based on current manufacturer delivery timescales.
Flood & Coastal Protection	
Flood Prevention Works & Scheme Preparation	See appendix 2 for block re-allocation.
Land and Property Infrastructure	
Asset Rationalisation & Demolition	Timing movement of £170k required into 2024/25 relating to HQ IT Server Room (£20k) and HQ Ground Floor Training Suite (£150k). Budget transfer from Emergency & Unplanned Schemes for demolition works at Gunsgreen Hill Squash Courts, Eyemouth (£100k).
Energy Efficiency Works	See appendix 2 for block re-allocation. Transfer available budget to Emergency & Unplanned (£220k). Part of this funding has become available due to an over accrual at 2022/23 year-end.
Free School Meals	See appendix 2 for block re-allocation where projects have been prioritised in line with reduced funding allocation.
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces	See appendix 2 for block re-allocation. Gross up i) confirmed Scottish Government funding (23/24 £234k, 24/25 £352k and 25/26 £586k); ii) Jedburgh Common Good for Allerley Well Park (23/24 £50k); iii) Sport Scotland for Walkerburn Pump Track (24/25 £50k); and iv) development contribution for Ayton (26/27 £25k). Offset by timing movements to align with current programme of delivery.
Jedburgh High Street Building	Timing movement of £632k to 2024/25 required in line with procurement timelines, tender award profiled for February 2024.
Road & Transport Infrastructure	
Road Safety Improvement Fund	Gross up funding from Scottish Government (£322k).
Community Bus Fund	Gross up funding from Transport Scotland (£243k) to support Local Authorities to explore the full range of options set out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, including municipal bus services.
Roads & Bridges -Inc. RAMP, Winter Damage & Slopes	See appendix 2 for block re-allocation. Gross up £515k of external funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) at B6357 Lawston to Longrow and B709 Berrybush. Gross down £100k from Scottish Government to be delivered under Cycling Walking Safer Streets. Timing movement in Masonry project (£40k) due to A701 Linnburn Bridge job changing from a masonry refurbishment job planned for 2023/24 into a bridge replacement scheme now planned for 2024/25. Additional defects were identified on the bridge than were previously anticipated, therefore the more appropriate solution is a bridge replacement scheme and can't be completed this year as SEPA Licences etc required. Contribution towards Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels project costs (£250k).
Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	Planned contribution from Roads & Bridges Blocks (£250k). Increased costs due to high construction inflation levels and greater complexity of the required public utility diversions to be funded from Emergency & Unplanned (£285k).

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	R A G	2023/24				2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
		Actual to 30/09/23	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Corporate														
ICT - Outwith CGI Scope	G	9	26	26	0	56	0	56	56	0	56	560	0	560
Inspire Learning	G	1,796	2,438	2,438	0	128	0	128	65	0	65	273	0	273
Digital Transformation	G	894	11,432	11,432	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	313	0	313
		2,699	**13,896**	**13,896**	**0**	**184**	**0**	**184**	**121**	**0**	**121**	**1,146**	**0**	**1,146**
Total Corporate		**2,699**	**13,896**	**13,896**	**0**	**184**	**0**	**184**	**121**	**0**	**121**	**1,146**	**0**	**1,146**

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	RAG	2023/24 Actual to 30/09/23 £000	2023/24 Projected Outturn £000	2023/24 Latest Approved Budget £000	2023/24 Movement requiring Virement £000	2024/25 Latest Approved Budget £000	2024/25 Movement requiring Virement £000	2024/25 Projected Budget £000	2025/26 Latest Approved Budget £000	2025/26 Movement requiring Virement £000	2025/26 Projected Budget £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Latest Approved Budget £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Movement requiring Virement £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Projected Budget £000
Learning Estate														
Early Years Expansion	G	244	1,525	1,525	0	614	0	614	433	0	433	0	0	0
Jedburgh Learning Campus	G	0	12	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eyemouth Primary School	A	1	250	3,421	(3,171)	7,402	1,586	8,988	4,000	1,585	5,585	0	0	0
Earlston Primary School	A	1,120	7,530	11,767	(4,237)	2,278	4,419	6,697	247	(182)	65	0	0	0
Gala Academy	G	3,184	16,108	14,587	1,521	30,840	1,871	32,711	13,141	(3,388)	9,753	868	(4)	864
New Hawick High School	G	453	1,497	1,497	0	886	0	886	7,023	0	7,023	46,004	0	46,004
Learning Estate Block	G	369	2,302	2,302	0	1,790	0	1,790	1,790	0	1,790	12,530	0	12,530
Inspire Academy	G	10	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Peebles High School	A	2,595	8,430	18,260	(9,830)	22,723	(2,490)	20,233	3,265	21,007	24,272	0	2,171	2,171
Inspiring School Age Childcare Spaces Programme	G	2	60	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Projects Funded from Revenue	G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		7,977	37,724	53,441	(15,717)	66,533	5,386	71,919	29,899	19,022	48,921	59,402	2,167	61,569
Total Learning Estate		7,977	37,724	53,441	(15,717)	66,533	5,386	71,919	29,899	19,022	48,921	59,402	2,167	61,569

Learning Estate

Eyemouth Primary School	Timing movement from 2023/24 of £1,586k to 2024/25 and £1,585k to 2025/26 to align with revised project timescales
Earlston Primary School	Timing movement from 2023/24 of £4,237k and 2025/26 of £182k to 2024/25 to align with revised project timescales following commencement of construction
Gala Academy	Timing movement to 2023/24 of £1,521k and to 2024/25 of £1,871k from 2025/26 and 2026/27 to align with revised project timescales
Peebles High School	Timing movement of £9,830k from 2023/24 and £2,490k from 2024/25 to 2025/26 to align with revised project timescales. Pressure of £10,858k as a result of volatility within construction market caused by a range of inflation-raising worldwide events (2025/26 £8,687k and 2026/27 £2,171k). The additional funding required for future years will be considered as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	RAG	2023/24 Actual to 30/09/23 £000	Projected Outturn £000	Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	2024/25 Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000	2025/26 Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000	2026/27 - 2032/33 Latest Approved Budget £000	Movement requiring Virement £000	Projected Budget £000
Sports Infrastructure														
Culture & Sports Trusts - Plant & Services	G	116	615	430	185	215	(185)	30	215	0	215	2,030	0	2,030
Netherdale Spectator Stand	G	7	77	77	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherdale Pitch Replacement	G	0	26	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Synthetic Pitch Replacement Fund	G	0	0	369	(369)	380	0	380	1,792	0	1,792	2,838	0	2,838
		124	718	902	(184)	595	(185)	410	2,007	0	2,007	4,868	0	4,868
Culture & Heritage														
Jim Clark Museum	G	0	16	11	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public Hall Upgrades	G	0	281	281	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		0	297	292	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Culture & Sport		124	1,015	1,194	(179)	595	(185)	410	2,007	0	2,007	4,868	0	4,868

Sports Infrastructure	
Culture & Sports Trusts - Plant & Services	Accelerate budget from 2024/25 to fund required programme of works.
Synthetic Pitch Replacement Fund	Gross down of synthetic pitch replacement fund, no planned pitch replacements in current year.
Culture & Heritage	
Jim Clark Museum	To gross up further funding from Jim Clark Trust to cover the anticipated increased cost to purchase and install an additional shutter to comply with the Government Indemnity Scheme (GIS) security requirements (£5k).

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	RAG	2023/24				2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
		Actual to 30/09/23	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Economic Regeneration														
Borders Town Centre Regeneration Block	A	0	858	306	552	70	0	70	70	0	70	700	0	700
Borders Innovation Park	G	46	830	500	330	10,577	(330)	10,247	3,186	0	3,186	219	0	219
Newtown St Boswells Regeneration	G	0	344	344	0	56	0	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawick Regeneration Block	G	863	863	863	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Galashiels Town Centre Regeneration	G	75	375	375	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Borderlands	A	143	11,974	11,974	0	10,666	0	10,666	10,939	0	10,939	23,428	0	23,428
Earlston Business Relocation	G	3	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		1,130	15,249	14,367	882	21,369	(330)	21,039	14,195	0	14,195	24,347	0	24,347
Housing Strategy & Services														
Private Sector Housing Grant - Adaptations	G	103	526	526	0	500	0	500	500	0	500	3,500	0	3,500
Empty Homes Grants	G	28	458	458	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		131	984	984	0	500	0	500	500	0	500	3,500	0	3,500
Total Economic Development & Corporate Services		1,393	17,216	16,335	882	22,369	(330)	22,039	15,195	0	15,195	31,347	0	31,347

Economic Regeneration

Borders Town Centre Regeneration Block — Gross up Place Based Investment Programme funding for 2023/24 (£552k).

Borders Innovation Park — Timing movement from 2024/25 to meet planned road infrastructure works in-year (£330k).

Borderlands — We are currently reviewing the profile of spend and adjustments will be presented at a future meeting.

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

	R A G	2023/24				2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
		Actual to 30/09/23	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Emergency & Unplanned Schemes														
Emergency & Unplanned Schemes	A	0	10	175	(165)	175	0	175	175	0	175	1,225	0	1,225
Inflation Contingency	G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Programming Adjustments		0	(833)	(833)	0	(7,454)	(1,738)	(9,192)	(3,063)	(11,555)	(14,618)	(5,623)	(2,171)	(7,794)
		0	**(823)**	**(658)**	**(165)**	**(7,279)**	**(1,738)**	**(9,017)**	**(2,888)**	**(11,555)**	**(14,443)**	**(4,398)**	**(2,171)**	**(6,569)**
Total Emergency & Unplanned Schemes		**0**	**(823)**	**(658)**	**(165)**	**(7,279)**	**(1,738)**	**(9,017)**	**(2,888)**	**(11,555)**	**(14,443)**	**(4,398)**	**(2,171)**	**(6,569)**

Emergency & Unplanned Schemes

Emergency & Unplanned Schemes | Transfer available budget from the Energy Efficiency Works budget (£220k). Budget transfer to Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels to cover increased costs due to high construction inflation levels and greater complexity of the required public utility diversions (£285k).   Budget transfer to Asset Rationalisation & Demolition for demolition works at Gunsgreen Hill Squash Courts at Eyemouth (£100k).

Planned Programming Adjustments

Planned Programming Adjustments | Pressures in Peebles High School and Care Village Tweedbank as a result of volatility within the construction market by a range of inflation-raising worldwide events.

Capital Financial Plan

	R A G	2023/24				2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
		Actual to 30/09/23	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Social Care Infrastructure														
Care Inspectorate Requirements & Upgrades	G	7	41	41	0	41	0	41	43	0	43	301	0	301
Technology Enabled Care	G	(9)	33	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Residential Care Accommodation - Upgrades	G	72	936	936	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Care Village Tweedbank	A	63	500	500	0	13,762	1,738	15,500	210	2,868	3,078	0	0	0
Care Village Hawick	G	41	50	50	0	13,603	0	13,603	213	0	213	0	0	0
		174	1,560	1,560	0	27,406	1,738	29,144	466	2,868	3,334	301	0	301
Total Social Care Infrastructure		174	1,560	1,560	0	27,406	1,738	29,144	466	2,868	3,334	301	0	301

Social Care Infrastructure	
Care Village Tweedbank	Pressure of £4.606m over 2024/25 and 2025/26 as a result of a range of inflation-raising worldwide events affecting the construction industry.

Scottish Borders Council
Capital Financial Plan

CAPITAL FINANCING	2023/24			2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
C9001 - Capital - General Capital Grant												
Capital - General Capital Grant	(6,271)	(6,271)	0	(10,737)	0	(10,737)	(10,737)	0	(10,737)	(75,159)	0	(75,159)
Hawick Flood Protection	(16,198)	(16,198)	0	(148)	0	(148)	(920)	0	(920)	0	0	0
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces	(234)	0	(234)	0	(352)	(352)	0	(586)	(586)	0	0	0
Flood Prevention Works & Scheme Preparation	(678)	(678)	0	(372)	0	(372)	(372)	0	(372)	(2,604)	0	(2,604)
Free School Meals	(721)	(721)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nature Restoration Fund	(353)	(353)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coastal Adaptations	(150)	(150)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C9002 - Scottish Government Specific Capital Grant												
Cycling Walking & Safer Streets	(741)	(741)	0	(407)	(100)	(507)	(407)	(100)	(507)	(1,729)	0	(1,729)
Roads & Bridges -inc. RAMP, Winter Damage & Slopes	0	(100)	100	(100)	100	0	(100)	100	0	0	0	0
Early Years Expansion	(1,525)	(1,525)	0	(614)	0	(614)	(433)	0	(433)	0	0	0
Inspiring School Age Childcare Spaces Programme	(60)	(60)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(2,326)	**(2,426)**	**100**	**(1,121)**	**0**	**(1,121)**	**(940)**	**0**	**(940)**	**(1,729)**	**0**	**(1,729)**
C9003 - Other Grants & Contributions - Capital												
Other Fleet - Electric Vehicles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Fleet - Electric Vehicles - Infrastructure	(10)	(10)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawick Flood Protection	(3,231)	(3,231)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawick Flood Protection (SG CG Advance)	(935)	(935)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces	(50)	(133)	83	0	(50)	(50)	0	(133)	(133)	0	0	0
Road Safety Improvement Fund	(322)	0	(322)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Bus Fund	(243)	0	(243)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roads & Bridges -inc. RAMP, Winter Damage & Slopes	(515)	0	(515)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jim Clark Museum	(16)	(11)	(5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hawick Regeneration Block	(753)	(753)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Borders Town Centre Regeneration Block	(558)	(6)	(552)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Borders Innovation Park	(500)	(500)	0	(8,762)	0	(8,762)	(3,186)	0	(3,186)	(219)	0	(219)
Borderlands	(11,974)	(11,974)	0	(10,034)	0	(10,034)	(10,939)	0	(10,939)	(23,428)	0	(23,428)
Earlston Primary School	(1,763)	(1,763)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eddleston Water Path	(600)	(600)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherdale Pitch Replacement	(11)	(11)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Replace previous borrowing with Capital Grant	0	0	0	(768)	0	(768)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(21,481)	**(19,927)**	**(1,554)**	**(19,564)**	**(50)**	**(19,614)**	**(14,125)**	**(133)**	**(14,258)**	**(23,647)**	**0**	**(23,647)**

CAPITAL FINANCING	2023/24			2024/25			2025/26			2026/27 - 2032/33		
	Projected Outturn	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget	Latest Approved Budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
C9004 - Capital Funded from Current Revenue (CFCR)												
Digital Transformation	(1,812)	(1,812)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jedburgh High Street Building	(297)	(929)	632	(1,000)	(632)	(1,632)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Empty Homes Grants	(458)	(458)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Land at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	(111)	(111)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(2,678)	**(3,310)**	**632**	**(1,000)**	**(632)**	**(1,632)**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
C9005 - Development Contributions												
Reston Station Contribution	0	0	0	(100)	0	(100)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces	(75)	(75)	0	0	0	0	(11)	0	(11)	0	(25)	(25)
Engineering Minor Works	(14)	(14)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	(379)	(379)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning Estate Block	(100)	(100)	0	(100)	0	(100)	(100)	0	(100)	(600)	0	(600)
Replace previous borrowing with Development Contributions	0	0	0	(4,652)	0	(4,652)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(568)	**(568)**	**0**	**(4,852)**	**0**	**(4,852)**	**(111)**	**0**	**(111)**	**(600)**	**(25)**	**(625)**
C9006 - Capital Receipts												
General Capital Receipt	0	0	0	(2,000)	0	(2,000)	(135)	0	(135)	(600)	0	(600)
Inspire Learning	(1,648)	(1,648)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	(1,648)	**(1,648)**	**0**	**(2,000)**	**0**	**(2,000)**	**(135)**	**0**	**(135)**	**(600)**	**0**	**(600)**
C9007 - Plant & Vehicle Fund												
Plant & Vehicle Replacement - P&V Fund	(5,754)	(4,000)	(1,754)	(2,000)	0	(2,000)	(2,000)	0	(2,000)	(14,000)	0	(14,000)
Synthetic Pitch Replacement Fund	0	(369)	369	(380)	0	(380)	(1,132)	0	(1,132)	(2,838)	0	(2,838)
	(5,754)	**(4,369)**	**(1,385)**	**(2,380)**	**0**	**(2,380)**	**(3,132)**	**0**	**(3,132)**	**(16,838)**	**0**	**(16,838)**
C9008 - Capital Borrowing												
	(57,498)	**(73,786)**	**16,288**	**(82,986)**	**(5,479)**	**(88,465)**	**(27,065)**	**(10,597)**	**(37,662)**	**(54,950)**	**(212)**	**(55,162)**
TOTAL CAPITAL FUNDING	**(116,558)**	**(130,405)**	**13,847**	**(125,160)**	**(6,513)**	**(131,673)**	**(57,537)**	**(11,316)**	**(68,853)**	**(176,127)**	**(237)**	**(176,364)**

	Latest approved budget £000's	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Infrastructure & Environment				
Flood & Coastal Protection				
Flood Prevention Works & Scheme Preparation				
Galashiels Natural Flood Management	40	0	40	6
Flood Scheme Preparation Peebles	6	(1)	5	2
Community Resilience	13	0	13	1
Ettrick Valley Study	49	0	49	22
Lindean Study	17	(13)	4	0
Slitrig Study	34	(33)	1	0
Newcastleton Temporary Bund	8	0	8	0
Berwickshire Shoreline Management Plan/Coastal Change Adaptation Plan	240	(240)	0	0
Dairy Mews Culvert, Galashiels	100	0	100	0
Romanno Bridge	37	14	51	20
Selkirk Flood Protection Scheme Erosion Works	0	71	71	88
Minor Works	58	0	58	0
Denholm Flood Scheme Upgrade	38	0	38	0
Jedburgh Flood Scheme Preparation	38	(38)	0	0
Eyemouth & Berwickshire Coastal Schemes	0	240	240	32
Gross up additional funding from Scottish Government for Coastal Change Adaptation	0	0	0	
Timing movement to 2024/25				
	678	0	678	171
General Flood Protection Block				
Romanno Bridge Flood Bank	94	0	94	94
Timing movement to 2024/25				
	94	0	94	94

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Land and Property Infrastructure				
Asset Rationalisation				
Hawick Town Hall - agile working	8	0	8	0
Paton Street Galashiels - agile working	12	0	12	11
Asset development and reconfiguration	188	0	188	0
Council HQ building upgrade works	480	(170)	310	32
Gunsgreen Hill Squash Courts at Eyemouth	0	100	100	0
Unallocated Balance	0	0	0	
Transfer of budget from Emergency & Unplanned Schemes		(100)	0	
Timing movement to 2024/25		**170**		
	688	0	618	43
Building Upgrades				
Peebles Swimming Pool roofing upgrade	370	0	370	0
Lifts - Mechanical infrastructure upgrades	30	0	30	14
Electrical Infrastructure management	25	0	25	0
Eyemouth Community Centre roofing upgrades	50	0	50	0
Industrial Units fabric upgrades	50	0	50	0
Linglie Mill roofing & rainwater goods upgrade	15	0	15	0
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	540	0	540	14
Energy Efficiency Works				
Solar Photo Voltaic panels installation	998	0	998	28
Existing Photo Voltaic estate reinstallations	100	0	100	0
Conversion of energy source (Oil to 'green' energy source)	145	(145)	0	0
Lowood Lodge	0	0	0	0
Chirnside PS window upgrade	0	(120)	(120)	(120)
Smart Grid	2	2	4	4
Unallocated Balance	0	43	43	0
Transfer available budget to Emergency & Unplanned Schemes		220		
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		0
	1,245	0	1,025	-88

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Health and Safety Works				
Legionella upgrade water tanks	67	0	67	1
Asbestos Management	50	0	50	32
Fire alarm systems upgrades	155	0	155	61
Drumlanrig Primary School window upgrade	40	0	40	40
Cemetery wall works	25	0	25	25
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	337	0	337	159
Free School Meals				
Kitchen Equipment	289	(269)	20	20
Project Management	10	0	10	0
Gordon Primary School Extension	337	0	337	193
St Peter's Primary School Extension	18	0	18	20
Glendinning Primary School Extension	8	0	8	10
Philiphaugh Primary School Refurbishment	27	(12)	15	9
St Margaret's Primary School Refurbishment	7	182	189	7
Burgh Primary School Refurbishment	25	(1)	24	2
Newcastleton Primary School Extension	0	0	0	0
Melrose Primary School Refurbishment	0	100	100	0
Drumlanrig Primary School Refurbishment	0	0	0	0
Stow Primary School Refurbishment	0	0	0	0
Balmoral Primary School Refurbishment	0	0	0	0
Kingsland Primary School Refurbishment	0	0	0	0
Newtown St Boswells Primary School Refurbishment	0	0	0	0
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	721	0	721	261

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Play Areas & Outdoor Community Spaces				
Jedburgh Allerley Well Park	270	38	308	282
Play Facilities & Surfacing Review	0	0	0	1
Jedburgh Skate Park	270	(240)	30	24
Peebles Victoria Park Skate Park	10	0	10	9
Gavinton	65	6	71	65
St Boswells Jenny Moore's Road	180	22	202	183
Newstead The Orchard	60	11	71	0
Selkirk Bog Park	60	10	70	3
Hawick Walled Garden Glass house	9	(9)	0	0
Kelso High Croft	66	3	69	3
Hawick Sleepy Valley, Burnfoot	222	(170)	52	0
Innerleithen Public Park Drainage & Surfacing Works	140	(120)	20	2
Walkerburn Pumptrack & Football Upgrade	150	(100)	50	2
Kelso Lighting	0	10	10	0
Roof Shelter - Peebles	0	6	6	0
Gross up Scottish Government funding		(234)		
Gross up Jedburgh Common Good funding		(50)		
Unallocated Balance	192	(192)	0	0
Timing movement to 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28 & 2028/29		**1,009**		
	1,694	0	969	574
Road & Transport Infrastructure				
Cycling Walking & Safer Streets				
Walking Related Activities:	370	0	370	39
Cycling Related Activities:	371	0	371	56
Gross up additional funding from Scottish Government		0		
	741	0	741	95

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Lighting Asset Management Plan				
Weensgate Drive, Hawick	29	0	29	40
St Ronan's Terrace, Innerleithen	24	0	24	20
Deanshead, Eyemouth	19	0	19	0
Bank Street Brae, Galashiels	10	0	10	0
Glebe Terrace, Selkirk	19	0	19	7
Scott Street, Newcastleton	19	0	19	0
Marchmont Road, Greenlaw	19	0	19	0
Carnarvon Street, Hawick	1	0	1	1
Corroded Columns	14	0	14	0
Timing movement to 2024/25				
	154	0	154	68
Roads & Bridges -inc. RAMP, Winter Damage & Slopes				
Surface Dressing	2,220	0	2,220	2,100
Patching	2,030	0	2,030	682
Resurfacing/Overlays	1,749	(570)	1,179	241
Walls & Structures	280	0	280	114
Footways	260	0	260	178
Drainage	320	0	320	141
Masonry Refurbishment	750	(40)	710	146
STTS Schemes	0	735	735	144
Gross up STTS Schemes		(515)		
Gross down Scottish Government funding to be delivered under CWSS		100		
Transfer available budget to Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels		250		
Timing movement to 2024/25		**40**		
	7,609	0	7,734	3,746

Corporate

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
ICT-Outwith CGI Scope				
PC Replacement	26	0	26	9
Timing movement to 2024/25				
	26	0	26	9

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Education & Lifelong Learning				
Early Learning and Childcare				
Early Years Expansion	1,525	0	1,525	244
Timing movement to 2024/25			0	
	1,525	0	1,525	244
Learning Estate Block				
Improve and enhance school environments:				
Outdoor Learning Provisions	512	(200)	312	7
Equipment & Furniture Replacement Programme (including white goods)	50	0	50	48
Primary School Refurbishments	982	360	1,342	211
School toilet programme	213	(100)	113	86
Meet security and legislative obligations				
Kitchen refurbishment programme	50	(30)	20	0
Accessibility works	30	0	30	7
Secure receptions programme	125	0	125	8
ASN Provision Enhancements				
ASN Provision Enhancements	10	250	260	2
Urgent, unplanned and fees				
Professional fees	180	(155)	25	0
Project closure contingencies	150	(125)	25	0
Unallocated balance	0	0	0	
Timing movement to 2024/25			0	
	2,302	0	2,302	369

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Culture & Sport				
Sports Infrastructure				
Culture & Sports Trusts - Plant & Services				
Live Borders	2	(2)	0	
Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust	24	0	24	24
Berwickshire Recreation Education Sports Trust	15	0	15	3
Peebles Swimming Pool - Electrical and additional decorating works	60	(60)	0	0
Gytes Leisure Centre, Peebles - Boilers	131	(131)	0	0
Eyemouth Leisure Centre	198	(198)	0	0
Selkirk Leisure Centre - calorifier replacement & Legionella		35	35	0
Selkirk Swimming Pool - roof mounted pool extract fans		0	0	0
Eyemouth Leisure Centre - secondary and main pool pumps & inverters		16	16	15
Eyemouth Leisure Centre - actuators pool heating		5	5	5
Peebles Swimming Pool - changing facilities, toilets, sauna, steam room		31	31	0
Peebles Swimming Pool - circulation pumps		10	10	0
Peebles Swimming Pool - heat pumps		19	19	0
Gala Swimming Pool - pool pumps		0	0	0
Teviotdale Leisure Centre - replacement of pool side scum channels		13	13	13
Multiple Sites - Carbon Monoxide/Gas alarms (6x£4,575)		28	28	0
Multiple Sites - Plantroom emergency shutdown controls (6x£3000)		18	18	0
Multiple sites - Chlorine gas alarms		20	20	0
Selkirk Leisure Centre - Electrical works		6	6	6
Teviotdale Leisure Centre - actuators controls etc		13	13	0
GYTES - Boiler & Pump replacement including pressurisation unit		73	73	0
GYTES - Calorifier replacement		35	35	0
GYTES - Control works to facilitate £28,807		34	34	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Main pool AHU		100	100	50
EYEMOUTH SP - Controls Upgrade		65	65	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Pool Cover		8	8	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Joinery works		5	5	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Project management and principal designer		14	14	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Booster Pump Set		14	14	0
EYEMOUTH SP - Retrofit (changing room supply & extract unit - AHU)		14	14	0
Unallocated balance		0	0	0
Accelerate budget from 2024/25		(185)		
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	430	0	615	116

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Public Hall Upgrades				
Live Borders	281	(281)	0	0
Gala Volunteer Hall		50	50	0
PA systems (all venues)		26	26	0
Unallocated balance		205	205	0
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	281	0	281	0
Economic Regeneration				
Hawick Regeneration				
Hawick Business Centre	863	0	863	863
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	863	0	863	863
Galashiels Town Centre Regeneration				
Galashiels Masterplanning & Town Centre redevelopment	375	0	375	75
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	375	0	375	75
Borders Town Centre Regeneration Block				
Workshop Development	86	0	86	0
Town Centre Regeneration Enabling Works (Galashiels, Hawick, Eyemouth, Jedburgh, Selkirk)	214	0	214	0
Jedburgh Abbey Ramparts	4	0	4	0
Unallocated Balance	2	0	2	0
Place Based Investment Programme 2023/24	0	552	552	0
Gross up Scottish Government funding for Place Based Investment Programme		(552)		
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	306	0	858	0

	Latest approved budget	Movement requiring Virement	Projected Outturn	Actuals to 30/09/2023
Adult Social Care				
Social Care Infrastructure				
Care Inspectorate Requirements & Upgrades				
Deanfield, Hawick	7	0	7	0
Grove House, Kelso	7	0	7	0
St. Ronan's, Peebles	7	0	7	0
Saltgreens, Eyemouth	7	0	7	4
Waverley, Galashiels	7	0	7	0
Day Services	6	0	6	3
Timing movement to 2024/25				
	41	0	41	7
Residential Care Accommodation - Upgrades				
Deanfield, Hawick	185	0	185	0
Grove House, Kelso	185	0	185	9
St. Ronan's, Peebles	176	0	176	20
Saltgreens, Eyemouth	167	0	167	13
Waverley, Galashiels	175	0	175	30
Garden View, Tweedbank	50	0	50	0
Timing movement to 2024/25		**0**		
	936	0	936	72

Scottish Borders Council
Project Net Expenditure Summary

| | Previous Years Life to Date | 2023/24 | | | 2024/25 | | | 2025/26 | | | 2026/27 - 2032/33 | | | Total Project Cost |
| | | Actual | Latest Approved Budget | Variance | Latest Approved Budget | Variance | Projected Budget | Latest Approved Budget | Variance | Projected Budget | Latest Approved Budget | Variance | Projected Budget | |
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Plant & Vehicle Fund														
Plant & Vehicle Replacement *(Block)*	2,360	3,093	4,000	(907)	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	14,000	0	14,000	26,114
Non-Plant & Vehicle Fund														
01-C00180 - Electric Vehicles	460	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	460
01-C100172 - Electric Vehicles - Infrastructure	498	0	10	(10)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	508
Flood & Coastal Protection														
01-C00223 - Hawick Flood Protection	66,444	10,169	24,228	(14,059)	456	0	456	879	0	879	0	0	0	92,007
Land and Property Infrastructure														
01-C100192 -Jedburgh High Street Building	951	32	949	(917)	1,000	632	1,632	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,900
Road & Transport Infrastructure														
01-C00162 - Union Chain Bridge	1,805	0	8	(8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,813
01-C100561 - Roundabout at Easter Langlee, Galashiels	116	80	8	72	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,030
01-C100487 - Eddleston Water Path	2,502	0	600	(600)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,102
Corporate														
01-C100403 - Digital Transformation	16,330	894	11,432	(10,538)	0	0	0	0	0	0	313	0	313	28,075
Learning Estate														
Early Years Expansion	829	244	1,525	(1,281)	614	0	614	433	0	433	0	0	0	3,401
01-C100262 - Eyemouth Primary School	1,177	1	3,421	(3,420)	7,402	1,586	8,988	4,000	1,585	5,585	0	0	0	16,000
01-C100274 - Earlston Primary School	2,308	1,120	11,767	(10,647)	2,278	4,419	6,697	247	(182)	65	0	0	0	16,600
01-C100264 - Gala Academy	5,064	3,184	14,587	(11,403)	30,840	1,871	32,711	13,141	(3,388)	9,753	868	(4)	864	64,500
01-C100313 - Hawick High School	541	453	1,497	(1,044)	886	0	886	7,023	0	7,023	46,004	0	46,004	55,951
01-C100419 - Peebles High School	5,894	2,595	18,260	(15,665)	22,723	(2,490)	20,233	3,265	21,007	24,272	0	2,171	2,171	61,000
Social Care Infrastructure														
01-C100504 - Care Village Tweedbank	222	63	500	(437)	13,762	1,738	15,500	210	2,868	3,078	0	0	0	19,300
01-C100392 - Care Village Hawick	269	50	50	0	13,603	0	13,603	213	0	213	0	0	0	14,135
Economic Regeneration														
01-C00205 - Central Borders Business Park	7,684	46	500	(454)	10,577	(330)	10,247	3,186	0	3,186	219	0	219	22,166
01-C100589 - Borderlands	419	143	11,974	(11,831)	10,666	0	10,666	10,939	0	10,939	23,428	0	23,428	57,426

MONITORING OF THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

Report by Director of Finance & Procurement

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1 **PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1 **This report provides the Executive Committee with budgetary control statements for the Council's General Fund based on actual expenditure and income to 30 September 2023 along with explanations of the major variances identified between projected outturn and the current approved budget.**

1.2 Budget pressures continue to be experienced across the Council as a result of activity levels, statutory requirements and the ongoing impact of high inflation levels. This poses a significant risk to the Council's ability to balance the 2023/24 budget.

1.3 Unfunded pressures of £1.3m are currently being reported at this point in the current year which have arisen as a result of further demand and inflationary cost increases associated with placements within Children and Families Social Work.

1.4 Further pressures of £3.1m associated with inflation and the ongoing implications of COVID recovery have been identified across the Council and are being managed within existing service budgets.

1.5 In response to these significant budget pressures the Council Management Team (CMT) have agreed a number of management actions to enable the Council to deliver a balanced year end position. These actions are intended to fund the identified pressures of £1.3m in Children and Families Social Work and also support services to manage their services within existing budget.

- Introduction of a 6 week recruitment delay to non front-line staffing to increase savings from natural staff turnover

- Restriction on discretionary spend budgets not yet committed over the remainder of the year

- Limiting future earmarking to that specifically agreed by Council Policy e.g. DSM, Second Homes council tax at this time.

1.6 Financial plan savings of £11.5m require to be delivered in 2023/24. An analysis of deliverability is shown in Appendix 3. Following the September 2023 month end £6.2m (53%) savings have been delivered permanently by September, £3.8m (33%) are profiled to be delivered by 31 March 2024 and £1.6m (14%) have been delivered on a temporary basis through alternative savings.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   **It is recommended that the Executive Committee:-**

    (a)   notes the projected corporate monitoring position reported at 30 September 2023, the remaining pressures identified, the underlying cost drivers of this position and the identified areas of financial risk as reflected in Appendix 1;

    (b)   notes the CMT management actions agreed to mitigate the pressures contained within appendix 1 and request a report on Placements within Children and Families Social Work to explain the current challenges within the service and how the Council intends to address the issues;

    (c)   note the impact of ongoing service pressures on the 2024/25 Financial planning process;

    (d)   notes the Recovery Fund resources detailed in Appendix 2;

    (e)   notes the progress made in achieving Financial Plan savings in Appendix 3;

    (f)   approves the virements attached in Appendices 4 and 5.

Executive Committee – 14 November 2023

3   PROJECTED OUTTURN

3.1   The revenue monitoring position set out in this report and summarised in Appendix 1 is based on actual income and expenditure to the 30 September 2023 and forecasts for the remainder of the year.

3.2   Unfunded pressures of £1.3m are currently being reported which have arisen as a result of further demand and inflationary increases within Children and Families Social Work. The position around the cost of out of area placements and caring for our young people is one being reported across the UK with the number and complexity of cases rising alongside increases in the cost of placements. This budget was already under significant pressure during 2022/23 and as such elected members approved budget growth of £2.5m through the 2023/24 financial planning process. A further budget of £3.4m was transferred into the service following approved at the August Executive. The £1.3m pressure identified in this report is over and above the £6.27m growth previously provided with the unprecedented requirement for out of area placements continuing in the second quarter of 2023/24.

3.3   A senior officer panel has been convened by the Chief Executive involving senior staff from Social Work, Education, Finance and Legal Services to scrutinise all future decisions on this budget and to consider the future operating model in order to support young people locally wherever possible. Consideration is also urgently being given to the permanent budgetary impact of these pressures and how these can be funded through the 2024/25 financial planning process.

3.4   Further pressures of £3.1m associated with inflation and the ongoing implications of COVID recovery have been identified across the Council and are being managed within existing service budgets. The current level of inflation continues to impact the Council directly and indirectly through its delivery partners. At the second quarter additional costs in electricity, out of area placements and school transport, over and above the growth provided in the budget for 2023/24 are forecast. We are also experiencing pressures in care and transport services where suppliers are withdrawing from contracts due to the increased costs of running their services. This withdrawal with little or no notice reduces our ability to competitively tender the services increasing costs in the short term.

3.5   In response to these significant budget pressures the Council Management Team (CMT) have agreed a number of management actions to enable the Council to deliver a balanced year end position. These actions are intended to fund the identified pressure of £1.3m in Children and Families Social Work and to also support directorates to manage their services within existing budgets.

- An introduction of a 6 week recruitment delay to non front-line staffing to increase the savings available from natural staff turnover,
- The reduction to discretionary spend not yet committed over the remainder of the year,
- Limiting future earmarking to that specifically agreed by Council Policy e.g. DSM and second homes council tax at this time.

3.6   The level of savings required by the financial plan in 2023/24 totals £11.5m. An analysis of delivery of savings as at the end of month 6 is provided in Appendix 3. This analysis shows that following the September month end £6.1m (54%) savings have been delivered permanently, £3.8m (32%) are profiled to be delivered by 31 March

2024 and £1.6m (13%) have been delivered on a temporary basis through alternative savings.

SBC (Total) Efficiency Savings Progress £'000
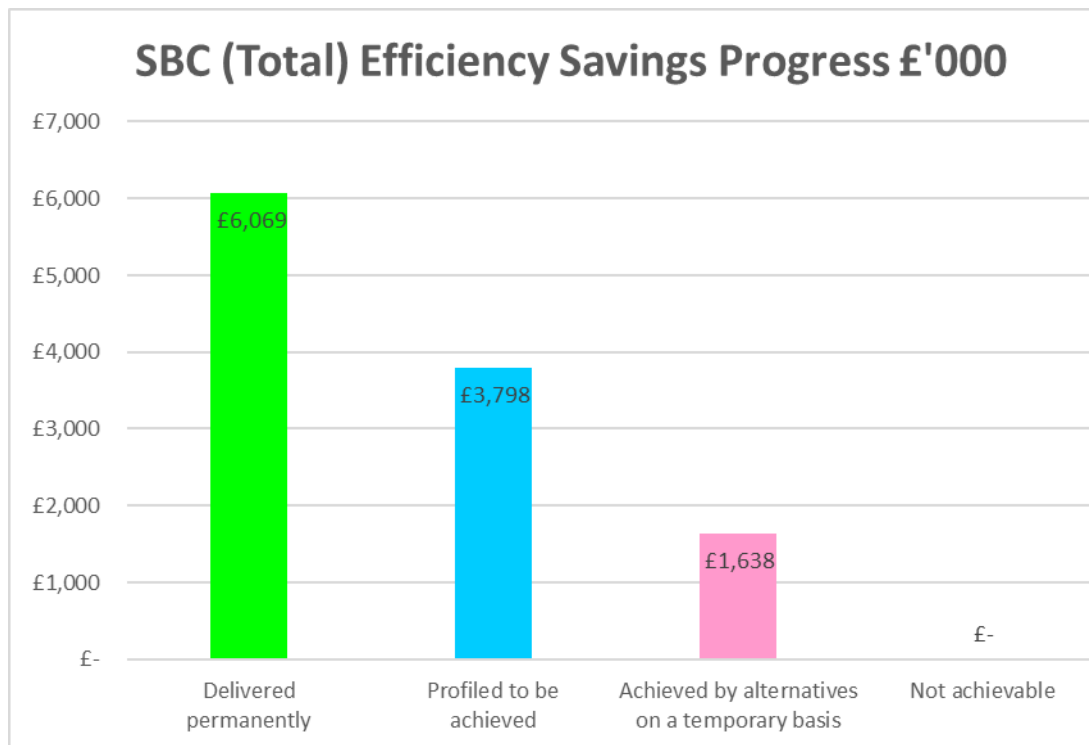
3.7   CMT remain focused on ensuring that the £3.8m of savings, profiled to be delivered by 31 March 2024, is progressed and delivered permanently as soon as possible.

3.8   An agreement for pay award for non-teaching staffing groups across the Council has yet to be reached nationally for 2023/24 and therefore presents a risk to the revenue budget. The revenue budget for 2023/24, approved by Council on 23rd February 2023, includes an assumed pay award for all staff of 2%. Teaching unions have agreed a pay award for 2023/24 with Scottish Government (SG) requiring that as part of the funding package that an uplift of 3% will be funded by Councils.

3.9   It is anticipated that Councils will also be required to fund a 3% increase across all SJC staffing groups which would result in a pressure of c£1.8m for a full year. As approved through the 2022/23 outturn reports, £1.5m budget has been ringfenced within the general fund balance to support the 2023/24 pay award on a one-off basis in the current year. £0.7m of this is being drawn down in this reporting period to fund the agreed Teacher Pay award for 2023/24.

3.10   As shown in Appendix 2, the Recovery Fund balance has reduced to £0.4m after £0.2m was utilised to address pressures identified at the end of the first quarter and £0.05m for areas committed to in 2022/23: refurbishment of the caravan park at Victoria Park, Selkirk, and the Live Borders review. £0.5m is being utilised to support identified inflation pressures within Corporate Landlord in this reporting period.

3.11   Appendices 4 and 5 provide detail of the budget movements highlighted in Appendix 1 which require approval by the Executive committee.

Service Highlights

3.12 **Infrastructure & Environment (I&E)**

I&E is forecasting a net pressure of £0.995m. This forecast overspend is partially caused by higher than anticipated utility costs across the Council estate due to continued inflationary cost pressures above those included in the Financial Plan (£498k). Non-Domestic Rates have also increased due to the impact of transitional relief on revaluations compared with assumptions made in the budget before the methodology for calculations was received (£477k). Property costs were previously consolidated from individual services into I&E as part of the implementation of the Corporate Landlord model which means all property pressures are now reported through I&E. These pressures have been partially offset by £468k from the Recovery Fund. The remaining net pressure of £527k relates primarily to the balance of the utilities pressure and additional costs within Facilities Management relating to cleaning.

3.13 **Social Work & Practice**

There are significant budget pressures of £1.308m within Children & Families Social Work services including additional forecast costs due to an increase in out of area placement costs (£0.738), the significant care of one young person within the local area (£0.475m) and the increased cost of the costs of unaccompanied asylum seekers being greater than the funding provided by UK Government (£0.092m).

Within Homelessness Property Management there are ongoing pressures including in relation to repairing and furnishing properties to make them available for use and the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. A working group to review homelessness services across the council has been established to ensure the provision is fully integrated across Council services.

It is anticipated reallocated Scottish Government funding provided for demographics combined with savings in other areas will be sufficient to cover the pressures emerging within IJB delegated services: learning disability day services, community support as well as 24hour permanent care within other services.

3.14 **Education & Lifelong Learning**

Scottish Government has tasked all Councils with maintaining minimum teacher numbers, at census, and Scottish Borders Council is in line with this figure.. We have not yet had confirmation of the Council's share of national funding from Scottish Government towards the agreed Teachers pay award, however we have included an assumption around funding based on our percentage share.

Additional Support Needs in schools are forecasting a pressure of £764k due to higher numbers of children and young people requiring support in the return to post covid normality across the education spectrum. The support currently provided will be reviewed by senior E&LL staff to ensure budgets are prioritised effectively.

School transport pressures of £194k have materialised due to external providers handing back non-viable contracts, necessitating the use of providers offering more expensive provision in the short term. This pressure will be managed within the service.

The Early Years review is underway, with the service increasing their focus to identify and agree the required changes to the service for the

2024/25 financial year. This will ensure the service is managed within the reduced specific grant provided.

3.15 **Resilient Communities**

The service is managing an underlying pressure of £73k. The current economic climate continues to put pressure on households and demand for Scottish Welfare and Council Tax Reduction Scheme support remains high.

A pressure in Housing Benefit subsidy primarily linked to homeless properties has also been identified. The Homeless Service is reported under Social Work & Practice and additional net income is being received in this area which partially offsets this pressure.

3.16 **Finance & Corporate Governance**

The service is managing an underlying pressure of £60k relating to potential non-delivery of financial plan savings within Protective Services (£50k) and costs relating to avian flu (£10k).

3.17 **People, Performance and Change**

The service is currently forecasting a saving of £20k with additional staff turnover savings being made.

3.18 **Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships**

Within Adult Social Care, a pressure of £496k is forecast due to increased costs in care homes and within care at home staff. This is being caused by the high overtime and agency costs required to cover high levels of staff sickness and a shortage of bank staff. It is partially offset by forecast underspends in Older People and Generic Services and permanent funds are also being allocated from the demographic budget. The remaining pressure is anticipated to be addressed throughout the remainder of the year by focussing on Care Home and Care at Home staff rotas and allocations.

4 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report, its content being specifically related to the performance of the revenue budget in 2023/24.

4.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

The Risk Register associated with the Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2027/28 (Item No. 7 - Financial Strategy Risk Register.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)) that was approved by Council on 23 February 2023 lists the following examples of relevant Budget Control risks:

"If we are unable to deliver budgeted savings then expenditure may not be contained within approved budgets and there may be negative impacts on service provision" (No.5 - Amber risk); and

"If we are unable to accurately forecast demographics in relation to vulnerable children/children with complex needs then we may not be able to plan service provision accordingly and expenditure may not be contained within approved budgets, resulting in the potential for reduced service provision" (No.7 - Red risk).

In respect of the former Financial Strategy Risk No.5, it is imperative therefore that as many savings as possible identified within the 2023/24

and previous financial plans are delivered permanently to ensure affordability and budget sustainability.

The risks identified above are being managed and mitigated through:

(a)   monthly reports of actual expenditure and income against approved budgets being made available to budget managers from the Council's Business World System.

(b)   review of budget variances and monitoring of management actions to control expenditure by Finance, Service staff and Directors and quarterly reporting to CMT, and monthly on an exception basis.

(c)   engagement with Departments and review of monthly management accounts by Directors.

(d)   supporting departmental transformation projects to monitor and deliver the planned transformation savings in the medium-term Financial Plan.

In respect of the latter Financial Strategy Risk No.7, a 'deep-dive' into Corporate Risk CMT019 "C&YP/Learner Placements - If children, young people and learners are placed/educated outwith the local area to meet their needs, this may result in significant costs to SBC" is continuing to be progressed in light of its heightened risk score. An increased frequency of meetings are being held with the Director Education & Lifelong Learning and the Chief Officer Children & Families Social Work to maintain focus on this risk, share updates on the current position and discuss the progress of actions that are underway. The Corporate Risk Register was presented to the Audit Committee on 10 May 2023 as an Appendix to the Risk Management Annual Report 2022/23 (Item No. 10 a - Appendix 1 - Corporate Risk Register Quarter 4 2022-23.pdf (moderngov.co.uk).

Furthermore, there is a risk that further cost pressures may emerge as the year progresses or that the savings required by the Financial Plan may not be delivered as planned, both of which may impact on the outturn position. Every effort must continue to be made by Directors to contain projected spend in the remainder of the year and to consider permanent effects on the Financial Plan. These efforts include maintaining a focus on sound financial management, balancing the budget and delivering good value for money and ensuring these remain key aspects of the culture of the Council.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no significant effects on the economy, community or environment.

4.5 **Climate Change**

No effect on carbon emissions are anticipated from the recommendation of this report.

4.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

4.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

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There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

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

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation is required as a result of this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Director of Corporate Governance, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director of People, Performance & Change, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will be reported to the meeting.

Approved by

Suzy Douglas   Signature ………………………………….
Director of Finance & Procurement

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Suzy Douglas	Director of Finance & Procurement
Lizzie Turner	Chief Officer - Finance & Procurement

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

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MONTHLY REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL   **2023/24**   **AT END OF MONTH:**   Sep-23
SUMMARY

	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/under spend	Summary Financial Commentary
Infrastructure & Environment	54,408	27,232	55,417	55,537	(120)	120	0	
Social Work & Practice	82,010	22,364	81,664	82,556	(892)	(415)	(1,308)	Social Work & Practice are forecasting an overspend position of £1.3m due to increased demand and inflationary pressures in Children & Families Social work.
Education & Lifelong Learning	122,103	63,054	130,586	134,364	(3,778)	3,778	(0)	
Resilient Communities	25,274	(25,487)	29,531	29,531	(0)	0	0	
Finance & Corporate Governance	24,989	2,859	26,038	25,590	448	(448)	0	
People, Performance and Change	7,484	3,558	7,464	7,444	20	(20)	0	
Strategic Commissioning & Partnership	27,493	15,865	33,603	34,329	(726)	726	0	
Total	**343,761**	**109,444**	**364,303**	**369,352**	**(5,049)**	**3,741**	**(1,308)**	

Financed by:								
Revenue Support Grant	(213,888)	(106,080)	(210,074)	(213,444)	3,371	(3,371)	0	Gross up additional kinship and foster care funding (£311k) and expected funding from SG for Teacher pay awards 2023/24 (£3,060k).
Non Domestic Rates	(37,818)	(18,909)	(37,818)	(37,818)	0		0	
Council Tax	(71,809)	(73,743)	(71,809)	(71,809)	0		0	
Second Homes Council Tax	(1,229)	0	(1,229)	(1,331)	102	(102)	0	Projected additional income through Second Homes Council Tax (£102k).
Capital Financed from Current Revenue	0	0	0	0	0		0	
Ring fenced grants	(14,106)	(10,926)	(14,102)	(14,102)	0		0	
Reserves:								
Earmarked Balances from 2022/23	(3,503)	(31,142)	(31,142)	(31,142)	0		0	
Earmarked Balances for future years	0	3,827	3,359	3,809	(450)	450	0	To earmark Second Homes Council Tax from 2023/24 into 2024/25 to support future investment in affordable housing (£450k).
Transfers to/(from) Reserves	(1,408)	(80)	(1,488)	(2,206)	718	(718)	0	Drawdown the 1% of the 2023/24 teachers pay award (£718k) that is to be funded through reserves.
Total	**(343,761)**	**(237,054)**	**(364,303)**	**(368,044)**	**3,741**	**(3,741)**	**0**	

| **Total** | **0** | **(127,610)** | **0** | **1,308** | **(1,308)** | **0** | **(1,308)** | |

MONTHLY REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL   2023/24   AT END OF MONTH: Sep-23

Infrastructure & Environment	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/under spend	Summary Financial Commentary
Property	**15,645**	**12,194**	**16,050**	**16,851**	**(801)**	**801**	**0**	
Property Management Services	15,943	12,881	16,276	17,077	(801)	801	0	Inflationary pressures within utilities (£498k) and a pressure within Non-domestic rates (£477k) as a result of a difference between assumptions on the impact of transitional relief for the revaluations and the final calculations are offset by a £468k budget allocation from Recovery Fund (Finance & Corporate Governance) and £333k from Waste Management Services. The remaining £174k pressure is anticipated to be addressed by department before the year end
Estates Management Services	619	296	622	622	0	0	0	Risk assessments for bodies of water on Council land required (£35k). The service will work to address this pressure in the 2nd half of the year.
Commercial Property Income	(1,284)	(1,350)	(1,284)	(1,284)	0	0	0	Projected shortfall in income due to reduced occupancy is forecast at this time (£52k). The position will be monitored closely in the next quarter.
Architects	159	148	158	158	0	0	0	
Major Projects	208	218	277	277	0	0	0	Extension of Project Management Office from December until 31 March 2024 (£45k). The service will work to address this pressure in the 2nd half of the year.
Facilities	**7,552**	**3,018**	**6,894**	**6,894**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
Catering Services	2,881	710	2,217	2,217	0	0	0	We are currently seeing a cost of food pressure within the service, the ability for the service to cover will depend on the impact of the roll-out of P6 and P7 FSM.
Cleaning & Facilities Management	4,671	2,308	4,677	4,677	0	0	0	Ongoing Covid recovery pressures relating to additional requirements for cleaning materials and PPE (£72k), equipment pressure following the required purchase of scrubber driers (£92k) and reduced departure charges income from the Galashiels Transport Interchange (£38k) are expected to be managed within the service at this time.
Parks & Environment	**4,879**	**2,067**	**4,893**	**4,893**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
Roads & Infrastructure	**10,407**	**4,979**	**10,507**	**10,507**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
Network & Infrastructure Asset Management	9,684	3,169	9,869	9,869	0	0	0	Street lighting electricity pressure (£14k) and undeliverable staff turnover savings (£5k). The service will look to address these pressures in the 2nd half of the year.
SBcContracts	(425)	437	(728)	(728)	0	0	0	
Engineers	924	606	924	924	0	0	0	
Fleet Management Services	224	817	221	221	0	0	0	
Pay Parking	0	(49)	222	222	0	0	0	

MONTHLY REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL   **2023/24**   **AT END OF MONTH:**   Sep-23

Waste Management Services	10,937	3,451	10,934	10,574	360	(360)	0	Additional income from trade waste disposal fees, CRC deposits and bulky uplifts (£105k). Release projected underspend in Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) contract (£255k) towards Property Management Services pressure.
Passenger Transport	2,294	1,168	2,335	2,335	0	0	0	
Planning Services	1,346	164	1,163	1,205	(42)	42	0	Pressure associated with increased Local Development Plan costs (£42k), produced every 5 years.
Housing Strategy & Services	1,348	190	2,643	2,280	363	(363)	0	Projected additional income through Second Homes Council Tax (£102k), this and a re-profile of spend allows for the earmark of Second Homes Council Tax into 2024/25 to support future investment in affordable housing (£450k). Staff turnover savings (£15k).
Total	54,408	27,232	55,417	55,537	(120)	120	0	

Key Highlights, Challenges and Risks
Following the transfer of budget from the Recovery Fund to partially address corporate landlord pressures, the service is managing an underlying pressure of £0.527m this is primarily linked to the remaining corporate landlord pressures and pressures within facilities management where additional requirements for cleaning materials and PPE remain and replacement cleaning equipment was required. The service has £1.926m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.578m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.192m temporarily with the remaining £1.156m still to be delivered.

3

Social Work & Practice	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend	
Child Protection	224	89	235	235	0		0	
Children & Families Social Work	18,319	10,472	22,335	23,954	(1,619)	311	(1,308)	Pressure due to increased demand and inflationary pressures in Out of Area placements, (£738k). Pressure due to a young person required intensive 24 hour care (£475k). Pressure due to Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers funding not being sufficient for number of young people being cared for (£95k). Allocation of additional funding for kinship and foster carers (£311k).
Adult Protection	374	171	349	349	0		0	
Emergency Duty Team	332	189	332	407	(75)	75	0	Permanent reallocation of SG funding provided for demographics to cover increased staffing costs including enhancements within the Emergency Duty Team (£75k).
Quality Improvement	513	244	597	597	0		0	
Services in Criminal Justice System	1,273	(12)	1,261	1,261	0		0	
Safer Communities	2,223	(2,192)	2,408	2,408	0		0	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Funding shortfall (£166k) . Recurring pressure within Homelessness Property Management in relation to repairing and furnishing properties to get them ready for use (£71k). It is anticipated that the department can off-set this pressure prior to the year end.
Older People	24,735	(411)	18,145	16,785	1,360	(1,360)	0	Permanently vire (£720k) from ring fenced demographics budget and a temporary virement of (£200k) to Adult Social Care. Permanent rebasing of 24 hour Care budgets to People with Physical Difficulties (£365k). Reallocation of additional funding to cover increased staffing costs within the Emergency Duty Team (£75k).
Joint Learning Disability	20,404	8,383	21,397	21,791	(394)	394	0	(£394k) transferred from ring-fenced demographics budget in Older People to cover increased cost of day care contracts (£190k), supported living (£54k) and support undeliverable savings associated with day care commissioning (£150k).
Joint Mental Health	2,178	844	2,236	2,236	0		0	
People with Physical Disabilities	2,698	1,568	2,850	3,215	(365)	365	0	Permanent rebasing of 24 hour Care budgets to People with Physical Difficulties (£365k)
Generic Services	8,639	2,991	9,421	9,221	200	(200)	0	Transfer (£200k) from a reduction in client specific forecasts to fund pressure in Adult Social Care.
Total	**81,912**	**22,334**	**81,566**	**82,458**	**(892)**	**(415)**	**(1,308)**	

Public Health	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend
Public Health	98	30	98	98	0		0
Total	**98**	**30**	**98**	**98**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Key Highlights, Challenges and Risks

Increasing pressures within Children & Families services relating to new and increasing out of authority placements (£738k)and increasing care commitments for client receiving care (£475k) are currently unfunded as are accommodation costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers as costs are greater than the funding provided creating a pressure (£95k). Pressures within Safer Communities relating to Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan scheme amount to £166k as well as a further £71k pressure in relation to increased costs associated with Homelessness accommodation repairs and maintenance will be met from existing budgets. Ring-fenced additional Scottish Government funding is being allocated across Social Work and Practice as well as Adult Social Care to cover increasing demographic and cost pressures. A virement amounting to £365k is a result of a 24 hour permanent care rebasing exercise between Older People and People with Physical Disabilities.

The service has £0.604m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.540m of these have been delivered permanently with £64k still to be achieved.

Education & Lifelong Learning	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/underspend	Summary Financial Commentary
Early Years	17,547	8,342	21,453	21,528	(74)	74	(0)	Working towards meeting pressure arising from reduced SG funding (£1.7m) any shortfall will be met through their earmarked balance brought forward from 22/23. An assumed contribution funding from Scottish Government and within SBC for 2023/24 teachers pay award is included (£74k).
Primary Schools	30,408	17,233	31,950	33,709	(1,759)	1,759	0	2023/24 Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experience (CE) funding (£166k) allocated to Primary schools. Assumes a contribution funding from Scottish Government and within SBC for the 2023/24 teachers pay award (£1,593k).
Secondary Schools	48,309	25,351	51,732	53,847	(2,115)	2,115	(0)	2023/24 Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experience (CE) funding (£127k) allocated to secondary schools. Assumes contribution funding from Scottish Government and within SBC for 2023/24 teachers pay award (£1,988k).
Additional Support Needs	12,790	6,257	11,338	11,430	(92)	92	(0)	Pressure on service as needs have increased, especially following Covid £856k offset by a contribution of funding from Scottish Government and within SBC for 2023/24 teachers pay award (£92k). Net pressure of £764k anticipated to be addressed by the department before year end.
Educational Psychology	741	377	758	764	(6)	6	0	Assumes funding for pay awards for SJC classified Teaching staff (£6k)
Central Schools	5,394	2,605	6,160	5,892	268	(268)	(0)	Allocate 2023/24 budget for Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) and Care Experience (CE) funding to Primary and Secondary Schools (£293k). Educational Psychology assessed placement at Caledonian School for one P3 pupil at a cost of £825 per week (£20k). Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) pressure due to the numbers of teachers received and how funded posts have been allocated (£244k). Assumes contribution funding from Scottish Government and within SBC for 2023/24 teachers pay award (£25k). Net pressure in service anticipated to be met by department before year end.
School Meals	1,756	1,223	2,042	2,042	(0)		(0)	Further analysis to be carried out in conjunction with catering service.
School Transport	4,123	1,172	4,120	4,119	0		0	Forecast pressure due to contracts handed back by suppliers being replaced by more expensive provision in the short term (£194k). It is anticipated that the department will meet this pressure before the year end.
Community Learning & Development	1,035	493	1,033	1,033	0		0	
Total	**122,103**	**63,054**	**130,586**	**134,364**	**(3,778)**	**3,778**	**(0)**	

Key Highlights Challenges & Risks
The Additional Support Needs service is showing a pressure of c. £764k partly caused by the return to post covid normality across the whole education spectrum. Pressures within Central Schools largely relates to the allocation and funding for Newly Qualified Teachers. Schools passenger transport pressures amount to £194k and relates to difficulties faced by external providers handing back non viable contracts with other providers offering more expensive short term provision. There is a risk that when these contracts are re-tendered, this pressure may increase and become permanent. These pressures will be met from within existing budgets.
The service has £0.155m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.030m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.125m temporarily.

MONTHLY REVENUE MANAGEMENT REPORT
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL   2023/24   **AT END OF MONTH:**   Sep-23

Resilient Communities	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend	Summary Financial Commentary
Business Support	5,512	2,756	5,580	5,580	0		0	
Community Planning & Engagement	485	223	483	483	0		0	
Neighbourhood Support Fund	471	210	1,486	1,486	0		0	
Customer Advice & Support Services	3,153	710	3,270	3,270	0		0	
Economic Development	1,885	(1,157)	3,457	3,435	22	(22)	0	Underspend in budgeted PMO costs for Borderlands and City Deal (£22k).
Cultural Services	3,442	2,677	3,443	3,403	40	(40)	0	Forecast underspend in depreciation (£40k).
Sports Services	1,836	1,504	1,904	1,904	0		0	
Discretionary Housing Payments	0	242	1,093	1,093	0		0	
Housing Benefits	608	1,004	839	839	0		0	Currently showing a pressure due to increased expenditure in penalised subsidy areas (£59k). The position will be monitored closely in the 2nd half of the year.
Non Domestic Rates Relief	1,561	(39,637)	1,535	1,535	0		0	
Scottish Welfare Fund	586	123	706	736	(30)	30	0	Small pressure resulting from continued demand on the Scottish Welfare Fund
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	5,735	5,858	5,735	5,767	(32)	32	0	Previously forecast weekly reduction in the number of cases in receipt of Council Tax Reduction is not yet being achieved resulting in a small pressure at this time. At this time, a further pressure of £14k has been identified but this will be closely monitored in the coming months.
Total	**25,274**	**(25,487)**	**29,531**	**29,531**	**(0)**	**0**	**0**	

Key Highlights, Challenges & Risks

The service is managing an underlying pressure of £0.073m relating to Housing benefits and Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The current economic climate continues to put pressure on households and demand for Council Tax Reduction Scheme support remains high. The budgets will be monitored closely during the next quarter.

A pressure in Housing Benefit subsidy is primarily been driven by homeless properties, the homeless service is reported within the Social Work & Practice Service and additional net income is being seen in that area which partially offsets the subsidy pressure.

The service has £0.546m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.210m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.336m temporarily.

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Finance & Corporate Governance	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend	Summary Financial Commentary
Recovery Fund	0	(38)	430	(38)	468	(468)	0	Recovery Fund balance of £468k being released to partly off-set corporate landlord pressures within Infrastructure & Environment.
Corporate	(3,082)	0	(2,356)	(2,356)	0		0	New commissioning Strategy (£250k) and Digital Transformation (£1,744k) Financial Plan savings are not yet identified. The balance relates to the top-slicing of grants which will be reviewed during Q3 (£362k).
Chief Executive	192	110	209	209	0		0	
Emergency Planning	221	123	217	217	0		0	
Finance	4,544	2,468	4,509	4,509	0		0	
Legal Services	716	216	721	696	25	(25)	0	Staff turnover savings (£25k).
Protective Services	1,559	735	1,550	1,640	(90)	90	0	Undeliverable Financial Plan savings in-year due to service pressures (£90k). The service will look to address Avian flu pressure (£10k) and balance of Financial Plan savings (£50k) in the 2nd half of the year.
Audit & Risk	384	184	383	383	0		0	
Assessor & Electoral Registration Services	1,006	485	1,001	1,001	0		0	
Democratic Services	1,859	982	1,845	1,824	21	(21)	0	Additional election income received in excess of 2022/23 accrual (£21k).
Communications & Marketing	553	261	558	534	24	(24)	0	Staff turnover (£9k) and discretionary spend savings (£15k).
Loan Charges	17,520	(2,915)	17,452	17,452	0		0	
Provision for Bad Debts	125	125	125	125	0		0	
Recharge to Non-General Fund	(608)	0	(608)	(608)	0		0	
Total	**24,989**	**2,859**	**26,038**	**25,590**	**448**	**(448)**	**0**	

Key Highlights, Challenges & Risks

The Recovery Fund is held within the Finance & Corporate Governance service to be allocated to services as required, £468k being released this quarter to offset corporate landlord pressures in Property Management Services.
The service is managing an underlying pressure of £0.060m relating to potential non-delivery of the Protective Services Financial Plan saving (£50k) and Avian Flu (£10k).
There are £6.143m of financial plan savings to be delivered in 2023/24 (some of which will be delivered across the wider Council), £3.837m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.262m temporarily with £0.050m currently profiled to be achieved by Protective Services, leaving £1.994m still to be confirmed.

People, Performance & Change	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend	Summary Financial Commentary
Human Resources	4,959	2,325	4,943	4,943	0		0	
Early Retiral/Voluntary Severance	67	3	67	67	0		0	
Corporate Transformation	730	274	674	674	0		0	
Business Change & Programme Management	1,261	720	1,315	1,315	0		0	
Business Planning Performance & Policy Development	467	237	466	446	20	(20)	0	Staff turnover savings (£20k).
Total	**7,484**	**3,558**	**7,464**	**7,444**	**20**	**(20)**	**0**	

Key Highlights, Challenges & Risks

The service is reporting an underspend of £.020m relating to staff turnover savings which is being used to offset pressures in other service areas.

The service has £0.161m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.028m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.104m temporarily with the remaining £0.029m still to be delivered.

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Scottish Borders COUNCIL

Strategic Commissioning & Partnerships	Base Budget (£'000)	Actual to Date (£'000)	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)	Proposed Virement (£'000)	Projected (over)/unders pend	Summary Financial Commentary
Information Technology	11,918	7,215	16,445	16,445	0		0	
Adult Social Care	16,341	8,535	16,197	16,924	(726)	726	0	Currently forecasting significant pressures in overtime and agency costs. Permanently vire £326k and a temporary virement of £200k from Older People as well as a £200k transfer from Generic Services to support this. The service will continue to address staffing, rota and overtime costs to meet the remaining £496k forecast overspend in the 2nd half of the year.
Commissioning	(766)	115	961	961	0		0	
Total	**27,493**	**15,865**	**33,603**	**34,329**	**(726)**	**726**	**0**	

Key Highlights, Challenges & Risks

Adult Social Care are currently forecasting staffing, overtime and agency costs pressures of c. £1.2m. £326k of this is being permanently addressed through a virement to allocate previously ring-fenced demographic budget and a further temporary allocation of £400k from other service underspends within Social Work and Practice further addresses £726k of this pressure in 2023-24. This leaves c. £500k pressure which is anticipated to be addressed throughout the remainder of the year by focussing on Care Home and Homecare staff rotas and allocations. There is a risk that no further efficiencies can be realised within staffing and will need to be addressed at a later point in the year.
The service has £1.970m of financial plan savings to deliver in 2023/24, £0.846m of these have been delivered permanently and £0.619m temporarily, leaving £0.505m still to be delivered.

Recovery Fund 2023/24

Details	Amount			Ring-fenced				
		Admin.	Education Recovery	Individuals/ Families/ Communities	Self Isolation	Flexible	Assumed IJB funding through LMP	Financial Plan
Reserve carried forward from 2022/23	1,186,716					1,186,716		
Caravan site - Victoria Park, Selkirk - balance of works (final payment)	(34,030)					(34,030)		
External consultancy for Live Borders Review	(15,200)					(15,200)		
Top-slicing of 22/23 Earmarked Balances, as approved by Executive Committee , to address pressure at June month-end	(234,765)					(234,765)		
Released into Revenue to fund pressures (November Executive)	(467,921)					(467,921)		
Committed but not drawn down	(34,800)					(34,800)		
	400,000	0	0	0	0	400,000	0	0

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FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

SBC Total

Status		Saving £'000	Saving %
Delivered permanently	£	6,069	53%
Profiled to be achieved	£	3,798	33%
Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	£	1,638	14%
Not achievable	£	-	0%
		11,505	100%

SBC (Total) Efficiency Savings Progress £'000
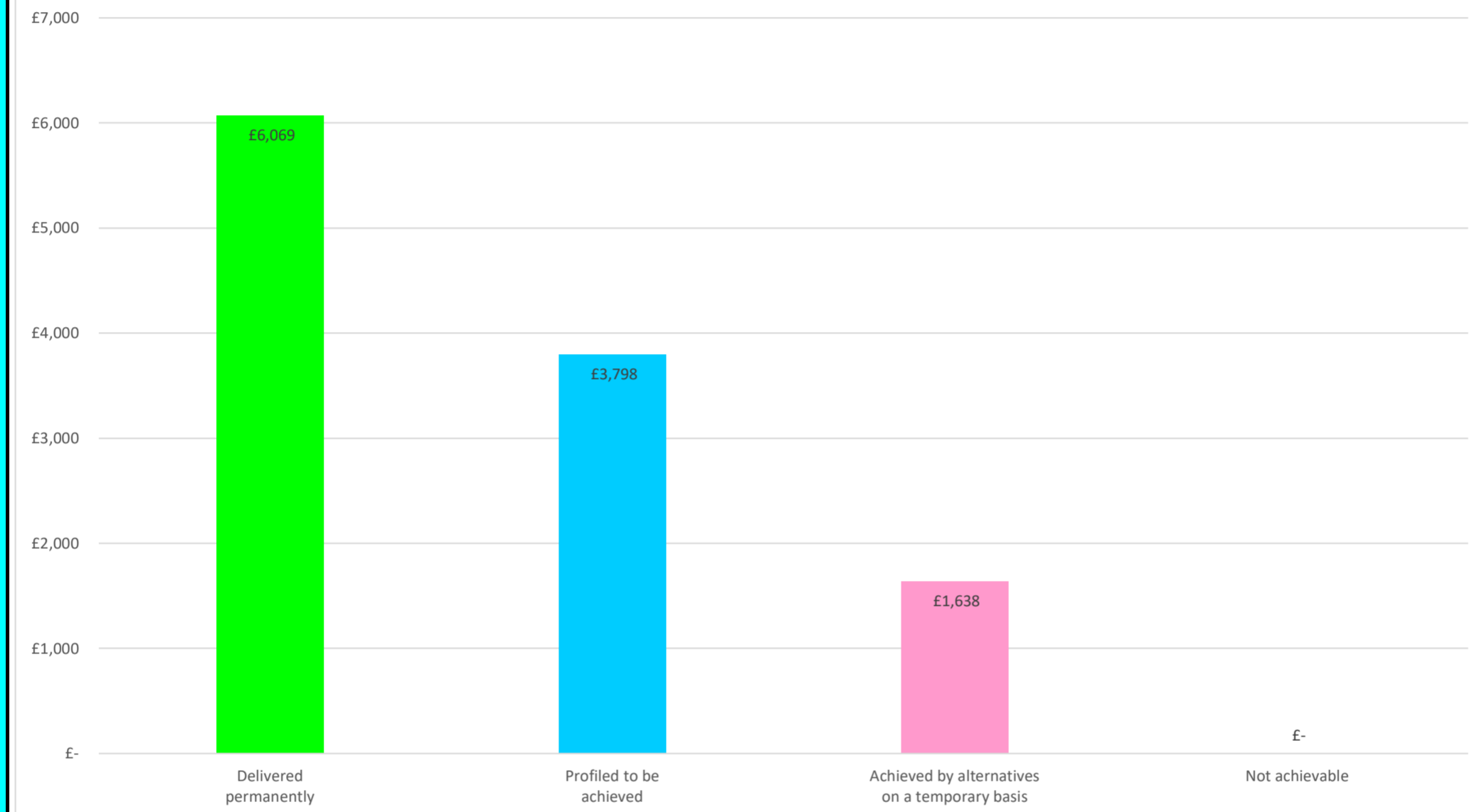
FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Infrastructure & Environment

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
Energy Efficiency Project	102		102		
More efficient property and asset portfolio and implementation of	252	13	239		
Parks & Environment	187	25	162		
Roads & Infrastructure	176	176	-		
Waste Management	105		-	105	
Passenger Transport	170		170		
Planning Services	44		7	37	
2023/24 Savings					
Additional Fees and Charges	171	171	-		
Commercial rent income	10	10	-		
Energy Efficiency Project	50		50		
More efficient property and asset portfolio	126		126		
Facilities Management	183	183	-		
Parks & Environment	100		100		
Roads & Infrastructure	167		167		
Waste Management	50		-	50	
Passenger Transport	24		24		
Planning Services	9		9		
	1,926	**578**	**1,156**	**192**	**-**

Infrastructure & Environment Savings £000's

Delivered permanently	£578
Profile to be achieved	£1,156
Achieved by alternative (Temp)	£192
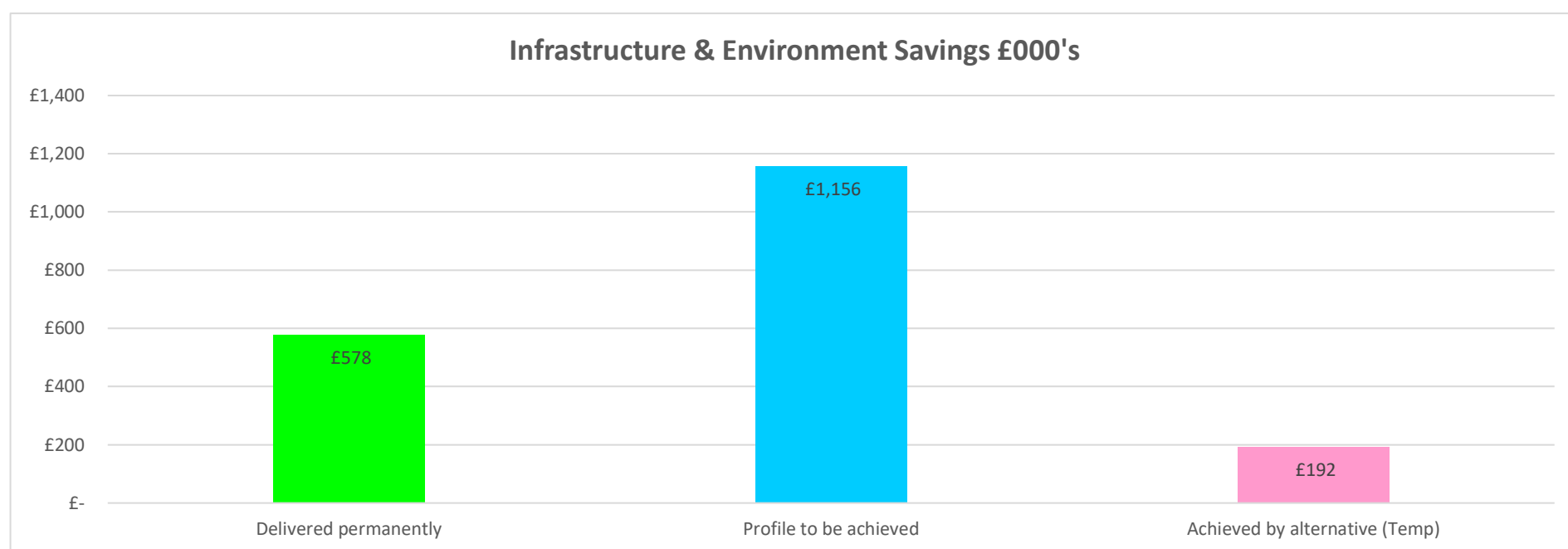
FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Social Work & Practice

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
Review of Care Packages (LD)	190	190	-		
Trusted Assessment (OP and LD)	50		50		
Review of Day Care Services (LD)	75	75	-		
2023/24 Savings					
Review of Day Care Services (LD)	75	75	-		
Shared Lives	200	200	-		
Safer Communities - Homeless Service	14		14		
	604	**540**	**64**	**-**	**-**

Social Work & Practice Savings £000's

Delivered permanently	Profile to be achieved	Achieved by alternative (Temp)	Not achieved - Risk
£540	£64	£-	£-

FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Education & Lifelong Learning

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently[1]	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
2023/24 Savings					
Increased fees & charges for lets	9	9	-		
Increases to fees for non-funded childcare	21	21	-		
Central Schools	125		-	125	
	155	**30**	**-**	**125**	**-**

[1]assumes proposed DSM Scheme approved by Executive

Education & Lifelong Learning £000's
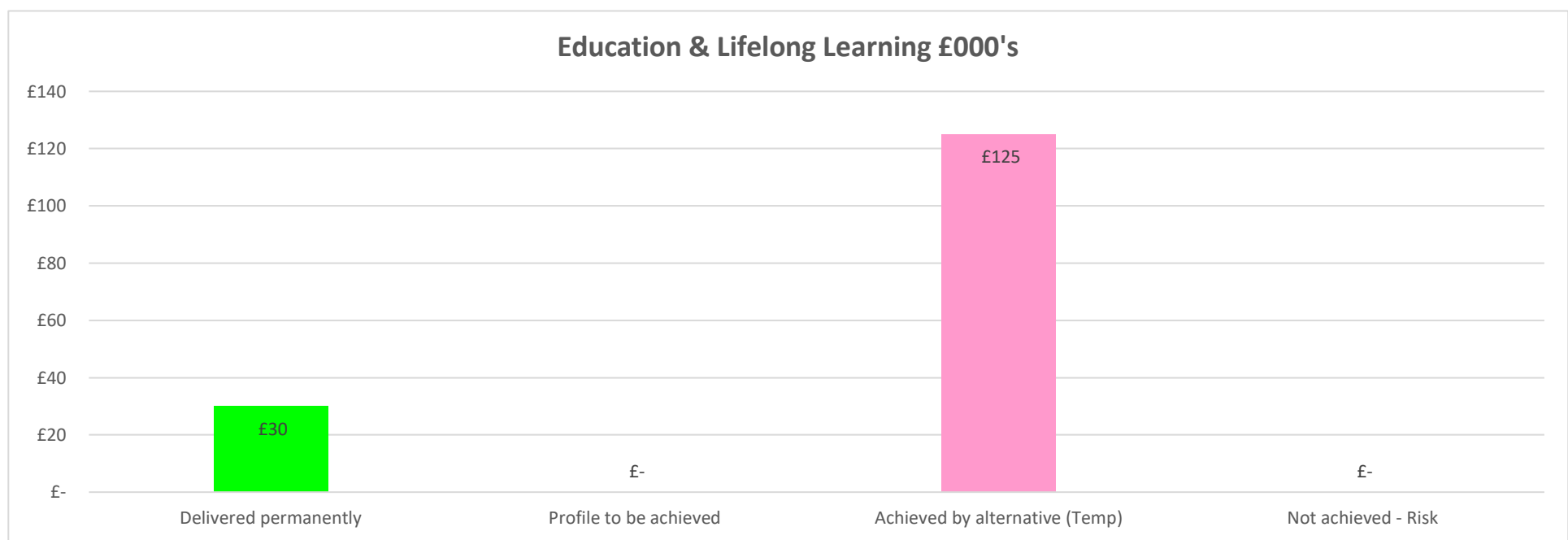
FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Resilient Communities

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
A redesigned operating model for the Customer and Business Admin function through the rollout of digital service across the Council	166	114	-	52	
2023/24 Savings					
Additional fees & charges income	18	18	-		
Scottish Water Commission	11	11	-		
A redesigned operating model for the Customer and Business Admin function through the rollout of digital service across the Council	248	62	-	186	
Roll out of Digital Customer Access within Customer Advice and Support Services	98		-	98	
Employment Support Service	5	5	-		
	546	**210**	**-**	**336**	**-**

Resilient Communities Savings £000's

FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Finance & Corporate Governance

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
Finance Savings	47	18	-	29	
Protective Services	54			54	
Assessors & Electoral Registration Services	9		-	9	
2023/24 Savings					
Additional Fees & Charges Income	137	137	-		
Service Concessions	3,562	3,562	-		
Finance	125		-	125	
Loans Charges	25	25	-		
Legal Services	9		-	9	
Protective Services	86		50	36	
Communications & Marketing	7	7	-		
Audit & Risk	19	19	-		
Remove COVID-19 base budget	69	69	-		
New Commissioning Strategy	250		250		
Digital Transformation	1,744		1,744		
	6,143	**3,837**	**2,044**	**262**	**-**

Finance & Corporate Governance Savings £000's

Category	Value
Delivered permanently	£3,837
Profile to be achieved	£2,044
Achieved by alternative (Temp)	£262
Not achieved - Risk	£-
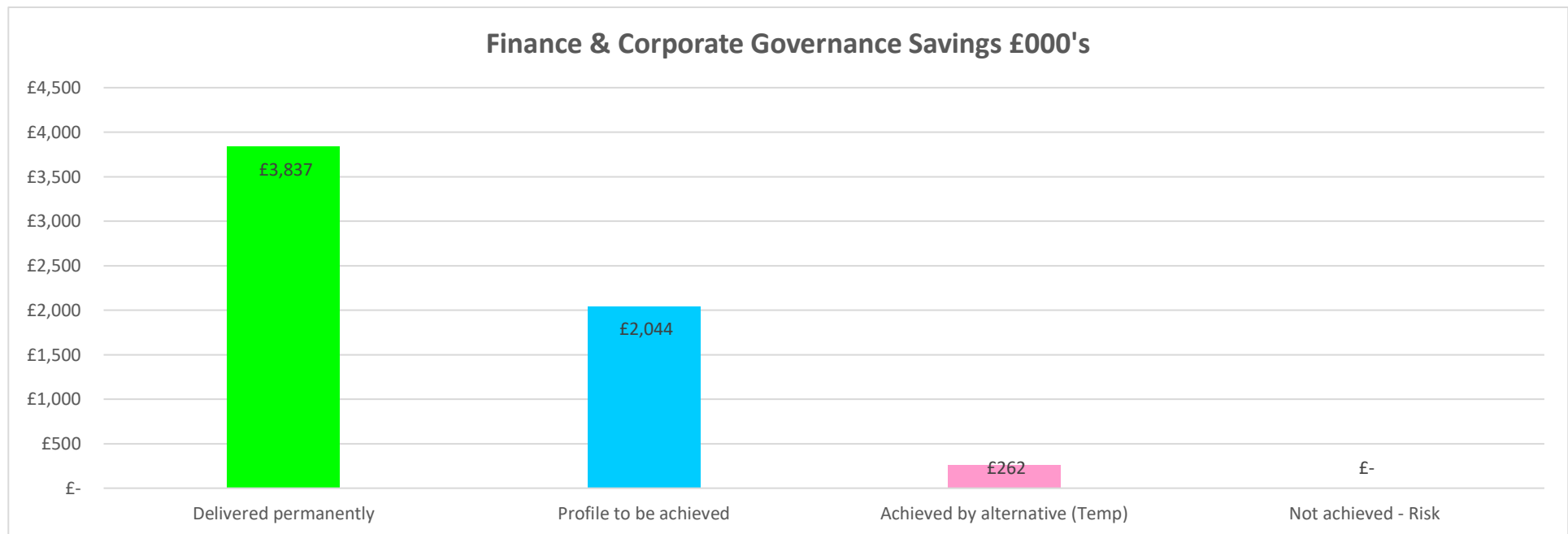
FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

People, Performance & Change

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
Business Change	15		-	15	
Reduce subscriptions budget across the Council by a further 10%	29		29		
Progress the roll-out of digital services across the Council	34		-	34	
2023/24 Savings					
Service Reviews	83	28	-	55	
	161	**28**	**29**	**104**	**-**

People, Performance & Change Savings £000's

Delivered permanently	£28
Profile to be achieved	£29
Achieved by alternative (Temp)	£104
Not achieved - Risk	£-
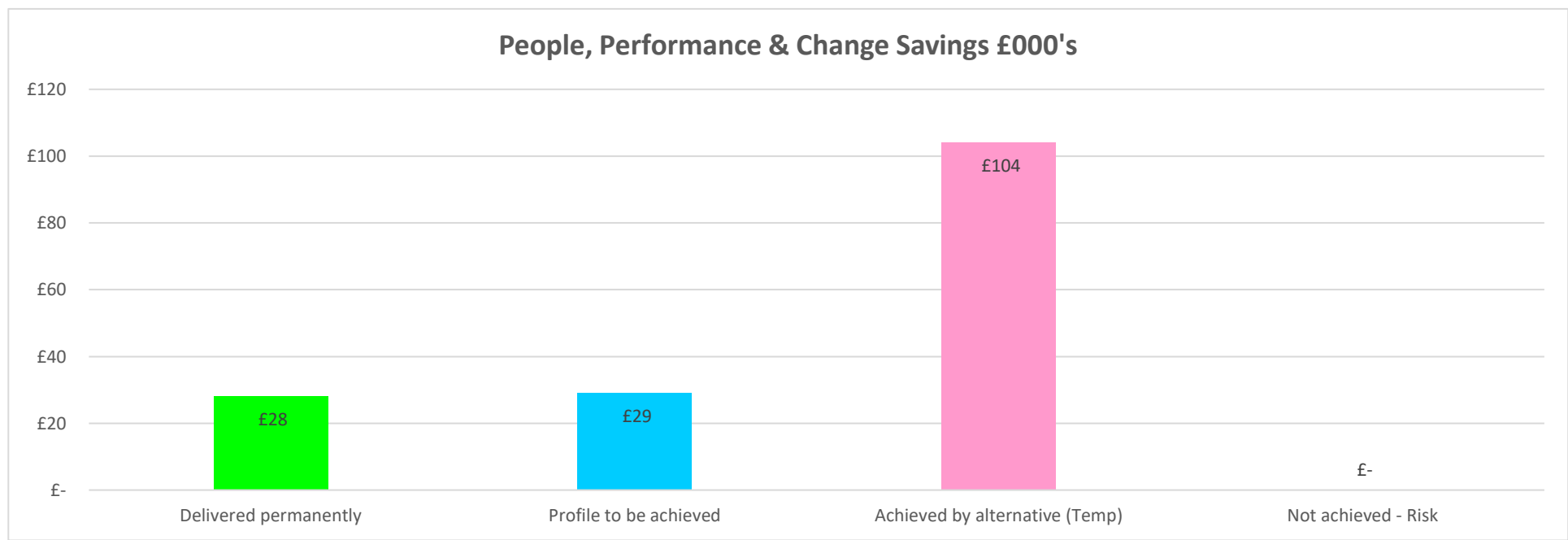
FINANCIAL PLAN EFFICIENCY PROGRESS 2023/24

Strategic Commissioning & Partnership

Savings:

	£'000	Delivered permanently	Profiled to be achieved	Achieved by alternatives on a temporary basis	Not achievable
Brought Forwards Savings					
Strategic Commissioning Savings	591	309	-	282	
Reablement Savings	722	437	285		
Bordercare Alarms	75		75		
2023/24 Savings					
Better use of Fleet Vehicles	45		45		
Residential Care Retendering	100		100		
IT Savings	100	100	-		
Strategic Commissioning Savings	337		-	337	
	1,970	**846**	**505**	**619**	**-**

People, Performance & Change Savings £000's

Budget Virement Requirement   **Infrastructure & Environment**   **No. of Virements   2**

1 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Infrastructure & Environment			
Service	Housing Strategy & Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	(15,000)	0	0

Service	Waste Management Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(105,000)	0	0

	Total	(120,000)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Infrastructure & Environment			
Service	Planning Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	42,000	0	0

Service	Property Management Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Premises Related Expenditure	78,000	0	0

	Total	120,000	0	0

Because   Transfer available budget from additional Waste income and Housing staff turnover savings to address pressures relating to i) Local Development Plan (£42k); and ii) corporate landlord pressures within Property Management Services (£78k).

2 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Infrastructure & Environment			
Service	Waste Management Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	(255,000)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Infrastructure & Environment			
Service	Property Management Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Premises Related Expenditure	255,000	0	0

Because   Release projected underspend in Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) contract (£255k) to fund corporate landlord pressure in Property Management Services.

1

Budget Virement Requirement   **Social Work & Practice**   **No. of Virements   4**

1 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	Older People	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	(365,277)	(365,277)	(365,277)

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	People with Physical Disabilities	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	365,277	365,277	365,277

Because	Permanent rebasing of 24 hour Care budgets from Older People to People with Physical Disabilities in line with shift in demand.

2 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	Older People	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	(75,899)	(75,899)	(75,899)

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	Emergency Duty Team	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	75,899	75,899	75,899

Because	Permanent reallocation of additional SG funding to cover increased staffing costs including enhancements within the Emergency Duty Team.

3 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	Older People	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	(526,354)	(326,354)	(326,354)
Service	Generic Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	(200,000)	0	0
	Total	(726,354)	(326,354)	(326,354)

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Strategic Commissioning & Partnerships			
Service	Adult Social Care	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	726,354	326,354	326,354

Because	Permanently transfer budget from ring-fenced demographics budget in Social Work and Practice and a temporary allocation of budget from staffing underspends in Generic Services to alleviate pressures within Adult Social Care.

4 Virement is required from

Department	Social Work & Practice	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Older People	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	(393,646)	(393,646)	(393,646)

To

Department	Social Work & Practice	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Joint Learning Disability	£	£	£
Budget Head	Other Hired & Contracted Services	393,646	393,646	393,646

Because	Permanent reallocation from ring-fenced demographics budget in Older People to cover increases to Cornerstone contract (£190k day care, £54k supported living) as well as £150k undeliverable savings associated with LD day care commissioning.

Budget Virement Requirement   **Education & Lifelong Learning**   **No. of Virements 2**

1 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Education & Lifelong Learning			
Service	Central Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	(187,724)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Education & Lifelong Learning			
Service	Primary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	110,662	0	0

Service	Secondary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	77,062	0	0

	Total	187,724	0	0

Because   To allocate 2023/24 Strategic Equity Fund (SEF) funding to Primary and Secondary Schools.

2 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Education & Lifelong Learning			
Service	Central Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	(105,500)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Education & Lifelong Learning			
Service	Primary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	55,750	0	0

Service	Secondary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Supplies & Services	49,750	0	0

	Total	105,500	0	0

Because   To allocate 2023/24 Care Experience (CE) funding to Primary and Secondary Schools.

4

Budget Virement Requirement   **Finance & Corporate Governance**   **No. of Virements   2**

1 Virement is required from

Department	Finance & Corporate Governance	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Legal Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	(25,000)	0	0

Service	Democratic Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(21,000)	0	0

Service	Communications & Marketing	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	(9,000)	0	0
	Supplies & Services	(15,000)	0	0

	Total	(70,000)	0	0

To

Department	Finance & Corporate Governance	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Protective Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	70,000	0	0

Because	Transfer available budget as a result of staff turnover, discretionary spend savings and additional income to partly offset undeliverable Financial plan savings within Protective Services due to service pressures.

2 Virement is required from

Department	Finance & Corporate Governance	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Recovery Fund	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	(467,921)	0	0

To

Department	Finance & Corporate Governance	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Property Management Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Premises Related Expenditure	467,921	0	0

Because	Release budget from the Recovery Fund to partly offset corporate landlord pressure within Property Management Services (£468k).

5

Budget Virement Requirement   **Resilient Communities**   **No. of Virements   1**

1 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Resilient Communities			
Service	Economic Development	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	(22,000)	0	0

Service	Cultural Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Capital Financing	(40,000)	0	0

	Total	(62,000)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Resilient Communities			
Service	Scottish Welfare Fund	£	£	£
Budget Head	Transfer Payments	30,000	0	0

Service	Council Tax Reduction Scheme	£	£	£
Budget Head	Transfer Payments	32,000	0	0

	Total	62,000	0	0

Because

Transfer available budget from reduced Programme Management Office costs and underspends in vehicle depreciation, to offset pressures in Scottish Welfare Fund and Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Budget Virement Requirement　　　　**People, Performance & Change**　　　　**No. of Virements　1**

1 Virement is required from

Department	People, Performance & Change	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Business Planning Performance & Policy Developme	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	(20,000)	0	0

To

Department	Finance & Corporate Governance	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Protective Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	20,000	0	0

Because	Additional staff turnover savings within Business Planning, Performance & Policy Development (£20k), to be used to partly offset undeliverable Financial plan savings within Protective Services due to service pressures.

Budget Virement Requirement   **Financed by**   **No. of Virements   4**

1 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Financed by			
Service	Second Homes Council Tax	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(102,000)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Infrastructure & Environment			
Service	Housing Strategy & Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	102,000	0	0

Because   Projected additional income through Second Homes Council Tax forecast (£102k).

2 Virement is required from

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Financed by			
Service	Revenue Support Grant	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(311,000)	0	0

To

		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Department	Social Work & Practice			
Service	Children & Families Social Work	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	311,000	0	0

Because   Allocation of additional funding for kinship and foster carers (£311k).

3 Virement is required from

Department	Financed by	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Transfer to/from Reserves	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(718,000)	0	0

To

Department	Education & Lifelong Learning	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Early Years	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	14,000	0	0

Service	Primary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	303,000	0	0

Service	Secondary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	378,000	0	0

Service	Additional Support Needs	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	17,000	0	0

Service	Educational Psychology	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	1,000	0	0

Service	Central Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	5,000	0	0

	Total	718,000	0	0

Because	Drawdown from Reserves to fund 1% of 2023/24 teachers pay award (£718k).

4 Virement is required from

Department	Financed by	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Revenue Support Grant	£	£	£
Budget Head	Income	(3,060,000)	0	0

To

Department	Education & Lifelong Learning	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Early Years	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	60,000	0	0

Service	Primary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	1,290,000	0	0

Service	Secondary Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	1,610,000	0	0

Service	Additional Support Needs	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	75,000	0	0

Service	Educational Psychology	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	5,000	0	0

Service	Central Schools	£	£	£
Budget Head	Employee Costs	20,000	0	0

	Total	3,060,000	0	0

Because	Allocation of additional funding for 2023/24 teachers pay award.

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Budget Virement Requirement   **Infrastructure & Environment**   **No. of Virements   1**

1 Virement is required from

Department	Infrastructure & Environment	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service	Housing Strategy & Services	£	£	£
Budget Head	Third Party Payments	(450,000)	450,000	0

To

Department		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service		£	£	£
Budget Head	General Fund Reserve - Earmarked Balances	450,000	(450,000)	

Because	To earmark Second Homes Council Tax income into 2024/25 to support future investment in affordable housing (£450k).

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BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2024

Report by Director of Finance & Procurement

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **This report provides the Executive Committee with an analysis of the Council's balances as at 31 March 2023 and advises Members of the projected balances at 31 March 2024.**

1.2 The Council's General Fund useable reserve (non-earmarked) balance was £9.980m at 31 March 2023.   The General Fund useable reserve is projected to be around £8.4m at 31 March 2024 in line with the Council's Financial Strategy and recognises the requirement to draw down from reserves during 2023/24 to fund the 2023/24 pay award which is yet to be agreed.

1.3 The total of all useable balances, excluding development contributions, at 31 March 2024 is projected to be £60.531m as summarised in section 4.2.

1.4 The projected balance on the Capital Fund of £10.677m will be affected by any further capital receipts, development contributions, interest received and any expenditure authorised to be financed from the Fund during the remainder of the financial year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**

(a) **Notes the audited 2022/23 revenue balances at 31 March 2023;**

(b) **Notes the projected revenue balances as at 31 March 2024 as per Appendices 1 & 2; and**

(c) **Notes the projected balance in the Capital Fund as per Appendix 3.**

3   ACCOUNTS AND FUNDS OPERATED BY THE COUNCIL

3.1   Income and expenditure relating to the Council's services are accounted for and financed through the following funds (as required or permitted by statute):

(a)   General Fund

(b)   Corporate Property Repairs & Renewals Fund

(c)   Insurance Fund

(d)   Plant & Vehicles Renewals Fund

(e)   Pitch and Play Park Replacement Fund

(f)   Capital Fund

4   BALANCES

4.1   Appendix 1 summarises the anticipated transactions and resultant projected balances at 31 March 2024 on the General Fund and Appendix 2 shows the projected non-General Fund balances. The useable General Fund balance, after earmarked funds and allocated reserves, is projected to be around **£8.4m** at 31 March 2024. This is in line with the recommended level included in the 2023/24 Financial Strategy approved by Council and recognises the requirement to draw down from reserves during 2023/24 to fund the 2023/24 pay award; which is reflected through this reporting for Teachers pay with SJC pay award for 2023/24 yet to be agreed.

4.2   The projections in the statements attached in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 are based on actual expenditure and income to 30 September 2023 as well as further anticipated movements and are summarised in the table below.

BALANCES	31/03/24 projection £m
Earmarked Balances (non DSM)	3.409
Recovery Fund (previously COVID-19 reserve)	0.400
Earmarked Balances (DSM)	0
Allocated Balances	36.164
General Fund (Unallocated Reserve)	9.228
Corporate Property Repairs & Renewals Fund	0
Pitch & Play Park replacement fund	1.875
Plant & Vehicles Renewals Fund	5.505
Insurance Fund	1.172
Capital Fund (exc. Developer Contributions)	2.778
	60.531

4.3   The key movements in the General Fund balance since the last reporting period are:

- £0.450m – additional earmarked balance from Second homes Council Tax, linked to investment in affordable housing.

- (£0.716m) – planned draw down from unallocated reserves to fund teachers pay agreement for 2023/24.

- (£0.468m) – draw down from Recovery Fund to support the 2023/24

revenue budget leaving a balance of £0.400m to support the Council during the remainder of the year.

4.4   The Corporate Financial Risk Register was considered at the Council Meeting on 23 February 2023 and identified potential risks including the failure to control budgets within approved limits, severe weather events, the economic downturn, potential contractual claims and unplanned emergencies. The unallocated balance of £8.4m, approved by Council as part of the Financial Strategy on 23 February 2023, equates to 2.5% of net revenue expenditure and is sufficient to cover 59% of the risks identified in the finance risk register should they be realised. The general fund reserve will continue to be monitored through the Corporate Financial Risk Register on a regular basis.

4.5   Allocated balances have been maintained in the current reporting period per the table below:

ALLOCATED BALANCES	31st March 2023 £m	Increase during 2023/24 £m	Released during 2023/24 £m	31st March 2024 £m
Municipal Mutual	0.233	0	(0.233)	0
Adverse Weather (including flood)	1.000	0	0	1.000
Workforce Management	0.890	0	(0.046)	0.844
Treasury reserve	5.131	0	0	5.131
Strategic Contract movement reserve	1.271	0	(0.493)	0.778
Service concessions (support financial plan)	0	9.093	(0.682)	8.411
Service concessions (Change Fund)	0	20.000	0	20.000
Total	**8.525**	**29.093**	**(1.454)**	**36.164**

4.6   Appendix 3 details the balances currently held in the Capital Fund. These balances are temporarily held in the Loans Fund and will attract interest at the end of the financial year. The Fund can only be used for capital purposes or to repay external debt.

5   IMPLICATIONS

5.1   **Financial**

There are no financial implications beyond those contained in the report and appendices.

5.2   **Risk and Mitigations**

The major risks associated with this report are that the level of projected balances proves to be insufficient. Service budget pressures plus unexpected liabilities are the most likely sources of pressure on reserves. These risks are being managed through regular monitoring of financial activity in all funds of the Council, including regular revenue and capital budgetary control reports to the Executive Committee. In addition, the Corporate Financial Risk Register is regularly reviewed by senior Finance staff.

5.3   **Integrated Impact Assessment**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.4   **Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no significant effects on the economy, community or environment.

5.5   **Climate Change**

No effect on carbon emissions are anticipated from the recommendation of this report.

5.6   **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

5.7   **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

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

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

6   CONSULTATION

6.1   The Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted on this report and any comments will be reported to the meeting.

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Approved by

</div>

Suzy Douglas   Signature …………………………………
Director of Finance & Procurement

Author(s)

Suzy Douglas	Director of Finance & Procurement 01835 824000 X5881

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

GENERAL FUND BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2024

	GENERAL FUND	GENERAL FUND (DSM)	GENERAL FUND (EARMARKED)	ALLOCATED RESERVES	TOTAL
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Balance at 1 April 2023	**9,980**	**3,589**	**27,553**	**8,525**	**49,647**
Projected Income (RSG, NDR, Council Tax)	338,504				**338,504**
Projected Net Revenue Expenditure	(367,292)				**(367,292)**
Earmarked Balances from previous year	31,142	(3,589)	(27,553)		**0**
Earmarked Balances to future years	(3,809)		3,809		**0**
Drawdown from allocated reserves to support 23/24 Financial Plan	726			(726)	**0**
Creation of Service Concession allocated reserve to support 5 year revenue financial plan				9,093	**9,093**
Creation of Service Concession allocated reserve to create change fund to support transformational change linked to financial sustainability				20,000	**20,000**
Service Concessions draw down to support 2023/24 budget	682			(682)	**0**
Drawdown from unallocated reserve to fund the implementation of actions in relation to the independent inquiry	(34)				**(34)**
Drawdown from Workforce Management Allocated reserve to cover conserved teacher salaries	46			(46)	**0**
Drawdown from unallocated reserve to fund shortfall in teachers pay award	(718)				**(718)**
Projected Balance at 31 March 2024	**9,228**	**0**	**3,809**	**36,164**	**49,201**

Appendix 1 - Projected Balances as at 31-03-24

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

REVENUE FUND BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2024

(EXCLUDING GENERAL FUND)

	CORPORATE PROPERTY REPAIRS & RENEWALS FUND	PLANT & VEHICLES RENEWAL FUND	INSURANCE FUND	PITCH & PLAY PARK REPLACEMENT FUND	TOTAL
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Balance at 1 April 2023	-	**8,597**	**1,387**	**1,401**	**11,385**
Projected Income	2,307	2,662	1,852	474	**7,295**
	2,307	11,259	3,239	1,875	**18,680**
Projected Expenditure	2,307	5,754	2,067	-	**10,128**
Contribution to Reserves					-
Transfer to/from General Fund					-
Projected Balance at 31 March 2024	-	**5,505**	**1,172**	**1,875**	**8,552**

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SUMMARY OF CAPITAL FUND

	Balance as at 31/03/23 £'000	Balance as at 31/03/24 £'000
DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS		
Waverley Railway	-	-
Technical Services	979	511
Education & Lifelong Learning	6,305	5,969
Social Work - Affordable Housing	525	525
Accrued Interest	736	894
Sub Total Developer Contributions	**8,545**	**7,899**
Capital Receipts	1,212	2,778
Total	**9,757**	**10,677**

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CORPORATE DEBTS – WRITE OFFS IN 2023/24 MID YEAR UPDATE

Report by Director of Finance & Procurement

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **As required by the Financial Regulations, this report details the aggregate amounts of debt written off during the first 6 months of 2023/24 under delegated authority.**

1.2 The report covers the areas of Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates, Sundry Debtors, Housing Benefit Overpayments and aged debt from the balance sheet.

1.3 The total value of write-offs between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023 is £198.1k.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **It is recommended that the Executive Committee note the debtor balances written off under delegated authority for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Financial Regulations give the Director of Finance and Procurement authority to write-off individual irrecoverable debts up to £100,000. Any debt in excess of £100,000 may only be written off as irrecoverable following approval by the Executive Committee. No write-offs have fallen into this category in 2023/24.

3.2 Financial Regulations also require that the Director of Finance and Procurement shall report to the Executive Committee annually on the aggregate amounts written off under delegated authority and this report adds to that remit for financial year 2023/24.

4 LEVEL OF WRITE OFFS

4.1 The total net amounts which were written off during the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023 are shown in table 1 below. Figures for the same period for the last two years are shown for comparison.

Table 1

Category	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/21-30/09/21	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/22-30/09/22	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/23-30/09/23
Council Tax	137.6	66.9	106.2
Non Domestic Rates	0	-19.1	-2.9
Sundry Debts	58.3	57.2	59.3
Housing Benefits Overpayments	16.2	26.5	35.5
Aged debt from balance sheet	0	0	0
Total	**212.1**	**131.5**	**198.1**

4.2 The 'write-offs' are net of any amount 'written back on'. This occurs where a debt has been written off and subsequent information is received, such as a new forwarding address, which would enable the Council to again pursue a debt previously considered irrecoverable. In these circumstances, the write-off will be reversed by a write-on and the debtor will then be pursued for the debt.

4.3 In all cases, a debt will only be written off when at least one of the following occurs: -
- Legislation prevents its recovery;
- It is uneconomic to pursue;
- The Debtor becomes insolvent;
- All options of recovery have been exhausted, which includes the use of the Council's Legal team and the appointed Sheriff Officers, Walker Love;

- After a professional assessment of the debt concludes that recovery is unlikely. For example, if Sheriff Officers advise that there are no assets, or the debtor has left the area and cannot be traced.

4.4 The amount of Housing Benefit written off is as expected, higher than the same period last year. This is due to recovery work being undertaken as part of business as usual. Although not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, we would expect this to remain consistent over the next half of the year. Housing Benefit Overpayments attract 100% subsidy from the Department of Work and Pensions which, combined with established recovery procedures, minimises the financial loss to the Council.

4.5 The categories of Council Tax write offs processed in the first 6 months of 2023/24 are detailed below.

The resource issues have been resolved and all works to consider write offs are being undertaken as business as usual. This has resulted in an increase across the board other than sequestrations.

Previously we had suspended sequestration write offs while we awaited new working practices for online portals. This has recommenced and we in an up to date position with these cases but are awaiting authorisation for higher level debts.

Table 2

Reason for write off: Council Tax	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/21-30/09/21	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/22-30/09/22	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/23-30/09/23
Small Balance under £10	2.5	-0.1	0
Deceased	44.0	31.6	52.3
Gone Away	14.2	1.7	24.9
Sequestrated	57.2	30.2	21.7
Miscellaneous	5.8	-6.0	-5.6
No effects		1.0	0
Surcharge	13.9	8.5	12.9
Total	**142.1**	**66.9**	**106.2**

4.6   Nominal amounts of Non-Domestic Rates balances were written off in the first 6 months of 2023/24 and the net position reflects that more monies were written on than written off during this period.

Previously we had suspended sequestration write offs while we awaited new working practices for online portals. This has recommenced and we are currently working on these cases and expect this to reflect an increase in the 3rd quarter.

Table 3

Reason for write off: Non Domestic Rates	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/21-30/09/21	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/22-30/09/22	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/23-30/09/23
Sequestrated	0	-15.2	0
Gone Away	0	-0.4	0
Miscellaneous	0	-2.0	-7.8
Surcharge	0	-1.5	0
Small Balance	0	0	1.2
No Effects	0	0	3.7
Total	**0**	**-19.1**	**-2.9**

4.7   More detailed information on the 2nd quarter position will be issued separately to members in due course.

4.8   Levels of write-offs for Sundry Debt remain the same at this point compared with the same period of time last year.

The type of debt being written off has not changed significantly with write-offs for accounts of deceased customers being the largest majority whereby we have been unable to claim against the deceased's estate due to timing and lack of funds.

We have made significant progress to reduce the write offs due to debt becoming time barred and still monitor this closely to ensure that all avenues are explored in a timely manner to ensure the best recovery outcome.

As previously reported in the year end 2022/23 report, due to the current cost of living crisis we are anticipating that this will cause a higher number of sundry debt accounts being sent to Sheriff Officers and decree applications being made.

Table 4

Reason for Write-off: Sundry Debt	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/21-30/09/21	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/22-30/09/22	Net amount written off (£'000) 01/04/23-30/09/23
Deceased	1.5	31.4	49.4
Gone Away	0.1	0.5	1.3
Bankruptcy	1.1	0.3	4.2
Uneconomic to Pursue	1.2	1	0.8
Sheriff Officer Unable to Collect	1.2	12	2.3
Time Barred	53.2	12	1.6
Debtor in Prison			1
Credit Amounts			-1.3
Total	**58.3**	**57.2**	**59.3**

5   IMPLICATIONS

5.1   Financial

An annual budget provision for sundry bad debts of £125k and £839k for Council Tax is maintained, which is regularly reviewed and if necessary, will be revised in future.

5.2   Risk and Mitigations

It is expected that the level of debts written off in 2023/24 in some areas will vary as we see the effects of the cost-of-living crisis impact households. Performance in this area continues to be closely monitored and management action, including the approved policy on debt recovery and supporting procedures, are in place to minimise risk.
The Council maintains an appropriate bad debt provision to help manage these risks.

5.3   Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no impact or relevance to Equality Duty or the Fairer Scotland Duty for this report. This is a routine financial monitoring report which is required to comply with the Financial Regulations. Nevertheless, a light touch assessment has been conducted and this will be published on SBC's Equality and Diversity Pages of the website as in doing so, signifies that equality, diversity and socio–economic factors have duly been considered when preparing this report.

5.4   Sustainable Development Goals

There are no environmental implications directly associated with this report.

5.5   Climate Change

There is no impact on the Council's carbon emissions.

5.6   Rural Proofing

There are no changes in policy or strategy in relation to rural areas.

5.7 **Date Protection Impact Statement**
There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
There are no changes to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director of Finance and Procurement, the Director of Corporate Governance (and Monitoring Officer), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Suzy Douglas   **Signature…………………………………..**
Director of Finance and Procurement

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Allison Exley	Income & Reconciliation Manager – Tel: 01835 824000 Extn 5909
Katrina Wilkinson	Customer Advice and Support Manager – Tel: 01835 824000 Extn 2630
Rachel Stewart	Revenues Lead Officer - Tel: 01835 824000 Extn 8608
Pauline Clark	Benefits Lead Officer – Tel: 01835 824000 Extn 2722

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee 15 November 2022

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Tel 01835 824000 Extn 5881,
email: sdouglas@scotborders.gov.uk

Scottish Borders Council

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Part 1 Scoping

1 Details of the Proposal

Title of Proposal:	CORPORATE DEBTS – WRITE OFFS IN 2023/24 MID YEAR REPORT
What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice ☐ A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice **X**
Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate).	Mid Year report to the Executive Committee on the corporate debt write-offs carried out during the first 6 months of 2023/24
Service Area: **Department:**	Income & Reconciliation Team; Customer Advice & Support; Finance & Regulatory; Customer & Communities
Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Allison Exley, Income & Reconciliations Manager
Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Les Grant, Customer Advice & Support Manager Gary Murdie, Benefits Lead Officer
Date(s) IIA completed:	26/10/23

Revised October 2023

2   Will there be any cumulative impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

~~Yes~~ / **No** *(please delete as applicable)*
If yes, - please state here:

3   Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:	
Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010? *(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter "No" and go to Section 3.2.)*	
Equality Duty	**Reasoning:**
Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*	
Promotion of equality of opportunity? *(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)*	
Foster good relations?	

(Will your proposal help or hinder the council s relationships with those who have equality characteristics?)	

3.2 Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)				
Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.				
	Impact			**Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this**
	No Impact	**Positive Impact**	**Negative Impact**	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping	X			**No impact or relevance. This is a routine monitoring report required under the Financial Regulations.**
Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring	X			
Gender Reassignment Trans/Transgender Identity anybody whose gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth	X			
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	X			
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to **maternity** leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, **protection** against **maternity** discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	X			
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy	X			

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	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)				
Religion or Belief: different beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief)	X			
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	X			
Sexual Orientation, e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	X			

3.3   Fairer Scotland Duty

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?

~~Yes~~ / No *(please delete as applicable)*

If No go to Section 4

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no	X			

savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.				
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	X			
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport)	X			
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income	X			
Looked after and accommodated children and young people	X			
Carers paid and unpaid including family members	X			
Homelessness	X			
Addictions and substance use	X			
Those involved within the criminal justice system	X			

4   Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered "No" to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

~~**Yes**~~ **/ No** *(please delete as applicable)*

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

Report is a regular governance report required under the Financial Regulations

Signed by Lead Officer:	**Allison Exley**
Designation:	**Income & Reconciliation Manager**
Date:	**25/10/22**
Counter Signature Service Director	
Date:	

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Part 2 Full Integrated Impact Assessment

5   Data and Information

What evidence has been used to inform this proposal?
(Information can include, for example, surveys, databases, focus groups, in-depth interviews, pilot projects, reviews of complaints made, user feedback, academic publications and consultants' reports).

Please state your answer here

Describe any gaps in the available evidence, then record this within the improvement plan together with all of the actions you are taking in relation to this (e.g. new research, further analysis, and when this is planned)

Please state your answer here

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## 6	Consultation and Involvement

Which groups are involved in this process and describe their involvement

Please state your answer here

Describe any planned involvement saying when this will take place and who is responsible for managing the process

Please state your answer here

Describe the results of any involvement and how you have taken this into account.

Please state your answer here

What have you learned from the evidence you have and the involvement undertaken? Does the initial assessment remain valid? What new (if any) impacts have become evident?
(Describe the conclusion(s) you have reached from the evidence, and state where the information can be found.)

Please state your answer here

7 Mitigating Actions and Recommendations

Consider whether:

Could you modify the proposal to eliminate discrimination or reduce any identified negative impacts?
(If necessary, consider other ways in which you could meet the aims and objectives of the proposal.)

Could you modify the proposal to increase equality and, if relevant, reduce poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage?

Describe any modifications which you can make without further delay (e.g. easy, few resource implications)

Mitigation Please summarise all mitigations for approval by the decision makers who will approve your proposal			
Equality Characteristic/Socio economic factor	**Mitigation**	**Resource Implications (financial, people, health, property etc)**	**Approved Yes/No**

8 Recommendation and Reasoning *(select which applies)*
- Implement proposal with no amendments
- Implement proposal taking account of mitigating actions (as outlined above)
- Reject proposal due to disproportionate impact on equality, poverty, health and Socio -economic disadvantage

Revised October 2023

Reason for recommendation:

Signed by Lead Officer:	
Designation:	
Date:	
Counter Signature (Service Director):	
Date:	

Office Use Only (not for publication)

This assessment should be presented to those making a decision about the progression of your proposal.

If it is agreed that your proposal will progress, you must send an electronic copy to corporate communications to publish on the webpage within 3 weeks of the decision.

Complete the below two sections. For your records, please keep a copy of this Integrated Impact Assessment form.

Revised October 2023

Action Plan (complete if required)

Actioner Name:	Action Date:
What is the issue?	
What action will be taken?	
Progress against the action:	
Action completed:	Date completed:

Monitoring and Review

State how the implementation and impact of the proposal will be monitored, including implementation of any amendments? For example what type of monitoring will there be? How frequent?

Please state your answer here

What are the practical arrangements for monitoring? For example who will put this in place? When will it start?

Please state your answer here

When is the proposal due for review?

Please state your answer here

Who is responsible for ensuring that this happens?

Please state your answer here

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT: 2022/23

Report by Director Resilient Communities

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **This report presents a summary of Scottish Borders Council's "Complaints Annual Performance Report for 2022/23", which is presented as Appendix 1. This sets out how many complaints have been received, how effectively complaints have been dealt with, trends over time and how Scottish Borders Council (SBC) compares to other similar rural Local Authorities and the national average. It also provides a summary of eight performance indicators, four of which the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) require all Local Authorities to report against.**

1.2 The Annual Report is a requirement for all Local Authorities and allows the SPSO to assess the effectiveness of Councils' Complaint Handling Procedures (CHP). It also ensures an ongoing focus on learning from complaints received, to inform continuous improvement.

1.3 During 2022/23, SBC received 1131 complaints, of which 866 were defined as valid. In 2022/23 Scottish Borders Council's performance relating to the processing of complaints performs well against the Scottish National averages in some indicators, specifically those relating to Stage One, but performance is poorer in relation to indicators that measure timeliness of responses. In this area there has been a decline for a number of years.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Committee:- notes the performance of handling complaints for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.**

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the SPSO the authority to lead the development of a standardised complaints handling procedure to be used across the public sector.

3.2   In May 2012, the SPSO issued finalised guidance on the handling of complaints, 'Local Authority Model Complaints Handling Procedure'. In November 2012 Scottish Borders Council approved a 'Complaints Handling Procedure' (CHP), based on this guidance, which then became publicly available and fully implemented during 2013.

3.3   In 2018-19, the SPSO conducted a review of their Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP) to establish their effectiveness and usability. Following consultation across all sectors the MCHPs were revised to standardise the core text across all of Scotland's public services and to update the MCHPs in line with issues identified by the SPSO in their casework, research and through good practice. In January 2020 the SPSO issued finalised guidance on Revised Local Authority Model Complaints Handling Procedure. In November 2021 The Executive Committee approved the Revised CHP. This was fully implemented in October 2022 with the introduction of the new Jadu complaints system.

3.4   The CHP defines a complaint as "any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf". It also defines how a complaint will be handled and the timescales to resolve any complaint received.

3.5   The objective of the (CHP) is to resolve complaints (i.e. customer dissatisfaction) as close to the point of service delivery and as soon as possible. The majority of 'Valid' complaints go through the Frontline 'Stage One' process where the complaint should be closed within 5 working days. However, if the complaint is complex, needing detailed investigation or is Escalated from Stage One because the customer is dissatisfied with the original response, it is considered an Investigation Stage 'Stage Two' complaint. Escalated complaints are knows as Stage Two – Escalated complaints. All Stage Two complaints should be closed within 20 working days. If, after 'Stage Two', the customer is not satisfied with the response to their complaint or how it was handled, they can refer their complaint to the SPSO.

3.6   In August 2014, the SPSO issued guidance stating that the annual performance of Local Authorities handling of complaints should be formally presented in an annual report across eight specified key performance indicators (KPIs). It was later confirmed that this report should be published. In March 2022 the SPSO issued revised guidance on the four key performance indicators Local Authorities are required to report on. SBC reports on these four KPIs, but also continues to report on the other four indicators, because this information is collected and benchmarked across the Local Authority sector.

3.7   Elected Members are also kept aware of key SPSO indicators on a quarterly basis through Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Performance reporting to Executive Committee. This information is also reported publicly on a quarterly basis (www.scotborders.gov.uk/performance).

3.8 In November 2015, it was agreed that SPSO decisions, recommendations and subsequent actions would be reported in the Complaints Annual Performance Report.

3.9 Live Borders complaints performance for 2022/23 is also included at the end of Appendix 1.

4 **OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23**

4.1 The 'Scottish Borders Council Annual Complaint Performance Report 2022/23' (presented in Appendix 1 to this Report) is the way in which the Council complies with its statutory responsibility stemming from the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

4.2 The performance indicators in the report relate to 'Valid' complaints that were either opened and or closed within financial year 2022/23. These indicators are based on the eight key performance indicators developed by the SPSO in conjunction with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities in 2014. Only four of these indicators are now mandatory. These are:

   1. The total number of complaints received
   3. Complaints outcomes
   4. Average time spent responding to complaints
   5. Complaints closed against timescales

   SBC continue to collect data for the other four KPIs and benchmark these across the Local Authority sector. These are:

   2. Closed complaints
   6. Complaints that were granted authorised extensions
   7. Customer satisfaction
   8. What we have learned, changed or improved

4.3 The number of complaints received in 2022/23 decreased compared to 2021/22, and the number that were classified as 'Valid' also decreased; 866 valid compared to 871 in the previous year.

4.4 How the Council handled the 'Valid' complaints it received and closed in 2022/23 can be summarised as follows:

   (a) The number of 'Valid' complaints received in 2022/23 (866) meant that on average there were 7.5 complaints per 1,000 population in 2022/23, up from 7.4 in 2021/22.

   (b) The proportion of closed complaints that were handled at Stage One increased slightly from 83.0% in 2021/22 to 85.6% in 2022/23. This high percentage closure rate at Stage One is a positive indicator because it is more resource intensive to handle complaints at Stage Two compared to handling them at Stage One.

   (c) In 2021 the SPSO introduced a fifth outcome for complaints in their Revised CHP. This was called Resolved. In 2022/23 SBC was able to measure the numbers of Resolved and partially upheld complaints from October 2022 when the new system was introduced. The 2022/23 statistics include 5 months of data for these two outcomes.

(d)   The introduction of the resolved outcome has had an impact on the upheld and not upheld outcomes for Stage One. Both the upheld and not upheld figures for 2022/23 have decreased with the resolved outcome being 21.3% for 2022/23. It is also interesting to note that the not upheld figures for 2022/23 have reduced significantly for Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated, from 62.6% to 46.1% and 55.2% to 34.1% respectively. This suggests that a higher proportion of Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated complaints have been upheld or partially upheld in 2022/23.

(e)   2022/23 is also the first time that SBC have reported on the reasons for invalid complaints. It should be noted that approximately half the invalid complaints were classed as first-time requests for a service, which fall outwith the scope of the complaints procedure. In addition, approximately 74% of these invalid complaints were raised by customers themselves using an online form.

(f)   The average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage One has dropped to 5.7 days in 2022/23 from 7.1 days in 2021/22. Similarly, the average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage Two has dropped to 27.7 days in 2022/23 from 30.5 days in 2021/22. The average time taken to respond to Stage Two - Escalated complaints has also dropped to 31.6 days in 2022/23 compared to 42.2 days in 2021/22.

(g)   The proportion of SBC's complaints closed against timescales for Stage One has decreased to 77.3% (from 80.6% in 2021/22), Stage Two has decreased to 39.5% (from 49.6% in 2021/22) and Stage Two - Escalated has decreased to 26.8% (from 27.6% in 2021/22).

(h)   The proportion of SBC's Stage One & Stage Two closed complaints that have been granted an authorised extension has increased from 1.3% and 8.7% respectively in 2021/22 to 3.9% & 23.7% in 2022/23. At Stage Two - Escalated the figures have dropped from 10.3% in 2021/22 to 7.3% in 2022/23.

(i)   In 2022/23 significantly fewer Complaints Handling Customer Satisfaction Surveys have been sent out. However, the return rate of the surveys has increased 17% in 2021/22 to 19% in 2022/23. Of those people that completed the 'Complaints Handling Customer Satisfaction Survey' in 2022/23, 45% were either very or fairly satisfied with how their complaint was handled by the Council compared to 33% who were very or fairly dissatisfied. The highest levels of satisfaction were around how easy it was to make a complaint (60.4% up from 57.1% in 2021/22) and information about the complaints procedure being easy to access (58.3% up from 44.0% in 2021/22). Highest levels of dissatisfaction however were around the overall handling of a customer's complaint (50.0% down from 52.4% in 2021/22), officers understanding of a customer's complaint (45.8% down from 46.4% in 2021/22) and the key points of a customer's complaint were identified and responded to (39.6 down from 46.4% in 2021/22).

(j)   Over the year, the Council recorded approximately 110 unsolicited comments and compliments for the services provided, a decrease

from 112 in 2021/22. Of these 80 were compliments. These compliments related to areas such as curb-side waste and recycling, roads, community recycling centres, adult social care and customer services. These recorded compliments are submitted by customers online, or are received by Customer Advice and Support Services officers over the phone on the 0300 number or in emails sent to the enquiry mailbox. It should be noted that SBC also receives compliments directly to officers but these are not always recorded, and therefore cannot be included in these figures.

4.5　　The Complaints Annual Performance Report 2022/23 also contains benchmarking information, comparing SBC to the performance for Scotland and its Family Group (similar Scottish Local Authorities, including Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Highland, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, and Shetland Islands). The highlights include:

(a)　　In 2022/23 SBC received more complaints per 1,000 citizens (7.5) than the Family Group average of 6.0, but fewer than the Scottish average of 11.66. It is interesting to note that this is an increasing trend across Scotland.

(b)　　SBC closed more complaints at Stage One (85.6%) compared to the Family Group (77.0%), but fewer than the Scottish average (87.6%). At Stage Two, SBC closed less complaints (9.3%) compared to the Family Group (16.9%) but more than the Scottish average (8.3%). SBC closed fewer complaints at Stage Two - Escalation (5.0%) than the Family Group (6.1%) and Scottish Average (4.1%).

(c)　　In 2022/23 a higher proportion of complaints made to SBC were upheld compared with the Scottish average and the Family Group. Specifically, 39.5% of the Stage One complaints to SBC were upheld compared to 30.8% for Family Group and 39.3% for Scotland. The proportion of Stage Two complaints that were upheld for the Scottish Borders (38.2%) was higher than the Family Group average (19.2%) but lower than the Scottish average (30.4%); the proportion of Stage Two - Escalated complaints that were upheld for the Scottish Borders (43.9%) was higher than the level for the Family Group (24.1%) and the Scottish average (22.4%). Overall, SBC is not far off the Scottish Average's for Stage One and Stage Two, but there is a significant difference at Stage Two - Escalated.

(d)　　SBC's average response time for Stage One (5.7 days) was faster compared to both the Family Group (6.4) and Scotland (7.0). It was slower at both Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated. At Stage Two, the average time for SBC to respond was 27.7 days (Family Group 23.6 days, Scotland 19.4 days) and the Stage Two - Escalated complaints average time for SBC to respond was 31.6 days (Family Group 29.6 days, Scotland 23.7 days). It is positive to see that the average number of working days taken to close complaints at all stages is reducing. There is still significant room for improvement especially at Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated, and hopefully we will see this improvement in 2023/24 following the increased focus on overdue complaints.

(e)   SBC's proportion of Stage One complaints closed within timescales (77.3%) was higher compared to the Family Group (75.1%) and the Scottish average (75.0%). However, it was significantly lower at Stage Two (39.5%) than the Family Group (58.5%) and Scottish average (70.1%). It is also significantly lower for Stage Two - Escalated at 26.8% compared to 41.5% for the Family Group and 57.7% for the Scottish average. Whilst this is not a positive position for the council it is important to remember that 85.6% of valid complaints are responded to at Stage One and at Stage One 77.3% of complaints are responded to on time.

(f)   The proportion of Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated closed complaints that were granted an extension for SBC was below the proportion for the Family Group and Scotland for all stages with the exception of the Family Group and Scottish Average for Stage Two.

4.6   If, after fully investigating a complaint, an individual is still dissatisfied with the decision or the way in which their complaint has been handled, the customer can ask the SPSO to look at the complaint. In 2022/23 the SPSO received 21 complaints about Scottish Borders Council. This is equal to 2.0% of all complaints received by the SPSO in relation to the Local Authority sector. Of the 22 complaints closed by the SPSO about SBC in 2022/23, 2 complaints were considered but only 1 was upheld or partially upheld. Details of the 2 complaints considered are presented at Section 3 of Appendix 1.

4.7   The new complaint recording system was implemented in October 2022. There were two parts to this project. The first was building a completely new and improved complaints recording system. The other part was a complete refresh of the complaint handling training. The refresh of the complaint handling training will ensure that all complaint handlers across the council are aware of their responsibilities with regards to complaint handling. There have been some changes to these responsibilities as a result of the SPSO launching their revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure in April 2022.

4.8   It is expected that this complete refresh of system and training will make a significant difference in the long run to SBC's complaint handling performance.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Financial**
There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

(a) By following efficient and robust complaints handling procedures, reputational damage can be significantly reduced. Analysis of complaints can be useful in identifying or highlighting risks that SBC may not be aware of. This enables SBC to mitigate these risks and reduce the impact or likelihood of them occurring and of impacting on the quality of services delivered.

(b) Internal Audit assurance work was undertaken during 2023 in relation to complaints handling. The purpose of the audit was to review and assess the new arrangements in place for complaints to ensure the implementation of the revised policy and procedures complies with the Revised CHP.

(c) The Audit report stated that substantial assurance could be given that there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. It was further acknowledged that this is still a relatively new process for staff to complete and it is anticipated to improve over time. Two low-rated recommendations were identified, setting an achievement target, and completion of mandatory training, these are designed to assist with the planned lessons learned evaluation.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**
It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**
There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report which would affect the Council's sustainability policy.

5.5 **Climate Change**
There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report.

5.6 **Rural Proofing**
This report does not relate to a new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

5.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**
There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
No changes to the Scheme of Administration or Delegation are required as a result of this report.

6   CONSULTATION

6.1   The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Director Resilient Communities, the Clerk to the Council, Corporate Communications, Development and Support Manager and Customer Advice & Support Manager have been consulted and all comments received incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

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Previous Minute Reference:

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Scottish Borders Council
Annual Complaint Performance Report 2022/23

Contents

1.   Overview

1.1.   Introduction

This is the council's annual complaints performance report that provides information on customer complaints received and closed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Scottish Borders Council always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to the residents, business owners and service users within the Scottish Borders. However, there are times when things go wrong and we fail to meet the expectations of our customers.

The council's complaints procedure provides a clear and structured way to provide feedback on what has gone wrong with a council service. The process to resolution should be straightforward and timely. Listening to our customers helps us to put things right, improve our services and learn from our mistakes.

This report provides us with an opportunity to share how well we are performing.

1.2.   Corporate Complaints Procedure

The objective of the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close to the point of service delivery and as soon as possible at Stage One in the procedure. Figure 1 is a flow chart of SBC's CHP. Complaints can be raised online, by email, in person, by telephone or by letter.

FIGURE 1: COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE
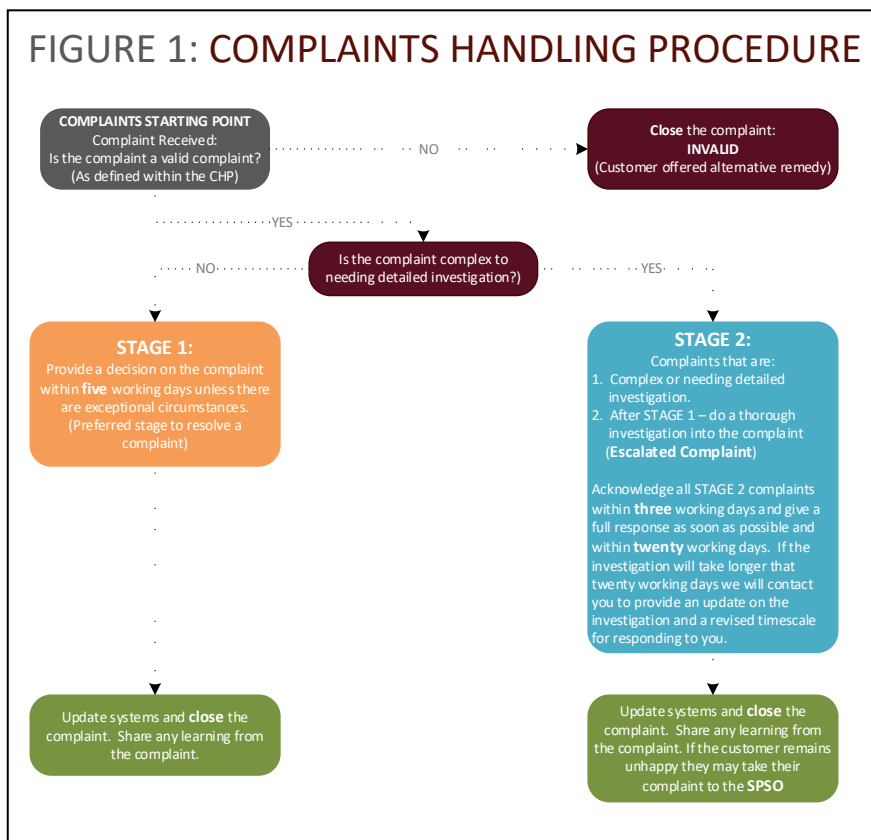
Complaints performance is reported on a quarterly basis to both the council's Senior Leadership Team and the council's Executive Committee. All complaints performance statistics are reported to the public and are available on the council's website.

2. Complaint Performance Statistics

This report presents how SBC performs based on eight key performance indicators developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) in conjunction with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

The number of valid complaints closed in 2022-23 was 813. This is a decrease on the number closed in the previous year. The council will continue to analyse complaints to help inform service improvement, identify training opportunities for our staff and to help prioritise our activities to meet the changing needs of the residents of the Scottish Borders.

Complaint benchmark data for 2022-23 is accurate at the time of publishing this report. Where applicable, this report has included the Scottish local authority national average and Family Group performance indicators for comparative information. The council's performance relating to the processing of complaints performs well against the Scottish national averages in some indicators, specifically those relating to Stage One, but performance is poorer in relation to indicators that measure timeliness of responses.

2.1. Indicator 1: Complaints received per 1,000 population

This indicator records the total number of 'Valid' complaints received by SBC during the financial year (April to March) as a rate per 1,000 population. In 2022-23 SBC received **1131** complaints of which **265** were closed as 'Invalid'. The remaining **866** were handled as 'Valid' complaints. This is equivalent to 7.5 received complaints per 1,000 population.

Table 1 provides SBC's total complaints closed per 1,000 population over the past 6 years along with the Scottish and Family Group Averages for 2022-23. The table shows that there has been an increase in the number of complaints closed by SBC and the complaints closed per 1,000 population in 2022-23.

Table 1: Complaints received per 1,000 population

Measure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Population Total	114,530	115,020	115,270	115,510	115,240	116,020	923,900	5,047,300
Total number of Valid	670	625	725	780	849	866	5538	58,845
Number of complaints per 1,000	5.8	5.4	6.3	6.8	7.4	7.5	6.0	11.66

2.2. Indicator 2: Closed complaints

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated complaints as a percentage of all complaints closed. Table 2 provides the performance information for this indicator.

The term 'closed' refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time, no further action was required to respond to the customer.

Stage Two - Escalated complaints are those complaints that have been resolved at Stage One initially, but the customer was not satisfied with the response they received. When the customer requests that the same issue is considered again at Stage Two, of the CHP, these complaints are called 'Stage Two - Escalated' complaints.

Table 2: Closed Complaints

Complaints Closed as a % of all complaints closed	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	75%	78%	75%	85.4%	83.0%	85.6%	77.0%	87.6%
Stage Two	21%	17%	21%	12.2%	13.6%	9.3%	16.9%	8.3%
Stage Two - Escalated	4%	4%	5%	2.4%	3.4%	5.0%	6.1%	4.1%

2.3.   Indicator 3: Complaint Outcomes

There is a requirement for a formal outcome to be recorded for each complaint. There are five outcomes, upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, resolved or invalid. In 2021 the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) introduced the fifth outcome for complaints. This was called Resolved. In 2022/23 SBC was able to measure the numbers of Resolved and partially upheld complaints from October 2022 when the new system was introduced.

This indicator measures the percentage of complaints, which were upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, or resolved at each stage. The results can be seen in Tables 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d. Additional information has also been included in relation to the reasons for invalid complaints (table 4).

Table 3a: Upheld Complaints

Complaints upheld	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	42%	37%	48%	36.6%	50.5%	39.5%	30.8%	39.3%
Stage Two	38%	45%	47%	38.5%	37.4%	38.2%	19.2%	30.4%
Stage Two - Escalated	50%	39%	30%	22.2%	44.8%	43.9%	24.1%	22.4%

Table 3b: Not Upheld Complaints

Complaints not upheld	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	58%	63%	52%	63.4%	49.5%	34.5%	38.1%	27.2%
Stage Two	62%	55%	53%	61.5%	62.6%	46.1%	54.9%	42.1%
Stage Two - Escalated	50%	61%	70%	77.8%	55.2%	34.1%	37.2%	42.6%

Table 3c: Partially Upheld Complaints

Complaints partially upheld	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	4.7%	9.2%	16.2%
Stage Two	15.8%	22.5%	20.0%
Stage Two - Escalated	22.0%	28.0%	24.3%

Table 3d: Resolved Complaints

Complaints resolved	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	21.3%	22.0%	16.1%
Stage Two	0.0%	3.4%	7.7%
Stage Two - Escalated	0.0%	10.7%	10.7%

Table 4: Reasons for Invalid Complaints

Reason for Invalid Outcome	No. of Invalid Complaints
First time request for a service	126
Request for compensation only i.e. insurance	15
Council is not responsible for the service the complaint is about	63
Matters complained about are in court or have already been heard in court	1
Matters raised have previously been considered	7
There is an alternative right to appeal	4
There is insufficient information	28
HR Related Matter	7
Logged in Error or Duplicate Complaint	14
Total	**265**

Of these invalid complaints approximately 74% are logged by customers themselves using an online form.

2.4. Indicator 4: Average times

Indicator 4 represents the average time in working days to close complaints. Indicator 4 performance can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Average times

Average times	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	4.0	4.6	5.3	5.9	7.1	5.7	6.4	7.0
Stage Two	17.7	18.2	22.5	23.1	30.5	27.7	23.6	19.4
Stage Two - Escalated	18.0	14.9	32.4	41.6	42.2	31.6	29.6	23.7

The average time taken to close complaints at Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated has improved in 2022/23, however, SBC's performance is still below that of the Family Group and the Scottish Averages, with one exception. SBC's average working days to close a Frontline complaint is better than the Family Group and Scottish Average. Looking at the Family Group and the Scottish Average data there is a national picture of worsening performance for this indicator, with the exception of the Scottish Average for closing the Investigation Stage.

2.5. Indicator 5: Performance against timescales

This indicator reports the percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been authorised. Indicator 5 performance can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Performance against timescales

Performance against timescales	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	86%	81%	77%	80%	80.6%	77.3%	75.1%	75.0%
Stage Two	67%	74%	60%	66%	49.6%	39.5%	58.5%	70.1%
Stage Two - Escalated	54%	79%	24%	22%	27.6%	26.8%	41.5%	57.7%

2.6. Indicator 6: Number of cases where an extension is authorised

SBC always aims to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. There are, however, times when a complaint is particularly complex and it is not feasible to fully investigate the issues within the prescribed timescales. In these situations SBC agree with a complainant to extend the timescale for closing the complaint.

This indicator reports the percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised. Indicator 6 performance can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Number of cases where an extension is authorised

Percentage of cases where an extension is authorised	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	FG 1 Average 2022-23	Scottish Average 2022-23
Stage One	4%	3%	2%	1%	1.3%	3.9%	17.1%	5.8%
Stage Two	18%	11%	5%	3%	8.7%	23.7%	20.9%	10.6%
Stage Two - Escalated	31%	4%	6%	6%	10.3%	7.3%	17.7%	16.8%

2.7. Indicator 7: Customer Satisfaction

SBC runs a Complaint Handling Customer Satisfaction Survey on an ongoing basis. Customers are contacted approximately one week after their complaint is closed inviting them to provide feedback on their experience. Indicator 7 performance can be seen in Table 8. This indicator provides information on the levels of customer satisfaction with the complaint handling procedure and process.

The survey asks the customer to state how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with:
- Information about the complaints procedure being easy to access
- How easy they found it to make their complaint
- If they were happy that the Investigating Officer fully understood their complaint
- They were given the opportunity to fully explain their complaint
- That the points of their complaint were identified and responded to
- The response to their complaint was easy to understand
- Overall how satisfied they were with the handling of their complaint

They were also asked:
- If they were told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2)
- If they were clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for them

Table 8: Customer Satisfaction

Survey Invitations Sent:	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No. survey Invitations Sent	225	131	57	166	488	251
No. closed complaints	691	645	725	780	849	813
% of customers invited to respond to the survey	33%	20%	8%	21%	58%	30.9%
Return Rate:						
No. Returned	25	33	25	41	84	48
% Return Rate	11%	25%	44%	25%	17%	19.1%
Responses:						
Either Fairly or Very Satisfied	60%	49%	43%	58%	42%	45%
Either Fairly or Very Dissatisfied	20%	30%	38%	23%	37%	33%

In 2022/23 the survey questions that received the highest satisfaction levels were:
- I found it easy to make my complaint – 60.4%
- Information about the complaints procedure was easily accessible – 58.3%
- I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint – 56.3%

In 2022/23 the survey questions that received the lowest satisfaction levels were:
- Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint – 50.0%
- I was happy that the Investigating Officer fully understood my complaint – 45.8%
- The points of my complaint were identified and responded to – 39.6%

Figure 2 Overall Complaints Handling Customer Satisfaction 2022/23
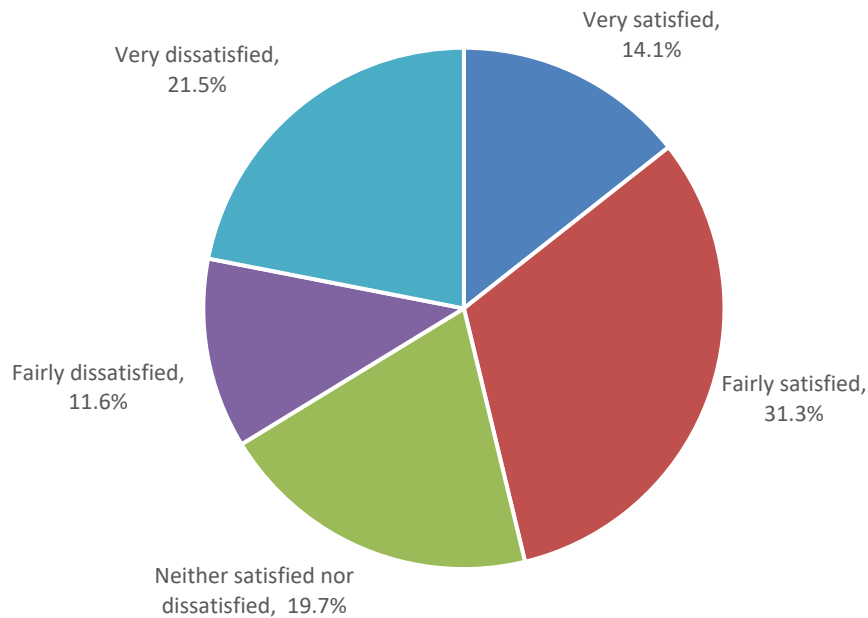
In 2022/23, approximately 31% of customers who made a complaint were invited to respond to a survey about their satisfaction with SBC's handling of their complaint. The survey return rate has increased slightly from 17% in 2021-22 to 19% in 2022-23. In 2022/23, satisfaction with complaints handling has improved slightly.

In addition to recording complaints, SBC also records compliments. These compliments are submitted by customers online, or are received by Customer Advice and Support Services officers over the phone on the 0300 number or in emails sent to the enquiry mailbox. It should be noted that SBC also receives compliments directly to officers but these are not always recorded, and therefore cannot be included in these figures.

In 2022/23, the Council recorded approximately 110 recorded unsolicited comments and compliments for the services provided. This was a slight decrease from 112 in 2021/22. Of these 80 were compliments. These compliments related to areas such as curb-side waste and recycling, roads, community recycling centers, neighbourhoods, cemeteries, adult social care and customer services. Some examples of these compliments are as follows:

"I want to thank the refuse collectors of yesterday. Access was impossible and I assumed that they wouldn't be able to collect my rubbish, but they must have returned later by another route in order to collect. Very many thanks to them."

"This is just a note of thanks to your Pest Control Team. I booked a call-out to deal with wasps yesterday morning and your Pest Control Officer attended at 8am this morning. Very impressed with the speed of the service. The lady I spoke to yesterday was also very pleasant and efficient."

"Please convey to the Roads Department how impressed we are with the recent road resurfacing on Dingleton Road outside our house, - it was quick, it was efficient, and the road is transformed. Thank you!"

"I wish to thank you for the provision of motorhome parking. We Stayed on Saturday & Sunday, and supported local businesses spending money in Hawick & Denholm. The new service point is excellent, as supporters of Campra we feel it is vital to give you feedback for supporting motorhome / campervan parking. We look forward to visiting the town again in the future."

"I have been very impressed with the wildflower planting in Duns. It is beautiful! So want to thank whoever came up with the idea and those who put in the work to get the borders looking so nice."

"Thank you for passing on my request to have the gutter cleaned at the front of my home. A council cleaning lorry did the whole village today. A large thank you to the driver who took time to remove all the weeds in the gutter in our cul-de-sac, it has made a huge difference."

"Customer wanted to complement the man who was working in Shawpsrk Cemetery, Selkirk today. He went above and beyond his responsibilities and made a very difficult and sad day a lot easier".

"Customer emailed in to say how lovely and helpful the bin men were today. They had forgotten to put out their bin. The customer had to run down the street with her bin, and one of the workmen noticed this and came back to help her and take her bin to the lorry to be emptied".

"The customer had a fall around the Tait Hall area in Kelso on Monday. A Council Employee with a white van with black bin bags on the back assisted her. She thinks he was emptying the public waste bins in that area. She is hoping the department can find out who this was because she wants to give thanks and give him a gift as he was so helpful and kind".

"Can you please pass on our thanks to the carers for their great care and support they have given mum and us as a family over the last 12 years. She was very fortunate to have such caring people support her (& dad before he died). We are all heartbroken she has gone, and I know it will be strange for some of the carers who have been part of her life for many years. From all of us. Thank You".

"Just wanted to commend Hawick for the excellent motorhome facilities at Victoria road car park. We drove down from Falkirk yesterday and have had a lovely stay here and spent time (and money) in the town yesterday. Hopefully other towns will follow your example".

"Please could you let the two guys who were performing the hedge cutting duties in the village today know that their work is very much appreciated. They took great care and precision to trim the hedge on Feuars Park despite the quite atrocious weather conditions. Thank you fellas. Nice job!".

"I live in Eyemouth and I had to contact to comment on the excellent service provided during this icy weather. It is not just the main roads that have been kept clear and safe, our pavements have also been gritted on a daily basis making it safe for everyone to go out. I work in another Local Authority area and it is an absolute disgrace, even the council car parks are a sheet of ice! So well done it is appreciated".

"I would like to pass on my thanks to A at customer advice. I contacted the council about my council tax and she was very helpful and friendly and completely put my mind at ease when I was very worried. I moved from another Local Authority area and you don't get the same service there that's for sure!".

2.8. Indicator 8: Learning from Complaints

Formal complaint reports are provided to the Corporate Management Team on a monthly basis and complaints performance information is provided to Elected Members on a quarterly basis through our Corporate Public Performance Report.

We take all complaints seriously, and the information gathered from them is invaluable in helping to continually improve our services. Since the introduction of the Complaints Handling Procedure, many changes and improvements have been made to services as a result of complaints and some examples of case studies are detailed in this section.

Case Study One

Customer A contacted the Council three times requesting information on the section and lair number of a relative. They were understandably upset that they did not receive a response to their enquiries.

It was found that an old email address for the cemetery's team, that was no longer monitored, was still available in the Council's email directory and unfortunately, the enquiries had been sent to that email address. The Cemetery's team have now requested the old email address is closed down, so this doesn't happen again.

Case Study Two

Customer B complained that potholes on the road leading to his home had not been fixed, despite assurances that repairs to this section of road would be prioritised.

It was found that whilst these repairs had been added to the work plan, they were not marked as a priority. Officers have been reminded that all repairs need to be programmed along with all other competing priorities or this can affect delivery timescales. It is important that officers have this conversation with customers before agreeing to prioritise works. Officers have also been reminded of the importance of following up on issues where customers have been provided with assurances.

Case Study Three

Customer C complained that the road outside their house was temporarily closed with no warning for surface dressing. This caused access issues for the residents who had no opportunity to make alternative arrangements.

It was found that officers had anticipated that a convoy system would be put in place during the surface dressing works, allowing residents access. Unfortunately, when officers arrived on site they discovered that the road was not wide enough to safely operate a convoy system. Residents have been assured that that any further works in the area that require a road closure will be advertised in the normal manner and advance warning signs will be provided in advance.

Case Study Four

A number of customers complained about excessive verge cutting on some of the roads in and around Kelso. They felt that this was having an adverse effect on the habitats of bees and other invertebrates. They also felt that cutting the verges later in the year would be more beneficial to nature.

Officers explained that the Council's grass cutting policy has been changed and verge cutting takes place only once per season now. The specification is to cut the grass 1 meter into the verge, leaving the remainder of the verge untouched to provide a wider diversity of habitat. Grass cutting is extended at junctions to maintain visibility at sections of roads which have a greater volume of traffic travelling at higher speed. Some unclassified roads verges are not always cut and are left untouched all summer providing road safety is not impacted. However, there are localised sections of road that have been maintained by the landowners, and the Council has no control over this grass cutting.

Officers also explained that, given the scale of the operation and the need to address the issue of road safety it is not possible at this time to modify our current grass cutting timing. In order to shorten the period of grass cutting and slightly delay the operation, this would require a much larger fleet or number of contractors and would be financially unsustainable within the current funding envelope.

Officers committed to continue to look into the possibility of delaying cutting completely for one year at more rural sites to try and leave sites untouched for one season as well as other opportunities to try and reduce the impact of our operation of flora and fauna.

Case Study Five

A number of customers complained that their children's school bus passes did not arrive before the start of the school term. Many children were left stranded at bus stops.

All school bus operators were given lists of the children that were allocated to their routes, so the children could catch the buses until their bus passes were ready. The Council also committed to reviewing the timeline for home to school transport planning, with the aim of having passes and arrangements in place before schools closed for the holidays.

Case Study Six

A customer complained that the street that live on is never cleaned. The gutters are filthy and detract from the area.

The Council explained that the street wasn't cleaned because parked cars line the street and prevent the street sweeper machine from reaching the gutters. The Council committed to trying to clean the street at different times through the day, i.e. early in the morning.

3.   SPSO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Customers can ask the SPSO to look at their complaint once we've fully investigated, if they're still not satisfied with our decision or the way we handled the complaint.

In 2022/23, the SPSO received 21 and closed 22 complaints about SBC. This is equal to 2.0% of all complaints received by the SPSO in relation to the Local Authority sector, or 1.9% of all complaints closed by the SPSO in relation to the Local Authority sector. The numbers of complaints that go to the SPSO are a very small proportion of all the complaints made about Scottish Local Authorities; this is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 1: Illustration of SPSO complaints of all complaints for 2022/23
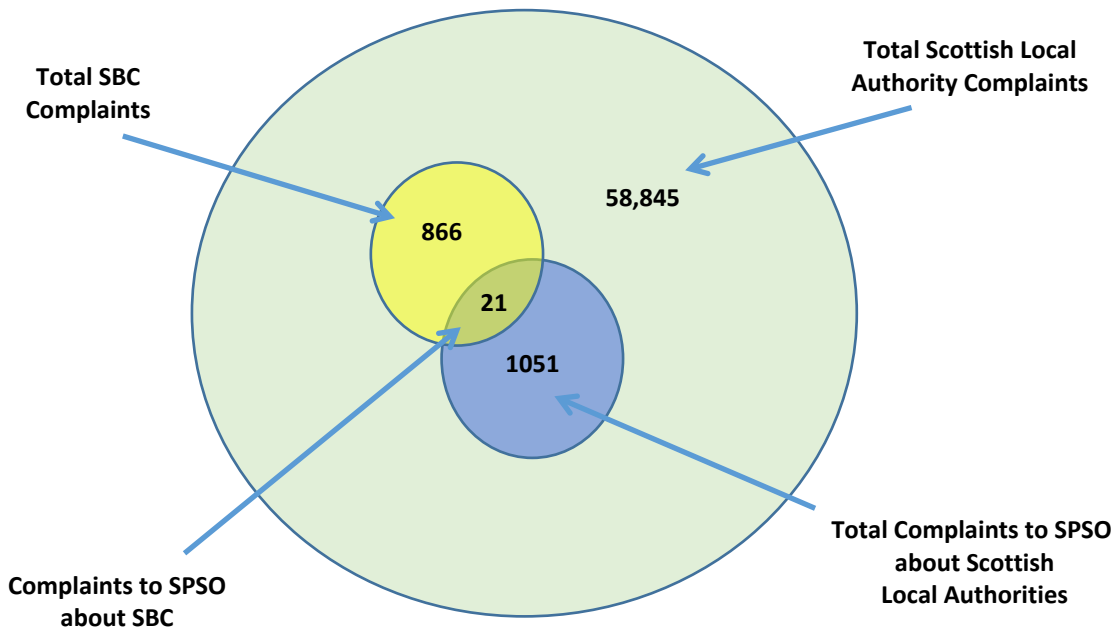
Table 9 below shows the number of complaints about SBC received by the SPSO and this as a percentage of the Local Authority Sector

Table 9: SPSO Complaints Received by Year

SPSO Received Complaints /Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
SPSO Received Complaints about SBC	20	27	11	41	15	25	21
SBC Complaints as % all for Scottish Local Authority sector	1.3%	1.8%	0.8%	3.3%	1.6%	2.1%	2.0%

Table 10 below shows how SBC compares to the Scottish Local Authority Sector in relation to complaints closed by the SPSO.

Table 10: SPSO Closed Complaints for SBC / Year

SPSO Closed Complaints for SBC / Year	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %
Closed	17	1.80%	1.70%	21	1.90%	2.00%	22	1.90%	2.00%
Stage SPSO Complaint Closed									
Advice	6	1.60%	40%	10	2.30%	39.10%	5	1.20%	36.80%
Early Resolution	10	2.00%	53%	9	1.40%	57.50%	15	2.10%	61.00%
Investigation	1	1.60%	7%	2	5.30%	3.40%	2	8.00%	2.20%
Premature	2	0.80%	27%	8	2.70%	26.30%	0	0.00%	0.30%
SPSO Decision									
Fit for SPSO	1	1.60%	7%	2	5.30%	3.40%	2	8.00%	2.20%
Upheld / Partially Upheld	**0**	**0%**	**4%**	**1**	**4.00%**	**2.20%**	**1**	**5.30%**	**1.70%**

In 2022/23, the SPSO undertook two investigations into complaints about SBC. The published Case Studies for these complaints are detailed below. Case Study One was partially upheld and there were two recommendations, and Case Study Two was not upheld and there were no recommendations.

Case Study One:
C complained that social work failed to reasonably assess A's needs following a hospital admission, in relation to whether they required 24-hour care, and C's concerns that social work ignored clinical opinions.

The SPSO took independent advice from a social worker. They considered that it was reasonable for social work to have concluded initially that A did not technically meet the criteria for residential care and was functionally fit to be discharged home with a support package. While they noted that the opinions of others were taken into account in arriving at this conclusion, they considered that there was a failure to fully examine the emotional impact on A of potentially being discharged. The council had already acknowledged that there could have been more detailed discussion with A's GP and further exploration of the views of a specialist nurse from the psychiatry team, which the SPSO agreed with. The SPSO also considered that some wording used in the social work assessment to describe A's reactions could have been perceived to lack empathy and compassion. The SPSO upheld this complaint.

A suffered a stroke three days after the initial social work assessment was concluded. They were in temporary accommodation at the time, awaiting further assessment. It was subsequently agreed that A required 24-hour care. They remained in the temporary facility until their transfer to a care home, but died a month later. C complained that a delay in social work re-assessing A delayed their transfer to a care home, which meant the transfer took place during lockdown when the family were unable to support A with the move. The council advised that A was re-assessed in a timely manner once a care home vacancy became available. The SPSO considered that it was reasonable for the assessment to be updated once a vacancy arose and were satisfied that the delay was due to a lack of available places and not due to a failing on the part of social work. The SPSO did not uphold this complaint.

Recommendations:

The SPSO asked the council to:

- Apologise to C for failing to give enough weight to the emotional impact on A of potentially being discharged and for the wording used to describe A's reactions.

What the SPSO said should change to put things right in future:

- Appropriate weight should be given to the emotional impact of discharge on clients. Social workers should be aware of the impact of language used and where it may be perceived to lack empathy and compassion.

Case Study Two:

C cares for their spouse (A) who has Alzheimer's disease. C complained about the council's social work department, after they took action under their Adult Support and Protection (ASP) procedures, including obtaining a warrant to remove A from home. C complained that false allegations about them resulted in the warrant being issued and served. They complained that social work staff had presented unsubstantiated claims of neglect and abuse during the ASP proceedings.

The SPSO took independent social work advice. They noted that there was evidence that C was experiencing stress in their caring role and that there was a difficult relationship with social work. They noted that there were periods during which A was locked in the house alone and C had mentioned that A may have bruising on them and would not allow access for a GP to assess A at that moment in time. The SPSO found that there was sufficient evidence to indicate that the council had a statutory duty to investigate the circumstances and put in place an action to safeguard A's welfare.

The SPSO found that the council followed the ASP process reasonably, seeking input from C and relevant professionals. A number of actions were agreed to ensure that both C and A had the support they needed in place and once it was established that the appropriate support was in place the ASP process was ended. The SPSO were also satisfied that it was reasonable for certain meetings to take place without C and A's involvement. Therefore, the SPSO did not uphold this part of C's complaint.

C also complained about the council's communication in respect of these matters. The SPSO found that the council had attempted to communicate clearly and openly with C. The SPSO considered that the circumstances themselves and the stress and anxiety involved likely contributed to a breakdown in communication. Therefore, the SPSO did not uphold this part of C's complaint.

4. 2022/23 Complaint Summary

In 2022/23, the council received 866 valid complaints and this represents an increase of 17 from the 2021/22 figure of 849.

85.6% of all complaints closed by the council were resolved at Stage One (Frontline Resolution), 9.3% of complaints resolved at Stage Two (Investigation) with the remaining 5% of complaints being resolved at Stage Two – Escalated.

The average times taken by the council to resolve Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated complaints were 5.7 days, 27.7 days and 31.6 days respectively. The council's overall performance relating to the timeliness of processing complaints has decreased for all stages. Processing timeliness for Stage Two complaints has decreased by approximately 10%. Of the 76 Stage Two complaints, only 30 were answered on time. That said, the council's performance in closing complaints on time at Stage One is better than the Family Group and only 2% lower than the Scottish Averages and accounts for 85.6% of all the complaints submitted. SBC's performance at Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated complaints is worse than the Family Group and Scottish Averages.

77.3% of Stage One complaints were closed within 5 days and 39.5% of Stage Two complaints were closed within 20 days, which is a drop of 10% when compared to 2021/22. The percentages in 2020/21 & 2021/22 were 66% and 49.6% respectively. 26.8% of Stage Two - Escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days compared to 27.6% in 2021/22. The Scottish National Average for 2022-23 is 75% and 70.1% for Stage One and Stage Two resolution respectively. SBC's performance at Stage One in relation to the Scottish and Family Group averages is positive. The Scottish National Average for 2022-23 for Stage Two - Escalated complaints is 57.7%.

In 2021 the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman introduced a fifth outcome for complaints. This is called Resolved. In 2022/23 SBC was able to measure the numbers of Resolved and partially upheld complaints for the first time from October 2022 when the new system was introduced. There are some teething issues with the use of the resolved outcome category because the outcome is not being used as it is sometimes being confused with closing a complaint. Unfortunately, this means that the Resolved figures are higher than they should be.

The percentage of Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated complaints that were upheld in 2022/23 were 39.5%, 38.2% and 43.9% respectively. SBC's upheld rates were higher than the Scottish National Averages for 2022/23 that were 39.3%, 30.4% and 22.4%.

SBC's upheld rates have dropped significantly compared to 2021/22, this is because from October 2022 we have been recording partially upheld as an outcome. Previously complaints in this category would have been part of the upheld figures. By now recording partially upheld outcomes, this allows us to better benchmark with the Family Group and Scottish Average.

2022/23 is also the first time that SBC have reported on the reasons for invalid complaints. This was following a request from Elected Members for more information relating to invalid complaints. It should be noted that approximately half the invalid complaints are actually classed as first-time requests for a service, which fall outwith the scope of the complaints procedure. In addition, approximately 74% of these invalid complaints are raised by customers themselves using an online form.

In 2022/23, the number of surveys issued decreased significantly compared to 2021/22. However, we achieved a return rate of 19.1%, which was up from 17% in 2021/22. The percentage of customers either fairly or very satisfied has increased with 45% fairly or very satisfied. We continue to have more customers say they are fairly satisfied with the handling of their complaint than any of the other categories. See Figure 2.

The survey question that received the highest satisfaction levels was, I found it easy to make my complaint – 60.4%. The survey question that received the lowest satisfaction levels was, Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint – 50.0%.

In 2022/23, the Council also received approximately 110 unsolicited comments and compliments for the services provided. This was a slight decrease from 112 in 2021/22. Of these 80 were compliments. These compliments related to areas such as curb-side waste and recycling, roads, community recycling centers, neighbourhoods, cemeteries, adult social care and customer services.

Overall, there has been a decrease in both the numbers of complaints received and closed in 2022/23 compared to the previous year. In 2022/23, for the first time we have recorded partially upheld and resolved complaints. This has had an impact on the upheld and not upheld complaint statistics. Given partially upheld and resolved have only been recorded since October 2022, it will take another year of reporting before we can meaningfully benchmark these statistics. The council's performance relating to the processing of complaints performs well against the Scottish National averages in some indicators, specifically those relating to Stage One, but performance is poorer in relation to indicators that measure timeliness of responses. Work continues to be done on pursuing overdue complaints more vigorously, which will hopefully have a positive impact on the indicators in 2023/24.

5.   Live Borders Complaints

Live Borders has a Complaints Handling Procedure that aligns with SBC's and the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP). The Volume of all complaints, comments and compliments for 2022/23 are presented below as well as overall figures for 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 for comparison. Figures for 2020/21 are missing due to service closures for much of the year as a result of Covid.

Complaints 2022/23	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/23	2021/22	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Price	0	2	0	0	2	7	4	8	14	16
Booking/access/info	11	9	9	13	42	32	61	87	55	78
Quality	7	6	10	4	27	17	45	47	47	27
Staff attitude	1	2	1	3	7	5	9	19	11	4
Other	2	7	3	5	17	24	37	21	47	8
Total	**21**	**26**	**23**	**25**	**95**	**85**	**156**	**181**	**174**	**133**
Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	72	87	64
Compliments					21	14	25	12	21	8

The number of complaints recorded has increased from 85 in 2021/22 to 95 in 2022/23. However, this is still a decreased since 2019/20 when there were 156 complaints. In 2022/23 there were no recorded comments and number of compliments has increased by a third.

Channel:
In 2022/23 83% of complaints were received via email of the website with the remaining 17% by telephone of letter.

Price:
The number of complaints concerning price (2%) continues to indicate that our price point is right for the Borders.

Booking / access/ information:
This continues to be the main cause for complaint (44%). We have introduced a new app which greatly simplifies the booking process and we hope to see a decrease in the number of complaints concerning booking / access /information going forward.

Staff Attitude:
In 2022/23 the number of complaints about staff attitude has increased slightly from 6% in 2021/22 to 7%.

Quality:
The number of complaints concerning quality has increased from 20% in 2021/22 to 28% in 2022/23. They concerned temperatures and cleanliness in the main and 66% of these were upheld

Other:
There were a number of other complaints (18%) and several of these concerned noise, from children playing outside a community centre to a town hall clock chiming during the night.

Complaints Received	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Stage 1	21	23	21	25	90
Stage 2	0	1	1	0	2
Stage 2 - Escalated	0	2	1	0	3
Total received	21	26	23	25	95
Received online	1	7	10	7	25
% received online	4.8%	26.9%	43.5%	28.0%	**26.3%**
Complaints received per 1,000 population	**0.18**	**0.22**	**0.20**	**0.22**	**0.82**

Complaints Closed	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Stage 1	21	22	22	25	90
Stage 2	0	1	1	0	2
Stage Two - Escalated	0	1	2	0	3
Total Complaints Closed	**21**	**24**	**25**	**25**	**95**

Compliant Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Stage 1					
Upheld (No.s)	3	8	9	13	33
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	14.3%	36.4%	40.9%	52.0%	36.7%
Not Upheld (No.s)	14	10	9	7	40
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	66.7%	45.5%	40.9%	28.0%	44.4%
Partially Upheld (No.s)	4	5	3	5	17
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	19.0%	22.7%	13.6%	20.0%	18.9%
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Stage 2					
Upheld (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Upheld (No.s)	0	1	0	0	1
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	100%	0%	0%	50.0%
Partially Upheld (No.s)	0	0	1	0	1
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	50.0%	0%	33.3%
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Compliant Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Stage Two - Escalated					
Upheld (No.s)	0	1	1	0	2
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	100%	50.0%	0%	66.7%
Not Upheld (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Partially Upheld (No.s)	0	1	0	0	1
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	50.0%	0%	0%	33.3%
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Closed within authorised timescale	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Closed at stage 1 within 5 working days	19	18	19	23	79
% Closed at stage 1 within 5 working days	90.5%	78.3%	90.5%	92.0%	87.8%
Closed at stage 2 within 20 working days	0	1	1	0	2
% Closed at stage 2 within 20 working days	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%
Stage Two - Escalated and closed within 20 working days	0	1	1	0	2
% Stage Two - Escalated and closed within 20 working days	0%	50.0%	100%	0%	66.7%

Average time (working days) spent responding to complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2022/23
Stage 1	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.9
Stage 2	0.0	6.0	17.0	0.0	5.8
Stage 2 - Escalated	0.0	20.0	19.0	0.0	9.8

5.1 Live Borders Learning from Complaints

Staff Attitude:
In one case a child was upset at their swimming lessons, we engaged with the parent with understanding, resulting in the child being moved to an earlier lesson time when they were less tired.

5.2   2022/23 Comments & Compliments

Compliments are shared with our staff or the facility concerned, and the upward management structure. Compliments in the main are about our staff, their friendliness, helpfulness and knowledge. We are proud of our people.

An Example includes:

"The transformation in his confidence, ability and most importantly his enjoyment of swimming has been vast since he started with you. It is a joy to watch you working with the children. You are so enthusiastic and encouraging, which clearly makes the children enthusiastic too".

Scottish Borders COUNCIL

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Report by Director Resilient Communities

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   This report sets of a series of recommendations to the Executive Committee following the review of financial support community councils which was undertaken by a short life working group following agreement by the Executive Committee in June 2023.

1.2   Scottish Borders Council currently provides iro £80,696 by way of financial support to community councils per year. This can vary due to the amount of funding claimed via reimbursement or changes to insurance premiums.

1.3   Area of financial support considered during this review were:
   a) Annual support grant
   b) Insurance
   c) Local community paths maintenance grant
   d) Hall hire reimbursement
   e) Data protection renewals

1.4   A comprehensive survey of community councils was carried out between 20/07/23 – 16/08/23, the results of which were used alongside information obtained from annual accounts, to understand the financial pressures on community councils and to inform the review.

1.5   A total of 38 community councils responded to the survey. This represented a 55% response rate. Community councils from all localities responded representing at least 50% of operational community councils in each annual support grant bracket.

1.6   When asked whether the support grant covered all costs five community councils responded that it did while 33 said it didn't. Of these, 20 community councils said that they took steps to identify funding elsewhere while 13 said that they are limited in what they do.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee agrees:-

a) **Increase the annual community council support grant by 10% representing a budget increase of £4,970,**
b) **Review the annual support grant every three years,**
c) **Limit spend of the annual support grant to operational matters in the first instance and other initiatives thereafter,**
d) **Disallow community councils from using of the annual support grant to fund third party organisations,**
e) **Cover the cost of all community council insurance premiums, capped at the current level of assets and events, at an additional cost of approximately £6,000 for 2024/25 allowing for annual increases thereafter,**
f) **Increase the maximum local community paths maintenance grant to £600 per applicant, representing a budget increase of £5,100,**
g) **Officers to support a review of Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network to consider the establishment of locality-based networks in consultation with community councils,**
h) **Maintain SBCCN annual grant at current level to be reviewed once the future of SBCCN has been agreed, and**
i) **The wider support available to community councils to be reviewed.**

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   There are currently 69 community council areas in the Scottish Borders. As of October 2023 there were community councils operational in 66 of these areas, the exceptions being Ayton, Jed Valley and Maxton & Mertoun, it should be noted that an election has been called for Ayton Community Council.

3.2   The last review of financial support was undertaken in 2009 with recommendations presented to, and agreed by, Council in October that year. Since 2009 the financial support provided has been enough to cover the cost of the core functions of community councils. However, the sharp rise in inflation has seen costs rise to a level that community councils are struggling to meet.

3.3   At their meeting on 13 June 2023 the Executive Committee agreed that a short life Member/Officer Working Group be established to undertake a review of financial support to community councils, report back to the Executive Committee, and agreed changes fed into the budget setting process for 2024/25.

3.4   Members on the Working Group were:

  • Cllr Pam Brown
  • Cllr Caroline Cochrane (Chair)
  • Lynne Cuerden (Democratic Services - support)
  • Tracey Hutchison/Ross Oliver (Finance)
  • Graeme Johnstone (Economic Development – Pathways Maintenance Grant only)
  • Clare Malster (Communities & Partnerships)
  • Cllr Aileen Orr
  • Cllr Neil Richards
  • Cllr Eric Small

3.5   The Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils is currently being reviewed although it is not expected that any recommendations in this report will be affected by that piece of work.

4   FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS

4.1   Currently, financial support to community councils is as follows:

Table 1: Financial support to community councils.

Support	Financial cost to SBC
Annual support grant	£50,950 [1]
Data Protection renewal	£2,760
Insurance [2]	£5,995.92 (2023/24)
Hall hire reimbursement [3]	£5,991.02 (cost for last pre-Covid claims 2019/20)
Local community paths maintenance grant	£15,000
Total costs [2]	**£80,696.94**

[1] Includes £1,250 grant to Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network
[2.] Hall hire reimbursement and insurance costs generally increase year on year
[3] With the exception of the path maintenance grant all funding is top sliced from the Neighbourhood Support Fund.

5   INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE REVIEW

5.1   A comprehensive survey was issued to all community councils, the results of which were used alongside information obtained from annual accounts, to understand the financial pressures on community councils and to inform the review.

5.2   A total of 38 community councils responded to the survey. This represented a 55% response rate. Community councils from all localities responded representing at least 50% of operational community councils in each annual support grant bracket.

Table 2: Responses by locality

Locality	No. of CC responding (operational CCs in locality)
Berwickshire	12 (20)
Cheviot	15 (13)
Eildon	9 (13)
Teviot & Liddesdale	5 (8)
Tweeddale	7 (12)

Table 3: Responses by grant level

Annual support grant	No. of CC responding (operational CCs in receipt of grant at this level)
£540	14 (20)
£630	16 (32)
£990	4 (8)
£1,365	3 (4)
£1,780	1 (2)

5.3   In analysing the data it was found that the number of times a community council met a year bore no relationship to the amount of the support grant that was spent, with 33 community councils indicating that they spent between 76-100% of the grant each year; spend by meeting frequency is set out below.

Table 4: Percentage of CC grant spend by number of meetings per year

% of grant spent / year	No. of meetings year								Total
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
26-50%	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	**1**
51-75%	1	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	**4**
76–100%	-	7	4	1	1	8	6	6	**33**
Total	**1**	**8**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**10**	**6**	**6**	**38**

5.4 When asked whether the support grant covers all costs five community councils responded that it did while 33 said it didn't. Of these, 20 community councils said that they took steps to identify funding elsewhere while 13 said that they are limited in what they do.

5.5 Information was submitted about where the financial pressures lay, these included: floral displays, Christmas decorations/trees/lights, community councillor expenses, maintenance of defibrillators, insurance and venues for community meetings (e.g. wind farms).

6   AGREEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 In arriving at each of the recommendations included in this report the Working Group considered each area of financial support provided by SBC to community councils as set out in Table 1 above. These recommendations are set out in sections 7 – 12 below.

7   ANNUAL SUPPORT GRANT

7.1 The annual support grant is currently structured in five bands based on the population of the community council area:

Table 5: Community council funding levels

Population	Funding	No. of CCs
Over 10,000	£1,780	2
4,000 – 10,000	£1,365	4
2,000 – 4,000	£990	8
500 – 2,000	£630	34
Under 500	£540	21

Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network receives annual core funding of £1,250 (SBCCN is covered in section 12 below).

7.2 There is set criteria in place that a community council must meet before the annual support grant is awarded:
   a) Submission of annual accounts
   b) Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Community Councils
   c) Completion of an evaluation setting out how the previous year's grant was spent
   d) No more than the equivalent of two years annual grant held by way of reserves, excluding money ring fenced for specific initiatives.

7.3 Research into how the community council support grant is structured in other local authority areas shows that others also award a grant based on population. This is a mix of fixed funding bands (as with SBC) and a flat rate topped up by an allow per head of population.

7.4 It is recognised that the current grant isn't enough, for the most part, for community councils to operate and deliver community initiatives within their area, particularly following the sharp rise in costs over the past 12 months.

7.5 The purpose of the annual support grant (ASG) is set out in the Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils:

"All monies received by a Community Council, whether by way of grant, gift or loan, shall be applied to maintain its administrative structure and/or to further the objects of such Council."

7.6 The defined purpose enables community councils to use the support grant to cover costs incurred from the wide range of work that they are involved in, including floral displays and Christmas lights/decorations as well as costs incurred from resilience work.

7.7 Recognising the huge variety of work that community councils undertake in their areas it is not proposed to make large changes to how the annual support grant can be spent. However, there are some occasions when the annual support grant is used to cover costs that could be funded elsewhere e.g., SBC's Neighbourhood Support Fund or National Lottery Awards for All. It is therefore being recommended that the purpose of the support grant be changed to state that it should be used to cover operating costs in the first instance, e.g. stationery, expenses, preparation of accounts and memberships / subscriptions. Once all operating costs have been covered any remainder can be used to support other costs the community council may incur. This will allow flexibility to continue to use the annual grant to cover costs, such as electricity for Christmas lights, which can't be met elsewhere. A team of Community Engagement Officers, within SBC's Community & Partnerships Team, can support groups, including community councils, to identify and apply for funding from other sources.

7.8 It is also recommended that money from the support grant can no longer be used to fund other community groups / organisations (53% of community councils who responded to the survey said that they give donations/grants to other community groups). Any groups requiring financial support should be encouraged to contact the Communities & Partnerships team for help and advice to access funding. This is not seen as penalising community groups but will help to ease the financial pressure on community councils, which are sometimes seen as the first port of call for funding by local groups, and will also help other groups build up knowledge about other sources of funding and develop their capacity.

7.9 When considering the financial pressures being experienced by community councils the Working Group agreed that the level of grant should be increased. Mindful of the budget pressures faced by Scottish Borders Council the proposed increase has been set at 10%. Whilst a conservative increase given that the grant had not been reviewed since 2009 it is

anticipated that other recommendations contained in this report will help to alleviate the financial pressure on community councils.

7.10 Increasing the support grant by 10% would cost SBC an additional £4,970 p/a. It is recommended that the grant be reviewed every three years going forward.

7.11 As previously stated, there has been no increase in the level of support grant since 2009. However, during this period community councils have increased the level and range of work they do. In some instances the community council may be the only, or best placed, community group able to take on initiatives within their towns and villages such as environmental enhancement (flower displays/planters) or responsibility for Christmas lights.

7.12 The ask of community councils from SBC has also increased. During the Covid pandemic the community council-led resilience groups were central to the Borders response. The resilience groups are also vital during times of severe weather, for example Storm Arwen, not only for their presence 'on the ground' but knowledge of the local situation and who may be most at risk.

7.13 Not providing a suitable level of funding to cover operational costs, and initiatives that can't be funded from other sources, could be viewed as SBC not valuing community councils and the work they do. This not only presents a reputational risk to SBC but could lead to a reduction in the number of people joining community councils, resulting in them falling into abeyance, if people do not feel that their work is valued.

8   INSURANCE PREMIUM COSTS

8.1   Scottish Borders Council covers the cost of standard insurance for all community councils in the Borders. This is provided by Zurich Municipal via the insurance team at City of Edinburgh Council through a shared service agreement.

8.2   Standard insurance cover comprises:

a)   Money
b)   Basic public liability
c)   Employers liability*
d)   Personal accident cover
e)   Employees personal accident cover*

*This cover is added by request and is currently in place for five community councils

8.3   Community councils that own assets e.g. Christmas lights, defibrillators or gazebos, or who run community events, and therefore require additional insurance cover are required to meet the additional cost themselves. This isn't paid for by SBC as it is for things that are over and above the core purpose of community councils which is:

"The general purpose of a Community Council is to find out, co-ordinate and express to Scottish Borders Council, and other public authorities, the views

of the community which it represents in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible."

8.4   Research into the arrangements in other local authority areas shows a mix of support with some areas covering the cost of all insurance while others pay for standard cover only. In some areas the community councils themselves are responsible for arranging cover which is then reimbursed by the local authority.

8.5   In 2023/24 40 community councils took out all risks cover (for assets owned) and/or public liability cover for events. Costs incurred ranged from £61.60 to £639.52 (representing between 5% – 36% of the annual grant).

8.6   As community councils take on more and more within their communities they incur increased additional costs to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place. Some equipment being insured is linked to resilience work and has been obtained by community councils over and above that supplied by SBC. Not supporting this cost in some way could pose a reputational risk to SBC being seen as increasing the ask of community councils but not the financial support. This could lead to community councils reducing the amount of work they undertake (incl. resilience work) or opting to not take out appropriate levels of insurance cover.

8.7   To reduce this financial pressure on community councils it is recommended that SBC meets the full cost of the insurance premium for all cover required by community councils - capped at the current level.

8.8   Based on the cost of the additional premiums incurred in 2023/24 it is estimated that an increase in budget of £6,000, allocated to the Communities & Partnerships Team, would be required for 2024/25. An annual increase should be built into this to allow for price increases as a result of cost increases within the sector.

8.9   Capping support for insurance costs at the current level would mean that the cost of insuring assets and events, currently insured (and on the insurance renewal form for 2023/24), would be met by SBC going forward. A community council would be responsible for the cost of insuring any additional assets and events, added to the policy from 2024/25 onwards.

8.10 It is anticipated that SBC paying the insurance premium cost, of assets and events currently insured, will reduce the financial pressure on community councils. It is also anticipated that the requirement for community councils to meet the cost of any assets and events added to the policy will encourage them to identify ways to cover those costs, at the earliest opportunity.

8.11 From 2024/25 community councils will be asked to submit an asset register annually. This will identify the items they own and set out what should happen to the assets should the community council fall into abeyance.

9   LOCAL COMMUNITY PATHS MAINTENANCE GRANT

9.1   The Local Community Paths Maintenance Grant is available to reimburse annual expenses incurred up to the value of £450 for local path

maintenance or improvements undertaken. This includes grass cutting, vegetation removal, surfacing, installation of gates, etc. and can be used towards the purchase of relevant tools and machinery. The total annual budget is £15,000.

9.2   The grant was last reviewed in 2002/03 when it was increased from a maximum of £300 to £450 per applicant.

9.3   Over the last six years an average of 34 community councils received the grant each year with an average award of £400. In 2022/23 18 community councils applied for more than the maximum award of £450.

9.4   Of the 38 community councils that completed the survey 24 received the grant, 11 of these said that all their costs were covered while 13 said that only some of their costs were covered.

9.5   A cost benefit analysis has shown that in 2022/23, a total of 2,007.25 hours were spent on pathway maintenance by volunteers and contractors undertaking work on behalf of community councils, this equates to an hourly rate of £5.94. In the same year 18 claims for payments above the cap of £450 were received.

9.6   Not covering all costs could pose a reputational risk to SBC and result in some community councils restricting the amount of path maintenance they undertake; this would result in an increase in costs if SBC was required to carry out this work. It is therefore being recommended that the maximum grant be increased from £450 to £600 per applicant. This would represent an annual budget increase of £5,100 to be allocated to the Countryside Access Team.

10   DATA PROTECTION

10.1 Scottish Borders Council covers the cost and administration of data protection renewals. The annual fee is currently £40 per community council, having been increased from £35 in 2018/19.

10.2 It is not proposed to make any changes to this support.

11   HALL HIRE REIMBURSEMENT

11.1 Scottish Borders Council provides free use of premises owned and under its control for the purposes of holding Community Council meetings; where such accommodation is not available 100% of hire costs are reimbursed.

11.2 Due to the increase in energy costs it is expected that we will see an increase in the level of claims for meeting room hire reimbursements in 2023/24, which are paid a year in arrears. However, it is anticipated that we will be able to meet any increase from an underspend in annual support grant payments this year due to three community councils being in abeyance. Once we have up to date costs, we will be better placed to forecast future spend.

11.3 It is not proposed to make any changes to the arrangements for this support.

12 SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY COUNCILS' NETWORK

12.1 The support provided to Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network was also considered in the review.

12.2 SBCCN was established in 1999 and currently receives an annual grant of £1,250 to support it in its role "to promote and support community councils in the Scottish Borders and to provide a collective view of the community councils on regional issues to SBC, the Government and others."

12.3 Questions about Scottish Borders Community Councils Network (SBCCN) were included in the survey of community councils to best understand whether it is delivering what is needed by community councils.

12.4 Community councils were asked whether they attend SBCCN meetings, whether they think SBCCN is meetings its purpose and objectives and if there is anything that it could be doing differently.

12.5 SBCCN has an important role to play in facilitating community council peer support and representing community councils across the Borders. Comments received submitted in the survey suggest that that this role may not be being fulfilled at the moment. The Working Group considered the responses and recommends that officers support the Network to review its purpose and objectives in line with comments received and in consultation with community councils. Consideration should be given as to whether locality community council networks would better address the needs of community councils rather than a single body. Excluding Berwickshire community councils, where a local community council forum is already in place, 32% of survey respondents indicated that they would attend a locality-based forum while 3% said they wouldn't. 34% indicated that they possibly would attend or weren't sure.

12.6 Berwickshire Community Councils Forum (BCCF) is the collective community council body in place in Berwickshire. BCCF provides opportunities for community councils in Berwickshire to come together and share information, exchange ideas, discuss community council issues and anything else relevant to them as community councils. BCCF is self-managing and self-funding.

12.7 It is recommended that any increase to the annual grant be reviewed once the future shape of SBCCN had been agreed.

13 OTHER SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS

13.1 While this review only looked at financial matters, it is recommended that the wider support available to community councils is reviewed. To assist with such work questions were included in the survey about support required by community councils, over and above funding.

14 SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO COMMUNITY COUNCIL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

14.1 If agreed the recommendations in this report will have the following impacts on community councils:

14.2 Increased level of grant to all community councils as set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Increased community council funding levels

Population	Funding	No. of CCs
Over 10,000	£1,958	2
4,000 – 10,000	£1,501	4
2,000 – 4,000	£1,089	8
500 – 2,000	£693	34
Under 500	£594	21

14.3 The annual support grant would be reviewed every three years.

14.4 The purpose of the grant would be restricted to covering operational costs in the first instance. Once operational costs have been covered the balance can be used to fund other work undertaken by the community council. A list of things deemed to be operational costs will be circulated to all community councils.

14.5 Community councils would no longer be able to give grants/donations using money from the annual support grant to other groups/ organisations. Instead, these groups should be encouraged to contact the Communities & Partnerships Team to discuss other options for grant funding. It is anticipated that this could have a two-fold benefit:
   i.   Remove the call on community councils to use the annual support grant to fund things that could be funded elsewhere, and
   ii. Help groups to build up their knowledge of grant funding options that can fund both small and larger scale projects. In some instances, this may reduce the need for community groups to go to a number of funders for a small amount of money if one funder is able to fund all project costs.

14.6 All insurance costs, as they currently stand, would be paid for by Scottish Borders Council. Based on 2023/24 costs this would represent a financial benefit to community councils of between £61.60 and £639.52. Insurance cover for any new assets or events would need to be funded by community councils.

14.7 The maximum reimbursement available for local community path maintenance would be increased from £450 to £600 per community council.

14.8 Officers will support Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network, in consultation with community councils, to review its purpose and objectives and consider the establishment of locality-based networks.

14.9 SBCCN's annual support grant will not be increased but reviewed once its future has been agreed.

14.10   The wider support, e.g. training, will be reviewed.

15   IMPLICATIONS

15.1 **Financial**
The financial implications contained in the report are:
   a) 10% increase in the annual support grant, totalling an additional £4,970 allocated to the budget held by the Communities & Partnerships Team
   b) An additional £6,000 (2024/25) to cover the All Risks and Public Liability (Events) insurance premiums, capped at current level of cover, for community councils allowing for a year-on-year increase to allow for price rises. This to be allocated to the Communities & Partnerships Team.
   c) Increasing the budget held by the Countryside Access Team to enable the Local Communities Pathway Maintenance Grant to be increased from £450 to £600. A total budget increase of £5,100.
   d) Review of the Scheme in three years' time.
   e) Increase to be included as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process.

The total financial implications are £16,070 for 2024/25 with a year-on-year increase for insurance costs thereafter.

15.2 **Risk and Mitigations**
The report fully describes all the elements of risk and mitigation that have been identified and are included in sections 7 – 9.

It is also highlighted that in October 2023, 15 community council areas, out of 30, in the Western Isles were facing uncertainty due to a lack of volunteer members. In five areas no nominations were received in the recent community council elections, while another 10 districts, received too few nominations to formally establish a community council. Although the reasons for the lack of people coming forward are not specified it is a reminder that the existence of community councils is reliant on volunteers within our communities.

15.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**
An integrated impact assessment has been completed for the proposals contained in this report. While it is anticipated that the proposals would have a positive effect on the relationship between SBC and community councils there are no impacts foreseen on those with protected characteristics specifically. Similarly, the proposals in this report are not expected to specifically impact on the groups listed under the Fairer Scotland Duty.

15.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**
Providing improved financial support to community councils may have a positive impact on community involvement through the recognition that SBC puts on the work undertaken by community councils. This contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

15.5 **Climate Change**
The proposals contained in this report have been assessed to have no impact on climate change.

15.6 **Rural Proofing**
   N/a

15.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**
   There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

15.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
   There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

16   CONSULTATION

16.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council, Insurance Manager and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name: Jenni Craig   **Title: Director Resilient Communities**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Clare Malster	Participation Officer, 01835 826626

Background Papers: Review of financial support to community councils – survey responses
Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee, 13 June 2023

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Clare Malster can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at: Clare Malster, 01838 826626, cmalster@scotborders.gov.uk

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Scottish Borders Council

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1   Details of the Proposal

A. Title of Proposal:	Review of financial support to community councils
B. What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice ☐ A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice X
C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)	The review sought to understand the financial pressures on community councils and identify ways in which SBC address these.
D. Service Area: Department:	Communities & Partnerships Resilient Communities
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Clare Malster, Participation Officer
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	12/10/2023

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Section 2   Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

No *(please delete as applicable)*
If yes, - please state here:

Section 3   Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:

Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010?
(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter "No" and go to Section 3.2.)

Equality Duty	Reasoning:
A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*	
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? *(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)*	
C. Foster good relations? *(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)*	It is expected that increasing the financial support to community councils would be viewed as a positive move by SBC and would help maintain good relations between community councils and SBC.

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Revised February 2023

3.2	**Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)**			

Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.

	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics. There is no anticipated impact on anyone because of a particular equality characteristic.
Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Gender Reassignment/ Gender Identity anybody whose gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to **maternity** leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, **protection** against **maternity** discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.

travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)				
Religion or Belief: different beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief)	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.
Sexual Orientation, e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	X			It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on community councils and all those involved with them regardless of equality characteristics.

3.3   Fairer Scotland Duty

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?

Yes *(please delete as applicable)*

If No go to Section 4

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	**Positive Impact**	**Negative Impact**	

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Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport)	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Looked after and accommodated children and young people	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Carers paid and unpaid including family members	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Homelessness	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Addictions and substance use	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will

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				impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.
Those involved within the criminal justice system	X			The proposals entail financial support for the operation of community councils; it is not anticipated that they will impact on this group directly but on community councils as a whole.

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty *(Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only)*	
This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters. This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families. **Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?** **No** If "Yes", please complete below	
Covenant Duty	**How this has been considered and any specific provision made:**
The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;	

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The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;	
The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.	

Section 4 Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered "No" to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes (please delete as applicable)

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

A full impact assessment has not been completed as although the proposals in the report are strategic (funding) they impact on the operation of community councils not any groups identified above.

Revised February 2023

Signed by Lead Officer:	Clare Malster
Designation:	Participation Officer
Date:	12 October 2023
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

8

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL LOCAL FESTIVAL GRANT SCHEME REVIEW

Report by Director – Resilient Communities

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to advise Members on the outcomes of a review of the Local Festival Grant Scheme (LFGS) and seeks approval for an increase in funding to the Scheme from 2024/25 onwards.**

1.2   The paper provides feedback gathered from stakeholders as part of the review process.

1.3   This report requires Members to consider the proposed funding increase of the Scheme by £30,000 to be used for insurance, public protection and health and safety costs. The membership of the Scheme would be maintained and would not be extended to include new festivals or events.

1.4   Festivals whose annual support grant does not fully cover their insurance and public protection costs, can apply for an additional grant of up to 50% of their annual support grant, from 2024/25 onwards. All festivals within the Scheme can apply for funding to support health and safety costs. It is proposed that decision making should be made at Officer level with final approval and sign off by the Director, Resilient Communities.

1.5   This report also asks Members to consider proposals for in-kind support for festivals and events delivered across Scottish Borders.

1.6   The Scheme will be reviewed every three years with the next review due to take place in 2026/27.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee approves:-**

(a)   **The recommendation that the total monies available in the Local Festival Grant Scheme be increased from £85,110 to £115,110.**

(b)   **The recommendation that decision making for additional grant awards as detailed in Section 6 of the report be agreed at Officer level with final approval and sign off by the Director, Resilient Communities**

(c)   **The recommendation for Officers to explore the opportunities for in-kind support from SBC for local festivals and events.**

(d)   **The recommendation for festival and event organisers to have access to a digital SBC Community Events toolkit which will provide guidance and information for those hosting local events.**

(e)   **The recommendation for Officers to strengthen grant evaluations to gather information on the economic and social benefits festivals bring to the local area.**

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   On 29 March 2005, the Executive Committee agreed recommendations made by a Working Group which was established to put forward proposals for the provision of grants to Community Councils, Local Festivals etc.

3.2   New levels of funding for 30 Local Festivals, based on populations and the inclusion of horse cavalcades for the larger festivals (populations to 3,500), were approved and automatic grant allocations were put in place.

3.3   The approved grant levels reflected;

- The increased cost of insurance and
- The increased costs of public protection measures for festivals with horse cavalcades

3.4   Subsequent amendments were made to the Scheme on 22 January 2013 to remove Reston which was no longer operating and to create a Grouping 4a to provide an enhancement to the Yetholm Festival Week in recognition of it having a horse cavalcade. In 2015/16 it was agreed to include Burnfoot Carnival and increase the total budget of the Scheme to £85,110.28 (see Appendix 1). There have been no additions to the Scheme since then.

3.5   The total value of LFGS grants claimed in 2022/23 was £78,875. Of this, £48,993.75 (63.73%) was spent on insurance and public protection. £28,796.67 was spent on other festival costs including venue hire, media, catering and decorations (see Appendix 2).

3.6   In June 2023, The Executive approved a review of the LFGS by an Elected Member/Officer Working Group in response to festivals highlighting increasing financial pressures in operating costs as well as festivals and events sitting outside the LFGS, requesting financial support (see Appendix 3).

3.7   As part of the review process, an online consultation was held using Citizenspace to engage with Festival Committees to seek their views on current challenges of organising and delivering an annual festival and what resource they considered necessary to support future delivery of their festival. The consultation was open from 28 July 2023 to 20 September 2023.

3.8   An online consultation was held using Citizenspace to engage with those who are involved in festivals and events but who do not receive an annual support grant as well as those who wished to share their views on how local festivals and events could be supported. The consultation was open from 06 September 2023 until 20 September 2023.

3.9   Information was shared by Police Scotland detailing the services they provide to festivals (see Appendix 4). Police Scotland has advised that their ongoing ability to support festivals is under review. There may be financial implications for festivals next year if Police Scotland are to reduce the support they provide to festivals.

3.10   SBC departments provide a significant range of in-kind services for festivals within the LFGS as well as festivals and events who sit out-with the Scheme. This includes deposit and collection of road barriers, signage and traffic cones. Additional services such as grass cutting, litter picks, road cleans etc are also undertaken during the festival period (see Appendix 5).

3.11   SBC's Festivals and Events Small Grant Scheme is providing grant funding in 2023/24 to support and develop small festivals and events in local communities. Awards of between £3,000 and £5,000 are available.

4   FESTIVAL COMMITTEE CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

4.1   13 festival committees responded to the consultation and one additional response was received when the consultation period was extended providing a total of 14 responses (see Appendix 6). After review of the consultation responses, two further questions were posed by the Working Group and 8 out of the 14 committees provided a response. All of those who responded are involved in organising and delivering a local festival and receives a grant from the LFGS.

4.2   7 (50%) responders reported that their annual support grant is no longer sufficient in covering their insurance and public protection costs which includes toilets, security and first aid costs. The total value of their shortfall in funding is £25,176.87 (see Appendix 6).

4.3   10 (71%) responders have concerns about the financially viability of their festival due to increased operating costs and diminished ability to raise income due to cost of living pressures. Many activities are currently provided free of charge and there are concerns that charges will need to be introduced if running costs continue to increase.

4.4   6 responders (43%) reported that their annual support grant is sufficient in covering their insurance and public protection costs. 11 (79%) responders confirmed that their committee holds cash reserves of more than twice the value of their Local Festival Grant. Many committees anticipate having to use reserves to cover expenses in future if costs continue to rise. 6 responders (43%) do not have a reserves policy.

4.5   Committees found it difficult to quantify in hours the support provided by volunteers but reported a significant contribution with volunteers giving their time throughout the year to plan and deliver the annual festivals. Many committees estimate volunteer hours to run in to the thousands and some volunteers are supporting more than one festival.

4.6   No formal measure of economic benefit is taken by committees but responders reported that the festivals are one of the busiest times of the year for bringing locals together and attracting visitors which has a positive impact on local businesses and the local economy.

4.7   Of the 8 committees who responded to the two additional questions from the working group concerning any plans to review the delivery model of

their festival, one festival reported that they are considering a reduction in the number of events they stage to help manage expenditure. Most reported taking measures to try and reduce expenses by modifying the events they hold, securing sponsorship, introducing a patronage scheme or increasing fundraising efforts. There is however a shared concern amongst the festivals that increasing participation costs will exclude some residents and therefore there are limitations in how much can be raised through charges.

5   NON LFGS CONSULTATION RESPONSES

5.1   29 responses were received in total, 19 (70%) of which were from volunteers who are involved in supporting a local festival or event. There appeared to be no responses from volunteers in the Tweeddale area.

5.2   The 19 responders involved in a supporting a local festival or event reported a range of methods in securing income to host their festival or event including fundraising, grants, chargeable activities, donations and sponsorship.

5.3   Similar to the responses from festival committees within the LFGS, there is a sense that local festivals and events help to bring people together, improve the local economy by attracting visitors, encourage spend with local businesses and helps to create a sense of place and belonging.

5.4   Some festivals and events reported recording the economic impact of their event though this was mainly related to the costs of holding the event and the income generated.

5.5   As with LFGS festivals, there is a significant contribution by volunteers to ensure these festivals and events take place. Over 50% of those who responded have 10+ volunteers supporting their event with the majority of volunteers offering between 1-100 hours.

5.6   Volunteers had completed various training courses in their role including food hygiene, bike training for leaders, First Aid, Walk Leader training, marshalling and child protection.

5.7   23 (79%) responders said that a community events toolkit similar to the version developed in Dumfries and Galloway would be helpful.

5.8   When asked what criteria festivals and events should meet to be eligible for grant funding from public sector bodies, 28 (97%) responders felt community cohesion and involvement should be a factor. 24 (83%) felt the festival or event should be open to all, 23 (79%) thought it should be inclusive to all and support local business, 20 (69%) responders felt it should attract additional visitors and promote Scottish Borders to a wider audience.

5.9   When asked how festivals and events could be supported in Scottish Borders, suggestions included support with the publication of newsletters and posters, support for village halls including the provision of WiFi, a

reduction in bureaucracy and obstacles that make event organisation difficult, a more diverse approach to inclusion (and no funding for events promoting inequalities), help in understanding what funding is available from SBC and the criteria for accessing this funding and an increased focus on cultural creation and heritage (e.g. a writers festival or a history festival), affordable venues. There was also comment that it would be useful to understand the difference between direct costs of holding a festival or event and the income generated.

6   PROPOSAL

6.1   When considering the financial pressures being experienced by LFGS festival committees the Working Group agreed that the level of grant should be increased. Mindful of the budget pressures faced by Scottish Borders Council the proposed increase has been set at £30,000. It was recognised that there has been no financial increase in grants awarded since 2005 and it is anticipated that an increase in grant will enable festivals to manage increased operating costs and satisfy safety requirements.

6.2   The additional grant of £30,000 will be available to LFGS festivals who have a shortfall in funding for their insurance and public protection costs. Festivals will can apply for up to 50% of their annual festival grant. Festivals will be required to submit an application for additional funding which will be assessed against a criteria which considers eligibility, financial need, inclusiveness and community involvement as well as the levels of in-kind support being provided. An equality policy or equalities statement will be required as part of the grant application process along with evidence of costs, annual accounts and constitution.

6.3   Approximately 7 LFGS festivals are known to have a shortfall in their funding for insurance and public protection costs and could potentially benefit from this proposal.

6.4   Festivals who do not have a shortfall in their insurance and public protection costs will be eligible to submit an application to fund health and safety costs. Joint applications from festivals will be considered for items of expenditure which could benefit more than one organisation such as volunteer training.

6.5   Officers will continue to seek opportunities to provide in-kind support for all local festivals and events in response to the suggestions provided in 5.9. This includes increasing awareness of the funding available from SBC and the Expressions of Interest process, supporting groups who would like to develop new festivals and events by providing a community events toolkit as requested, streamlining the process of event organisers contacting multiple SBC departments, work with partner organisations on the accessibility of community venues and the resources available as well as encouraging new volunteers and support groups to consider the environmental sustainability of their event.

6.6   Upon conclusion of this year's Community Festival and Events Small Grant Scheme, Officers will review the distribution of the fund to increase

our understanding and awareness of who is seeking financial assistance and what their ambitions are for the continued delivery of these events.

6.7   Officers will strengthen the evaluation process of the LFGS so that we are better informed of what social and economic benefits festival bring to the local area.

7   IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

The financial implications contained in the report are:

a) 35% increase in the Local Festival Grant Scheme (£30,000) with effect from 2024/25, to cover shortfalls in insurance and public protection costs as well as general health and safety costs.

b) Review of the Scheme in three years' time.

c) Increase to be included as part of the 2024/25 financial planning process.

7.2 Risk and Mitigations

a) To ensure good practice in grant making, Committees must submit their equalities statement in order to receive a LFGS grant along with up-to-date constitutions and annual accounts. For audit purposes, Council will state the purpose of the grant within the grants contract and monitor and evaluate the grant spend. This should be done in a proportionate way commensurate with the level of grant made.

b) Good practice also suggests that risks can be further reduced (for both grant makers and grant recipients) through the provision of advice notes covering relevant legislation changes and signposting to support agencies, enabling the Council to evidence that we have informed the organisations we fund of key changes that may (or may not) impact on their risk levels.

c) Services and support information will continue to be provided by the Safety Advisory Group and the Events Team. Festival Committees will be advised to review their risk assessments in line with this information.

7.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

a) In line with both Council policy and legislative requirement, the Local Festival Grant Scheme Review has been subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment. The outcome of that assessment did not identify any concerns arising from the Scheme potentially adversely impacting on any of the equalities groups.

b) Equalities statements will continue to provided by Festival Committees as part of the grant awardprocess.

7.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

The Council's approach to events will be consistent with UNSDGs that the Council is committed to ['Embedding Sustainable Development' Council, August 2019] which means a responsible approach to materials and resources used at events, the allocation of resources, taking an inclusive approach etc.

7.5 **Climate Change**

The Council has a commitment to the delivery, funding and hosting of sustainable events which is consistent with the principles of SBC's Climate Change Route Map. SBC recognises it needs to play its part with event organisers on sustainability and develop a consistent approach with events of a certain size / scale. Council has an organisational target of net zero by 2045. In delivering support to community events, the Council is committed to ensuring that their events are consistent with organisational ambitions.

7.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

7.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

7.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
No changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of this report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name: Jenni Craig   **Title: Director - Resilient Communities**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jenni Craig	Director, Resilient Communities

| Gillian Jardine | Community Co-ordinator |

Background Papers: Review of Local Festival Grant Scheme support to festivals – survey responses. Review of festival and event support by those who sit out-with the LFGS.

Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee, 13 June 2023

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. The Communities and Partnership team can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Communities and Partnership -
communityengagement@scotborders.gov.uk

LOCAL FESTIVALS FUNDING

	Population in 2014	Max. Grant 2022/23
GROUP 1		
Population over 10,000		
Hawick Common Riding Committee	13,833	£9,300.00
Galashiels Braw Lads Committee	12,365	£9,300.00
GROUP 2		
Population 3,500 - 10,000		
Peebles Beltane Festival	7,853	£6,500.00
Kelso Laddies Association	6,192	£6,500.00
Selkirk Common Riding Trust	5,640	£6,500.00
Jethart Callants Festival	3,946	£6,500.00
GROUP 3A		
Population 1,000 - 3,500 which have horse cavalcades		
Duns Summer Festival	2,479	£3,300.00
Melrose Festival Committee	2,007	£3,300.00
Presenting Coldstream Association	1,839	£3,300.00
West Linton Whipman Play Society	1,457	£3,300.00
Lauder Common Riding Committee	1,109	£3,300.00
GROUP 3B		
Population 1,000 - 3,500 without horse cavalcades		
Eyemouth Herring Queen	3,155	£2,750.00
St. Ronan's Festival Week	3,004	£2,750.00
Burnfoot Community Carnival	2,954	£2,750.00
Tweedbank Fair Committee	2,097	£2,750.00
Earlston Civic Week	1,793	£2,750.00
Chirnside Civic Week	1,244	£2,750.00
St. Boswells Village Committee	1,058	£2,750.00
GROUP 4A		
Population 500 - 1000 which have horse cavalcades		
Yetholm Festival Week	552	£775.00
GROUP 4B		
Population 500 - 1000 without horse cavalcades		
Newcastleton Music Festival	762	£500.00
Walkerburn Summer Festival	720	£500.00
Greenlaw Festival	639	£500.00
Stow Gala Day and Sports Committee	630	£500.00
Coldingham Gala Committee	572	£500.00
GROUP 5		
Population 300 - 500		
Cockburnspath Gala Week		£375.00
Gordon Civic Week		£375.00
Eddleston Summer Festival		£375.00
GROUP 6		

Population 100 - 300
Burnmouth Village Hall Committee   £210.00

GROUP 7
Professional Games
Morebattle Games Committee   £150.00
                                                                        £85,110.00

Appendix 2

Cavalcade
Awarded so far 2022/23

29% £16,320.53
Other Spend

32%
£17,586.73
Insurance

39% £21,467.74
Public Protection

Non-Cavalcade
Awarded so far 2022/23

14% £2,140.92
Insurance

9% £1,298.36 Public
Protection

77% £11,560.72 Other Spend
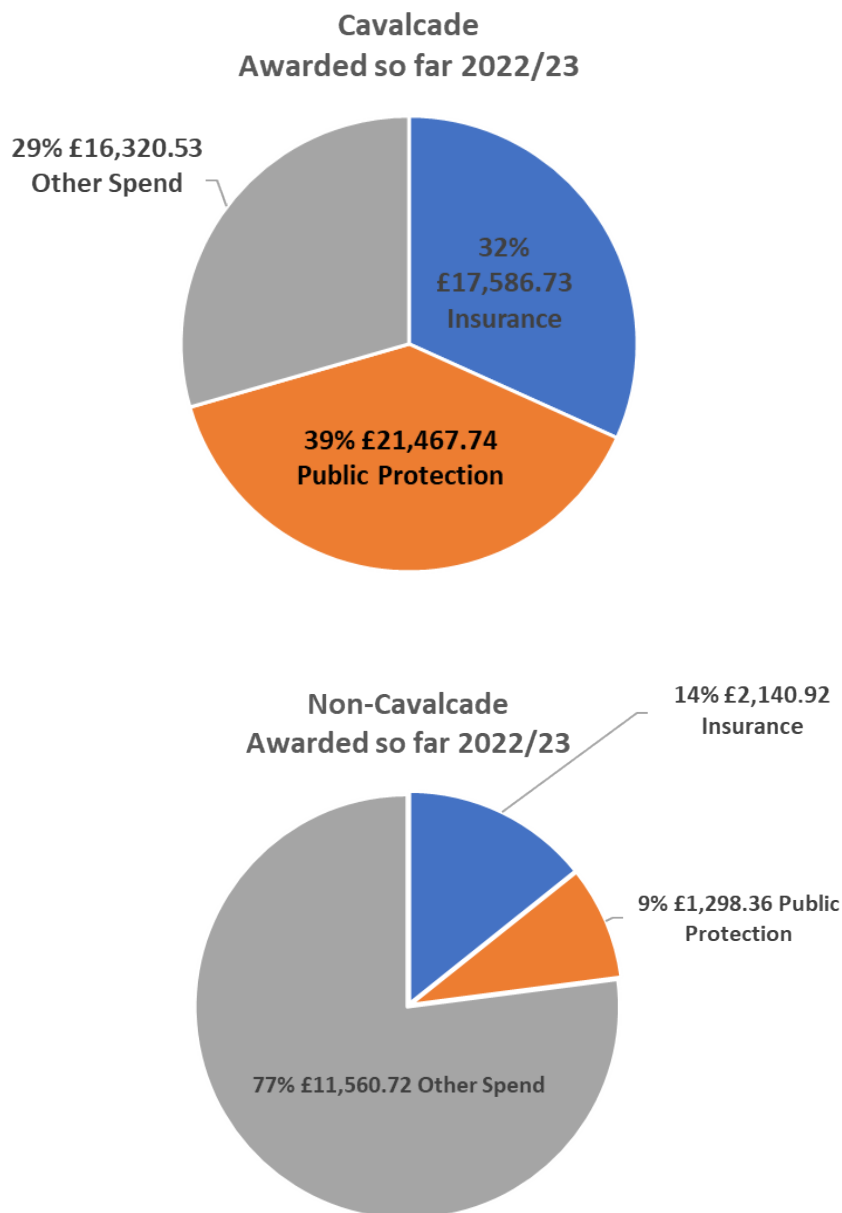
- Total Awarded to date for 2022/23: £76,875

- Spent on Insurance/Public Protection: £48,993.75 (63.73%)

- Spent on Other: £28,796.67

Appendix 3

Annual festivals and events who have enquired about members of the LFGS or how they could secure annual grant funding includes:

- Hawick Reivers Festival
- Alchemy Art Film Festival
- Maroon'd
- Duns Play Fest
- Coldstream Riders Association

Appendix 4

POLICE SCOTLAND FESTIVAL ATTENDACE HOURS	2023
Name of Town & Event	**Total hours**
Burnfoot Carnival	16
Chirnside Civic Week	4
Coldstream	109
Duns Summer Festival (DSM)	132
Earlston Civic Week (ECW)	7
Eyemouth Herring Queen (EHQ)	32
Gala Braw Lads (GBL)	170
Gordon	2
Greenlaw	5
Hawick Common Riding (HCR)	644
Innerleithen - St Ronans (SR) Kirkin	116
Jedburgh Callants Festival (JCF)	160.5
Kelso Laddies (KL)	110
Lauder Common Riding (LCR)	81
Melrose Festival (MF)	56.5
Peebles Beltane Festival (PBF)	133
Selkirk Common Riding (SCR)	108
Stow Sports Week (SSW)	8
Tweedbank Fair (TF)	2
Walkerburn Festival	10
West Linton - Whipman Play (WP)	24
Yetholm – Stobestanes	0

Total Hours	**1,930**

Appendix 5

Support provided by SBC's Environments and Infrastructure Support department during festival period 2022/23:

LFGS Festival	Value of services provided
Coldstream	£1,444.88
Coldingham	£1,230.83
Duns	£517.23
Eyemouth Herring Queen	£1,658.62
Galashiels	£9,803.83
Gordon Civic Week	£6,733.50
Greenlaw Festival	£81.25
Hawick	£6,733.50
Jedburgh	£2,347.08
Kelso	£685.50
Lauder	£1,934.31
Peebles	£9,603.30
Selkirk	£4,818.70
St Ronan's Festival Week	£1,523.25
Stow Gala Day	£465.96
Tweedbank	£253.68
	£49,835.42

Support provided by SBC's Environments and Infrastructure Support department to festivals and events (out-with the LFGS) in 2022/23:

Festival /Event	Value of services provided
Currie Road Car Boot Sale	£542.98
Innerleithen Pipe Band Championships	£1,005.04
Peebles March Junior Ride	£77.60
Jedburgh Seasonal Market	£1,561.72
Galashiels Triathlon	£471.78
Border Counties Rally 2022	£621.08
Kelso 7s	£685.79
Tweedlove Cycle Events	£6,584.07
World Enduro Event (Tweeddale)	£1,073.52
Borders Book Festival	£748.75
Sir Jackie Stewart Classic, Thirlestane	£206.94
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Blainslie	£202.18
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Kelso	£419.72
Borders Vintage Automobile Club	£305.66
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Denholm	£280.14
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Lauder	£456.27
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Tweedsmuir	£310.40
Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event - Coldingham, Chirnside, Burnmouth, St Abbs, Duns, Eyemouth	£617.87
Eyemouth Triathalon	£471.54
Tavern Car Park Event, Eyemouth	£64.67
Mountain bike Event, Satersykes Corner, Innerleithen	£315.88
Maroon'd, Galashiels	£1,853.84
Hawick 7s	£269.58
St. Abbs Gala Day	£686.55
Peebles Show	£277.07
Twilight Walk, Eyemouth	£67.40
Peebles Highland Games	£100.92
Langlee Carnival	£277.87
Eyemouth Remembrance Day Parade	£114.21
Coldstream Remembrance Day Parade	£41.53
Volunteer Hall Parking, Galashiels	£157.97
Selkirk Remembrance Day Parade	£206.94
Peebles Christmas Lights Event	£635.17
Lauder Christmas Lights Festival	£249.37
Halloween Event, Jedburgh	£103.48
Hawick Christmas Event 2022	£675.63
Scotts Selkirk	£437.78
Selkirk Farmers Market	£397.08
Jedburgh Winter Festival	£306.11

Christmas Lights Events, West Linto	£145.35
Doddie Weir Memorial Service, Melrose	£2,146.52
Jedburgh Hand Ba'	£219.48
Hawick Reiver Festival	£420.39
Car Boot Sale - Currie Road, Galashiels	£138.91
Melrose 7s	£3,571.74
Melrose 7s	£6,466.87
Tour Series 2022 - Cycle Event	£4,454.34
Summer Concerts - Floors Castle, Kelso	£496.83
Borders Union Agricultural Show 2022	£723.16
Scott Fest 2022	£366.80
Tour Of Britian 2022 - Cycle Event	£23,296.58
Royal Visit - Galashiels	£51.74
	£66,380.81

Appendix 6

Festival Committee Consultation 2023

Of the 14 committees who returned a consultation response, 7 said their annual support grant does not cover insurance and public protection costs. The responses are assumed to be based on their expenditure in 2023/24 financial year.

Which Festival Committee are you responding on behalf of?	Shortfall in public protection and insurance	Reason
Coldingham Gala Committee	£800	£650 for insurance and £650 for toilets leaves a shortfall of £800
Tweedbank fair		
Kelso Laddies' Association		
Jethart Callant's Festival	£3,000	Referenced increase cost of hiring venues, hiring horses for principles and medical cover
Selkirk Common Riding Trust		
Braw Lads' Gathering		
Hawick Common Riding Committee	£15,681.10	£28,305.32 spent on Insurance - £1709 Toilets - £8752.42 Security - £9384 Police - £3181.2 First Aid/Medical - £2675 Gritting / Bin Hire - £2603.70
Melrose Festival	£686.87	Insurance cover is £3,986.87
Lauder Common Riding		
Greenlaw festival	£200	Not specified
Stow Sports and Gala Day		
The Whipman Play Society	£3,609	Hire of a marquee (£6,909)

Presenting Coldstream Association	£1,200	Not specified
Eyemouth Children's Picnic and Herring Queen Association		
Total	**£25,176.97**	

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SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2023-2028

Report by Director - Infrastructure and Environment

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028 due to be submitted to the Scottish Government in November 2023.

1.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy (LHS), supported by an assessment of housing need and demand. The LHS provides direction for tackling housing issues and informs future investment in housing and related services.

1.3 The new Local Housing Strategy sets strategic outcomes and a delivery plan framework for the period 2023-2028. The strategy brings together the local authority's responses to the whole housing system including; requirements for market and affordable housing; preventing and tackling of homelessness; delivering specialist housing; meeting housing support needs; addressing housing conditions across tenures and improving the energy efficiency of all homes to support a transition to Net Zero.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **The Executive Committee is asked to:**

   (a) Agrees to the submission of the LHS and the action plan to the Scottish Government in November 2023;
   (b) Agrees 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

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.

3.2   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 statutory housing responsibilities, including fuel poverty, climate change, house condition, and homelessness; as well as its strategic response to national outcomes and Housing to 2040.

3.3   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 which was then followed by the current LHS 2017-2022. This LHS (2023- 2028) 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 context.

3.4   In developing the LHS Scottish Borders Council has been working with a wide range of partners to assess local needs, agree priorities and define ideas and solutions to deliver our shared vision for housing in the Scottish Borders. The LHS aims to consolidate and build on successes, complete current projects and take forward new projects and partnerships. The LHS also addresses newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS Guidance (2019), Housing to 2040, Covid-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian War and the cost of living crisis.

3.5   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, as well as being set within the context of the updated Council Plan 2023-24. The LHS is closely linked to other strategies, both national and local. These include; the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, ESESCR Regional Prosperity Framework, South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment, the proposed Local Development Plan 2, Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Strategic Framework, the Anti-Poverty Strategy, Climate Change Route map and the Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plan (as examples).

3.6   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 OUTCOMES

4.1 The LHS is central to corporate planning activities and allows a local authority to set out its agreed strategic vision and outcomes 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. The LHS has been developed under the principles of co-production and complies with the LHS Guidance (2019). The LHS comes at an important time for housing in the Borders and addresses a number of the most significant and important challenges facing the Council, its partners and communities. It aims to:

- Provide a background to the local housing system.
- Explain how recent national and local developments impact on the Local Housing Strategy.
- 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.
- Sets out the 5 strategic outcomes for housing for the next five years.
- Provides proposed new objectives through an outcomes based approach

4.2 Scottish Borders Council and its partners believe that the proposed LHS 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 outcomes focus on the key issues facing local households including improved affordable housing supply and place making, improved housing quality and energy efficiency, homelessness prevention and support to enable independent living.

4.3 The LHS vision has been developed jointly with stakeholders and is **"Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community".** In order to deliver this vision successfully and contribute to the Scottish Borders five outcomes in the Council Plan, as well as the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Housing to 2040; the following five strategic outcomes have been defined:

- Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive.
- Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing.
- Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy.
- Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.
- Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.

4.4 The strategic outcomes have been identified and agreed in order to address a number of key issues and challenges which are summarised at the end of

Executive Committee – 14 November 2023

each outcome section in the LHS. Some of the main issues are identified below:

(a) The Scottish Borders has an ageing population and reducing household sizes; meaning a greater need for the right type and size of homes in the right places;

(b) Challenges in accessing affordable housing due to constrained supply, including difficulties for young people and first time buyers;

(c) A potentially decreasing Private Rented Sector;

(d) Delivering housing in a challenging financial landscape where there are considerable inflationary pressures, increasing tender costs, increasing cost of finance and mortgages;

(e) Affordability issues in the Scottish Borders; house prices and private rents vary in different parts of the Borders and a low wage economy means housings options can be limited for many residents;

(f) The number of empty homes;

(g) Delivering specialist housing and homes for people with specific, or more complex, needs;

(h) Lack of suitable housing options contributing to recruitment challenges in key sectors;

(i) Older housing stock with poorer energy efficiency (with subsequent health and net zero implications) and challenges in terms of maintenance and repair;

(j) The impact of the cost of living crisis on housing costs and fuel poverty;

(k) Impact of Covid and the lasting implications in relation to implementing the RRTP;

(l) The complex support needs, beyond housing support, of people presenting as homeless; and

(m) Increased demand on services due to support for the Ukrainian Crisis, the Resettlement Programme and a range of other pressures currently being experienced across the Council and its partners.

4.5 Based on the outcome of the [Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3](#) (HNDA3) and aligning with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) the proposed housing supply target (HST) for the period of the LHS has been set at 370 new homes per year, of which 141 should be affordable housing. In setting the HST Scottish Borders Council also considered the following factors:

- economic factors which may impact on demand and supply
- capacity within the construction sector
- delivery of market and affordable housing at the local level
- availability of resources
- recent development levels
- planned new and replacement housing or housing which could be brought back into effective use.

4.6 While the Housing Supply Target reflects the HNDA3 and NPF4 it should be acknowledged that this is an ambitious target which will require strong and effective partnership working to deliver in a very challenging financial and construction sector climate.

5   DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

5.1   As reported at paragraph 4.1 the LHS has been developed in strict accordance with the published LHS guidance. Additionally, a diverse range of partners, stakeholders, housing experts and residents have participated in developing of the LHS 2023-2028. A wide programme of engagement activity has been undertaken over the last two years to collect a range of views and enable these to systematically inform the development of the LHS. This includes:

5.2   An early engagement survey ran from 1st October 2021 to 30th November 2021. The main aim of the survey was to find out what Scottish Borders households and organisations thought were the main housing issues and priorities for the region. In total there were 330 responses (301 from individuals and 29 from organisations).

5.3   SBC appointed Altair Consultancy and Advisory Services Ltd (Altair) to carry out resident and stakeholder engagement workshops in relation to the development of this LHS. As part of the development four housing issues papers were prepared by SBC to help engage residents and stakeholders on key housing issues, these papers covered:

- Housing Supply and Place Making
- Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
- Particular Needs and Specialist Provision
- Homelessness

(a)   Four resident workshops and three stakeholder workshops were held in August 2022 hosted on Microsoft Teams. The outputs from these sessions provided valuable input into the LHS, including the outcomes and proposed actions. The issues papers and workshop details were widely circulated: they were published on the Council's and partner websites; publicised through social media campaigns as well as direct invitation to stakeholders through e-mail.

(b)   A further resident's survey was hosted on SBC's website between the 17th July 2022 and the 9th Sept 2022 to which almost 200 responses were received. A survey for stakeholders was also hosted on SBC's website at the same time.

5.4   Altair were also commissioned to help identify the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy and Traveller (GT) community across the region. The purpose of this engagement and needs analysis was to provide an evidence base to inform SBCs approach to meeting current accommodation needs for the GT population and projected needs from 2023-2028.

5.5   At the beginning of September 2022, SBC sent out a survey to a wide range of partners to find out about housing issues in relation to key workers and to help identify if there are any accommodation issues when recruiting key workers, in particular from other areas or overseas. In total there were 7 responses to the key worker questions. These responses were from various SBC departments, NHS Borders and RSLs.

5.6   In October and November 2022 SBC engaged with private landlords in the Scottish Borders through an online survey. The aim of the survey was to gain a better understanding of private landlords operating in the Scottish Borders, including information on their portfolios, how they source tenants, letting practice, supporting tenants, rents, repairs and improvements. The survey sought to find how we can improve our services and ensure the support and information provided is better suited to landlord needs now and in the future and to inform future service delivery and priorities, as well as this LHS. There were 221 responses to the survey.

5.7   The formal consultation process on the draft LHS began on 2nd May 2023 and lasted for a period of 12 weeks, closing on 21st July 2023. The draft LHS set out the proposed vision, strategic outcomes and delivery plan framework for the new Housing Strategy for the period 2023-2028. This document clearly outlined the issues affecting housing, summarised housing need and proposed a housing supply target, as well as providing other background and contextual information to ensure the purpose of the LHS was clear.

5.8   A full communications plan was developed which identified a range of engagement approaches to ensure everyone had the opportunity to engage in the consultation. The Housing Strategy Team worked to ensure the consultation draft was widely circulated to all relevant stakeholders and households in the Scottish Borders, including "hard to reach" groups. This comprised:

- An online survey on Citizen Space with consultation questions to capture the views of all residents and organisations in the Scottish Borders
- A number of regular posts on social media during the 12 week consultation period
- A dedicated LHS consultation webpage
- A video showcasing the LHS to raise awareness – posted on the webpage and circulated on social media
- Engagement with SBC staff through internal updates (Yammer)
- Approximately 450 stakeholders were emailed
- A template was circulated to key stakeholders gathering their suggestions to include in the LHS action plan
- Presentations were given at 15 partnership meetings (3 face to face and 12 on Microsoft Teams) and feedback was collected from: Community Planning Programme Board, Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership Executive, Integrated Joint Board, Borders Homeless and Health Strategic Partnership, Home Energy Forum, Area Partnerships (Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon and Teviot and Liddesdale), RSL tenant groups, Borders Older Peoples Planning Partnership, See Hear Group and Physical Disability Group

5.9   As part of the formal consultation process the draft LHS was sent to Scottish Government officials in the More Homes Division and relevant Policy Teams, as well as colleagues at West Dunbartonshire Council. The review process helps to ensure alignment of the LHS with Scottish Government guidance. The Peer review identified a number of areas of strength (Requirements, Essential Links and Outcomes, Equalities & Engagement and Consultation (which was highly commended), Housing

Delivery and Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change) and some areas to consider (Preventing and Addressing Homelessness, House Condition and Housing, Health and Social Care Integration) all of the feedback has been considered and helped inform the LHS.

5.10   A full report on the consultation and engagement on the LHS can be found as LHS Appendix 3. A report on the formal consultation and peer review can be found as LHS Appendix 4.

6   IMPLICATIONS

6.1   Financial

(a)   There are no direct financial implications from this 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. There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

6.2   Risk and Mitigations

(a)   The LHS 2023-2028 strategic outcomes and actions have been developed in cooperation with a range of partners to ensure it is based on evidence and shared priorities. As noted in the report the principles of co-production and the LHS Guidance (2019) have been followed in the development of the LHS. Effective engagement with partners and stakeholders not only helps to ensure that the Council is meeting its obligations in this regard but can help to ensure that the achievement of Strategic Outcomes is more likely.

(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. However, it is important that the Council adopts a watching brief in relation to these elements and develops mitigations, where possible and practicable and in collaboration with partners, to limit the impact of threats to the delivery of the LHS Strategic Outcomes.

(c)   A Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has been undertaken which determined a full SEA would not be required for the LHS as the strategy itself is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

(d)   Any potential environmental effects from any specific proposals or plans which may relate to the LHS would be individually considered and addressed through the planning process and full SEAs.

(e) In publishing its final report on the 17th January 2023 Internal Audit found examples of good practice and provided substantial assurance on the governance and controls in place to ensure efficient and effective use of funding and other resources for the provision of affordable housing to ensure achievement of the local housing strategy with partners.

(f) Furthermore, the audit report also identified scope for improvement to formalise risk management arrangements, for the Strategic Housing Service, to ensure compliance with the Council's Risk Management Framework. One low-rated recommendation was made, in this regard, by Internal Audit and was agreed by the Lead Officer - Housing Strategy and Development. Follow-up meetings and work have since been undertaken to meet this recommendation, supported by the Corporate Risk Officer, with the intention of developing a Strategic Housing Risk Register that is reflective of the objectives of the service. Once developed the risk register will support the achievement of objectives and will be managed and reviewed following a proportionate and value based approach. It should be noted that as the management of risk (incl. the identification of risk) is not a one-off exercise the Strategic Housing Risk Register will evolve over time to capture new threats as they arise and are identified along with opportunities that should be capitalised on in order to further the achievement of objectives.

6.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

(a) Equalities forms an integral part of the LHS process and is part of the LHS guidance. A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and was embedded in the development process of the new LHS 2023-28.

(b) The integrated impact assessment (IIA) template has been completed and will be published on the Council's website, alongside all the associated documentation in relation to this LHS, subject to approval. The IIA can be viewed at LHS Appendix 6a and 6b. In addition to the full Integrated Impact Assessment additional screening on the LHS was undertaken, including:

- A Child Rights' and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (LHS Appendix 7)
- Consideration of the Fairer Scotland Duty
- Consideration of Human Rights
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (LHS Appendix 10)
- Rural Proofing Exercise (LHS Appendix 11); and
- Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (LHS Appendix 8)

(c) A full Equalities Statement, outlining all of the above activity and how it has subsequently influenced the LHS, has been prepared and can be viewed at LHS Appendix 9. Housing has a vital role to play in tackling child and fuel poverty; preventing homelessness; strengthening communities; helping stem rural depopulation; improving health and wellbeing; addressing the climate emergency; and promoting inclusive growth. Tackling inequality is at the heart of each of the strategic aims. Delivery of the LHS will improve outcomes for those with protected characteristics and in doing so will contribute fully to the Scottish

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Government's National Performance Framework and National Outcomes and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

6.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**
It is considered that the Local Housing Strategy will contribute positively to goals 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17.

6.5 **Climate Change**
It is considered that there are no direct effects on the Councils carbon emissions arising from this report. More generally there are likely to be positive effects delivered through the LHS. Strategic Outcome 3 is: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy. The LHS promotes sustainability through better use of existing stock and bringing empty homes back in to use; improvements to energy efficiency of the housing stock and the installation of renewable technologies; Improvements in the quality and condition of homes through RSL investment, private investment and information and advice through the Scheme of Assistance; Improved energy standards in the new build programmes; the promotion of sustainable communities and recognising housing role in that, as well as many other areas identified in the LHS outcomes.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

(a) As part of the LHS development a Rural Proofing exercise was undertaken. The full checklist can be viewed at Appendix 11. This helps us consider any challenges presented by rural circumstances and recognise the distinct needs of rural communities. There is clear recognition in the LHS of the role that housing plays in reversing depopulation and in creating more sustainable communities, and in the need to take a holistic approach including improving accessibility, broadband, infrastructure, renewable energy technology, transport and investment. Some challenges the LHS considers in relation to rurality include:

- Short-term lets, second homes and empty homes contributing to a constrained supply of housing;
- High development costs and lack of skilled labour and local supply chains, and the need to be more energy efficient and sustainable in the way we build;
- Community sustainability; and
- Fuel poverty, poor energy efficiency and housing stock in poorer condition

(b) Responding to these concerns and issues has been central to the development of the LHS vision and strategic outcomes, ensuring that the LHS and associated action plan takes the needs of rural communities fully into account.

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6.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**
There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Director of Finance and Procurement, the Director of Corporate Governance (and Monitoring Officer), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name: **John Curry**   **Title Director – Infrastructure & Environment**

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Background Papers:
Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
LHS Appendix 1: LHS Outcome and Action Plan
LHS Appendix 2: Evidence Paper
LHS Appendix 3: Consultation and Engagement Report
LHS Appendix 4: Formal Consultation Report
LHS Appendix 5: Housing Supply Target Paper 2023-2028
LHS Appendix 6a: Integrated Impact Assessment Stage 1
LHS Appendix 6b: Integrated Impact Assessment Stage 2 and 3
LHS Appendix 7: Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)
LHS Appendix 8: Health Inequality Impact Assessment (HIIA)
LHS Appendix 9: Equalities Statement
LHS Appendix 10: Strategic Environmental Assessment
LHS Appendix 11: Rural Proofing

Previous Minute Reference: 18th April 2023 Item 8: Scottish Borders Council Consultative Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Donna Bogdanovic can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2023-2028

Scottish Borders COUNCIL

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to introduce the Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which sets out our vision for Housing and Housing Related services, across all tenures, for the period 2023 – 2028.

The Local Housing Strategy is linked to the Scottish Borders Community Plan and has a key role to play in supporting the recovery, regeneration and repopulation of our region and its economy. Housing is fundamental to the health and well-being of our local communities and every resident of the Borders has a stake in this strategy and in the future of the area. The development of the strategy has involved significant engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, as well as detailed consultation with our local communities.

The strategy reflects the diverse views and priorities of people across our communities; builds on the positive achievements of the previous LHS and seeks to address some significant challenges and housing pressures. We need to reflect and recover from the impact of the global pandemic; face a challenging economic context and cost of living crisis; combined with the implications of an ageing demography, which all impact on housing circumstances, our economy and the lives of individuals in the area.

The success of our Local Housing Strategy depends on strong local partnership working. More than ever before, we need people to come together to deliver housing outcomes and improve housing services as part of a programme of local and regional recovery and inclusive growth. Our task is greater than ever, and I look forward to working with partners, national agencies, local organisations as well as our communities to meet these challenges and see our plans progress.

Councillor Robin Tatler
Executive Member for Communities and Equalities.

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1.   Introduction

1.1   Purpose of LHS

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which sets out its vision, strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services. Scottish local authorities are required to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) every five years, setting out a vision for the supply, quality and availability of housing in their local area. The LHS is a key planning document, examining housing as a system with various interlinked components, and provides a framework of action, investment and partnership working to deliver local priorities.

The last LHS for the Scottish Borders was developed in 2015/16 and covers the period 2017-2022. In November 2020, elected members agreed to carry forward the current LHS for an additional year. This ensures that this LHS is informed by the Housing Need and Demand Assessment that was developed in 2021 for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland region. The Housing Need and Demand Assessment received robust and credible status in July 2022.

The new Local Housing Strategy sets strategic outcomes and a delivery plan framework for the period 2023 – 2028. In building the strategy, Scottish Borders Council has been working with a wide range of partners to assess local needs, agree priorities and define ideas and solutions to deliver our shared vision for housing in the Scottish Borders. The LHS builds on the progress through our last LHS by consolidating and building on successes, completing current projects, and taking forward new projects and partnerships. This strategy addresses newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS Guidance, Housing to 2040, the COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian War and cost of living crisis.

1.2   Scottish Borders LHS Partners

The LHS is developed and delivered with key partners and stakeholders, including community planning partners, tenants and residents. This section summarises the main roles and responsibilities of key internal and external partners:

Partners	Roles and Responsibilities
Scottish Borders Council	• The local strategic housing authority and the local planning authority are responsible for preparing the LHS and Local Development Plan. • The council does not own or manage any social housing stock following a large scale voluntary transfer to Scottish Borders Housing Association in 2003. • Through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan the council is responsible for managing the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) budget. • SBC coordinates public capital funding streams, including the Scheme of Assistance (disabled adaptations), Empty Homes Grant, and Affordable Warmth Area Based Schemes. • The Council is responsible for managing and monitoring delivery of the LHS priorities. • SBC delivers homelessness services. • SBC prepares and coordinates the delivery of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy • SBC delivers the Scheme of Assistance, providing information, advice and support for private housing which: is in disrepair or below the tolerable standard, or needs to be adapted because a person is disabled.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)	• 9 RSL organisations own and manage over 12,200 affordable homes across the Borders, including specialist homes let to specific client groups such as older people and people with disabilities.
	• 4 of the RSLs are locally based and own 94% of all stock. These 4 RSLs have a significant economic impact:
	   - Investment in new homes - £242m (over next 5 years)
	   - Investment in existing homes - £25.3m/year
	   - Number of homes managed - 12,042.

Partners	Roles and Responsibilities
	- Staff employed - 472. - Collective turnover - £62.9m/year • Applying specialist knowledge and local insights to address housing needs and requirements. • Investing significant capital and revenue in planned and reactive maintenance programmes for their existing housing stock. • Developing, maintaining and updating long-term (30 years) business plans to undertake investment in new housing supply, mitigate risks and ensure financial resilience of their organisations in response to the changing financial and policy environment.
Health and Social Care Strategic Partnership	• Jointly planning and delivering community health and social care services – for children, adults and older people, including homelessness and criminal justice services.
Scottish Government	• Providing national direction on housing and homelessness objectives as well as for related priorities including health and wellbeing, Climate Change and sustainability. • Providing public capital grant funding including for the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP), the Affordable Warmth Area Based Schemes and Gypsy Traveller accommodation fund. • Providing revenue and other funding support in relation to the prevention of Homelessness, Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plans and Housing First.
Private Housing Developers	• Developing new market homes for sale and rent which meet a range of needs and identifying new market development opportunities. • Undertaking viability assessments and liaising closely with the Council to prepare planning proposals that fit with the Local Development Plan and progressing to new housing development. • Contributing to Affordable housing delivery through S75 agreements and development partnerships with RSLs.
Construction Sector	• Providing labour and skills to meet the needs of new development, including private and affordable homes, as well as retrofit improvement works to maintain or upgrade existing homes.
Infrastructure Providers	• SEPA; Scottish Water; SPEnergyNetworks; Broadband Providers. • Supporting a collaborative approach to infrastructure planning, provision and investment.
South of Scotland Community Housing	• SOSCH provides long-term support to community organisations relative to the planning and delivery of community-led housing.
South of Scotland Enterprise	• SOSE have been set up to bring a fresh and regionally focussed approach to economic and community development in and for the South of Scotland, covering Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders. • SOSE's Five Year Plan (2023 – 2028) sets out six inter-related areas of strategic focus to achieve their aims of furthering the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland and improving the amenity and environment of the region: Accelerating Net Zero and Nature-positive solutions; Advocating for Fair Work and Equality; Activating and Empowering Enterprising Communities; Attracting Ambitious Investment; Awakening Entrepreneurial Talent; Advancing Innovation and Improving Productivity.
Regional Economic Partnership	• The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) is the forum that brings together a wide range of expertise and sets the direction of our regional economy. Partners include representatives from the regions two Councils, SOSE, education, private businesses, social enterprises, the Third Sector, Communities, Young People, South of Scotland Destination Alliance, Registered Social Landlords, NHS and relevant national agencies. The REP oversaw the development of the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy and its associated Delivery Plan.
Scottish Housing Regulator	• The Scottish Housing Regulator is a non-ministerial department responsible for regulating social housing in Scotland.

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1.3   Vision and Outcomes

The LHS vision has been developed jointly with stakeholders:

> **"Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community"**

In order to deliver this vision successfully and contribute to the six outcomes in the Scottish Borders Council Plan, as well as the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Housing to 2040; the following 5 LHS outcomes have been defined.

A home that meets people's needs covers a wide range of diverse needs, including changing needs. It is affordable (not just affordability in terms direct housing costs but is it affordable to maintain, including keeping warm), it is energy efficient, it is good quality, it is the right size and in the right location and it is part of a community with access to local services. It is digitally connected; it allows people to live and work locally and or allow people to work from home. It meets people's needs in terms their health needs and promoting independent living. The needs of older people, younger people, families, people who require housing support or other support services are met.

Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive

Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing

Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy

Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage

Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible

1.4   Key Indicators 2023-2028

Indicators	Baseline (22/23)	Annual Target	By 2028
No. of New Homes (Market, Affordable/Rent) (HST)	tbc	370	1,850
No. of new supply affordable Homes	120	141	705
No. of empty Homes brought back into use	37	30	150
No. of Wheelchair Accessible Homes built	6	20	100
No. of private major adaptations (private and social)	238	220	1,100
Total number of measures installed through EES-ABS	225	220	1,100
No. of homes in the social rented sector retrofitted with specific measures introduced to improve energy efficiency	tbc	tbc	-
No. of owners supported through Missing Shares scheme	10	15	75
No. of private sector properties provided with advice and practical assistance	48	30	150
Proportion of RSL lets to homeless households (locally based RSL's)	39%	50%	-
No. of statutory homeless cases open at close of period, who had an unintentionally Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness (TWH) decision at close of period	327	context	-

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This is a list of key indicators with the biggest impact but does not form an exhaustive list of indicators. A full list of all the Performance Indicators is included in the outcome and action plan (**Appendix 1**).

1.5   LHS 2017-2022 Achievements

The LHS 2023-2028 builds on the success of the Council's previous strategies and supports the Scottish Government's vision for Housing to 2040. Some of the key achievements of the previous LHS include:

Priority 1: the supply of new housing meets the needs of Scottish Borders communities
• The delivery of 899 affordable homes; equating to an annual average of 179 homes a year, exceeding the annual 128 target.
• The SHIP 2017-2022 set out proposals for up to 1,320 new homes which represent an estimated investment value of around £268.226m.
• The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 received robust and Credible status in July 2022.
• Over the past 5 years, the Council has been working closely with Waverley Housing to consider suitable options and progress regeneration of Beech Avenue area in Upper Langlee, Galashiels. In March 2021, planning consent was granted for 229 homes including the demolition of 159 homes.
• South East Scotland City Region Deal - A new Regional Housing Board was established in 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives.
• Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in the Borders Railway Corridor and in the South East Scotland City Region Deal. Following a considerable amount of work, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Design Guide (DG) agreed by Council in June 2021.
• Final year of the 5 year Selkirk Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) with almost 70 grant offers were made through the scheme, ranging from £525 to £205,000. Jedburgh CARS saw a total of 59 individual grants for building repairs for 32 town centre buildings totalling over £749k in spend – plus £390k for seven priority projects. Hawick CARS began in 2019 and has completed seven repair projects and is currently working on priority projects at 6 different locations.
• Recruitment of an Empty Homes Officer in August 2021 and has an active case load of 182 empty homes

Priority 2: People have better access to good quality, energy efficient homes
• The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) 2019-2023 was implemented.
• Energy efficiency schemes in the Borders since 2013 have resulted in 4,494 installed measures across 3,580 households.
• Each RSL has prioritised investment towards meeting EESSH, which resulted in £12.1m over the 5 year period of the LHS. 91% of RSL stock meets EESSH.
• 4 of Eildon Housing Association's affordable housing projects have been selected for inclusion in the Green Homes Pilot. The 1st Passivhaus development comprising 3 houses in St Boswells were completed in March 2020.
• The Borders Home Energy Forum was established in March 2018, to ensure and continues to ensure that a strategic, multiagency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders.
• The Energy Efficient Scotland (EES) Pilot Project was developed in Peebles – 'Change Works in Peebles'. Over 1,400 people visited the hub (this included repeat visits and multiple person visits); and there have been over 500 referrals to Home Energy Scotland for support.
• SBC secured 2 years of funding worth £551,000, from National Grid's Warm Homes Fund to deliver the "Warm and Well Borders" project. The scheme was able to support 771 households and secured benefits and savings of £1.2 million for households across the region. This project has been extended for another 12 months.
• SBC has partnered with Partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland (LAS) to provide one landlord forum per year and a number of training events throughout the year.
• Through the Scheme of Assistance over 400 instances of practical assistance were given in the private sector including advice on repair and maintenance; empty homes advice; support to landlords and tenants and, as a last resort, enforcement.
• To help progress shared repairs, in 2019 SBC agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme. Principally to support the activity and life of the Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration scheme.

Priority 3: Fewer people are affected by homelessness

- Over the past five years the average percentage of homeless household accessing settled accommodation has been 78%.
- Housing support cases that have been closed with a positive outcome continues to be consistently above 80%
- No B&B accommodation was used as temporary accommodation during 2020/21.
- In 2018/19, a new Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) was established. The key focus of the partnership is on the implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP).
- Appointment of the Private Rented Sector Development Officer.
- Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP covering a five year period 2019-2024. A Rapid Rehousing Development Officer was appointed in January 2020 with the key role of implementing the aims and objectives of the RRTP.
- Housing First pilot was launched in October of 2021. The pilot is funded for 2 years and aims to provide housing and support to 30 households over the two year period.
- COVID-19 had a huge impact on Homelessness Services. (BHHSP) members were on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require.
- Establishment of Housing Options Protocol for care leavers in 2017/18.
- Two Crisis and Housing Intervention Funds were launched in 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- The 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' (SHORE) was launched nationally in 2017. The information sharing protocol which was adopted in 2019/2020 and has improved information sharing arrangements contributing to the aspirations of SHORE, allowing for earlier intervention both in terms of the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

Priority 4: More people are supported to live independently in their own homes

- The "Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People Housing, Care and Support 2018-28" identifies a number of developments for older people across Borders that are "no longer fit for purpose".
- Responding to the Community Equipment and Housing Adaptations: Draft Guidance.
- Housing needs and aspirations of young people study was carried out in 2018-2019 and identified a five year action plan.
- Wheelchair housing study was carried out in 2019/2020 and identified an annual target of 20 homes with proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the balance provided by the private sector.
- Housing Contribution Statement 2018 was developed and linked in with the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2018-2022.
- Helping homeowners and private sector tenants aged 60 or over and people of any age with disabilities to remain in their homes: Care & Repair have project managed 1,615 minor adaptations and repairs, and 335 major adaptations over the five year period of the last LHS. There have been 18,846 visits by a handyperson
- 69 units of extra care housing have been delivered in the past five years, in Galashiels and Duns. Work has also started on the former Kelso High School to convert it into 35 additional flats, which are expected to be completed in early 2023.

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2.   Strategic Context

Housing plays a significant role in both national and local policy. It is important that the LHS supports and helps deliver national outcomes and targets, whilst also reflecting the needs and priorities of local people in the Scottish Borders. The LHS is therefore set within the wider policy framework for the Council and its partners.

2.1   National

2.1.1   Housing to 2040

Housing to 2040 is Scotland's long-term national housing strategy which sets out the collective vision and route map for housing over the next twenty years. It has been informed and shaped by extensive consultation and is designed to reflect the diversity of people, homes and communities across urban, rural and island Scotland.

The vision is by 2040, everyone will have a safe, high-quality home that is affordable and meets their needs in the place they want to be. It sets out four broad, interconnected themes:

- More homes at the heart of great places;
- Affordability and choice;
- Affordable warmth and zero emissions homes; and
- Improving the quality of all homes.

Under these themes, the strategy sets out priorities and 20 actions. The Scottish Government has set a 10-year national target to deliver 110,000 additional affordable homes (to 2031/32). The strategy also sets out key commitments, including:

- Proposals to bring forward zero emissions requirements for new build social rented homes;
- A Rented Sector Strategy published for consultation in 2022 that covers social and private and addresses issues of affordability and rent pressure; and
- Targets for private sector housing to achieve energy efficiency ratings and new legislation to establish a tenure-neutral Housing Standard.

Housing to 2040 sets out a specific vision for ensuring:

- A well-functioning housing system;
- High quality, sustainable homes;
- Sustainable communities; and
- Homes that meet people's needs.

The Local Housing Strategy will support and contribute to the vision and actions of Housing to 2040, this will be reinforced through this LHS.

2.1.2   New Housing Bill

A new Housing Bill will be introduced by the end of this parliamentary year (2023) to begin to deliver the actions of the New Deal for Tenants and some other aspects of Housing to 2040. These will be confirmed later in 2023. This new housing bill will impact this LHS and the key actions over the next five years.

2.1.3   Scotland's National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework sets out 11 national outcomes that describe the desired features for Scotland's future.

Figure 1: National Performance Framework Outcomes

These 11 National Outcomes have a statutory basis in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and align with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 for the Borders contributes towards all 11 National Outcomes, with a strong focus on tackling poverty, promoting good health and wellbeing, protecting and enhancing the environment and creating communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

2.2   Local and Regional

Figure 2 provides a useful graphic on how the Local Housing Strategy is integrated into a wide range of local policies and strategies. It is important while developing this strategy that consideration has been given to these plans and strategies to ensure there is alignment in the priorities and outcomes. While figure 2 provides an overview, there are many other plans and strategies that link in with the LHS that are not included.

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Figure 2: Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 and related strategies and plans
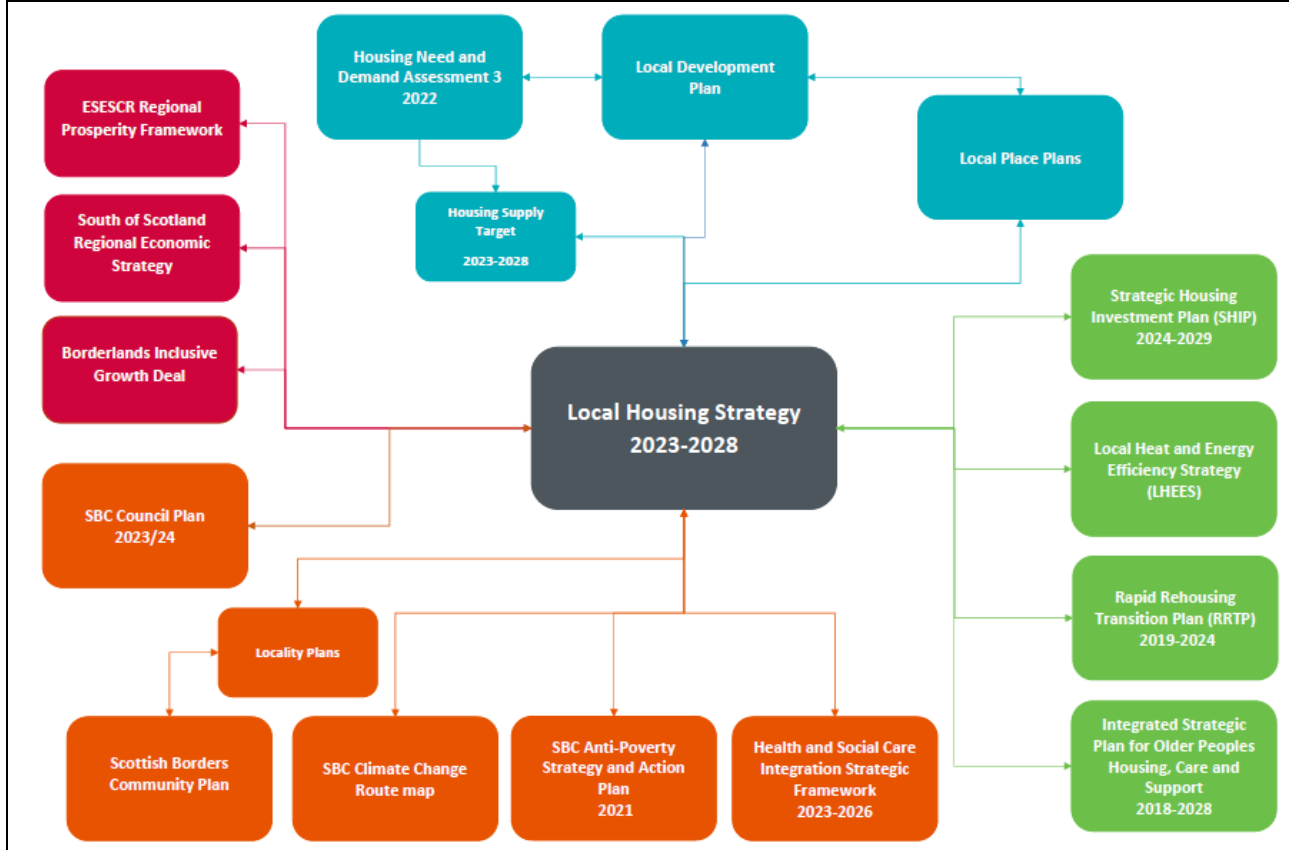
2.2.1 South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland Approach

The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland approach provides the Scottish Borders with real economic strengths and opportunities. It has particular strengths in food and drink production, manufacturing and tourism and cultural services, while its size and outlook enable strong public sector partnerships and strategic links with its nearest neighbours in Scotland and the north of England in areas like tourism, energy, digital connectivity and natural capital. The region's physical geography means it is particularly well placed to benefit from national transition to a net zero economy both in respect of renewable energy production and carbon storage, and from the development of future farming, and land management practice following the UK's departure from the EU. An active further and higher education sector provides a strong base from which to develop the skilled workers of the future.

2.2.2 South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)

The unique opportunities and challenges facing the south were key drivers for the creation of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) which assumed its legal responsibilities across the Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Council areas (which make up the South of Scotland) on 1 April 2020**.** The overarching aims of SOSE are to further the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland and improve the amenity and environment of the region.

2.2.3 The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP)

The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) is the forum that brings together a wide range of expertise and sets the direction of our regional economy. Partners include representatives from the region's two Councils, SOSE, education, private businesses, social enterprises, the Third Sector, Communities, Young People, South of Scotland Destination Alliance, Registered Social Landlords, NHS and relevant national agencies.

To drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the South of Scotland, the REP developed, following extensive engagement, the Regional Economic Strategy and associated Delivery Plan in late 2020. In taking a strategic overview of delivery, the REP helps ensure that collectively, partner capacities and resources are harnessed to maximum effect.

2.2.4   South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy

Launched in September 2020, the region's first ever Regional Economic Strategy sets out a vision for a green, fair and flourishing South of Scotland by 2031. At its heart is a strategic framework comprised of six interlinked key themes of equal importance.

The Regional Economic Strategy has recognised the centrality of tackling housing challenges to future economic success and sets out a range of priorities and relevant interlinked activities. The following priorities are outlined:

- We will increase the supply of housing, deliver more affordable homes and ensure current homes are well maintained and continue to keep pace with changing needs and expectations. Central to this is creating a housing market which affords all the opportunity to gain and sustain independence, as well as grow and improve their prospects in terms of health and wellbeing.
- Ambitious house building will help to better integrate generations, attract new people to the area and ensure those farthest from the labour market have a stable platform from which to progress and prosper.

The following housing-related actions in the RES Delivery Plan form part of a prioritised programme of work:

- Action 2 (H) Promote flexible working practices through housing and planning policies, to support the concept of 'live here work anywhere'.
- Action 6 (E) Advocate and lobby to create the right conditions for investment in new and existing housing within the region, to boost the number of new homes delivered to better align with economic and social needs and ambition.

2.2.5   The Convention of the South of Scotland Forum

The Convention of the South of Scotland, a forum composed of all public sector partners and Scottish Government, seeks to ensure effective public sector partnership working and delivery, assessing and planning for existing and future challenges, and driving inclusive growth and regional priorities. The remit of the Convention of the South of Scotland is to:

- strengthen alignment between the Scottish Government, Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Scottish Borders Council and public agencies delivering in the South of Scotland to drive inclusive growth and to agree action to address the priorities of the area
- ensure effective partnership working and delivery across the public sector
- consider current and future challenges impacting on inclusive and sustainable economic growth; and agree actions to deliver that growth
- address any blockages and oversee progress.

2.2.6   South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

The two South of Scotland local authorities have developed an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS) seeking to align spatial strategy with a number of initiatives and strategies including the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal and Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Strategic Transport Projects Review and the Regional Economic Strategy. With a focus on ways to make the area more attractive to

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investors, visitors and those who may wish to come and live here, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal (BIG Deal) brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the inclusive economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England border.

2.2.7   Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

As part of a shared, strategic approach, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal is designed as a coherent package of activity to be delivered with fresh investment in the region. Jointly funded by up to £350 million from the Scottish Government and UK Government it delivers total investment of £150 million for Scottish elements (£85 million Scottish Government and £65 million UK Government) and up to £200 million for English elements alongside local investment of a further £102.56 million. The five Local Authorities which constitute the Borderlands Partnership are Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council. The package of proposals aim to increase productivity; grow the working age population, and deliver a more inclusive economy. The projects and programmes within the Deal will be delivered within four agreed themes, each with inclusive and sustainable growth at their core. The four strategic themes that provide the foundation for the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal are set out below:

- Enabling Infrastructure - this aims to invest in the infrastructure needed to support improvements in connectivity, helping people to access the region and addressing perceptions of poor connectivity.
- Improving Places - this aims to revitalise places across the Borderlands region to attract people to live, work and visit by investing in smaller market towns to reinvigorate and repurpose towns to support thriving and sustainable communities.
- Supporting Business, Innovation and Skills – this aims to stimulate business growth to create a more diverse regional economy, recognising that innovation and skills are central to achieving this.
- Encouraging Green Growth – this aims to capitalise on the green credentials of the Borderlands region and to facilitate decarbonisation, the creation of new high value jobs and supporting low carbon energy generation and carbon reduction schemes.

2.2.8   Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal

Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal, comprising the local authorities of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders, together with regional universities, colleges and the private sector, is a mechanism for accelerating growth by pulling in significant government investment. The City Deal is progressing the Regional Housing Programme: Forward Work Programme, which seeks to deliver a step change in innovation and inclusive growth in the housing and construction sectors, as well as the new supply of homes across the South East of Scotland.

In December 2022, a refreshed set of five key priorities for the region were identified:

-    Affordable Housing Delivery (current and future);
-    Retrofit (EESSH2);
-    Home Demonstrator Project;
-    Strategic Sites; and
-    Future Town Centres and New Delivery Models.

Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in both the Borders Railway Corridor and the South East Scotland City Region Deal that is situated within the Scottish Borders. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Design Guide (DG) was agreed by Council in June 2021. This guidance will steer future work to agree a master plan for development, help assemble infrastructure investment and implement phasing packages.

2.2.9   Council Plan

The Council Plan 2023 sets out the council's ambitions and priorities for 2023/24. It outlines what SBC wants to achieve and how this will be done. It builds on the Corporate Plan for 2018-2023 and has six outcomes. Five of these outcomes focus on improving the wellbeing of citizens within the Scottish Borders and making our region a more sustainable and better place to live, work in and to visit. The sixth outcome is about developing a Council that is as effective and efficient as it can be – we need to do this in order to deliver on the other five outcomes.

Figure 3: Council Plan Outcomes

The latest Plan includes those big developments, such as the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map and the Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy, which were identified in the Refresh of the Corporate Plan last summer. The latest Council Plan is being developed with some important additions;

- Sets out long-term strategic ambitions, which extend beyond the horizon of a single year (e.g., in relation to a Just Transition to Net Zero; Poverty; Low Economic Productivity and Wages; Demography).
- The vision gives rise to the actions intended to be delivered across the Scottish Borders in 2023-24. Subsequent Council Plans will build on this process, comprising steps on the road to long-term delivery of our vision for the region.
- Sets out clear ambition, action and outcomes for each of the 5 'localities' of the Scottish Borders.

Over time the aim is to embed Locality Plans as an element of the Council Plan, which can truly be said to "Speak to our 'Places' across the Scottish Borders by setting out the priorities for different communities, whether in Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot & Liddesdale, or Tweeddale".

2.2.10   Community Plan and Locality Plans

The introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP) to prepare and publish a Community Plan, sometimes referred to as a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP).

The Community Plan focuses on improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for the whole of the Scottish Borders. There are four themes supporting a range of outcomes as shown in figure 4.

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Figure 4: Community Plan 2023-2033	
OUR OUTCOMES	
Theme 1 – Poverty	Help mitigate against the financial challenges of day to day living for those who are most affected.
	Children and young people from low-income households are supported to develop life skills to help them to succeed in life.
Theme 2 – Learning, Skills and Economy	More people have a clear route to progress into a greater variety of jobs, learning and training opportunities available within the Scottish Borders.
	Parents are supported to enter, remain, and progress in work.
Theme 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing	Improved access to effective services, particularly for those who face greater challenges accessing services.
	Reduced health inequalities for those experiencing the greatest negative impact.
	Fewer people experiencing domestic abuse.
Theme 4 – Place, Community and Connectivity	More people, especially our older community have the skills to benefit from digital and mobile connectivity.
	More people have access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community.
	Our communities are supported and empowered to be strong, active, resilient and sustainable.
	People have access to better travel options across the Scottish Borders.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act legislation also requires the CPP to prepare and publish more localised plans addressing local challenges and improving local outcomes. There are five Locality Plans representing the five localities of; Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot and Liddesdale and Tweeddale. The Community Plan is currently being refreshed and a new Community Plan will in place by the end of 2023.

2.2.11   Local Development Plan

The Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted on 12 May 2016 and sets out our policies on development and land use within the Scottish Borders.

The Proposed Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) sets out land use proposals and planning policies which are intended to guide development and inform planning decisions within the Scottish Borders over the next ten years. The plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 14 July 2022 for examination and the Report of Examination was published on 7 July 2023. It is intended that the Proposed Plan for adoption will be submitted to Scottish Ministers in November 2023.

2.2.12   Health and Social Care Strategic Plan

The Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Strategic Framework for 2023-2026 has been developed to improve the outcomes of the local community, by taking an approach based on the needs of communities to prioritise areas where there will be the biggest impacts on health and wellbeing outcomes of people in the Scottish Borders. The Strategic Framework will be used as the Strategic Commissioning Plan for the Integration Joint Board, and to support the focus of delivery of delegated services for the Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders. The Strategic Framework also guides the approach being undertaken in the 'Enjoying Health and Wellbeing' theme of our Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership.

The mission of the Strategic Framework is: "To help the people of the Scottish Borders to live their lives to the full, by delivering seamless services that place their needs at the heart of everything we do".

In previous Strategic Plans, a Housing Contribution Statement was produced to provide an initial link between the strategic planning process in housing at a local level and that of health & social care. The Health and Social Care Strategic Framework 2023-2026 does not have a Housing Contribution Statement; however, housing is embedded throughout the Health and Social Care Strategic Framework as a result of close working during the consultation of the Strategic Framework and the LHS 2023-2028.

3.   Impact Assessments

3.1   Integrated Impact Assessment

Scottish Borders Council embraces the commitments required under the Equality Act 2010 which brings the general duty to nine equality strands of age, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership. We view the Scottish Borders as a place where:

- everyone matters
- everyone should have equal opportunities
- everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.

The Council endeavours to ensure that all services meet the needs of everyone who lives, works or visits the Scottish Borders and we will continue to work with our communities to ensure we can achieve this.

A full equalities impact assessment has been undertaken on the Local Housing Strategy in line with Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders Equality Policy and Impact Assessment. SBC's method for assessing impact is the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). IIA is a method or tool for assessing predicted effects or impacts of a policy or function on meeting the public sector equality duties to:

- eliminate discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- and foster good relations between those who have an equality characteristic and those who do not.

It also incorporates the Fairer Scotland Duty (Socio-economic disadvantage). This duty requires us to:

- show that we have actively considered (pay due regard to) how we can reduce socio economic inequalities in the strategic decisions that we make
- publish a short written assessment on how we have done this.

IIA is a tool for designing out discrimination and removing barriers to equal access and outcomes for people who have equality characteristics and experience disadvantage due to socio economic factors.

As part of the process while carrying out the IIA, SBC also undertook a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA) and a Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA).

A full copy of the IIA can be found as **Appendix 6a** and **6b.**
A full Equalities Statement in relation to this LHS can be viewed at **Appendix 9.**

3.2   Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

Stage 1 of the Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) Screening was completed for this LHS which indicated that the LHS will have a positive indirect impact on children and young people.

While we anticipate positive indirect impacts of the LHS on children and young people, these will be considered in detail as the specific policies within the LHS are developed and implemented over the next five years.

A full copy of the CRWIA can be found in **Appendix 7.**

3.3   Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

The process of exploring the impact of the LHS on health inequalities goes beyond our assessment of equalities impact and the Fairer Scotland Duty. For this LHS, partners decided to carry out a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment as part of the development process. This brings a number of benefits because it takes a cross cutting approach to consider inequalities and allows us to consider our duties across a number of key areas.

There were a number of discussions held to identify if there was an impact and whether or not these impacts were positive or negative. The discussions which have taken place have helped form our proposed actions and helped to contribute to the development of the LHS.

A full copy of the HIIA Report can be found as **Appendix 8.**

3.4   Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic method for considering the effects on the environment of a plan or programme with the aim of helping to reduce or avoid environmental impacts. A SEA is a requirement of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The objective is to provide a high level of protection for the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

A screening request was submitted to SEA Gateway under Section 9(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The key consultation authorities have indicated that there was no likelihood of significant environmental effects through the LHS 2023-2028.

The SEA Screening Report can be viewed in **Appendix 10**.

4.   Consultation and Engagement

The Council has a duty to consult widely on the LHS and involve the wider community to ensure that equality duties are met. To build the new Local Housing Strategy Scottish Borders Council has engaged with key partners and stakeholders to:

- Define a vision for the housing system in the Scottish Borders
- Identify the main issues facing the housing system in the Scottish Borders
- Propose actions and solutions that will address these issues

Consultation events and dialogue with stakeholders has identified that housing related challenges, and their effects, are being reported more and more frequently by businesses and communities. Key issues identified include a lack of suitable homes in the right locations; a lack of homes that are affordable in terms of social rent, or in price or in running costs; old stock with poor energy efficiency and subsequent health and net zero issues; pressures on homelessness services; and a need for greater diversity of housing types and tenures. Additionally, our key workers are finding it difficult to find homes to enable us to deliver vital services and it adds to the recruitment challenges for both public and private sectors. It is important across the Borders that the mix of our housing offer is effective, in terms of tenure and location – the right home in the right place.

A wide range of engagement has taken place throughout the development of this LHS, starting in the summer of 2021 up until the end of the formal consultation in July 2023. This has included:

- Early engagement survey – October to November 2021
- Resident and Stakeholder Workshops and Surveys – July to September 2022
- Gypsy / Travellers Needs Analysis and Engagement – Summer 2022
- Key Workers Survey – September 2022
- Private Landlord Survey – October to November 2022
- Formal Consultation – May to July 2023
- Peer Review – Feedback received in August 2023

A full report on the consultation and engagement on the LHS can be found in **Appendix 3**.

A report on the formal consultation and peer review can be found in **Appendix 4.**

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5. Local Context

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.

This section provides an overview of the local context. There is a full breakdown of evidence in **Appendix 2.**

5.1 Population

The estimated 2021 population for the Scottish Borders was 116,020: an increase of 0.7% from 115,240 in 2020. In the Scottish Borders, 8.7% of the population are aged 16 to 24 years. This is smaller than Scotland, where 10.2 % are aged 16 to 24 years. Persons aged 60 and over make up 33.5% of Scottish Borders. This is larger than Scotland where 26.2% are aged 60 and over.

The population of the Scottish Borders is expected to increase by 1% over the next 10 years. The structure of the population is also expected to change, with a pronounced increase in older people: the 75+ age group is expected to increase by 29.6% over the period 2018-2028, with 45-65 remaining the largest projected age group.

An ageing population means more people in the Borders will be living with one or more complex conditions and therefore will require more specialist housing and more support to live independently. There will also be fewer people of working age within the population to offer that support.

5.2 Households

The latest household estimate (2021) for the Scottish Borders is 55,296, a 0.9% increase from the previous year and 5.4% over the past 10 years. The 2018 household projections, suggest that number of households will continue to rise, with the projected increase for Scottish Borders around 3.7% for the period 2018-28, compared with 4.9% for Scotland as a whole.

While the population is expected to increase across the Borders by 1.7% and the number of households by 7% it is set to be an ageing population, with increasing numbers of smaller households. The numbers of one adult households and two adult households in particular, are growing, while the number of larger households is predicted to decline. Single person households are projected to increase by 14%.

The population in the Scottish Borders is ageing with the population aged 65 and over increasing faster than the population of children and younger adults. This impacts on household structure, as children tend to live in larger households and older people in smaller ones. The 2018-based household projections show large increases in the number of older adults living in one-adult and two-adult households; which is consistent with the increase in older age groups.

5.3 Rural Issues

The Scottish Borders comprises 4,732 square kilometres, and is home to 116,020 people, making it the 6th largest and 7th most sparsely populated council area in Scotland (at 24 people per square km). Figures taken from the Scottish Government show that there are on average 0.12 dwellings per hectare within the Scottish Borders, the national figure for Scotland is 0.33 dwellings per hectare.

Using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016, the Scottish Borders is characterised as a rural area, having only 5 settlements with a population in excess of 5,000. 30% of the population lives in settlements of under 500 people or in isolated hamlets.

The rural nature of the Scottish Borders is one of our biggest assets with the quality of our natural environment and landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area. Yet, the area suffers from a significant out-migration of young people and shrinking workforce – between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of 16 to 64 years olds fell by 4%, and the proportion of the population defined as "working age" decreased from 63% in 2007 to 59% in 2018. By contrast, the number of older people continues to grow with the number of over 65's having grown by 25% over the same period; worsening the region's dependency ratio which at 69.21 is significantly higher than the Scottish level of 55.71 (2018). Since 2018 the demand for workers in the South East of Scotland continues to outstrip supply, however vacancy postings are below the average for Scotland meaning that supply of workers is possibly being met by people travelling in from other areas[1].

The degree of inequality in rural areas like the Scottish Borders can be overlooked: with the sparsely populated nature of our region obscuring the extent of deprivation. Although SIMD is urban focused it does show that the Borders has areas of particular challenge: 6% of SIMD data-zones in the Borders are in the 20% most deprived data-zones in Scotland (typically concentrated in the larger towns), while almost a quarter of the Borders data-zones are part of the 40% most deprived in Scotland.

Rurality isn't a singular theme in the Local Housing Strategy but is a theme throughout and it forms a large part of all decision making and actions within every aspect of work.

A Rural Proofing exercise has been carried out as part of the development of the LHS and can be found in **Appendix 9.**

5.4   Economy

5.4.1   Regional Economy

Prior to the pandemic, the region's economic growth rate was greater than Scotland's. On average the Scottish Borders economy grew by 2.1 per cent each year (2012-2019). The economic output in the Scottish Borders was estimated to have grown by 0.1% between 2019 and 2021, in contrast to a 2.2% decline across Scotland during the same period.

Between 2022 and 2032, the largest contributions to growth across Scotland will come from human health & social work and financial and insurance activities. This reflects the size of these sectors as well as levels of growth.

5.4.2   Labour Market

- The employment rate for the working age population (age 16-64) in the region in 2022 was 79.4%, which was above the rate for Scotland (74.4%).
- More people worked full-time than part-time, 27,600 people (69.2%) were in the full-time jobs in the Scottish Borders compared to Scotland where 74.6% of people were in full-time employment.
- Part-time employment accounted for a greater percentage share of employment in the region compared to Scotland, 30.8% compared to 25.4%. Overall, there were 12,300 people in part-time employment in the Scottish Borders.
- In the Scottish Borders the largest employing industries, and their estimated regional share of employment in 2022 were Human Health and Social Work (23.3%), Wholesale and Retail Trade

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[1] Local Skills - Scotland 2023 Update Construction Industry Training Board

(12.2%), Manufacturing (11.4%), Education (8.3%), Construction (6.7%) and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (6.0%).

Of the key sectors in the Scottish Borders, Health and Social Care was estimated to be the largest in 2022. The sector accounted for 9,000 people. Wholesale and Retail trade was the second largest with a total of 4,700 people. Large sectors are an important source of jobs; however, regions also have sectoral strengths that make them unique. This means that smaller sectors can be more important than their sizes suggest, as they are more concentrated in the region compared to the national average.

Pre COVID-19, employment in the region had decreased by 3.1% from 2012 to 2019. There were 1,600 fewer people in employment in 2019 compared to 2012. The contraction within the region compared with 7.1% growth observed across Scotland over the same period. Overall, employment was estimated to decline by 9,300 from 2019 to 2021 in the region (by 18.8%) due to the pandemic.

5.4.3   Future Demand for Skills

In the Scottish Borders the labour market is forecast to face some challenges in the immediate term. The forecasts for the mid-term (2022-2025) however suggest there could be some jobs growth and opportunities created as a result of the need to replace workers leaving the labour market due to retirement and other reasons.

The forecast for the long-term (2025-2032) highlight that jobs growth is not forecast to continue in the Scottish Borders. However, it is expected that there could be an ongoing requirement for skilled people to fill opportunities created by people leaving the labour market. This feature of the labour market, known as the replacement requirement, is a symptom of demographic change strategic driver.

5.5   Tenure and Housing Stock

Some 63% of dwellings are estimated to be owner occupied, 23% social rented sector and 14% private rented sector in the Scottish Borders. The Scottish Borders has a higher level of owner-occupied housing, a lower level of social rented accommodation but a higher proportion of private rented housing than is the case nationally. Scottish Borders Council is a stock transfer local authority and transferred all of its housing stock to Scottish Borders Housing Association in 2003.

The general trend shows on average a stable (or now slightly reducing) owner-occupied sector while there has been an increase in private renting from 10% back in 2001 up to 14% currently. Tenure changes in the Borders evidence a shift to private renting, accompanied by a net decline in social housing by 4% over the period 2001 to 2018.

The current stock profile in the Borders is primarily houses (76%), with less than a quarter of homes being flats (24%[2]). There is also a high number of properties with 3+ bedrooms (63%) and a third (33%) of dwellings were constructed pre-1945. For a more detailed breakdown of current stock see Appendix 2.

5.6   Housing Affordability

The affordability of housing for people, whether owning or renting, is a big issue for residents in the Scottish Borders.

The average house price in the Scottish Borders in 202/23 was £222,875. The average house price varies across each Housing Market Area (HMA), prices in the Northern HMA are on average higher (£247,724)

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[2] Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019

than elsewhere in the Scottish Borders due to its closer proximity to Edinburgh. This means that access to the housing market is much more challenging in some areas of the Scottish Borders.

Across the Scottish Borders, housing affordability is an issue for households on lower incomes, and a more pressing issue for households in the area compared to Scotland. In most areas, house prices are inflating at a faster rate than income. The ability for lower income households to access owner occupation in many parts of the Borders is likely to become more challenging due to the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

Table 1 below provides a summary of rent levels in the Scottish Borders. Please note that private rents vary across the region, with costs far higher in the Northern and Berwickshire HMA's. As shown in the table, social rents are either similar or lower than the Local Housing Allowance Rate (LHA) but private rents are consistently above the LHA rate, making the private rented sector unaffordable for anyone who claims LHA.

Table 1: Comparable Rents in the Scottish Borders					
	Shared Accommodation	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Local Housing Allowance Rate	£269.27	£324.09	£423.84	£523.55	£797.81
Social Rent	£274.30	£333.34	£394.55	£467.93	£507.34
Private Rent	*	£446.52	£585.05	£731.58	£1,366.67
Mid-market Rent	*	£376.63	£435.16	£552.28	£660.36
Source: LHA – 2022/23. Social Rent – RSL data 2022/23 Private Rent – SBC data obtained from Zoopla/Rightmove 2022/23 MMR – RSL data 2022/23 *Data not available at time of writing.					

The Scottish Borders has a low wage economy, below the Scottish average. This is also the case with household income. Most households will spend between 25% and 35% of their income on housing costs which means that some household in the Scottish borders will have limited house options and access to housing due to having less income. For example, the average household income in the Scottish Borders is £21,600[3] but the average income required for private rent to be affordable is £27,312. The average income required for social rents is £19,515, meaning it is the only affordable option for households in the region.

5.7   The Cost of Living Crisis

The cost of living crisis presents serious economic and social challenges for the Scottish Borders with rates of inflation not seen in the last forty years. Energy prices have more than doubled and in November of 2022 the Scottish Government estimated that around 35% of households in Scotland are fuel-poor and 24% are in extreme fuel poverty.

The crisis is placing significant additional pressures on public and third sector services. It is already negatively affecting mental and physical health and is driving up demand for health and social care services. Demand is increasing for third sector services such as food banks and advice services. Housing is people's biggest monthly expense and although the crisis is impacting households at every point on the income scale the resulting harms will not be evenly distributed. It is those with lower incomes and little or no savings who will be most impacted.

A key consideration for Scottish Borders Partners and this LHS will be to assess how we continue to provide housing services, additional support and continue to invest in housing in the current climate.

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[3] SHCS 2017-2019

6. Housing Delivery and Sustainable Communities

Strategic Outcome 1:
More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive

Housing has an important role in not only providing a secure home to live in but in anchoring communities and places. Local people and professionals are becoming increasingly aware of the wider benefits of good, affordable housing solutions. There are clear benefits to people's health, wellbeing and wider social outcomes through having a permanent, well maintained and warm home throughout life.

All proposed development, including new housing, is considered against land use proposals and planning policies outlined in the Local Development Plan (see Section 2.2.11). This ensures a considered approach to ensure the right development takes place in the right location, striking the balance between supporting economic growth and protecting the environment to build sustainable communities. This process takes into account existing and planned services and infrastructure as part of the planning application decision process.

6.1 Rural Housing

The Scottish Borders is predominately a rural area with 53% of the population in the Scottish Borders living in rural areas, compared with the national figure of 21%. Addressing the housing challenges in a rural area like the Scottish Borders is more acute.

The legacy of COVID, impacts of Brexit, and the war in Ukraine with subsequent inflationary pressures all impact on housing delivery, particularly in a rural location such as the Scottish Borders. The cost of construction materials and components are still 44% higher than pre-COVID-19 levels and these elevated costs could remain for as long as energy prices stay high and sterling is undervalued. There are also challenges with ongoing skills shortage which contributes to increasing labour costs, for example The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Building Cost Information Service suggests labour costs may increase by up to 8.1% in 2024.

The South of Scotland has a unique need for an innovative solution to address housing issues. Factors to consider include:

- Rural depopulation and aging population,
- The local construction sector is predominantly made up of SMEs, requiring support to grow the skills base helping ensure community wealth building objectives,
- 'Live here work anywhere' ethos is central to boosting working age population and flexible working in the South,
- Good quality, energy efficient, and affordable housing for all is central to the development of a wellbeing economy,
- Rural business base – both populations and places of work can be widely dispersed,
- Low wage economy reinforces the need for affordable housing,
- Rural premium cost of living (fuel poverty, greater reliance on private transport and poor public transport connectivity),
- Reported workforce issues in key sectors attributed to accommodation shortages,

- Local skills gap in the construction industry affecting ability to deliver a built environment that is both energy efficient and sustainable[4], and
- Demand for second and retirement homes within the region impacts market demand and behaviour.

The Remote Rural & Island Action Plan was published In October 2023 and will support rural and island housing policy and investment commitments by working to remove key barriers to housing delivery. While the Action Plan will be rooted in the actions, principles and vision of Housing to 2040, its development and implementation presents a new and vital opportunity for all organisations to channel their efforts, work effectively and collaboratively to deliver more and better housing in remote, rural and island areas.

6.2   National Planning Framework 4

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is a long term spatial plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable inclusive growth. Specifically, NPF4 will set out a spatial expression of Scottish Government's economic strategy and infrastructure investment plans through to 2050. Critically, it must also take account the urgent and accelerating threats of climate change, and biodiversity and ecosystems loss.

NPF4 sets out a vision for what Scotland, as a place, could and should look like in 2045. It includes national planning policies and provides a plan for future development in Scotland. NPF4 sets out six overarching spatial principles:

- Just transition. We will empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive.
- Conserving and recycling assets. We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy.
- Local living. We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.
- Compact urban growth. We will limit urban expansion so we can optimise the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- Rebalanced development. We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.
- Rural revitalisation. We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.

The Local Housing Strategy has been informed by the spatial principles and policies set out in NPF4. Important concepts and approaches, including the '20 minute neighbourhood', the 'Place Principle', prioritising brownfield development, developing a 'fabric first' approach to decarbonising homes and communities, all feature within this LHS including in relation to the proposed outcomes, actions, targets and measures.

Evidence suggested the initial default estimate on the minimum housing land requirement was an underestimation of market demand as well as the affordable need for the Scottish Borders. Therefore, Scottish Borders Council worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government, taking an evidence based approach to form a locally adjusted estimate which took into consideration; past completion rates, the outcome of the third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3), estimates of homelessness, hidden households and the policy drivers for the region. Neither did it take into account the numerous policy drivers which seek to attract people to live and work within the region, help boost the economy and meet the required rise in the number of households. It was considered that the initial default

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[4] Construction Industry Training Board – Local Skills Scotland 2023 Update

estimate conflicted with national and regional policy aspirations for the Scottish Borders, including investment in the South of Scotland.

The finalised Minimum All -Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR), contained within the adopted NPF4 for Scottish Borders is 4,800; comprising 350 for existing need; 3,300 for households and 1,105 for additional flexibility. Scottish Borders Council have agreed that the figures are the minimum amount of land to be identified within LDP's and that this covers all tenures.

6.3   Place Making

Place is significant in our lives. It has shaped who we are, frames what we have become and nurtures our aspirations. It is where we find the people and communities that are important to our sense of self and belonging. Having a real say in what happens to our place empowers who we are and who we can be.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of local community resilience and the potential of local places to act effectively and collaboratively in both identifying and addressing local needs as well as supporting our fundamental wellbeing.

Making change happen at scale is complicated and difficult. However, focussing in on a specific place, its communities and partners, provides a more manageable setting to engage and take effective action.

Scottish Borders Council has put forward a proposed framework that builds on the Place Principle agreed between CoSLA and the Scottish Government, in particular: "A more joined-up, collaborative and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives".

The proposed framework aims to build upon the Council's ambitions around enhanced community engagement and participation, commitment to community planning and the intention to strengthen the role of area partnerships. At a regional level, Place is a critical element of the South of Scotland Economic Strategy, an explicit component of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the future direction of health and social care.

Scottish Borders Council intends to put Place at the heart of our work, investing in town centres and making it easier for homes to be the heart of strong communities with housing that is well designed, without compromising on the aesthetics. SBC will take action to stem rural depopulation and help communities across the Borders to thrive.

6.4   South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)

Unlike local authorities, the South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) does not have a statutory remit in housing, but has an important role in helping to underpin the housing sector. This can include promoting the development of construction capacity and skills and finding solutions to strategic issues affecting the economy through supporting the development of innovative solutions to housing issues, for example by the use of pathfinder projects to trial new ideas and alternative models for housing supply. It has an important role in raising the profile of the housing challenge in the South of Scotland, where housing is critically linked to economic development.

6.5   South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy has recognised the centrality of tackling the housing challenges for future success and has driven out a range of relevant and interlinked activities. The following housing-related actions in the RES Delivery Plan form part of a prioritised programme of work:

- Action 2 (H) – Promote flexible working practices through housing and planning policies, to support the concept of 'live here work anywhere'.
- Action 6 (E) - Advocate and lobby to create the right conditions for investment in new and existing housing within the region, to boost the number of new homes delivered to better align with economic and social needs and ambition.

As a result of the housing and infrastructure challenges in the South of Scotland, there is a need for regional partners to:

a) **Recognise** the importance of suitable housing of all types and tenures across the region in meeting people's housing requirements and unlocking opportunities for social and economic development in the South of Scotland

b) **Endorse** the approach being taken across the South of Scotland to deliver a range of strategic objectives via investment in affordable housing, particularly where aspirations have been identified in partnership with in the community

c) **Support** the range of activities already happening in the South of Scotland, and recognise that a well-functioning housing system is a key factor in us achieving the ambition set out in the respective Local Housing Strategies and Local Development Plans as well as our Regional Economic Strategy to be a green, fair and flourishing region by 2031

d) **Acknowledge** the interdependence between regional, Scottish and UK-level policies, and ask all partners and stakeholders to address the issues, recognise the opportunities, and play their part in addressing the housing challenges, including testing ideas through pathfinder projects in the region where appropriate

6.6   Community Planning Partnership and Locality Planning

Community planning is the process by which SBC and other public bodies work with local communities, businesses and community groups to plan and deliver better services and improve the lives of people who live in Scotland. The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is tasked with taking this forward in the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders Community Plan highlights what the Borders-wide inequalities are and how the CPP, together and with local communities and businesses, can address those inequalities and improve outcomes. Some inequalities and outcomes are not Borders wide but much more localised to specific communities, for example rural isolation. To reflect these more localised inequalities five Locality Plans have been developed to get a better understanding of the key issues within these areas and what specific actions can be identified. These locality plans are taken forward at the five area partnerships. The aims and objectives of area partnerships are outlined in the Locality Plans and Action and Locality Action Plans. The partnerships are another way for local communities to have a voice in local decision making, via their Elected Members.

The CPP structure comprises of a Strategic Board, a Joint Programme Board and five locally based area partnerships. As well as a number of statutory partners, the CPP works closely with a range of other partners in the Scottish Borders.

There are five community planning localities in Scottish Borders: Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot and Liddesdale, and Tweeddale. These localities align with agreed Social Work and NHS Borders localities and are part of the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Plan.

6.7   Housing Need and Demand Assessment

The purpose of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) is to estimate the future number of additional housing units required to meet existing and future housing need and demand by housing market area, based on a range of scenarios rather than precise estimates. The HNDA captures contextual

information on the operation of the housing system to develop policies on new housing supply, the management of existing stock and the provision of housing related services.

The South East Scotland Plan (SESplan) HNDA3 was developed throughout 2020 and 2021 and achieved robust and credible status on Thursday 28 July 2022.

The Strong Growth scenario was the preferred scenario for the Scottish Borders. The Strong Growth scenario outlined in the HNDA3 reflects a positive outlook across the region with movement towards high income growth in real terms, high inward migration, greater equality, high/moderately high house prices and rental growth. It reflects regional ambitions such as:

- More people move to Scottish Borders from Edinburgh and the Lothians, making use of the links to the City by rail, in particular to Northern HMA and parts of Central HMA.
- Tourists are attracted to the area with Tapestry opening in Galashiels, and a wider Masterplan relating to the town centre, with Destination Tweed continuing investment in biking facilities in the Tweed valley.
- Central Borders Innovation Park expands and redevelops and the expansion of Tweedbank for housing and commercial development is underway.
- High levels of investment lead to improved digital connectivity, opening opportunities for businesses in rural areas of the Scottish Borders, and the new railway station at Reston provides more development opportunities on the East Coast.

The HNDA3 in the strong growth scenario suggests that the Borders will require an additional 3,827 units over the next 20 years. A third of this requirement is for affordable housing. The figures identified through the HNDA3 process are a starting point to inform the production of the housing supply target, the housing land requirement and housing land supply figures.

6.8   Housing Supply Target

The current Housing Supply Target (HST) identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 was set in 2016. The target was informed by the outputs of SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment2 (HNDA2). The LHS 2017-22 identified the target as 348 new homes per year. This comprises of 128 affordable homes and 220 market homes per annum.

Affordable housing, as defined in Scottish Government's NPF4, is housing "of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on low incomes. This can include social rented, mid-market rented, shared ownership, shared equity, housing sold at a discount, self-build plots and low-cost housing without subsidy."

The affordable housing supply targets were ambitious but achieved due to the Council and its RSL partners responding proactively and creatively to opportunities to increase the housing supply in the Borders over the last five years.

The Housing Supply Target must be reasonable, properly reflect the HNDA estimate of housing demand in the market sector and be based on compelling evidence. The HST is, however, a policy view of the number of homes that each authority has agreed will be delivered in each housing market area over the periods of the development plan and Local Housing Strategy. There is a clear expectation that there will be an alignment between the HNDA and the Housing Supply Target; however, the two need not be the same. In setting the affordable HSTs Scottish Borders Council considered the following factors:

- economic factors which may impact on demand and supply
- capacity within the construction sector
- delivery of market and affordable housing at the local level
- availability of resources
- recent development levels
- planned demolitions
- planned new and replacement housing or housing brought back into effective use

Housing Supply Target 2023-2028

New Housing Requirement: 370

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141 affordable houses per year

229 market houses per year
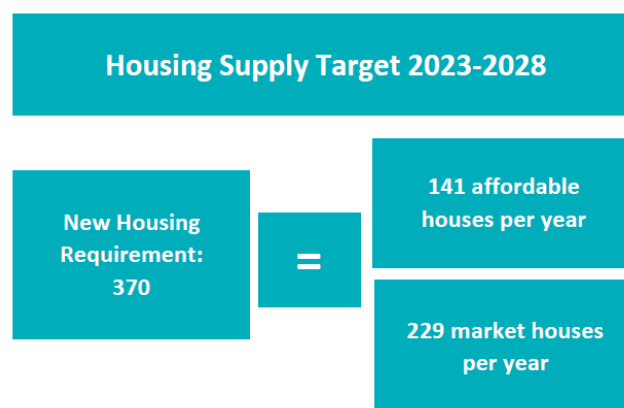
Aligning with NPF4 it is estimated that HST for the Scottish Borders for 2023-2028 will be 370 per annum.

The full Housing Supply Target Paper can found as **Appendix 5.**

6.9   Land Supply

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) undertakes an annual Housing Land Audit (HLA) to identify and monitor the established and effective housing land supply and to meet the requirement for monitoring housing land. The annual base date for the Scottish Borders HLA is 31st March. The two key functions of the HLA are;

- To demonstrate the availability of sufficient effective land to meet the requirement for a continuous five-year supply; and
- To provide a snapshot of the amount of land available for the construction of housing at any particular time.

The most recent finalised Housing Land Audit (HLA) was produced in 2021 and demonstrates that there are 8,715 units in the established housing land supply within the Scottish Borders. 3,538 units are classed as effective (Years 1-5) and 1,967 units are potentially effective (Years 6-7). The table below shows the established land supply by Housing Market area; 63% are in Central HMA, 22% in Berwickshire HMA, 14% in Northern HMA and 1 % in Southern HMA.

Table 2: Establish housing land supply by HMA for 2020/21				
Housing Market Area (HMA)	**Berwickshire**	**Central**	**Northern**	**Southern**
Established Land Supply (2020/21)	1,902	5,534	1,187	92
Source: SBC Housing Land Audit 2021				

This demonstrates that the Scottish Borders has a vast amount of land available for housing development, which includes a range of sites within all housing market areas. Furthermore, the established housing land supply also includes windfall sites, which account for approximately 20% of the supply. There are 570 windfall sites included within HLA, which is not uncommon for a rural Local Authority given the number of single houses and steading conversion developments.

An estimate of the timescale for delivery of housing projects has been continually difficult due to the downturn in the housing market. The programming of sites within the audit continues to be a reasonable expression of what can be developed within the given time periods and there is a significant degree of uncertainty beyond years 2 to 3. A large number of sites were subject to delays and stalling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020. As a result, it is acknowledged that this will have impacts upon the programming of sites going forward. This has been taken into consideration in the programming.

Scottish Borders Council is also aware of the economic position regarding the lack of finance and the availability of mortgage finance for buyers. It should be noted that in recent years there are very few house

builders developing sites within the Scottish Borders. The above demonstrates the direct impact upon rural areas including the Scottish Borders as a result of the current economic climate and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

6.10 Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)

Scottish Borders Council, with the involvement of its key partners via the SHIP Working Group, prepared the most recent SHIP for its submission in October 2023. It rolls forward the projects and planning horizons set out in the previous SHIP 2023-2028. It is updated by current information, where applicable, and sets out how the Council and its partners have identified and prioritised projects that are capable of being delivered within the period 2024-29 and identifies where there are development constraints in relation to particular projects. It sets out estimated timescales for project delivery and identifies a range of funding sources and resource mechanisms including Scottish Government grants, Registered Social Landlord own resources and borrowing, other funding initiatives and the Council's own resources.

The SHIP also sets out how the Council and its partners have identified and prioritised projects that are capable of being delivered within the period 2024-2029 and identifies where there are development constraints in relation to particular projects. It sets out estimated timescales for project delivery and identifies a range of funding sources and resource mechanisms including Scottish Government grants, Registered Social Landlord own resources and RSL borrowing, other funding initiatives and the Council's own resources.

The SHIP 2024-2029 sets out ambitious proposals for potentially up to 1,122 new affordable Borders homes at a total estimated investment value in the region of £267m during 2024-2029. In addition the SHIP 2024-2029 identifies Potential Pipeline Development Projects which require further work before they could potentially be accelerated into the 5 year programme, or included in future SHIPs in due course. Most of these are developer-led or privately owned sites, which draws attention to the importance of the housing market in the delivery of affordable housing.

From the 1,122 potential units, 266 are particular needs units (24%) and 111 (10%) are wheelchair accessible houses. Table 3 provides a breakdown of the total potential units by Housing Market Area.

Table 3: SHIP 2024-2029 Planned Units by HMA							
HMA	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total	%
Berwickshire	20	30	12	128	105	295	26%
Central	92	89	130	202	215	728	65%
Northern	22	27	0	0	0	49	4%
Southern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Unknown*	10	10	10	10	10	50	4%
Scottish Borders	144	156	152	340	330	1,122	100%
Source: SHIP 2024-2029 *AHSP purchases							

The Scottish Social Housing Tender Price Index measures the movement in construction costs of social housing in Scotland. The index is based on analysing the construction costs in accepted tenders for affordable housing. Grant recipients provide tender information through the Housing Tender Return. The average is about £200k per unit (3 person equivalent) although most recent tenders returned have been significantly higher, which is an area of concern.

The SHIP is based on a number of known and assumed funding resources that the Council and its development partners will draw upon. These include Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant allocations of £16.0m in 2022/23 and assumptions of £15.954m in 2023/24, £16.010m in 2024/25 and £16.275m in 2025/26. The SHIP also assumes use of up to £5.1m Second Homes Council Tax funding from the Council and up to £154m estimated private borrowing by the Registered Social Landlords over the period of the SHIP to 2029.

To assist budget estimating, the Council and its partners have developed this SHIP 2024-2029 on the basis of an indicative grant of £96k/unit, and RSL Private Finance contribution of £144k/unit, which illustrates the increasing pressure on individual RSL's finite financial capacity.

6.11   Private Rented Sector

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) plays an important role in Scotland's housing system with some 700,000 people in Scotland making their homes in the sector nationally, double the number of ten years ago. The sector plays a crucial role in meeting a wide range of housing needs in the Scottish Borders with 14% of people in the region living in private rented housing. The sector is an important part of a diverse housing offer, meeting the needs of a broad range of people at many stages of life and career. There is a broad base of tenants, from those requiring flexibility in terms of employment, to students and young people setting up home for the first time, as well as options for newly formed households but also those looking for longer-term accommodation.

At the end of August 2023 there were just under 7,400 properties (over 4,600 registrations) within the Private Rented Sector in the Scottish Borders. At its peak the number of people living in the private rented sector was 16.5% (currently 14%). The ten main settlements in the Scottish Borders make up 78% of the private rented sector, meaning the majority of properties available are in more urban areas of the Scottish Borders.

As stated in Section 5 under housing affordability, the private rents in the area vary across the region and are much higher than social rents, meaning the sector is not a viable housing option for everyone. In the private rented sector the *'New Deal for Tenants'* is proposed as a step towards 2040 goals, including plans for a Rental Sector Regulator, development of a national system of rent controls by 2025, and ambitious energy efficiency targets. This will help to tackle some of the affordability issues in the private rented sector.

6.11.1 Private Rented Sector Regulation and Support

The Scottish Government strengthened the rights and responsibilities for private rented tenants and landlords with the introduction of the Private Residential Tenancy Agreement in 2017, which provides more security, stability, and safeguards for all parties. This was updated to take into account the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

It is a legal requirement for landlords to register with the Council's Landlord Registration Scheme, which provides assurance that legal standards have been met for letting property and that a "fit and proper person" test has been undertaken on all registered landlords.

The regulation of letting agents and introduction of a letting agents' Code of Practice by the Scottish Government also aim to give tenants and landlords confidence in the standards and service that they should expect; and provide mechanisms for both landlords and tenants to challenge situations where poor practice is evident.

The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) was formed to provide support for dispute resolution. This deals with determinations of rent, or repair issues in private sector housing; provides assistance in exercising a landlord's right of entry; and helps to resolve issues that arise between homeowners and property factors.

SBC provides a liaison and support service for landlords and tenants and enforcement is only applied as a last resort. Key engagement activities include:

- Liaising with landlords in relation to prescribed information and providing guidance on legislation relating to letting properties. Rental properties are being improved as a result and landlords also gain a better understanding of the obligations when letting in the private sector.
- Landlords are becoming increasingly aware of the need for energy efficiency and proposed future energy standards affecting the rental market. Advice and support is offered through our liaison service.
- To address repairing standard issues, advice is provided to landlords following property inspection.
- In support of the Ukraine crisis, where homes or accommodation is being offered by the community, properties have been inspected using the Scottish Government's Quality Assurance Housing Checklist.
- Throughout the pandemic, Officers have continued to support landlords by providing the latest Scottish Government Guidance; information on financial help available and how to go about daily landlord activities, including what checks should be completed and how to undertake viewings.

Landlord Registration activity demonstrates that in the Scottish Borders Landlords tend to be long-term, with knowledge of legislation and their obligations.

6.11.2 Private Landlord Survey

At the end of 2022 SBC carried out a survey on private landlords to gain a better understanding of the needs and challenges landlords face and to find out about their practice. A total of 6% of all registered landlords in the Scottish Borders (223 out of approximately 3,900) responded to the survey. Some of the key findings from the survey responses included:

- 41% of respondents said they had been landlords for 10+ years, with a further 28% saying they had been landlords for between 5-10 years.
- 50% of respondents had only 1 property, followed up by 21% who said they had 2 properties. 86% of total responses said they had less than 5 properties.
- More than 70% of landlords who responded said they own property exclusively in the Borders.
- 22% of respondents tend to be 'accidental' landlords and 39% said for they were landlords for other reasons including; renting while out of the country, renting out farm cottage and investing for their pension.
- 57% of respondents said they manage their own properties, while another 37% use an agent.
- Nearly half of respondents (44%) said that they are in contact with tenants at least quarterly, while a further 31% said they were in contact monthly. Only 2.7% are in contact less than once a year.
- Most respondents inspect their properties regularly and plan ahead for improvements, with 40% saying they inspect annually, and another 29% inspecting every 6 months.
- 44% said they had plans to install some kind of energy saving measures, where 56% said they did not. The most common reasons for not installing measures were; measures too expensive, need financial incentive, no return on investment and their property was a listed building so installing measures is difficult.
- 70% of landlords who responded were aware of reforms in the private rented sector.
- 43% said they were very likely or fairly likely to sell part of their portfolio in the next 5 years, while 45% said they were not at all likely or not very likely to do so. The remaining respondents did not respond or responded with "don't know".

The sector recognises the importance of ensuring that tenants have certainty about rents and an ability to stay in their homes, as well as deserving a good quality, energy efficient home. However, it is possible there may be unintended consequences of recent legislative changes causing concern to landlords, including the impact of the Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 with a freeze on rent increases and no evictions until March 2024, as well as the investment required to meet minimum energy efficiency standards. This was raised in the private landlord survey where 43% of landlords responding said they were very likely or fairly likely to sell part of their portfolio in the next 5 years, however this does not

necessarily represent the views of all landlords. There is early evidence of some landlords withdrawing from the sector, with almost 600 fewer properties registered in August 2023 than in March 2021. Overall, the number of landlord registrations and number of active properties has been gradually decreasing in recent years however more time is needed to understand whether this trend will continue.

The LHS will continue to focus on improving the affordability, condition, and operation of the sector and further enhancing tenancy management in line with national legislative developments and guidance. Private renting remains a major element of the local housing system and a significant tenure for local households in need, particularly where alternative options are often restricted.

6.11.3 Homes for Good

Homes For Good is the only private rented sector letting agency in Scotland specialising in supporting people on lower incomes in need of housing.

Considering the housing challenges and demand highlighted to Homes for Good by South of Scotland Enterprise and other stakeholders in the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway, Homes for Scotland completed a scoping study earlier in 2023 to assess the need and viability for expanded the model into the South of Scotland. This was supported by SOSE (South of Scotland Enterprise Agency) and TNCLF (The National Lottery Community Fund). As a result of this market research Homes for Good is extending its geographical reach, with its first office opening in Dumfries later this year, followed by premises in the Borders during 2024.

6.12   Young People

Young people's routes to independent housing are becoming more difficult due to a wide range of factors. Young people are increasingly squeezed out of the housing market and face a more drawn-out process of moving towards independent living. Affordable housing in the private and social rented sectors is in short supply. Young people can face a number of significant life changes between the ages of 16-25, including leaving home, moving into further education, seeking employment, moving on from a period spent in care, involvement with youth justice services, becoming parents, and some may also have a variety of complex support needs.

The Scottish Borders has a lower proportion of young people in the region compared to Scotland and housing is an issue for young people, which was reflected as a priority from the early engagement strategy.

The Housing Needs and Aspirations of Young People's Study, undertaken by SBC in 2018-19, identified a number of key priorities and outcomes to help address some of the issues young people have and identified a number of key actions which will be taken forward in this LHS.

6.13   Town Centres

One of the ambitions in Housing to 2040 is *'Driving forward with a place-based approach through investment in town centres and placing housing at the heart of communities, including committing to stemming rural depopulation'*.

As part of the Borderlands Place Programme there is a focus on town centres and there is ambition that all towns and their centres are economically vibrant and resilient to change. The key objectives are to:

- Attract new businesses to our towns and town centres
- Increase and retain our working age population
- Raise the standard of the physical environment in our towns and town centres
- Increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres

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- Deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation
- Increase the number of visitors who spend time and money in our towns and town centres

There are currently four stages to this work:

- Stage 1: Town Prioritisation and Selection Process
- Stage 2: Development and endorsement of Place Plans
- Stage 3: Development and endorsement of Borderlands Town Investment Plans (BTIPs)
- Stage 4: Contracting, delivery, performance management and monitoring

As part of stage one, four towns have been identified in the Scottish Borders; Hawick, Galashiels, Jedburgh and Eyemouth. Workshops took place in each of these towns in 2022 with key partners and members of the community. Further workshops were held in early 2023 with some of the towns starting to establish Town Teams.

6.13.1 Town Centre Living

Place towns and town centres are at the core of NPF4, limiting new out of town development and encouraging a town centre first approach. Town Centre Living (TCL) is a key policy aspiration for the Scottish Government, local authorities and a wide range of other public, private and third sector bodies. It builds upon strong foundations of strategic place planning and supports key principles around inclusion, wellbeing and sustainability. The independent report 'A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres' was delivered by the Town Centre Action Plan Review Group and published in February 2021. The vision developed by the Independent Review Group is that:

"Towns and town centres are for the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy. Towns are for everyone and everyone has a role to play in making their own town and town centres successful."

The revised Town Centre Action Plan sets out the response to a broad range of recommendations proposed in the Review. It sets out government's response, both national and local, as enablers of positive change whilst recognising the limits of what can be achieved if government were to act in isolation.

Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) commissioned analysis that identified a range of 'push' and 'pull' factors that influence people's views around housing choice. These factors combine and influence people's perception about the attractiveness of a place, and their opinions of what it would be like to live in. They include:

- proximity to places of work and study;
- the quality of the physical environment and access to green spaces;
- the range of services and facilities, including public transport choices;
- housing quality and choice, including cost, size, type and tenure; and
- negative issues – for example pollution, crime and perceptions of safety

While there are a number of barriers to town centre living (funding gaps, lack of evidence of demand as well as time for, and process of, obtaining consents) there are a number of good examples in Scotland that SBC and partners can learn from.

6.14 Empty Homes

Nationally, bringing empty homes back into use continues to be a key priority for the Scottish Government. Scottish Government commitments regarding Empty Homes include:

- Committed continual funding for the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership which is hosted by Shelter Scotland to support local authorities and to encourage private sector long-term empty homes back into use;
- Working with local authorities to audit empty homes in their areas and determine those that should be brought back into use;
- Giving local authorities the powers, they need to regulate and charge owners appropriately for homes lying empty and to ensure that they have the mechanisms to bring empty homes back into productive use;
- Establishing a new fund for local authorities that will bring empty homes back into residential use and be able to convert suitable empty commercial properties in town centres to provide housing;
- Shifting of policy focus to help people renovate, adapt, or improve the energy efficiency of homes rather than help them to buy;
- Continuation of the Rural and Islands Housing Fund to increase the supply of affordable housing including bringing empty properties into use or the conversion of commercial and non-domestic properties into houses.

There are 1,268 long term empty homes in the Scottish Borders (according to SBC Council Tax records as of July 2023). This figure has remained steady for over ten years. There are many reasons why a property becomes empty. On a regional level an area may have low demand, or an oversupply of certain properties. Individual factors relating to the property can explain long term vacancy rates including the death of the owner, with new owners not forthcoming or a breakdown in relationship; a reluctance to rent out the property; being unable to afford to bring a property back into habitable condition; and repossession.

By working to support renovation of suitable empty homes and returning them back to use, SBC can help to improve the quality of housing stock and improve the quality of life in the communities with empty stock. SBC have a dedicated Empty Homes Officer working to actively engage with owners of Empty Homes across the Scottish Borders. The Officer has an active case load of 258 empty homes, and has been making connections with owners, neighbours and communities being affected by empty homes.

The Empty Homes Officer can support owners with a range of practical options to assist them to make informed choices about the best outcome for them and their property. Effective solutions can vary, and the main options include the following:

- Builder Merchant Discounts – a range of suppliers offer preferential rates or discounts for empty homes owners undertaking works.
- VAT reductions for qualifying properties undergoing renovation – this can significantly reduce costs and enable works to go ahead.
- Matchmaker Scheme – This is a free service which aims to match owners who wish to sell with potential purchasers looking to buy.
- Support Levy Discretions - The Council utilises the legislative powers afforded under the Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and 2016 to charge double Council Tax on long term empty dwellings under specified circumstances, and subject to certain exemptions. The primary aim of the double charge is to encourage owners to engage and take action to bring homes back into use.

Whilst there is a suite of tools available to assist empty homes owners to take action, dealing with these properties is challenging, particularly when properties have been empty for a significant period of time; are in serious disrepair; and where ownership is difficult to determine or owners do not engage.

The burden of renovation cost is often cited as a reason why action is not being taken. To help address that an Empty Homes Grant Scheme has been launched by SBC, offering financial assistance to bring properties back into use (primarily affordable use).

This is a discretionary scheme and is allocated on a first come first served basis. During the period 2022/23 16 applications have been received. Of these, 4 have been approved.

There are also many second homes in the Scottish Borders, and while these are not empty, there are long periods of time in which these properties are not lived in. As of March 2023, the number of second homes was 1,015, with the highest proportion of second homes located in the Central HMA followed by the Berwickshire HMA.

Benefits for owners, neighbours, the community and Local authority:

- Environmental and Climate benefits
- Contributes to reduced carbon emissions caused by housing and housing construction
- Improved property condition & increase in property value
- Increased revenue & reduced debt recovery costs
- Reduces crime, vandalism & anti-social behaviour
- Improved health and well-being
- Increased supply of affordable housing & choice of tenure
- Reduced pressure/ constraints on planning & new build homes
- Helps revive and revitalise town centres, villages and rural communities
- Local residents take pride in their community
- Improved energy efficiency and reduced utility costs
- Reduced Complaints & Enforcement Action
- Improved energy efficiency and reduced utility costs
- Rejuvenates local economy & employment opportunities
- Improves outlook of area

6.14.1   South of Scotland Community Housing

South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) provides long-term support to community organisations relative to the planning and delivery of community-led housing. SOSCH get involved with a community at the very start of a housing conversation, providing support all the way through to delivery and beyond. This work is inclusive of Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, project development (including business planning and funding packages), delivery and housing management.

In the summer of 2022, SOSCH recruited a Community-Led Housing Co-Ordinator for South East Scotland. A key part of the role is to support community organisations bring empty homes back into use as community led housing. The work of South of Scotland Communities Housing is vital in rural areas and community-led housing regeneration is important in the South of Scotland. SBC will work closely with the Community-Led Housing Co-Ordinator to support any projects coming forward either through individual projects or through the Place Plan Programme.

6.14.2   Short Term Lets

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of short term lets which has led to strong debates on the positives and negatives of short term lets. For many, short-term lets using Airbnb and similar platforms have enabled cheaper, more flexible travel, but for others – particularly in tourist hotspots – there are concerns that they make it more difficult to find homes to live in. Some of the positive impacts of short-term lets on communities include local economic benefits associated with tourism and increased household income for hosts. However, negative impacts include the impact on communities' quality of life, reduced availability of residential housing and increased strain on local public services.

While robust statistics are not yet available for short-term lets, in 2019 the Scottish Government commissioned research into the impact of short-term lets on communities in Scotland. The research provided a snapshot figure of properties advertised through active Airbnb listings by local authority area in

May 2019. 570 properties were listed, which is 1% of total housing stock in the Scottish Borders. The amount of short term lets will be monitored via the Scottish Government and SBC Licensing going forwards.

In the early engagement survey carried out in 2021, 44% of respondents felt that second homes and holiday lets were a big issue in the Scottish Borders. There were concerns around how this was impacting demand for housing and how this was affecting communities, in particular rural communities.

Short term lets will require a license from October 2023 which will ensure short term lets are safe and monitored. This also provides the opportunity to balance economic and tourism benefits with the concerns of local residents.

6.14.3 Vacant and Derelict Land

SBC undertake the Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS) annually, in conjunction with all local authorities in Scotland. The purpose of the SVDLS is to establish the extent and state of vacant and derelict land in Scotland. Requested by the Scottish Government and managed by the Scottish Government Communities Analytical Services, the survey has been operating since 1988. The data collected provides an invaluable source of information relating to vacant and derelict sites, and assists in reinforcing and justifying national policy established to bring about the re-use and regeneration of these land resources.

The classification of sites included in the survey are derelict sites, vacant land and vacant buildings. Derelict sites comprise previously developed land not ready for development without rehabilitation, including abandoned sites, and can be located anywhere within the Borders. Vacant land comprises previously developed land (including just as far as concrete slab base), without requirement for any demolition, which falls within settlements only and has an intended use within the Local Development Plan. Vacant land and buildings is similar to vacant land but the site must also features non-derelict buildings, which either are scheduled for demolition, or which are a minor part of the site in relation to the vacant element and the site boundary cannot easily be redrawn to omit the building.

National Planning framework 4 (NPF4), Scotland's National Policy, has a specific policy covering vacant and derelict land; the intent of Policy 9 is *"to encourage, promote and facilitate the reuse of brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings, and to help reduce the need for Greenfield development".* Policy 9 is linked to several other policies: Historic Assets and Places (Policy 7), Zero Waste (Policy 12), Infrastructure First (Policy 18), Play, Recreation and Sport (Policy 21), Community Wealth Building (Policy 25) and City, Town, Local and Commercial Centres (Policy 27). Policy 9 also relates to housing policies, Quality Homes (Policy 16) and Rural Homes (Policy 17).

Our proposed Local Development Plan has several policies that relate to vacant and derelict land, PMD5, ED5 and IS13. These policies relate respectively to infill development, regeneration and contaminated land. Vacant and derelict land is an important provision for housing land; for example, in the 2022 SVDLS survey in Scottish Borders, 8 sites had been taken up and 6 of these sites were in the process of being developed for housing.

6.15   Build to Rent

Build to Rent PRS (BTR) offers an opportunity to complement existing housing delivery models and help to increase the overall rate of housing delivery. BTR can contribute to the creation of well-designed, sustainable places, quickly and at scale. It can provide high-quality, purpose-built rented accommodation that will enhance the attractiveness of Scotland, for new and different developers and long-term investors at scale. It can also support labour market mobility by providing homes for people moving into areas for work.

While the Scottish Government wants to encourage a growing BTR sector, lower rents in the Scottish Borders makes it more difficult to deliver BTR homes or encourage BTR operators to develop homes in the Scottish Borders.

6.16   Self-Build

Self-provided housing is an important element of future housing supply. It can include self-build (where a person builds their own house or appoints their own builder), custom-build (where a person tasks a house builder to tailor a home to their preferences before it is built) and collective build (where a group of people design and build several homes together). It can be an affordable option for housing delivery, with the flexibility to support the development of accessible housing.

The Local Housing Strategy looks for opportunities to encourage and promote self or custom builds. As with many other rural areas a significant proportion housing completions are self-build units in the Borders and partners will continue to look for opportunities and sites to promote this form of build, as well as monitor the numbers of self-build completions. The number of self-builds is monitored through NB2 completions (Private Sector New Build). Over the past five years the number of self-builds in the Scottish Borders have been decreasing from approximately 35% (2011/12) of private new build completions to 18% of new build completions in 2022/23. While this provides us with an approximate number of self-builds, SBC will be looking to develop a register on people interested in self-build and develop a mechanism to monitor the number of self-build projects.

Access to appropriate information, advice and support is key to support those who may be considering a self-build option, and where initially there may appear to be a number of barriers to progressing. The Scottish Government, and other organisations, have a number of useful guides and helpful information available on their websites, however there is more that we can do locally to support this activity.

SBC are currently working on a self-build register with the aim of this going live on the website in 2023.

6.17   Key Issues and Challenges

- The Scottish Borders has an ageing population and reducing household sizes – meaning a greater need for the right type, size of stock in the right places
- Lack of access to affordable housing
- Decreasing Private Rented Sector - The private rented sector plays a significant role in the Scottish Borders. Work with landlords and tenants to ensure this sector continues to thrive
- Limited housing options for young people and/or first-time buyers
- Need for greater diversity of housing types and tenures
- Supporting housing development in more rural areas and communities
- Uncertainty and impacts of COVID-19 and the UK's exit from the EU
- Delivering housing in a challenging financial landscape where there are inflationary pressures, increasing tender costs, increasing cost of finance and mortgages which is adding to the challenge
- House prices and private rents vary in different parts of the Borders and a low wage economy means housing options are limited for many residents
- Perception from larger developers is that the region is a challenging market with insufficient market demand, lower end value and a longer time to sell. Traditionally, both sale prices and rates of sale are lower than other parts of Scotland, particularly the central belt, adding to costs and making development less attractive
- Housing needs to be considered in the wider context, including transport and digital connectivity, childcare, and employment opportunities. Ensuring that there is the appropriate infrastructure around new homes such as schools, shops, and employment opportunities
- Supporting community led housing developments
- The number of empty homes in the Scottish Borders continues to be at similar levels but has started to increase in the past couple of years
- Need to make better and more effective use of existing stock – e.g. empty homes
- There are some areas of the Scottish Borders being low demand creating some challenges
- Town centres in the Borders have been declining, there is a need to make town centres a great place to live - making better use of vacant/ derelict sites and repurposing existing buildings (high costs associated with derelict or brownfield sites)
- Increase in short term lets and second home usage

6.18   Current Progress

- HNDA3 received robust and credible status in 2022. The preferred scenario for the Scottish Borders being strong growth
- Revised Draft NPF4 is in place with the finalised MATHLR for the Scottish Borders is 4,800
- The Housing Supply Target for affordable housing has been met over the period of the LHS 2017-2022
- The Strategic Housing Investment Plan for 2023-2028 was submitted to Scottish Government in October 2022
- Establishment of Community Place Planning Team at SBC
- The Borderlands initiative set down the challenge in 2022 for us to take a 'whole town' approach to placemaking. Borderland Place Workshops were held in Hawick, Galashiels, Eyemouth, Jedburgh in 2022
- Recruitment of an Empty Homes Strategy & Policy Officer in the summer of 2021
- Launching an Empty Homes/ Property Grant Scheme
- Work on the regeneration of Beech Avenue area in Upper Langlee, Galashiels
- The Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) is ongoing in Selkirk, Jedburgh and Hawick
- South East Scotland City Region Deal - A new Regional Housing Board was established in 2019 as a means of better engaging the housing sector and harnessing its potential contribution towards the wider City Region Deal objectives
- Well established working relationships with RSLs, delivering social rented housing for people in the region

6.19   Key Actions for Delivery

- Increase the supply of affordable housing
- Increase the supply of alternative tenure housing to meet a broad range of needs
- Increase construction capacity and skills to support delivery of more homes
- Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places
- Supporting the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements)
- Support the development and implementation of Place Plans to help address local housing challenges
- Reduce the number of empty homes
- Explore innovative approaches to housing delivery in conjunction with partners

Successfully tackling these issues is key to our success and provides us with significant opportunity. To unlock economic opportunities in the Borders it is essential that people are able to find the homes they need, both for those already in the region and to attract new people, helping to tackle the need for more working age people.

Matching housing development to economic opportunities is important. This includes new-build properties and refurbishment and retrofit of existing properties, which all contribute across our ambitions to be a green, fair and flourishing region – from our net zero ambitions, through community wealth building, delivering thriving places and tackling poverty and inequality.

The proposed actions in relation to Housing Delivery and Sustainable Communities will support those ambitions.

7. Specialist Housing, Particular Needs and Independent Living

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Strategic Outcome 2:
People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing

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Having access to the right housing plays a crucial role in addressing some of the key health challenges in Scotland and the Scottish Borders. Housing can help contribute to the positive health outcomes of people who have mental or physical health needs.

The Scottish Borders has an ageing population which will have a big impact on housing services in the future. The main impacts are on changing demands for housing supply and the housing stock; in supporting people to live independently and on adaptations to housing stock. Wherever possible, independent living will be supported in a person's own home through appropriate care, support, adaptations or technology.

7.1 New Accessible Housing Standard

The new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard will apply to all tenures and is an important element of Housing to 2040, which will set the path for how Scotland's homes and communities should look and feel in 2040. The new standard will create a single set of quality and accessibility standards, no matter whether a home is owned or rented.

To enhance the accessibility, adaptability and usability of homes, there is an ongoing review of the Housing for Varying Needs design guide. Consultation is ongoing between June and December 2023 on proposed updates to Part 1 of the Housing for Varying Needs design guide: Housing and flats (1998). Once complete, the review of Housing for Varying Needs will inform the introduction of building standards in 2025-26 to underpin a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard, which all new homes will need to achieve by law regardless of tenure.

7.2 Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations

The new (2023) guidance outlines the responsibilities of all relevant agencies, with the aim of supporting partnerships across Scotland, to deliver a more equitable and accessible approach to the provision of equipment and adaptations. The overall aims of the guidance are to:

> **One of the overarching principles is:**
>
> "Adaptations should be seen as one of a number of possible solutions available, and it may be that housing support, or re-housing could be a better option for long term needs"

- Remove barriers in the systems promoting seamless pathways which are consistent and equitable across the country.
- Ensure services needed for the service user, and unpaid carer, are at the centre of provision.
- Enable choice and control for service users and unpaid carers as partners in the process of assessment and support planning.
- Focus service provision on supporting the achievement of successful outcomes for the individual, and where relevant, their unpaid carer.
- Promote a consistent approach to the assessment for, and provision of, equipment and adaptations, which promotes prevention and early intervention, and supports self-management.
- Ensure that service users and unpaid carers have access to up to date and relevant information on equipment and adaptations.
- Promote good practice and effective partnership working in relation to equipment and adaptation provision.

There are a number of key actions in the guidance grouped under several headings:

- Contribution of Equipment & Adaptations
- Assessment & Provision
- Prevention, Early Intervention, and Self-management
- Unpaid Carers
- Moving & Handling
- Postural Management
- Hospital Discharge
- Children & Young People
- Care Homes
- Prisons

- Wheelchairs
- Communication Aids
- Technology Enabled Care
- Sensory Impairment
- Integrated service pathways for equipment provision
- Community equipment Store service models
- Health & Safety
- Recycling
- Adaptations and Housing Solutions

SBC has been consulted on the draft guidance and will continue to be actively involved in future development of the guidance and will ensure processes are updated in line with guidance over the course of 2023-2024.

7.3   Need and Demand for Specialist Housing

7.3.1   Current stock

The following information is based on data collected from the Housing Associations operating in the Scottish Borders. There are currently four locally based RSLs and five national RSLs. There are only two who do not provide any specialist housing.

- 14% of social housing in the Scottish Borders is classed as specialist housing
- 22% of re-lets are for specialist housing
- 24% of potential new affordable supply provision is for particular needs housing
- There are 26 Care Homes in the Scottish Borders
- There is very limited information on specialist provision available in the private sector

7.3.2   Demand

The following bullet points provide a snapshot of the current demand for specialist housing in the Scottish Borders. This clearly indicates a growing need for specialist housing and support for people living in this area.

- There has been a 9% increase in the number of households with a long-term sick or disabled person from 2007-09 and 2017-19.
- An estimated 13%-15% of homes in the Scottish Borders have some form of adaptation for a person with a health or mobility issue, most frequently handrails, specially designed / adapted bathrooms or showers, ramps and door entry systems.
- Somewhere between 1,600 and 2,300 households contain at least one person that has to use a wheelchair, with a central figure of 2,000.
- There is an identified need for around 1,000 dwellings to be adapted to meet a range of mobility issues, this is likely to be an under-estimate when considering projected household growth in the Scottish Borders.
- Between 2009 and 2019, care home bed numbers in Scottish Borders increased by just 1%, despite a 20% increase in the population aged 75 and over.

- Demographic modelling indicates that there would be a need for 187 additional care home beds within the Scottish Borders by 2030. This represents an annual increase of between 14 and 20 care home admissions per year.
- The number of new referrals to Adult Social Services has increased significantly from 2016 to 2021.
- The number of people using Self Directed Support (SDS) has increased from 2,360 in financial year 2017/2018 to 3,005 in 2020/21.
- Scottish Borders has a high percentage of people aged 18-64 years receiving social care services.
- There is a lack of recent data to quantify the care and support needs of unpaid carers, although the information that is available suggests that the number of unpaid carers has increased since the 2011 Census. The Scottish Borders percentage of population providing unpaid care currently sits at 9.1%.

7.4 Health and Social Care Partnership

The Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership is a legally integrated partnership between the Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders, enhanced and overseen by the Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board. In addition, the Health and Social Care Partnership extends to Primary Care Partners, Non-Statutory Social Care Providers, Unpaid Carers, Service Users and our wider communities.

As part of this partnership and following the Housing services and integrated health and social care: housing advice note published in 2015, a number of housing functions were either delegated or non-delegated to Health and Social Care Partnership or remained with the Council, these are:

Housing functions that have been delegated to the Health and Social Care Partnership are:

- Adaptations – alterations or additions to the home to support independent living
- Housing Support – services which provide support, assistance, advice and counselling to individuals with particular needs

Housing functions which are not delegated (they remain with the Council) are:

- Care and Repair – provision of independent advice and assistance to older/disabled homeowners or private tenants to support independent living
- Housing support services for homeless people
- New supply housing
- RSL adaptations – this function sits with RSLs and provides adaptions to their tenants to support independent living

The Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board plans and directs the delivery of health and social care services for the people of the Scottish Borders. It is a commissioning body that was created in 2015 in order to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, and the experience for people of the Scottish Borders. It works in close partnership with communities and its delivery partners, and commissions against its budget in line with the strategic objectives and ways of working set out in the Strategic Framework.

The Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board (IJB) includes members from the Communities (including the Third Sector, People who represent the interests of service users, Unpaid Carers, and Staff), NHS Borders and the Scottish Borders Council. The IJB has a range of responsibilities and legal duties as outlined in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act (2014). The Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board is supported to develop and monitor the delivery of our Strategic Framework by its Strategic Planning Group and its Audit Committee.

7.5   Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Scottish Borders Council commissioned consultants to develop a wheelchair housing study. In January 2020 the finalised report was published "A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders". The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at national as well as at a local level by Scottish Borders Council and partner agencies.

Wheelchair Housing Target:

**20 homes per annum
15 being provided by RSLs**

The total potential number of new affordable units in the SHIP 2024-29 is 1,122, of these 266 (24%) are particular needs units and 111 (10%) are wheelchair accessible homes. To set this in context the target over a 5-year period would be 75 units. Based on these figures, the wheelchair housing target will be met.

7.6   Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support 2018-2028

Partners in the Borders have produced an Integrated Strategic Plan setting out a vision for enabling older people to have greater choice of housing and support care that meets their long-term needs. It is focused on enabling independent living but proposes an investment and service framework which tackles the logistical and market challenges experienced in the Scottish Borders. It proposes investment in housing for older people, technology-based services, and additional people capacity as a means of ensuring future needs can be met. Over the period up to 2028 partners will look to invest close to £130m to enable:

- 400 extra care houses (including 60 in a new retirement campus)
- 300 new build houses suitable for older people for sale and in the social rented sector (70% RSL, 30% other affordable housing including MMR and low-cost home ownership/ shared equity)
- Existing housing, refurbished or remodelled - 300 houses in the social rented sector
- Housing support on site to be offered to 300 more older households across housing sectors
- Over 8,000 adaptations and small repairs to enable people to stay in their own home
- A minimum of an additional 20 specialist dementia spaces to meet the need identified in the emerging Dementia Strategy
- Investment in telecare / telehealth for over 800 households.

Additionally, 30% of the private Housing Supply Target for new build private homes should be built to 'housing for varying needs' or equivalent standard (e.g. retirement housing options) to future proof housing for older people (Total Housing Supply Target for new private homes is 229 per annum).

Extra Care Housing is primarily for older people and provides purpose-built, accessible fully self-contained properties where occupants have their own front doors and access to care and support services 24 hours a day. In 2016 six extra care housing developments across the Scottish Borders were approved by the Council for delivery.

Proposed Project Delivery

**211 Extra Care Housing units
2020/21 – 2027-28**

The first 30 flat development completed was Longfield Crescent in Duns by Trust Housing Association which completed in March 2021, with Eildon Housing Association completing its 39 flat Wilkie Gardens development in Galashiels in November 2021. Former Kelso High School has also been converted and remodelled by Eildon Housing Association to form 36 ECH flats and opened in summer 2023.

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7.7 Scheme of Assistance (Disabled Adaptations)

The timely provision of adaptations can make a significant difference to the outcomes for an individual in relation to where they can live and the level of independence they have within their daily environment. These modifications can be critical in acting as preventative measures. They can help to reduce the number of emergency hospital admissions through falls and other accidents, and also reduce the need for home care or long-term admission to a care home. For children, adaptations can support functional, social & emotional development and can provide an improved quality of life for the whole family.

The scheme of assistance is a system of financial and non-financial help that local authorities can provide for private housing which:

- is in disrepair or below the tolerable standard, or;
- needs to be adapted because a person is disabled.

Information on the disrepair aspect of Scheme of Assistance can be found in section 9 on page 68. A major adaptation involves permanent changes to the structure of a person's home. These works are subject to mandatory grant provision and are prioritised for financial assistance by the Council. These include:

- Provision of standard amenities which can include an extension to provide any or all of the standard amenities;
- Provision of structural adaptations with the exception of extensions, to provide living accommodation.

7.8 Care and Repair

Under the Scheme of Assistance, SBC provides advice and grant funding to people with disabilities in the private housing sector to carry out adaptations to their home. To assist SBC have commissioned a Care & Repair Service through Eildon Housing. The Borders Care and Repair Service provides an adaptation service and handyperson service. Households can access the service if they meet any of the following criteria:

- They are a homeowner 60 years of age and over
- They are a tenant 60 years of age and over
- They are a disabled homeowner or tenant of any age

Through the adaptation service, the team can advise on improvements required in the home to meet a physical need. This may involve assisting with major adaptations, for example; level access showers, stair lifts and access ramps.

The handy person service carries out jobs including; fitting locks and smoke alarms, replacing tap washers and unblocking sinks, fitting light bulbs and hanging curtain poles and fitting grab rails or handrails. The service also provides advice on home improvements, for example; roof repairs, damp works, electrical rewiring and window replacement

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a 'One Stop Shop' model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger RSLs who all operate locally in the Scottish Borders. This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure. Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs.

Between 2017 and 2022, Care & Repair have project managed 1,418 minor adaptations and repairs, and 335 major adaptations over the five year period of the last LHS. There have been 18,846 visits by a

handyperson. Between 2017 and 2022, there were 369 major adaptations carried out by the four main RSLs in the Scottish Borders supported by over £1.7million in capital funding.

7.9   Supported Housing

7.9.1   Care Homes

As of March 2022, there were 26 registered care homes in the Scottish Borders, the majority of which cared for people aged 65+. A modelling exercise was undertaken by Public Health Scotland to advise on demand for and commissioning of care home beds in Scottish Borders for the next 10 years (to 2030). Demographic modelling indicates that there would be a need for 187 additional care home beds within the Scottish Borders by 2030. This represents an annual increase of between 14 and 20 care home admissions per year. However, past experience suggests that care home demand will not increase proportionately to demographic change.

Studies show that fewer older people enter care homes in rural areas compared to urban area and this may be related to closer family support networks. This suggests older people in the Borders manage to remain at home longer than in other areas.

7.9.2   Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care refers to the support and care assessment and provision given to all adults, including older people. According to Care Inspectorate data, there are 43 care at home and housing support services registered, employing a total of 793 staff. The third and independent sectors are collectively the largest employer of social care staff comprising 67% of the staff delivering care to people living in their own homes and 83% of the beds provided in care homes. The remaining 33% of staff are employed by the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership, in the Scottish Borders Council.

Most care at home services are delivered by the organisation SB Cares. Until 1 December 2019, SB Cares was registered as a Limited Liability Partnership wholly owned by Scottish Borders Council, although Councillors have since approved the recommendation to bring the partnership back into full ownership of the Council.

7.9.3   Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support (SDS) is an approach to social care that allows individuals more control and choice over the support they receive. There are 4 options with Self Directed Support:

1. Direct payment - People receive an individual budget to arrange their own support. People may employ who they choose and when/how the work is done. This option offers the most flexibility but may be challenging as it effectively makes the service user an employer for their care services.
2. Individual Service Fund – When the person's budget is paid directly to the service providing care for them.
3. Social Work Services – When local authority holds the budget and arranges any support needed.
4. A mix of the above options – People have choice to control some of the budget but not all of it.

The number of people using SDS has increased from 2,360 in financial year 2017/2018 to 3,005 in 2020/21. Since 2016, on average most people received option 3 (76%), followed by option 1 (17%) then option 4 (7%). Less than one percent of people used Option 2.

7.9.4 Care at Home

As Scotland's policy agenda moves away from institutional settings and congregate environments, the provision of care and support is paramount to ensure individuals can live at home for as long as they want. Individuals may require care and support at different points in their life, or not at all. The levels of care and support needs to be flexible and comprehensive to enable the following groups of people to live independently at home providing they would prefer to do so:

- Older People - people are living longer, leading to a higher incidence of frailty, dementia and co-morbidities.
- Individuals with short-term or long-term disabilities/conditions – this covers a range of individuals including those who have multiple and complex needs and require 24/7 care, to individuals who require weekly housing support or peer worker input.

In 2021, there were an average of 1,367 Home Care clients each month and 549,018 hours of care work delivered. Most Home Care clients are over the age of 65.

7.9.5 Technology Enabled Care

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) is "where outcomes for individuals in home or community settings are improved through the application of technology as an integral part of quality, cost effective care and support"[5]. TEC aims to empower people to better manage their health and wellbeing using digital solutions. The Scottish Government sets out national objectives to deliver digital solutions which improve outcomes for people across Scotland through technology as part of its Technology Enabled Care in Housing programme which supports housing providers, their tenants and customers to explore, test and embed digital opportunities across housing. It consists of equipment to support people to remain safe and independent at home or in a community setting. Equipment can range from personal alarms and devices to activity pattern monitors.

One of the key priorities for the Scottish Borders Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support is the investment in technology to enable older people to continue living at home as their needs change. As part of this commitment, a TEC assessment is available for anyone with a social care need. There was a big increase in the number of people above 65 years receiving community alarms in the Scottish Borders between 2018/19 and 2019/20 (1,637 to 2,564), although this reduced significantly in 2021/21 to similar previous levels.

7.9.6 Unpaid Carers

Unpaid Carers are defined as people who care without pay for a family member, friend or neighbour, who, because of a long-term illness, disability or neurological difference, could not manage without this support. The illness can be a physical or mental health condition or an addiction. People can become carers at different ages and stages of life, and they do not have to live with the person they care for. Many carers find themselves juggling paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities, including parents of children with additional support needs.

The numbers of unpaid carers in each Health and Social Care Partnership area are difficult to identify exactly and data can only be sourced from the Scottish Health Survey and the 2011 Scotland Census. According to the Census 2011, 9% of the population of the Scottish Borders are unpaid carers. The Scottish Government estimates the number of unpaid carers living in Scotland to range between 700,000 and 800,000 each year. Carers Scotland estimates that there are 759,000 adult carers in Scotland, including

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[5] Scottish Government, 2022

29,000 young carers, suggesting the number of unpaid carers has been increasing which is likely to be linked to the ageing population.

The number of children aged 4-15 in Scottish Borders who act as a carer for someone may be (if the situation in Borders is similar to that for Scotland) roughly 760, translating as around 4% of all children in this age group. This is somewhat higher than the 187 carers aged under 16 who were counted via the 2011 Scotland Census.

7.10   Care Villages

Plans to develop two new care village facilities for the Borders were agreed in March 2022. More than £22.5m has been allocated to cover the cost of these two care villages, one covering Central Borders in Tweedbank and the other in Hawick. The intention is to provide an innovative new model of residential care, designed specifically to better support the changing needs of older people alongside providing high-quality care and support through proactive early intervention and preventative action aimed at those with complex needs, frailty and dementia. The concept of the care village model supports unique needs, lifestyles and personal preferences for living, care and well-being for people living mainly with dementia and frailty. 24-hour care would be delivered by trained professionals.

Tweedbank Care Village
The care village in Tweedbank will include 60 beds in Tweedbank care home, 8 units for particular need (Tweedbank Young Person Complex Care Development) and 8 units for particular needs (Tweedbank Adult Complex Care).

Hawick Care Village
The plan for the care village in Hawick includes 60 beds within the residential care and hub, 40 units for Extra Care Housing and 12 units for amenity housing.

7.11   Learning Disabilities

People with learning disabilities have a significant, lifelong, condition that starts before adulthood, which affects their development and which means they need help to understand information; learn skills; and cope independently. The number of people with learning disabilities is growing in Scottish Borders and there is an increase in the complexity and number of health and support needs requiring input from the Health and Social Care Partnership from both younger people living with more complex health conditions and people living longer into older adulthood.

In 2021, there were 702 people known to the Health and Social Care Partnership with a learning disability, of whom 101 have a diagnosis of a learning disability and autism (14%). This is likely to be an underestimation of both population statistics. The Scottish Government cites that around 32.7% of people with a learning disability also have a diagnosis of autism.

30 adults with a learning disability were placed in support arrangements out of the Scottish Borders in 2021 and of these, 8 people are a priority to return to the area when appropriate accommodation and support can be established.

As of 2022, there were 96 young people between the ages of 14-18 identified to the learning disability service, where transition to adulthood support is needed. As of Feb 2023, there are currently 229 tenancies within the Scottish Borders for people with learning disabilities, with approximately 25 vacancies. There are 75 people seeking a move, 25 of whom are deemed as urgent.

7.11.1   Coming Home Programme

The "Coming Home Implementation" report emerged from the working group into Delayed Discharge and Complex Care, which makes recommendations of actions to be taken at national and local levels to reduce the number of delayed discharges and out-of-area placements for people with learning disabilities and complex care needs. The vision identified in the report is that "The human rights of everybody with complex care needs are respected and protected and they are empowered to live their lives, the same as everyone else".

The Scottish Government has provided one-off capital funding of £350k for the Borders to support the aim of bringing people back to their "homelands" by March 2025. Scotland's ambition is that as many people as possible are cared for in a domestic setting, however it is unlikely that suitable homes already exist or will become available within a reasonable or predictable time period to meet the identified needs. As a consequence, for those whom housing is the appropriate outcome, it is likely that bespoke solutions in the form of individual dwellings or some arrangement of shared accommodation will be required.

In the Scottish Borders there are currently a total of 17 people who have complex support needs who require suitable accommodation and support locally; 5 of the 17 currently live within the Borders and the remaining 12 are out of area requiring returning home and 3 of the 17 are under 18 years of age. Following assessments of the 17; 8 of the 17 individuals are likely to need alternative accommodation and support within the next 12 months, 6 within the next 24 months and the remaining 3 at some point in the future.

Current modelling indicates that there will be an average future demand of 3 new people per year and that on average there is a requirement for 2 specialist inpatient beds for adult with learning disabilities and complex needs. There are currently no such beds within the Borders meaning being dependent upon expensive private specialist beds within England due to lack of availability throughout Scotland.

A programme board has been established to oversee related activity and monitor progress against delivering the aspirations of the Coming Home Report. There are currently have 4 work streams reporting into a Coming Home Programme Board, these are:

- Supported Living Service (previously known as Tweedbank Supported Living Service)
- Kelso Supported Housing
- Lives Through Friends
- Remaining and future demand (Individual assessment and care management led support planning)

A report was taken to the Integrated Joint Board in September 2023 to update on progress and activity.

7.12   Gypsy/Travellers and Show People

Gypsy/Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group by the Scottish Government. There is a large body of evidence, both in Scotland and in the UK, which shows a lack of access to culturally appropriate housing which is a major contributory factor in poor health, education and societal outcomes experienced by Gypsy/Travellers.

While there is a lack of reliable accurate data to show the number of Gypsy/Travellers, national estimates would suggest that 1.5% of Scotland's population of Gyspy/Travellers reside in the Scottish Borders.

Currently, there is no legal requirement for local authorities to produce assessments of accommodation need for gypsy and travellers. However, local housing strategies set out council's plans and priorities for housing and housing related services, including those for the gypsy and traveller community.

SBC commissioned consultants to carry out engagement work with the Gypsy/Traveller community in the Scottish Borders, which formed part of the early engagement work of this LHS. The key aim of this work was to identify the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy and Traveller community in the region. The assessment was undertaken by conducting a review of the following data sources:

- 2011 census data
- Information from SBC regarding pitch provision and supply
- Information from SBC regarding authorities encampments
- Information from key stakeholders and neighbouring authorities
- A survey of households residing in site based accommodation across the Scottish Borders
- A community survey of those attending the St Boswells Fair
- One response to an open survey made available on SBC's website and advertised on Twitter and Facebook

The findings of the analysis has indicated an estimated unmet need for an additional site provision of 28 pitches. Estimated additional household information identifies an anticipated future need for 3 additional pitches. The estimated identified need in the analysis undertaken should be taken as a starting point, but also as confirmation that provision, in some form, is required.

This had led to the formation of a short working group which has been working on a project plan to identify any site provision in the Scottish Borders, which led to a "call for sites" in February 2023. Responses to this were due by the 14th April 2023, in total there were five sites were identified. All these sites have undergone an assessment to identify if these sites are suitable.

7.12.1 Travelling Show People

Travelling show people are defined by their occupation, which centres around travelling to provide fairground rides and amusements throughout the summer months and settling in a permanent residential base in winter months.

The Housing Need and Demand Assessment considered the needs of travelling show people, but the data available is limited. The HNDA engaged with the Scottish Showmens' Guild who indicated 400 member businesses, totalling over 2,000 Showpeople in Scotland. The Guild suggested that around 80% of these are based in the Glasgow area when not operating shows. Local data would suggest there are two sites in the Scottish Borders that accommodate Travelling show people.

At the time of developing the HNDA (2021/22) the Guild did not identify any accommodation needs which are not currently being met via existing arrangements for temporary accommodation for Travelling show people in the Borders. Anecdotal evidence however has identified an unmet need in Greenlaw, where there is an existing site which lacks amenities and requires improvements to accommodate additional show people.

7.13   Key Workers

The LHS identifies key workers based on the definition from the Scottish Government's *'Affordable Housing for Key Workers' Project Group August 2015':* A 'key worker' should be defined as a public sector employee who provides an essential service. As well as workers in the public sector, it was noted that this definition could also apply to low paid employees in the private sector/ service industries who are also providing essential services [1].

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[1] https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/factsheet/2017/10/affordable-housing-for-key-workers-project-group-report/documents/affordable-housing-key-workers-project-group-report-pdf/affordable-housing-key-workers-project-group-report-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/Affordable%2BHousing%2Bfor%2BKey%2BWorkers%2B-%2BProject%2BGroup%2BReport.pdf

Housing is a key issue reported by other sectors in the Scottish Borders, in particular Health and Social Care, but also raised by wider communities and businesses. Key issues reported include a shortage of suitable stock in the right locations and challenges with affordability. As part of the LHS development process we need to explore collaborative actions to help ensure that people, particularly key workers, are able to find the homes they need to take up those opportunities.

While housing needs to be considered in the wider context of transport, employment opportunities and other issues it is important that the Local Housing Strategy communicates an understanding of, and provides evidence in relation to, the housing related challenges being faced by employers across the region, and looks to identify solutions to these.

As mentioned in section 4 on page 20, at the beginning of September 2022, SBC sent out a survey to a wide range of partners to find out about key workers in the Scottish Borders and identify any accommodation issues when recruiting key workers in particular from other areas or overseas. This has resulted in a number of discussions and pathfinder projects that will be identified in the action plan. Further information on the results of this survey can be found in **appendix 3**.

7.14   Key Issues and Challenges

- There has been a focus in recent years on national and local policy on specialist housing and people with specific needs
- The impact of updating the housing for varying needs – how will this impact future housing delivery in both the social and private sector?
- There is a lack of local data on the needs of households in the Scottish Borders. In order to plan for the future, we need to be able identify the current situation
- There is quite a range of specialist housing types. There has been a move from traditional housing models such as sheltered housing to retirement housing and extra care housing
- An ageing population puts more pressure on housing. The main impacts are on changing demands for housing supply and existing stock; supporting people to live independently and on adaptations to housing stock
- An increase in the number of households with a long-term sick or disabled person means an increase in demand for specialist housing provision and adaptations
- There is a lack of information on specialist housing in the private sector. It is not only the role of the social rented sector to meet the needs of households
- Clearly identifying housing's role in the locality planning within health and social care partnership
- The lasting legacy of COVID-19
- There has been a lot of focus on specialist housing for older people, need to ensure there is an adequate supply and access to specialist housing for young people

7.15   Current Progress

- The "Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People Housing, Care and Support 2018-28" identifies a number of developments for older people across Borders that are "no longer fit for purpose"
- Wheelchair housing annual target of 20 homes with proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the balance provided by the private sector
- 69 units of extra care housing have been delivered in the past five years, in Galashiels and Duns. Work has also started on the former Kelso High School to convert it into 35 additional flats, which are expected to be completed in early 2023
- Increased partnership working with the Health and Social Care Partnership to embed housing in the new Strategic Framework 2023-2026
- Commissioned work on wheelchair housing, young people, Gypsy Travellers and key workers to gain a better understand of housing need and aspirations within these groups

7.16   Key Actions for Delivery

- Work in partnership to deliver more accessible homes across tenures
- Increase the supply of wheelchair housing
- Provide information, advice and assistance on housing options and adaptations to meet particular needs across tenures
- Review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected
- Strengthen joint working with partners in HSCP, NHS, RSLs and others to deliver appropriate housing solutions for individuals with complex needs
- Strengthen joint working to support key worker and employer led housing opportunities
- Identify land and funding opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of the Gypsy and Gypsy Traveller community

Successfully tackling these issues is key to delivering more housing and services for people with particular needs and to help support people's health and wellbeing. Ensuring we have the right housing in the right locations to meet peoples changing needs is a key focus of this LHS and the proposed actions in relation to independent living and health and wellbeing will support those ambitions.

8. Climate Change, Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Strategic Outcome 3:

Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy

8.1   Just Transition to Net Zero

For the benefit of the environment, people, and prosperity, Scotland is transitioning to net zero emissions. As part of the global effort to fight the climate emergency, Scotland has set an ambitious target to become 'Net Zero' by 2045, five years ahead of the rest of the UK. The interim target of 70% reductions by 2030 is less than 10 years away.

Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan was updated in December 2020. It sets out the Scottish Government's pathway to new and ambitious targets set by the Climate Change Act 2019. To meet Scotland's targets, a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society is required. It is a key strategic document on our green recovery from COVID-19.

SBC declared a climate change emergency response in 2020 and this will be a key theme and core consideration through all aspects of SBC activity, including the LHS. SBC is committed to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and a number of key priorities have been identified as part of declaring a climate change emergency including the electrification of heat; moving away from reliance on fossil fuels and towards cleaner greener energy; as well as promoting measures to help reduce energy use and raise positive behaviour change in how people use energy. The national requirement for all Local Authorities to develop their own Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) will support this transition and commitment to carbon reduction.

In June 2021, SBC developed the Climate Change Route Map for the Scottish Borders showing a pathway to climate change resilience and to Net Zero GHG emissions for the Scottish Borders, over a 25-year time horizon. Resilience and adaptation are key priorities alongside mitigation, this will ensure places can adapt to the effects of climate change which cannot be readily reversed as well as mitigate further impact. This includes delivering housing which is durable and future proofed, using local materials and labour where possible.

A report on Net Zero has recently been to the Corporate Management Team. The aim of this discussion paper has been to outline the challenges, opportunities, solutions and next steps. Ensuring the Council is working towards its ambition to which it committed in the Climate Change Route Map.

8.2   Housing to 2040

Housing to 2040 sets out the key housing challenges, priorities and actions required over the longer term. The aim is for housing to contribute to tackling climate change by 2045 by delivering homes that are warm and affordable to heat, and reducing the emissions caused by housing and housing construction. This is especially important in the Scottish Borders where there is a need to deliver homes that are affordable to heat and have good energy efficiency to ensure vulnerable groups and those on lower incomes have access to homes which support their health and wellbeing.

Housing to 2040 sets out a number of actions:

- Align the work set out in Housing to 2040 with the draft Heat in Buildings Strategy so both work together to deliver our statutory targets for climate change and fuel poverty, and the milestones in between, in a fair and just way.
- Aim for all new homes delivered by Registered Social Landlords and local authorities to be zero emissions by 2026.
- Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency and decarbonise their heating systems.
- Modernise housing construction, particularly through offsite construction.
- Build the strong local supply chains needed to decarbonise Scotland's homes and contribute to green recovery.
- Grow the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems and support an increase in the use of offsite construction.

8.3   Fuel poverty

8.3.1   Fuel Poverty Act

The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act was passed by Parliament with unanimous support in June 2019 and received Royal Assent on 18 July 2019. It sets statutory targets for reducing fuel poverty, introduces a new definition which aligns fuel poverty more closely with relative income poverty and requires Scottish ministers to produce a comprehensive strategy to show how they intend to meet the targets, this strategy was produced but Scottish Government in 2021. The 2019 Act establishes a new definition whereby a household is considered fuel poor if:

> **After housing costs have been deducted, more than 10% (20% for extreme fuel poverty) of their net income is required to pay for their reasonable fuel needs**[6]

8.3.2   Fuel Poverty

Three main factors influence whether a household is in fuel poverty:

1. Household income – the cost of heating a property forms a greater proportion of total income for those on low incomes
2. Fuel costs – the prices of different types of fuels varies considerably; in some areas/ properties consumers are unable to choose an economical type of heating systems. Even with high levels of investment in energy efficiency measures, the recent increases in fuel prices have pushed many families back into fuel poverty
3. Energy efficiency – thermal quality of the building and the efficiency of the heating source impact on heating costs

A fourth factor has also been identified as a cause of fuel poverty:

4. How people use their heating systems and live within their home

While this fourth factor is not unique to fuel poor households, the absence of energy efficient behaviours can affect an increased vulnerability to, and entrench people within, fuel poverty. Vulnerable households can also find it more challenging to develop strategies to tackle fuel poverty themselves and participate in support programmes. Fuel poverty is a particular issue facing households in the Scottish Borders. In the Scottish Borders, 29% of households are fuel poor in comparison with 24% nationally. Fuel poverty is

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[6] Fuel Poverty & extreme Fuel Poverty reference is: (Source: Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019)

exacerbated by a number of factors affecting properties and households in Scottish Borders, including the following:

- 11% of dwellings in Scottish Borders have an F or G energy efficiency rating
- 33% of dwellings in Scottish Borders were built before 1945 (30% Scotland)
- 35% of Scottish Borders dwellings are off the gas grid[7]
- The Scottish Borders has a lower wage economy
- 53% of the population in the Scottish Borders live in rural areas (21% Scotland)

Fuel poverty is exacerbated by not only the type of housing but the rural nature of the area, the low wage economy and the higher level of older people living in the Scottish Borders. The target for the Scottish Borders is to reduce the percentage of those living in fuel poverty to below the current level of 29%.

Table 4: Levels of Fuel Poverty and Extreme Fuel Poverty		
	Fuel Poverty	Extreme Fuel Poverty
Scottish Borders (SHCS)	29%	14%
Scottish Borders (HAnalytics)	28%	16%
Scotland	24%	12%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-19, Energy Saving Trust - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8		

8.3.3   Cost of Living Crisis and Energy Price Cap

The 'cost of living crisis' refers to the fall in 'real' disposable incomes (that is, adjusted for inflation and after taxes and benefits) that the UK has experienced since late 2021. The impacts on the UK economy following the COVID pandemic and the Ukraine war has resulted in an unprecedented increase in energy costs, and the wider costs of living. This in turn has had an impact on poverty and in particular fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty. The crisis is having an impact on households in the Scottish Borders. As the region is an area that already has higher than average levels of fuel poverty the cost of living crisis will only make this more profound.

As per revised definitions, the fuel poverty rate in Scottish Borders is at 29%. The increase in energy prices will have a huge negative impact pulling a large number of people into fuel poverty and pushing others into extreme fuel poverty. Applying the new "fuel poverty" definitions over the increased energy costs show this increased spend on heating and energy which could potentially mean that the real fuel poverty figure to be nearer 40-50%.

Between 1 October to 31 December 2023 the energy price cap is set at £1,834 a year for a typical household who use gas and electricity and pay by Direct Debit. Ofgem update the level every three months to reflect inflation and changes in underlying costs. These are welcome buffers against true fuel costs, but they remain significantly higher than the typical cost for energy in winter 2021 which was £1,277 (December 2021).

Although there has previously been a slow, gradual reduction in local levels of fuel poverty, the recent increases in fuel costs, the uncertain energy market and the resultant cost of living crisis will see an increase in households in poverty and in particular fuel poverty. For an average household, energy costs have doubled in the space of a year, meaning the average household will pay around £2,000 more per year for energy.

Ensuring housing and homes are as energy efficient as possible is the easiest and most direct way to reduce energy consumption. The housing stock across the region presents challenges due to the age and construction type. SBC along with partners will continue to work to mitigate against this rise through the

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[7] Energy Saving Trust - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8

delivery of energy efficiency schemes targeting households most at risk and making affordable warmth achievable for more households.

There has been a considerable amount of work ongoing across SBC and partners to mitigate against the impact of the cost of living crisis with a dedicated website offering a wide range of information and advice (financial support and advice, help with rising energy costs and help with access to food). SBC has been working with community and voluntary groups to create a network of Warm Spaces throughout the region. The Warm Spaces Initiative includes community centres, libraries and clubs which all offer a warm and welcoming space, free to anyone struggling to heat their home.

8.4   Heat in Buildings

The Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 was passed by the Parliament on February 2021. The Act sets out how provisions of the Heat Networks Scotland Act 2021 and wider policy will contribute to increasing heat networks in Scotland. It aims to accelerate the deployment of heat networks in Scotland through the introduction of a regulatory system aimed at boosting confidence in the sector. The Scottish Government's aim is that low carbon technologies such as heat networks will supply heat to 35% of domestic and 70% of non-domestic buildings by 2032.

In October 2021 the Scottish Government published its Heat in Buildings strategy outlining its aims to transform Scotland's buildings and the systems that supply their heat, ensuring a transition to net zero emissions and addressing fuel poverty commitments. The Heat in Buildings Strategy, which updates both the Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map and the Heat Policy Statement, sets out how The Scottish Government aims to achieve that ambition.

Through this strategy and the Programme for Government, Scottish Government committed to consulting on the following proposals and introduce primary legislation thereafter.

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard:
- EPC C (or equivalent) in private-rented homes by 2028
- EPC C (or equivalent) in owner occupied homes by 2033
- EPC B in social rented homes by 2032 (non-legislative)

Prohibition of Direct Emissions Heating Systems:
- End use in new build homes warranted from 2024.
- End use in all tenures of existing domestic housing from 2025 and by 2045.
- Phase in requirement at regulatory trigger points

From 1st April 2024 onwards, the Scottish Government will bring in regulations to prohibit the use of direct emissions heating systems in new buildings, which will ensure that new buildings applying for a building warrant in Scotland must meet their space and hot water heating and cooling demand by only using New Build zero direct emissions heating systems.

Heat in Buildings Strategy is also committed to reform EPCs to ensure that they drive the energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures needed for our net zero objectives. SG intend to consult in the coming months on final proposals for EPC reform.

The Scottish Government committed to £1.8 billion of capital funding to help promote rollout of energy efficiency and zero emissions heat measures. A large share will focus on households in fuel poverty. Scotland's homes and workplaces must transform, so they are warmer, greener and more efficient. Reducing emissions from our homes and buildings is one of the most important things we can do to help end Scotland's contribution to climate change.

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The established fabric first approach is critical to the transition, reducing demand for energy, making homes warmer and easier to heat, and preparing them for zero emissions technologies. This will likely be delivered through retrofit schemes such as EES:ABS and the maintenance and improvement schedules of the RSLs and supported by building of new homes and buildings.

8.4.1 Heat Networks in the Borders

All local authorities are required, within the Heat Network Act and the LHEES, to identify potential areas or opportunity zones for Heat Networks, to help meet the national targets. Heat Networks are more efficient and viable in energy dense areas with good numbers of nearby properties that can be served by the network, and with larger energy users (Anchor Loads), to help balance and sustain the network.

The Scottish Borders has challenges due to the rurality, sparse population and limited suitably dense enough areas with enough properties. As such it is likely that new build developments, rather than retrofitting into existing properties, will present as the best opportunities for Heat Networks. Through the Local Housing Strategy, the LHEES, the Local Development Plan and working with key stakeholders such as RSLs, SBC will look to identify and progress Heat Network opportunities and potential projects. SBC will continue to liaise with Scottish Government and work with them to achieve, support and develop Heat Networks to achieve the targets outlined.

8.4.2 National Public Energy Agency

The Scottish Government has launched a national public energy agency to scale up the delivery of climate-friendly heating and improve energy efficiency across Scotland's homes and buildings. The National Energy Agency has been proposed for some time and will be a central source of advice, guidance and knowledge for the Scottish energy landscape where Local Authorities and organisations get support and guidance from government. This will support and facilitate the massive changes and aspirational targets that have been set around decarbonisation. The agency will oversee and co-ordinate support and funding programmes to help people, businesses and the public sector access the most appropriate advice, guidance and investment streams to:

- accelerate transformational change in how we heat and use energy in homes and buildings
- aid public understanding and awareness
- coordinate delivery of investment

This will include dedicated funding for innovation, a programme of engagement with industry and ongoing support for skills and training. There will be an early focus on building public understanding of the changes needed in how people heat and use energy in their homes, as well as acting as a centre of expertise for green heat projects and co-ordinating the delivery of investment programmes. An independent strategic board has been established to support, advise and oversee the agency, with a marketing campaign highlighting the Home Energy Scotland service being launched November 2022.

The Scottish Government has committed at least £1.8 billion for green heat and energy efficiency programmes over the course of this parliament, with the aim for more than one million homes and non-domestic buildings to run on zero direct emissions heating systems by 2030. This includes:

- Energy Efficient Scotland (Heat in Buildings): Area Based Schemes
- Warmer Homes Scotland Scheme
- Home Energy Scotland Advice Service
- Home Energy Scotland Loan and Cashback
- Business Energy Scotland Advice Service
- SME Loan and Cashback
- Heat Networks Fund

- Social Housing Net Zero Heat Fund
- Green Public Sector Estate Decarbonisation Scheme

Many of these schemes target properties with lower energy efficiency and help vulnerable groups at risk of fuel poverty and other issues arising as a result of climate change. One of the key benefits will include a dedicated government team to offer support and develop working relationships with as we look to deliver the LHS and the LHEES, which both set out our regional approach to addressing fuel poverty and climate change.

8.4.3 Future Standards for New Builds

The new energy standards form part of improved building regulations and build on earlier improvements introduced in 2010 and 2015. The new standards, which were applied from December 2022, also support plans for all new buildings to have zero emissions heating systems from 2024.

The new energy standards will also apply to newly built non-domestic buildings and form part of plans to reduce emissions across Scotland's building stock by more than two thirds by 2030.

Key elements in the new standards include:

- Improved performance targets which will reduce emissions from new homes by an aggregate of 32% and new non-domestic buildings by an aggregate of 20%
- The introduction of a new energy target for new buildings to set and report on performance of decarbonisation as new buildings are decarbonised
- A focus on reducing energy demand, including improved fabric insulation in new homes to reduce heating needs
- Changes to make connection to low-carbon heating solutions such as heat networks easier

8.5 The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2019

Draft regulations to set minimum energy efficiency standards of EPC E being brought up to EPC D were withdrawn as a direct result of the impact COVID-19 on the sector. It has been proposed that the regulations will be in force from 2025, with a backstop date of 2028 for PRS properties, and for all owner occupied properties by 2033. The Scottish Government is also committed to prohibiting direct emissions heating systems in all homes by 2045.

The proposed energy efficiency standard will likely be predicated on it being technically feasible and cost effective to install measures, as it is recognised that some properties may be more constrained in terms of technology options available, or limited by location, impact on the fabric of historic buildings, property type or, space.

This will also likely impact on landlord registration activity as it is initially intended that the 'exemptions register' will align with landlord registration activity.

8.6 Decarbonisation in the South of Scotland

The South of Scotland's first Regional Economic Strategy prioritises creating and sustaining high quality, affordable housing. The strategy also commits to using community wealth building as a tool for delivering an inclusive economy that centres on wellbeing. The decarbonisation of housing stock in Scotland is a key priority for the Scottish Government in its efforts to address the environmental crisis and net zero by 2045.

The recent 'Roadmap to Decarbonisation: Retrofit of social housing stock in the South of Scotland'

Report recognises the challenges faced in achieving this ambition are considerable and identifies how these challenges play out in the South of Scotland, and outlines how they are being addressed through the partnership work of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), working with an emergent collaboration of registered social landlords (RSLs) and their partners.

The report sets out opportunities that taking forward energy efficiency measures in housing stock could have in:

- Developing the local construction and retrofit supply chain;
- Creating more than 2,200 jobs and £122m in direct gross value added;
- Tackle the impact of rising energy costs and impact of fuel poverty; and
- Contribute to net zero targets.

Rural economies like the South of Scotland face particular challenges in terms of delivery of retrofit. Without additional government support, they risk falling further behind urban areas which benefit from more buoyant labour markets and developed supply chains.

The challenges also present a huge economic opportunity for the region and community wealth building to make sure that retrofit work is done in a manner that benefits the local economy.

8.7   Affordable Warmth Strategy and Energy Efficiency Strategy

The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEES) is a multi-agency Strategy designed to support the provision of warm, energy efficient homes for everyone in the Scottish Borders. The Strategy involves key partners within SBC, as well as a wide array of stakeholders spanning the full breadth of the energy efficiency and fuel poverty agenda. Covering the period 2019-23, it contains a Vision, Priorities and an Implementation Plan. It was progressed in parallel with the LHS and acted as supporting key pillars. The AWHEES was a core part of the LHS 2017-2022 and helped deliver priority 2 of the LHS.

Vision:

More people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes

Along with existing commitments and priorities carried through from AWHEES development and inception, it is imperative that the AWHEES has climate change and "Just transition" to Net Zero at the core of its aims and delivery.

The three main priorities within the AWHEES are:

1. To collectively work with partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes
2. To explore wider measures to better manage and increase warmth in the home
3. To ensure the AWHEES provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders

There have been a number of key achievements made throughout the three years of the strategy. A key output has been the creation of the Scottish Borders Home Energy Forum. The Forum comprises organisations representing housing providers, statutory bodies, advisory groups, bodies associated with energy, affordable warmth, health and income maximisation, and representative Officers of Scottish Borders Council.

The Forum has acted as a catalyst for building collective support for ongoing Strategies including Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS) and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) 1 & 2, with upcoming funding opportunities being discussed proactively. It has continued to offer a

platform to promote and facilitate measures and schemes that target alleviating fuel poverty and increasing energy efficiency in households.

The Forum provides a strong position to deliver and monitor progress against delivery of strategic outcome 3 of this LHS. It will continue to work closely to also deliver against Scottish Government targets, as well as targeting efforts to work collectively on issues of fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

Across a varied range of commitments and deliverables the previous LHS, and supporting AWHEES, have progressed core priorities, including:

- Increase in EPC ratings across all tenures and wards
- Insulation levels (cavity wall, solid wall and loft) have all increased
- Increase in EESSH compliance within Social Housing Sector
- Establishment of Construction Forum to support local supply chain and build on outputs of Home Energy Forum
- Two years extension to the Warm & Well programme offering support advice and income maximisation to Borders households, particularly those in Fuel Poverty
- Increase spend and allocation on EES:ABS
- Development and introduction of renewable technologies into EES:ABS

8.8   Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)

The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022 creates a duty on a local authority to prepare and publish a local heat and energy efficiency strategy and delivery plan by December 2023.

All Local Authorities are required to develop, publish and deliver an LHEES. An LHEES identifies what needs to be done to change buildings and relevant local energy infrastructure by 2045 to fulfil the Scottish Government's objectives and local priorities relating to heat and energy efficiency in buildings. The Strategy will reflect national and local priorities, policies and wider strategies. It will take into account and interact with local and national factors, such as the timing of planned infrastructure upgrades, access to resources and funding, major projects, decisions over the gas grid and community engagement. It will cover a period of up to 15-20 years with detailed actions set out in shorter term Delivery Plans. Building on this LHS the LHEES will provide a framework and delivery programme for local authorities to reduce energy demand and decarbonise heat supply across all sectors: Domestic, Non-Domestic & Public Buildings.

SBC participated in a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) pilot for Peebles in 2018/19. The LHEES pilot project proved to be an interesting and worthwhile undertaking and allowed officers to gain a greater understanding of the process involved in undertaking an LHEES. Previous experience and activity in relation to this LHS will inform development. SBC appointed consultants to support development of the LHEES ahead of delivery phase commencing in 2024. To focus the delivery SBC has recruited a dedicated LHEES Coordinator in 2023.

To effectively deliver the LHEES it is key that regional stakeholders are involved as every building is in scope regardless of use, tenure or ownership and to meet the targets required there will need to be significant and sustained development across the national and local supply chain. There will need to be growth in the manufacturing sector and within skills and training. Scottish Borders Council is already working with Borders College and South of Scotland Enterprise and other local stakeholders to explore how this activity can be supported. Groups such as the Borders Construction Forum meet regularly to share opportunities and insight.

8.9   Energy Efficiency Programmes – Area Based Schemes

Scottish Government funding for private home energy efficiency improvements is known as the Energy Efficient Scotland Area Based Scheme (EES: ABS) (previously known as the Home Energy Efficiency Programme, HEEPS:ABS). The funding enables investment in: external and internal wall insulation; cavity wall insulation; loft insulation; and underfloor insulation. As well as offering insulation and fabric first measures the scheme will also aim to deliver more renewable technology in off gas grid areas, such as Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar PV and Battery Storage systems.

The Council works in partnership with Changeworks to deliver Energy Efficiency Programmes – Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS), building on the strong relationships established over previous years. This partnership allows the Council to benefit from the expertise required to maximise the effectiveness of this project and to build on the successful outcomes delivered to date. The schemes follow an area based approach with focus on the most fuel poor area and households, drawing on a range of data including index of multiple deprivation, child poverty, the Scottish House Condition Survey, heat mapping and local knowledge.

Table 5 below provides a summary of the funding that SBC has received from Scottish Government over the past nine years and number of measures installed across the number of properties supported.

Table 5: Investment in EES: ABS in the Last 9 years			
Households assisted by EES: ABS	EES: ABS investment levels	Measures installed	Households supported
2015/16	£1.5	311	311
2016/17	£1m	1,256	1224
2017/18	£1.23m	735	623
2018/19	£1.34m	428	387
2019/20	£1.35m	100	81
2020/21	£1.72m	195	176
2021/22	£1.78m	192	116
2022/23	£1.8	225	138
2023/24	£1.82	tbc	tbc
Source: SBC and Changeworks monitoring data			

The EES:ABS continues to be a core delivery channel for addressing fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth across the region. The funding allocated to SBC for EES:ABS has steadily increased. EES:ABS has provided varied insulation schemes and there is a continuing need to offer Internal Wall Insulation given the region's housing stock (i.e. older, solid walled properties that are unsuitable for cavity insulation).

As part of a commitment to decarbonisation, and increasingly electrification of heating there has been and will continue to be a focus on delivering renewable technologies in the region. Starting in 2019/2020 and each year since, projects have been progressed to install Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar Photovoltaics and Battery Storage.

Renewable technology and insulation which enables more economic use of heating energy are both key factors in supporting climate change mitigation within the region. The 2022/23 EES:ABS scheme saw a successful funding application of £1.8 Million for the region and we are approaching the final delivery stages of the current scheme year. In 2023/24, SBC were allocated £1.82 million to deliver the next EES:ABS cycle which is an increase on the previous years.

8.9.1   Energy Company Obligation (ECO) 4 and Flexible Eligibility

As part of the conditions of the EES:ABS grant, Local Authorities are required to outline how they will support Energy Company Obligation (ECO) 4 and ECO flexible Eligibility and to publish a Statement of Intent (SOI). SBC recently published our ECO 4 SOI and are reviewing ECO Flexible Eligibility mechanisms to fully

understand and realise how ECO can be maximised in our region whilst ensuring the protection of consumers. At present the council will only accept referrals from approved delivery partners.

8.10 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

8.10.1 Scottish Housing Quality Standard

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2004, setting a minimum property standard for all social rented homes, to be delivered by social landlords by April 2015. Although none of the four main RSLs (Scottish Borders HA, Berwickshire HA, Eildon HA and Waverley HA) achieved full compliance by this deadline, solid progress was made.

Based on data collated from the Scottish Housing Regulator Scottish Social Housing Charter (ARC) 2021/22, 73% of RSL stock is meeting the SHQS, 8% is exempt or in abeyance and 18% of RSL sock in the Borders is failing the SHQS. In total, 93% of stock is failing SHQS for one criterion. At the end of reporting for next year, the percentage of stock failing SHQS is expected to be 4%.

RSLs continue to carry out stock condition surveys in order to assess compliance with the SHQS and determine future investment needs and options. The stock condition surveys are then used to form planned and cyclical maintenance programmes going forward to ensure SHQS is maintained.

8.10.2 Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH)

Registered Social Landlords across the Borders have their own targets known as Energy Efficient Standards for Social Housing (EESSH) which were introduced in 2014. The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. It will help to reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases. RSLs are now considering the further, and higher, standards required for EESSH 2 which are:

'All social housing meets, or can be treated as meeting, EPC Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or is as energy efficient as practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent.'

In addition, no social housing below EPC Band D should be re-let from December 2025, subject to temporary specified exemptions.

Enhanced EESSH 2 standards will require that new builds are constructed to higher standards and utilise renewable low or zero carbon heating systems. Retrofitting properties to meet the standard will require new and innovative solutions to increase EPC ratings,

> **Current EESSH 1 Standard Compliance:**
>
> **93%**
>
> **(March 2022)**

thermal comfort and efficiency of properties. Some of the measures being considered and installed include EnerPhit retrofit standards, modern high efficiency storage heating systems (Quantum) and renewable zero carbon heating systems such as Heat Pump technology, Solar PV and battery storage. Longer term RSLs asset plans and potential Heat Network opportunities will be considered alongside the council's Local Development Plan and LHEES.

In Housing to 2040, the Scottish Government made a commitment to seek the agreement of the social housing sector to bring forward the review of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing post 2020 (EESSH2) commencing in 2023. This sought to strengthen and realign the standard with net zero requirements so that social housing leads the transition to zero direct emission buildings. Due to a number of pressures that RSLs face in the current climate (inflation, rising energy bills, rent freeze and cost of materials), this has been 'Temporarily put on hold', which means:

a) The 2020 EESSH milestone or the EESSH1 milestone, which social housing should meet since the end of December 2020, continues to apply.
b) Landlords are not required to show progress towards EESSH2 milestones. Landlords are not required to show that stock meets or is progressing towards EESSH2 milestones in reporting their performance for the years ending March 2023 or 2024.
c) Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has paused collection of EESSH2 data.

Within these constraints and the temporary hold, action is still needed to progress towards net zero to meet climate change targets and to reduce fuel poverty. Whilst the review is underway social landlords should continue to invest in energy efficiency measures, continue with planned investment and continue to draw on support available for example through the Social Housing Net Zero Heat Fund which will provide £200 million of grant support over the length of this Parliament.

8.10.3 Green Homes Pilot - Eildon Housing Association

Eildon Housing Association have been leading on the Green Homes Pilot with Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC) and supported by SBC, where a variety of modern energy efficient building techniques and styles are being utilised in their projects and post installation studies will be completed. The project aims to determine a new-build comparison program with different home types that can be monitored as they are designed and built, and after completion.

There are four projects each with different build methods. Costs, design and post-construction building performance will be monitored to determine comparisons between each for Eildon HA and the tenants. This project is being managed in partnership with CSIC and Glasgow School of Art (MEARU).

This has seen plans for new build energy efficiency properties such as Passivhaus standard installations and new build homes completed already by Eildon at St Boswells installed to Passivhaus standard, utilising air heat recovery heating systems. Eildon are progressing Passivhaus standard aspirations whilst considering best value. There are four development locations which will see up to 50 new green homes built using different building methods. This pilot will provide valuable real time insight and enable comparison of project journeys, construction costs, time to build and the experience of tenants living in the homes.

The insight and learnings from these buildings and the various nuances of each construction type will be shared to allow better understanding of merits and suitability for future housing in the region. Evidence will be provided by ongoing output of monitoring and evaluation of the scheme / scheme successes.

8.11 Energy Performance Certificate – Regional Assessment

Part of addressing fuel poverty, increasing housing standards and delivering council strategies relies on improving the EPC rating of properties. This is a standard assessment measure used nationally to define standards.

Whilst the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes is improving, around 55% of properties are still rated below the recommended minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'C'. Scottish Borders has a lower than the Scottish average EPC rating and has a medial average of D. Local strategies are focussing on addressing this. (Source: - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8)

Currently the EPC average scoring for the localities across the Borders, split by tenure, as shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: EPC rating by Tenure and Locality				
Locality	Compliant with EPC C or higher (by 2040)			Compliant with EPC B (by 2032)
	Owner Occupied	Social Housing	Privately Rented	Social Housing
Berwickshire	26%	62%	19%	21%
Cheviot	35%	82%	22%	14%
Eildon	32%	72%	24%	13%
Teviot and Liddesdale	25%	77%	24%	4%
Tweeddale	34%	65%	22%	8%
Source: Energy Saving Trust - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8				

Since the previous LHS (2017-2022) there has been steady and consistent improvements made as shown in the below table 7 which is based on the most recent Home Analytics data. The table shows the average increase in EPC rating for the Scottish Borders and in particular the increase in the social rented sector. The improvements reflect the uplift in EPCs required by the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing legislation - EESSH 1 and EESSH 2 and ongoing stock improvement and maintenance, and new builds being to a higher energy efficiency standard.

The key drivers are continuing energy efficiency home improvements through insulation and upgraded heating, either through 5 years of EES:ABS & Warmer Homes Scotland schemes which are for householders paying for the measures themselves.

The private rented sector has seen the lowest increase in EPC rating, but has still shown an increase. EES:ABS is available to some landlords and there are Energy Saving Trust loans available also to support home energy efficiency improvements in this sector. Lack of regulation, such as the delayed Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, may also have slowed improvements.

Table 7: Current compliance with Energy Efficient Scotland EPC ratings, by locality and tenure type, presented as % of stock			
Averages - EPC C or higher	2018	2023	Increase
Owner Occupied	24%	30%	6%
Social Housing	42%	72%	30%
Private Rented	19%	22%	3%
Source: Home Analytics v3.8 (Feb 2023)			

8.12   Key Issues and Challenges

- Old stock with poor energy efficiency (with subsequent health and net zero implications)
- There is a current skills gap to be addressed to ensure that energy efficiency works can be carried out, supporting the delivery of fuel poverty measures and joint climate targets
- Constrained local supply chain
- Supporting people as they seek to make their homes more energy efficient
- More focus to support efforts to reduce carbon emission and address climate change
- To provide affordable warmth and healthy homes for everyone living in the Borders
- The impact of the cost of living crisis and how to mitigate against these
- Current technologies and their suitability for homes in the region

8.13   Current Progress

- SBC declared a climate change emergency response in 2020
- Establishment of the Warm and Well Borders Project
- Establishment of the Borders Home Energy Forum
- The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) 2019-2023 was implemented
- SBC participated in a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES) pilot for Peebles in 2018/19
- Each RSL has prioritised investment towards meeting EESSH
- Significant investment in EES:ABS
- Development of the Climate Change Route Map in 2021
- Establishment of the Construction Sector forum
- Regional partnership working to address supply chain issues
- Publication of the "Roadmap to decarbonisation: Retrofit of social housing stock in the South of Scotland"

8.14   Key Actions for Delivery

- **Work with partners to improve energy efficiency across all tenures**
- **Develop the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the Scottish Borders**
- **Support a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings**
- **Work with partners to develop the skills and supply chain required to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems**
- **Explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home**
- **Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency**

Successfully tackling these issues is key to our success and provides us with significant opportunity. Meeting the targets set by Scottish Government, ensuring everyone can live in a home that is energy efficient and reducing fuel poverty is essential for people living in the Scottish Borders. The Cost of Living Crisis has hit the Scottish Borders harder than other areas so it is key we have the right actions in place to meet our ambitions of being greener and helping those most in need.

The proposed actions in relation to energy efficiency, fuel poverty and Just Transition to Net Zero will support those ambitions.

9.   Private Sector House Condition

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Strategic Outcome 4:
Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage

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9.1   Housing to 2040

To improve condition and quality Housing to 2040 aims to take action so that all homes, no matter their tenure, are required to meet the same standards. As a longer term target, the Scottish Government is working to harmonise differing housing quality standards. 'Tenure-neutral' space and quality standards for new homes, ensuring the same quality, safety standards and levels of consumer protection are proposed.

The aim is to ensure that there will be no margins of tolerance, no exemptions and no "acceptable levels" of sub-standard homes in urban, rural or island communities, deprived communities or in tenements. This will involve a "Help to improve" policy approach, meaning proactive approaches to repair, maintenance and supporting improvements. This means existing homes will keep pace with new homes, with no one left behind.

9.2   House Condition

The Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) is the largest single housing research project in Scotland, and the only national survey to look at the physical condition of Scotland's homes as well as the experiences of householders. The SHCS measures disrepair for a wide range of different building elements ranging from aspects of roofs and walls to chimney stacks, internal rooms and common parts of shared buildings like access balconies and entry doors.

The housing condition profile is worse in the Scottish Borders compared to Scotland and suggests that the majority of homes (74%) have some element of disrepair.

Table 8: Summary of Scottish House Condition Survey data – 2017-2019		
Percentage of homes in disrepair	%	%
	Scottish Borders	**Scotland**
Disrepair to critical elements	56	53
Urgent to critical elements	25	20
Disrepair	74	71
Urgent Disrepair	31	28
Extensive Disrepair	2	6
Damp*	4	3
Condensation	9	8
Below Tolerable Standard	2	2
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019 *Information on damp is not available in the SHCS 2017-19 so data has been sourced from the 2015-2017 survey		

Disrepair is reported in two categories; critical elements and non-critical elements. Critical elements refers to disrepair of building elements whose condition is central to a dwelling being wind and weather proof, being structurally stable and being safeguarded against further rapid deterioration. Non-critical elements relates to any damage to a non-critical element (such as skirtings and internal wall finishes, staircases, boundary fences or attached garages) which requires some repair beyond routine maintenance.

The SHCS reported that 56% of all dwellings had disrepair to critical elements of their fabric, which is higher than the national average, and almost half of these homes were in need of urgent attention. The building elements highlighted above will in many cases be affected by water ingress, which by definition is dampness. Consequently whilst the proportion of properties which are damp seems low, disrepair likely to be caused by water ingress is potentially high.

9.2.1   Damp and Condensation

A build-up of moisture in the home can cause a range of problems and can potentially damage the fabric of the building if allowed to continue. Penetrating damp is usually the result of a defect in the building fabric, such as damage to the walls or roof, water ingress due to damaged seals on doors or windows, or damp as a result of leaking plumbing. Rising damp is the result of defective or missing damp proof coursing, leading to water leaching into the building fabric.

Condensation is moisture that forms on cold surfaces and where there is limited air movement. Moisture is often created in kitchens and bathrooms but can cause damp or mould in other rooms, affecting the health of occupants. Day to day activities like drying clothes, cooking and taking a shower add moisture to the air inside the home. Mould can develop on walls, ceilings, furniture, curtains, and cushions and even on clothing stored in wardrobes and drawers.

Any condensation, rising or penetrating damp recorded in the SHCS can cover anything from a small damp patch or area of condensation on a single wall in one room (caused for example by ineffective ventilation whilst cooking) to prevalence throughout a dwelling, so does not indicate a serious housing quality issue in all cases.

Four of Scotland's leading housing organisations, ALACHO, SFHA, SHR and CIH, came together to publish a briefing note on damp and condensation in the social housing sector in early 2023[8]. The non-statutory guidance recognises that issues of damp and mould are often multi-layered, and solutions can include tackling problems with the property and supporting tenants with any issues that may affect the experience of living in that home, particularly with the rising cost of energy and other living costs. While this guidance impacts the social rented sector this will provide help and guidance in the private sector as well.

9.2.2   Tenement Maintenance Flatted Properties (Tenements)

The Scottish Law Commission has accepted a Law Reform Project to look at tenement maintenance and mandatory owners associations.

Scotland needs to address a re-emerging disrepair issue particularly within flatted housing stock. Simply, much of Scotland's private housing is deteriorating because of a lack of regular and ongoing property maintenance and repair. And while house prices may, in certain places, be at an all-time high, this provides no reflection of the actual condition of the property being purchased. The Scottish Parliamentary Working Group with the purpose of establishing solutions to aid, assist and compel owners of tenement properties to maintain their buildings, produced recommendations[9] around legislation, guidance and intervention to ensure outstanding repair backlogs are addressed, future repair needs are planned for, and conditions are set for regular maintenance. These recommendations included setting up mandatory Owners Associations, utilising Building Reserve Funds and undertaking Building Surveys. Housing to 2040 seeks to address the recommendations and investigate ways to encourage behaviour change which is most cost-effective for owners in the longer term.

While the Scottish Borders has a lower proportion of flatted properties (24% compared to 36% nationally), it is important to consider findings which has general agreement that maintenance and repair of tenements

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[8] https://www.cih.org/media/aaukbpmd/putting-safety-first.pdf
[9] https://www.gov.scot/publications/provision-building-reserve-funds-brf-tenement-dwellings/

in Scotland needs addressing by a combination of central and local government, professionals, third sector and the general public.

9.2.3   Housing Renewal Areas

As stated in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 local authorities can designate Housing Renewal Areas to improve the quality of private sector housing.

The Council may consider using these powers if:

- there is a significant number of substandard housing; or
- the appearance or condition of the housing is adversely affecting the area; and
- the Council believes this is the most appropriate action to take to address these issues.

Where it is established that an area has a significant number of houses which are sub-standard or where the appearance or state of repair of any houses are adversely affecting the amenity of that area, Scottish Borders Council may consider declaring a Housing Renewal Area with the purpose of improving that area. There are not a substantial number of houses in serious disrepair in any concentrated area to warrant declaring a Housing Renewal Area within the Scottish Borders and unlike some local authority areas, housing blight can be attributed to individual properties. Individual properties suffering from serious disrepair can be supported by the council's Scheme of Assistance procedures and potentially considered for other enforcement actions where that fails. If in the future clusters of properties in disrepair are identified, an assessment will be made on the appropriateness of designating HRAs.

9.3   The Tolerable Standard

The Tolerable Standard is a basic level of repair a property must meet to make it fit for a person to live in. The tolerable standard criteria are detailed in section 86 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. The criteria states that the dwelling house should:

- be structurally stable
- be substantially free from rising or penetrating damp
- have satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating
- have satisfactory thermal insulation
- have an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house
- have a sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house
- have a water closet, or waterless closet
- have a fixed bath or shower and a wash-hand basin
- have an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- have a supply of electricity, and where supplied it complies with the relevant requirements
- have satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house
- have satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings

The tolerable standard was amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criterion) Order 2019, to include two new elements relating to smoke and heat alarms, and carbon monoxide alarms. This came into force in February 2021:

- Satisfactory equipment installed for detecting fire, and for giving warning of fire or suspected fire;
- Satisfactory equipment installed for detecting, and for giving warning of, carbon monoxide present in a concentration that is hazardous to health

According to the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) 2019 survey, those dwellings which were below tolerable standard (BTS) across Scotland most commonly did so because they were:

- Not free from rising/penetrating damp (13,000 or 33% of BTS dwellings);
- Not satisfactorily insulated (8,000 or 21% of BTS dwellings);
- Or had unsatisfactory provision for lighting, ventilation or heating (8,000 or 21% of BTS dwellings)

Whilst there is likely to be similar reasons for failure in the Scottish Borders; another predominant factor which contributes to properties being BTS, relates to a property 'having an adequate piped supply of wholesome water within the house'. Due to the number of private water supplies (1,600 private water supplies serving almost 4,000 domestic properties), this could result in a property failing the defined tolerable standard. The age of dwellings is also pertinent with older stock pre 1919 most likely to be BTS which is replicated across Scotland.

To ensure compliance with Section 85(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (c. 26), SBC is working with owners promoting stewardships to try and achieve an agreed solution. This includes developing a more co-ordinated approach across council services, and under the Scheme of Assistance providing information and advice including utilising the Tenant Management Scheme (TMS) to agree to implement repairs. As a last resort the use of statutory powers is considered including repair where agreement cannot be reached with owners.

9.4   Repairing Standard

The private rented sector is often reported to have higher levels of disrepair and poorer energy efficiency than owner-occupied or social rented homes. As outlined in the 'A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home: A strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Scotland, 2013', there can be different reasons for this such as the older age profile of the private rented stock and under investment in properties by some landlords.

On 1st March 2019, the Repairing Standard was updated to clarify existing legislation and introduce some new elements to the standard. Where these requirements constitute a new element, private landlords were given 5 years to bring housing up to the standard. Therefore, these requirements are due to come into force on 1st March 2024. On the 1st March 2023, the Scottish Government issued new statutory guidance for landlords. New measures that need to be in place from 1st March 2024 are as follows;

1. Safe Kitchens. The repairing standard will be amended to include a requirement to have safely accessible food storage and food preparation space in a private rented house.
2. Fixed Heating System. The repairing standard will be amended to specify that there must be a fixed heating system in a private rented house.
3. Safe Access to Common Parts. The repairing standard will be amended to specify that where a private rented house is a flat in a tenement, the tenant must be able to safely access and use any common parts of the tenement, such as common closes.
4. Consent to Work on Common Parts. Section 16 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, which deals with exceptions to the landlord's repairing duty, is amended to make it clear that a private rented house which is a flat in a tenement does not fail the repairing standard if work otherwise needed to comply with the standard cannot be carried out because a majority of owners in the tenement have refused consent to carry out the work.
5. Safe and Secure Common Doors. The existing duty to ensure fire safety in private rented houses will be amended to specify that common doors must be secure and fitted with satisfactory locks.
6. Residual Current Devices. The existing duty to ensure that installations for the supply of electricity in a private rented house are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order will be amended to specify that these must include a residual current device.
7. Other Fuels. The existing duty to ensure that installations for the supply of gas and electricity in a private rented house are in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order will be extended to any other type of fuel.

9.5 Scheme of Assistance

The private sector is the biggest tenure in the Scottish Borders with a large percentage of the population either owning their own homes or renting privately. One of the key challenges in this sector is to ensure everyone is living in good quality homes. Good quality housing makes an important contribution to many aspects of a successful Scottish Borders including supporting local economies, improving individual health and well-being and by making communities safer.

The Council's Scheme of Assistance (SoA) was introduced under the duties and powers set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, and provides support for owners to address properties in disrepair. The Scheme of Assistance promotes the Scottish Government principle that homeowners have the primary responsibility for maintaining and repairing their own homes. The Scheme of Assistance offers:

- Information and advice for private sector housing residents on home repairs, maintenance, improvements and adaptations.
- Common repairs work, engaging with and bringing together multiple owners to resolve complex repairs.
- Working with Planning and Building Standards Enforcement to deliver enforcement work where relevant (i.e. in properties in multiple ownership – flatted property).
- Financial help to cover some (or all) of the costs of eligible major adaptations.
- Information and advice to support empty homes owners to bring them back into use.

Officers work closely with private owners, landlords and relevant partners to address issues of poor property condition, common repair works, and, where applicable, the use of enforcement powers. Assistance ranges from provision of advice and information; to financial support to undertake disabled adaptations, undertake common repair works, and bring empty homes back into use. The SoA provides a platform to take a practical approach to encourage and help owners to carry out repair and improvement works to their homes. It also supports the objective outlined in Housing to 2040 to support proactive approaches to repair and maintenance, reflecting the fact that this helps to avoid high cost interventions later.

9.6 Enforcement

A range of Local Authority Powers are available to departments across SBC including Work Notices, Demolition Notices, Maintenance orders and Missing Shares within the Housing (Scotland) 2006 Act; Closing and Demolition orders within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987; Defective and Dangerous building notices within the Building Scotland Act 2003; Abatement Notices through the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Listed Building Enforcement Notices through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. These examples are not exhaustive and offer a suite of legislative powers which in certain circumstances can be used to compel action and improve house condition.

For the Private Rented Sector SBC works closely with landlords, developing new processes to improve services for landlords and actively engaging with them to ensure good management practices and that condition standards are met. The council has provided relevant and up to date advice on the SBC website along with support from the Private Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer, who has been on hand to advise local landlords. Enforcement of the standards applicable to the private rented sector sits with the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) and when required referral is actively supported. SBC will continue to support landlords moving forward, for example keeping landlords up to date with proposed changes within the sector.

The use of enforcement powers fit into the wider Scheme of Assistance process. In the first instance, owners are supported to maintain and improve the condition of their properties. Where voluntary action

isn't possible, intervention will be considered as a last resort using the range of legislative powers available to the Council.

A more collaborative approach towards enforcement is being developed (principally across Housing Services, Building Standards and Environmental Health), helping to determine the most appropriate and consistent corporate approach to take when enforcing private property conditions, e.g. Issuing notices or carrying out works and recharge costs. This collaborative approach being implemented by officers across a range of services considers:

- the nature and scale of the problem;
- evidenced actions to date;
- professional judgement of officers involved;
- effect on the wider community;
- the impact that not taking action may have; and
- the available resources.

9.7   Approved Trader Scheme

Approved Trader schemes are currently in operation in 17 out of the 31 Trading Standard Local Authorities in Scotland (Clackmannanshire and Stirling operate a joint service) having been started by Dundee City Council in 2005.

The Schemes are essentially local business partnerships that aim to:

- increase consumer confidence
- help protect citizens from doorstep crime
- promote good practice within local business

Approved Traders are vetted by the Local Authority Trading Standards team and the schemes are supported by Police Scotland and consumeradvice.scot. All members of the scheme agree to trade fairly and sign up to a Code of Practice. The code covers:

- transparent procedures for quoting and carrying out work
- only charging a fair and reasonable price
- dealing with complaints promptly
- The scheme give traders
- a higher profile and exposure
- the ability to showcase official reviews and feedback of their work from genuine customers
- a webpage to the 'go to' list of Trading Standards vetted traders

Scottish Borders Council launched the Scottish Borders Trusted Trader Scheme in late 2022.

9.8   Under One Roof

Under Oner Roof is a charity committed to providing free and impartial information on repairs, maintenance, and retrofit for tenement flat owner-occupiers, landlords, and housing professionals in Scotland. It has an intention to transform the repair culture from one that is reactive to proactive, striving to make maintaining and managing tenement flats easier for owners by providing knowledge and information needed to care for tenement buildings and working with co-owners effectively.

SBC currently provides funding towards Under One Roof and will be looking to work more closely with the charity.

9.9   Built Environment: Conservation and Enhancement

Conservation of the built fabric and heritage assets (listed buildings and non-listed buildings within a conservation area) is an active process of maintenance and managing change. This requires a flexible and considered approach to get the best out of assets, and a thorough understanding of the heritage asset itself. In relation to the Built Heritage, generally the risks of neglect and decay are best addressed through ensuring the asset remains in active use that is consistent with their longevity and regular maintenance is undertaken.

The original use is often the best use for preserving character but ensuring heritage assets remain used and valued may well require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. Housing policies, such as this LHS, as well as housing related advice and support in terms of maintenance, repairs and energy efficiency improvements, have a key role to play in supporting those aspirations and reducing the risk of urgent and expensive repairs.

National Planning Framework 4 states, within Policy 7 for 'Historic Assets and Places', that the policy outcomes should ensure:

- The historic environment is valued, protected, and enhanced, supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change;
- Redundant or neglected historic buildings are brought back into sustainable and productive uses; and
- Recognise the social, environmental, and economic value of the historic environment, to our economy and cultural identity.

Additionally, Policy 9 a) encourages the reuse of vacant derelict land and buildings and Policy 9 d) supports development proposals for the reuse of existing buildings, taking into account their suitability for conversion to other uses, and also states that given the need to conserve embodied energy, demolition will be regarded as the least preferred option.

Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) is Historic Environment Scotland's overarching policy to support and enable good decision making about changes to the historic environment. This policy takes accord of the Scottish Government's National Outcomes HEPS sets out a series of principles and policies for the recognition, care and sustainable management of the historic environment. It takes into account principles that the UK and Scottish governments have agreed to in international charters and conventions on cultural heritage and landscape. There are a number of policies which encourage conservation of the built environment. Policy HEP 5, in particular, "Decisions affecting the historic environment should contribute to the sustainable development of communities and places", is applicable to this LHS.

Housing to 2020 also identifies where improvements can be made and states that "There should be a mix of regulation and monitoring alongside education, advice and support across all tenures and care must be taken to ensure we can marry climate ambitions with heritage and maintaining the aesthetics of older buildings".

As such it is important to recognise the importance of preserving the built environment in the LHS, and specifically in policies or actions which support the improvement and repair of buildings but also in delivering strategic outcomes 1 and 3 of this LHS; "Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy" and "More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive".

A conservation area is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 as "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance" and Local Authorities (Planning) are responsible for designating conservation areas. The Scottish Borders currently has 43 conservation areas and their designation takes into account the particular characteristics of a place. This includes its buildings, but also its layout and the spaces, trees and landscape within the area and its surrounding setting. As such, every conservation area is unique and contributes to the distinctive character and 'sense of place' in the Scottish Borders.

9.9.1   Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS)

Scottish Borders has a successful track record of applying for significant funding including Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) funding, where HES is the principle funder. Over the last 5 years, significant programmes of regeneration works have been undertaken in Selkirk and Jedburgh. These projects have enabled a number of properties in serious disrepair to be removed from Historic Environment Scotland's national register of Buildings at Risk.

The most recent CARS scheme for Hawick Town Centre was launched in autumn 2020. The scheme is centred on the Hawick High Street and aims to stimulate a total of £4.5m of investment through the use of £1.5m of public investment over the next five years.

9.9.2   Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

SBC has a duty to review its conservation areas and formulate proposals for their preservation and enhancement 'from time to time'. These statutory duties are fulfilled through publishing a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan helps owners, planners, Scottish Borders Council and others with an interest in the area find out about the history and identify the character of the area, and to decide what and how that special character can be preserved and enhanced. The final document should be used to help guide proposed changes in the area, and will be used to help determine planning applications. SBC is committed to a programme of CAAS and MPs and the first one for Newstead was approved for consultation in March 2023. It is hoped to bring these forward in tranches with Hawick CAA and MP planned as the next priority.

9.9.3   Building at Risk Register

The Building at Risk Register is a register created by Historic Environment Scotland which records buildings across Scotland which are considered to have an architectural or historic importance but are at risk of being lost if no action is taken. They are usually a listed building, or an unlisted building within a conservation area. They may be long term vacant, poorly maintained, affected by fire or the elements or be structurally unsound. The aim of the Building at Risk Register is to bring together potential restorers and redevelopers with buildings and sites that are considered at risk or under threat.

Within the Scottish Borders, there are currently 140 buildings on the register. These can range from monuments, ancillary buildings, farms, mills, premises and dwellings. Of the 140 registered buildings, 20 buildings are currently undergoing restoration. There are currently 23 buildings listed which are dwellings and these are being explored by the Empty Homes Officer.

9.10   Missing Shares

Responsible homeowners with shared responsibility for common repairs are often unable to progress essential repairs and maintenance due to other owners being unwilling or unable to contribute their share of the costs. This often leads to lengthy delays or repair works not being undertaken, resulting in further deterioration of the property.

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 a local authority can consider paying a missing share where the majority of owners have agreed to carry out necessary common repairs and maintenance but they cannot progress the repair because an owner is unable or unwilling to pay or it is unreasonable to require the owner to deposit the sum in question, or the owner cannot be identified or found by reasonable inquiry. This can hold up much needed repairs. The adoption of the missing share approach is a pro-active measure rather than having to wait and be reactive after building failure.

If essential repairs are not carried out then the Council can, should it wish, issue statutory notices on the property owners to enforce necessary repair works. The lack of suitable repair and maintenance can lead to serious disrepair and ultimately to a building becoming dangerous, when the Council may be required to take direct action to secure public safety.

In 2019 Scottish Borders Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders. Initially covering the Hawick Conservation Area, the Missing Shares scheme operates in tandem with the Scheme of Assistance and primarily supports activity through the approved Hawick Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. Progress in the delivery of the missing shares scheme has been hampered by COVID-19, in light of this the scheme has been extended until the 31st March 2025 to mirror the duration of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

9.11   Key Issues and Challenges

- The Scottish House Condition Survey suggests that the majority of homes in Scottish Borders have some element of disrepair. Furthermore, housing quality levels are poorer in the Scottish Borders than Scotland. What can be done to help support private homeowners to repair and maintain their properties?
- Understanding the quality of housing stock and the requirements for improvements across the region
- Co-ordinating activities across departments within in SBC to ensure best and most efficient use of legislative interventions
- Emerging legislation and the impact this will have
- The impact of the new Repairing Standards
- How to address the poorer house conditions in the Scottish Borders. Look to develop new mechanisms to help support landlords and homeowners
- React to new legislation from Scottish Government that will focus on all housing (new and existing) being to a set housing standard.
- Support measures to address climate change under strategic outcome 3
- Linking in with a wide range of policies and strategies. This strategic outcome links in with Strategic Outcome 1 empty homes, place making

9.12   Current Progress

- Through the Scheme of Assistance, SBC is helping private sector households to address house condition, maintenance and repairs. Developing a more collaborative approach to house condition across the council
- Working closely to support private landlords and tenants in the region
- Delivering training to private landlords on good practice and keeping them up to date
- Missing shares pilot in the Hawick Conservation Area is ongoing
- Reviewing and developing website content
- Reviewing and developing guidance notes
- Working to introduce the shared repair app
- Working to introduce a Trusted Trader Scheme
- Working in partnership with Under One Roof with the aim to provide a local forum on common repair
- Private sector liaison and enforcement officer

9.13   Key Actions for Delivery

- **Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/ energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate or explore funding options.**
- **Provide supporting information and assistance to owners and landlords to meet existing and future house condition standards in private housing.**
- **Review and develop the Scheme of Assistance to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach to house condition standards.**
- **Work to better coordinate the partnership approach to Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Housing**
- **Continue to implement Missing Shares and consider expansion of Missing Shares provision.**
- **Ensure activity in relation to repairs, maintenance, energy efficiency improvements and conversion are sensitive to the built heritage.**

Successfully tackling these issues is key to our success and provides us with significant opportunity. It is important to ensure everyone has a good quality home, no matter what tenure they live in. Good quality housing and buildings not only impact us individually but also impacts on the community.

The proposed actions in relation to house condition will support those ambitions.

10.   Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

> **Strategic Outcome 5:**
> **Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible**

10.1   Ending Homelessness Together

The Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan sets out a range of actions in response to the recommendations of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) and will transform how those at risk of homelessness receive help. Ending Homelessness Together has a focus on eradicating rough sleeping, supporting the most vulnerable households and reducing time spent in temporary housing.

Preventing homelessness is about more than finding somewhere else to live. National and local government will continue to work in partnership with the third sector and other public bodies in their approach to homelessness prevention. This means targeting support to people at risk of homelessness much sooner. It means considering people's circumstances in the widest sense, including their wellbeing, health and social care, employment and welfare needs. It means having local approaches to suit local circumstances.

There are five approaches to ending homelessness:

1.   Embed a person-centred approach.
2.   Prevent homelessness from happening in the first place.
3.   Prioritise settled homes for all.
4.   Respond quickly and effectively whenever homelessness happens.
5.   Join up planning and resources to tackle homelessness.

> **The shared ambition of national and local government is:**
>
> **"Everyone needs a safe, warm place they can call home"**

10.2   The impact of COVID-19 and the Cost of Living

Work and life changed dramatically in 2020/2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic which brought into sharp focus how closely our home, health and wellbeing are connected. It has also forced faster progress on tackling homelessness, and it is important we protect that progress and ensure there is no backwards movement as we move further into the period of recovery from the pandemic. Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSP) members have been on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require. Homelessness services were delivered by telephone wherever possible, however, given the vulnerable nature of many homeless households, face to face access and support was retained where required.

Early actions in response to the pandemic were focused around ensuring homeless or potentially homeless households within the Scottish Borders had suitable accommodation available to them that allowed them to comply with the imposed lockdown measures. Some of the impacts COVID-19 has had on homelessness services, include:

- 29% increase in the 'Homeless Queue' - the number of applicants assessed as Homeless or TWH open to homelessness services on the 31st March 2020 compared to 31st March 2022. This had been reducing prior to the pandemic.
- 30% increase in the number of households residing in temporary homeless accommodation (31st March 2020 compared to 31st March 2022).
- 21 % reduction in available RSL housing stock in 2020/2021 when compared to 2019/2020 (data from 4 main RSL's). RSL's have reported this is driven by households not moving (by restriction and then by choice) during lockdown, as well as the hiatus in new supply becoming available.

The data above is informed partially through the Scottish Social Housing Charter (ARC). The Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords must aim to achieve for their tenants and other service users and is made up of 16 outcomes. Through the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, a number of these indicators are measured on an annual basis and reported to the Borders Homelessness and health strategic Partnership.

The number of homeless presentations was higher in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22, with an increase in Jan-March 2023. Partners recognise that this may continue to fluctuate as inflationary pressures and the cost of energy and food continue to have an impact. The LHS considers additional actions which may be required to mitigate against the ongoing impacts across several of the strategic outcomes.

10.2.1 Housing Costs and mortgages

The Welfare Reform Act resulted in major changes to the welfare system: from April 2013 households claiming Housing Benefit (HB) for social rented housing and deemed to be 'under-occupying', may have Housing Benefit reduced in accordance with the 'bedroom tax', while benefit cap was introduced from July 2013.

Welfare Reform has resulted in reduced disposable income for many and increasing debt including rent arrears and under-occupation of property. A shortage of housing in the social rented sector has placed pressure on the private rental market, where high rents are driven by demand from the buy-to-let, second homes, holiday rentals and commuter market (the Scottish Borders is broadly tied to the Edinburgh housing market). Settled accommodation options for homeless people are in short supply and demand continually exceeds supply. This brings specific challenges to homelessness services and will continue to do so. It places an increasing emphasis on the private sector and alternative tenures to provide long term housing solutions.

Current LHA rates in the Scottish Borders are one of the lowest in Scotland and are not sufficient to cover the cost of private renting. The LHA rate also impacts access to housing options, for example intermediate rents. It is also worth noting that tenants who are under 35 and single with no dependents are only eligible for the shared accommodation rate when renting from a private landlord unless in exceptional circumstances. Where the LHA rate does not meet a claimants housing cost (excluding service charges), claimants already in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit can make an application for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). In the Scottish Borders, (2021/22) there were 2,165 applications received for DHP with 1,700 awards made. In total £1,016,789 was spent.

The impact of Welfare Reform, Local Housing Allowance Rates and continued impact of the cost of living crisis have put a significant pressure for housing in the Scottish Borders, in particular social rent housing as already stated this is some households only affordable option.

The impact of the cost of living crisis, in particular the recent increase interest rates could impact the number of people who are able to continue to afford their homes. For households who's fixed term mortgages are coming to an end, could see a significant increase in their mortgage repayments and potentially there ability to continue living in their home. The council will monitor the number of people

who approach the service who are in this situation and will continue to provide financial information and advice to help those who are struggling as a result.

10.3 Homelessness Population

In the Scottish Borders, the number of homeless applications has remained relatively steady since 2011/12 as a result of a proactive approach to prevention through the delivery of the Housing Options approach. In 2022/23, there were 784 applications made under the Homeless Persons legislation in the Scottish Borders, which is higher than the 686 applications received in 2020/21 and 682 in 2021/22 during the pandemic. It is also slightly higher than the 770 applications received in 2019/2020. The rate of homeless applications is generally now on an upward trend (despite lower levels during the pandemic). Homelessness in the Scottish Borders accounts for 2% of homelessness in Scotland as a whole.

Key headlines on the homeless population in the Scottish Borders are as follows:

- 50% of homeless assessments are single people
- 27% of homeless assessments are single parents
- 39% of homeless assessment included households with children (225 households)
- 21% of homeless assessments were young adults aged 16-24 (120 households)
- 33% of homelessness assessments were the result of a relationship breakdown

Reducing homelessness (the homelessness queue) will be key to the success of achieving rapid rehousing as it will bring flexibility and opportunities for new ways of working. Although many factors influence the homeless queue, reducing the queue can be achieved in two main areas. Increasing the focus on homeless prevention activities will reduce the number of new applicants joining the homeless queue and increasing the number of households receiving a housing solution that are already in the queue will also reduce the queue overall.

10.4 Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up by the Scottish Government in October 2017 to produce short and long term solutions to end homelessness and rough sleeping. The cornerstone of recommendations was a transition to a Rapid Rehousing approach. The Scottish Government gave Local Authorities and their partners a 5 year timescale for transformation to "Rapid Rehousing by default" and requested that all Local Authorities submit a 5-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the period 2019/20 – 2023/24.

Scottish Borders Council developed a five-year Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) working with key local partners in December 2018. Rapid Rehousing Plans link into Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans and offer each local authority and key partners an opportunity to re-assess how permanent and settled housing options are secured for every potentially homeless and homeless household.

The vision for Rapid Rehousing in the Scottish Borders is:

- Homelessness is prevented wherever possible but where homelessness cannot be prevented a settled, mainstream housing outcome is secured as quickly as possible.
- When temporary accommodation is needed it will be mainstream, furnished accommodation within a community, and time spent in it will be minimal, with as few transitions as possible.
- Housing First will be the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages. We will work in collaboration with the Health and Social Care Partnership, and other relevant services, to ensure tenancies are supported and sustained.

Rapid Rehousing is a key component of a whole-system approach whereby the responsibility for tackling homelessness lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support.

The COVID-19 emergency has delayed the full application of resources and has consequently impacted on the development of the Borders RRTP. In order to support the work of the RRTP additional development resources have been appointed to compensate for time lost as a result of the delays.

The development and implementation of the Scottish Borders RRTP has been led by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP). The BHHSP includes senior officers from the Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders with responsibility in homelessness, health and social care, public health, Drug and Alcohol Partnership, social work, property management and housing strategy, and senior officers from the 4 locally based Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who own the majority of the social rented housing stock in the Borders, Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) and Waverley Housing.

Despite the pressures arising from the pandemic, RRTP achievements so far include:

- Introduction of a Housing Intervention fund to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless.
- Introduction of a Homeless Intervention fund which is accessible by front line workers within the homelessness team to use in the prevention or resolution of homelessness. Given the varying and complex reasons for homelessness, any application which demonstrates a contribution to the prevention or faster resolution of homelessness is considered.
- The launch of a two year Housing First pilot.
- Temporarily increasing the % of RSL let's allocated to homeless households to support reducing the 'homelessness queue'.
- Increasing temporary accommodation to reduce the 'homelessness queue".
- The introduction of a Crash Pad within the homelessness temporary accommodation stock to improve the management and efficiency of the temporary accommodation stock.
- Recruitment of a Private Rented Sector Development Officer.
- Formalised relationships with Link Housing who have joined the section 5 protocol and offering SBC first refusal on 100% of their lets in the Scottish Borders.
- Working closely with RSLs on their revised allocation polices.
- Supporting vulnerable individuals who face barriers to digital inclusivity.
- Continuing to build on existing local joint pathway arrangements with partners.
- Improving Housing Options and Support in the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

10.4.1 Improving Housing Options and Support in the Private Rented Sector (PRS)

A temporary Private Rented Sector Development officer has recently been appointed and will take up post in April 2023. The development officer will embed homelessness prevention principles into the private rented sector in Scottish Borders by taking forward the private sector elements of Rapid Rehousing Transition plan.

The two year temporary post, funded by Ending Homelessness Together funds, will be crucial resource to improve prevention activities for households threatened with homelessness from the private rented sector and improve housing outcomes to the private rented sector in Borders.

The post holder will provide staff with technical, operational support, advice and comprehensive training on the PRS and contribute to policy and strategic change, improvement and development. This includes

creating positive relationships with private landlords and other key council departments (i.e. Housing Strategy and Environmental Health) to assess, plan, deliver and evaluate new ways of working.

10.5   Housing First

A Housing First pilot was launched within the Scottish Borders in October 2021, the pilot aims to support 30 households during this time. The pilot was intended to run for two years but this may be extended for an additional year. Although many people see homelessness as a housing issue, for many of the Housing First cohort homelessness is symptomatic of a greater range of challenges.

Housing First provides ordinary settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs, recognising that a safe and secure home is the best base for recovery. It offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs.
Secure tenancies are provided by four locally based RSL's; Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association and Waverley Housing. Housing First support is provided by Cyrenians. The positive benefits of having a secure base in housing can be felt in sectors such as employability, substance use, health and community justice. Additionally, the impact of a positive relationship with a Housing First support worker can act as a conduit to making better use of relationships with other professionals.

Referrals for the pilot are currently identified by the SBC's Homelessness Team to address the outstanding demand for this support in that domain, however, referrals may be considered from other sources when supply has met this demand.

Cyrenians will complete a formal evaluation of the pilot project in 2023. There is already a significant volume of research and evidence available on the Housing First model so this evaluation will focus on factors specific to the Borders pilot project. Evaluation will include consideration of impact on other services, as far as is possible given data sharing limitations. Evaluation will not include detailed savings analysis but it will include indicative figures for potential medium/long term savings.

All partners agree that early indications suggest this project is valuable and it is making a significant contribution to helping to keep vulnerable people safe, albeit on a small scale at the moment. It is recognised that future funding options need to be considered now if the pilot period is to be extended and these need to be scoped out to inform what is required in the medium to long term to retain the project. SBC are currently in talks to extend Housing First into 2024.

It should be noted that Housing First has real potential to contribute to wider longer-term savings for the public purse, this is only possible if all partners actively contribute the necessary upfront financial and staff resources to make this feasible beyond the initial pilot project.

10.6   Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options

Homeless prevention has been a major aspect of the national housing agenda for more than a decade, with national policy focusing on the delivery of a Housing Options approach to preventing homelessness in Scotland and delivering national housing outcomes. A commitment to the delivery of person-centred, preventative services which target early intervention and personal choice is now the bedrock of Scottish Housing Options policy.

Within the prevention model, the Council recognises homelessness as a complex issue that encompasses health, employment, education, offending, finance, relationships and families. The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan outlines the Councils approach to housing options, identifying a wide range of pathways for vulnerable people and extending housing options across tenures.

Housing to 2040 is based on the principles of social justice, equality and human rights and demonstrates a continued focus on Ending Homelessness, including the introduction of a new cross-public sector homelessness prevention duty. It is recognised that homelessness is not a standalone issue and a multi-agency approach is required to achieve a rapid rehousing approach. Public services must work together to help prevent the cycle of crisis and homelessness, not least due to the cost to the individual but also due to the cost to the public purse.

The recommendations in the final report of the Prevention Review Group, Preventing Homelessness in Scotland published in early 2021, provided the framework for the 2021/22 Scottish Government Prevention of homelessness duties consultation. It includes a number of recommendations that cut across 3 overarching principles:

- Responsibility to prevent homelessness should not rely solely or primarily on the housing/ homelessness service but be a shared public responsibility.
- Intervention to prevent homelessness should start as early as possible. In many cases this will be before issues have escalated to a point where homelessness appears imminent.
- People facing homelessness should have choice in where they live and access to the same range of housing outcomes as members of the general public, with any necessary protections to mitigate further risk of homelessness. Housing outcomes should be comparable across the prevention and homelessness duties.

The new duties will be introduced through the new Housing Bill expected toward the end of 2023 and will expect a range of public bodies and landlords to prevent homelessness, particularly by asking and acting on a risk of homelessness, as well as responsibilities relating to strategic and joint planning. It is also envisaged that existing homelessness legislation will be changed to ensure homelessness is prevented at an earlier stage, including a proposal to extend the duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness up to six months before, to maximise the housing options available to people and to prescribe what reasonable steps may include.

Health and social care services, children's services, police and other public bodies will therefore have a legal duty to 'ask and act' to prevent homelessness under Scottish Government proposals and will represent the biggest change to Scotland's homelessness legislation in almost a decade. Task and Finish groups are currently exploring opportunities for implementation and legislative changes are expected in 2023.

10.7   Specific Groups

There is clear evidence that particular groups are at a higher risk of homelessness and significant government focus has been on supporting these groups, including people leaving prison, young care leavers, and women (with accompanying children) experiencing domestic abuse. The expectation is that local authorities should develop specific pathways for each of these groups to prevent them from entering the homelessness system. In addition to the COVID-19 impacts on demand for temporary accommodation, some of the wider pressures in the Scottish Borders include:

10.7.1 Young People

Young peoples' routes to independent housing are becoming more difficult due to a wide range of factors. Young people are increasingly squeezed out of the private housing market and, consequently, are more likely than in previous years to face a drawn-out process of moving towards independent living. Affordable housing in the private and social rented sectors is in short supply.

The Scottish Borders ranks 12th out of the 32 local authorities for number of young people assessed as homeless as a proportion of the population, it is 16 per 1,000. The number of young people presented as homeless has remained steady over the ten years to 2021/22 but has started to fall since then.

SBC's Housing Support is provided via an internal team within Homelessness Services and a commissioned service. Housing Support offers short term support to individuals to live independently within the local community. This support covers a wide range of activities that help people to secure, set up and maintain suitable accommodation. This is targeted at the following specific groups:

- Individuals aged 16 or over.
- Individuals who are homeless or potentially Homeless.
- Individuals experiencing Housing Difficulties

10.7.2 The Young Persons Adult Working Group

Scottish Borders currently does not have a discrete strategic or commissioning plan that covers young persons and young adults. They are included within children's or adult's planning to varying degrees, however the age group from 14-16 years to 26-30 years (approximately) are not considered within the one specification. There are a number of groups and meetings that focus on or include work related to young persons and/or young adults but not always with a clear link to each other, meaning there is a need to review and better co-ordinate across all relevant workstream for this age group.

The overall purpose of the Young Persons Adult Working Group is to co-ordinate information, develop priorities and oversee the strategic response to the needs of young persons and young adults across Scottish Borders. This includes:

- Identifying, supporting and linking with priorities identified in a range of other relevant working groups thereby improving communication.
- Providing information on and increasing the quality and diversity of operational practice to enhance the lives of young persons and adults through access to existing research, benchmarking and identifying best practice.
- Establishing robust mechanisms for recommending and evaluating a strategic and commissioning plan for young persons and adults.
- Producing and presenting highlight and/or business reports to other relevant working groups.
- Considering the case for developing a dedicated young person and adult's service/operational practice teams within the target age group.
- Developing a Vision statement appropriate to the strategic and commissioning needs of young persons and young adults.
- Considering the need to implement a Care and Risk Management (CARM) model and revised Vulnerable Young Persons Protocols (VYP).

This group will include members from Homelessness and Housing, ensuring there is representation form the sector and homeless contribute to decision making, linking in the work by the team to reduce youth homelessness and provide a more holistic approach for young people across the Scottish Borders.

10.7.3 Housing Options for Care Leavers

The Home and Belonging Initiative is a fund that was originally managed by the Life Changes Trust aimed at supporting young people with care experience as they move on from care and into their own home. The Initiative has also taken in the context of increasing focus on the work of The Promise Scotland. The Promise Scotland has been set up to deliver recommendations from the Independent Care Review, to make sure the needs of young people with experience of care are met and that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

For young people who have experienced care, the Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers in the Scottish Borders was developed and implemented in partnership between Scottish Borders Council and the four

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locally based Registered Social Landlords in 2017/2018. The protocol seeks to ensure that the priority accommodation and support needs of care leavers are recognised in order that their needs for suitable housing are met in a planned and sustainable way. Key partners continued to support the 'Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways' to ensure that the housing needs of our care leavers are met in a planned coordinated way.

10.7.4 Prison Leavers

The Scottish Borders Council Homeless Service is the interface point for people leaving prison who have no fixed address. Over the past five years there have been on average 27 assessments carried out each year.

The 'Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' standards (SHORE) were launched nationally in 2017. The standards are designed to ensure that people leaving prison can access services and accommodation in the same way as people living in the community.

An information sharing protocol which was adopted in 2019/2020 between the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and Scottish Borders Council has improved information sharing arrangements contributing to the aspirations of SHORE, allowing for earlier intervention both in terms of the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

During 2022/2023 a multi-agency SHORE working Group was established and work began on developing processes around admission into custody. The group will consider what actions can be taken prior to custody and around bail. This is a challenging area that is not covered in the SHORE standards; however, the working group were keen to explore what could be done to improve housing and support outcomes at this time.

There is now one Bail supervision property available in the Scottish Borders which has been provided by Waverley Housing. The Sherriff has been informed of the project and is delighted that there is now a provision for Supervised Bail accommodation in Borders. The Bail Supervision standards, which are fairly robust, are being met and it is hoped the project will demonstrate that this is a positive approach going forward.

10.7.5 Mental Health

An operational protocol has also been established between NHS Borders and the Homeless Service to identify patients at the earliest opportunity, who have been admitted to acute in-patient mental health services and are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This protocol seeks to embed a proactive, inclusive, planned approach to safe patient discharge, promoting positive outcomes and patient care for those experiencing homelessness and poor mental health through collaborative person-centred support planning.

10.7.6 Veterans

The number of applications and assessments of veterans has remained at the same level over ten years, although it dropped to 10 in 2021/22. While veteran homelessness is quite low compared to other specialist groups it is important to ensure that SBC and partners are aware of any need and provide the right housing options advice.

The Scottish Borders Community Taskforce (Firmbase) is the main vehicle for progressing veteran's issues in Scottish Borders.

10.7.7 Women experiencing domestic abuse

On average 64 women present as homeless following incidences of domestic abuse each year in the Scottish Borders (over a ten year period). In 2021/2022, 43 women presented as homeless due to domestic abuse within the household.

'Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse' is the report of a Scottish Government working group in December 2020 highlighting six areas which, acted on together, could significantly reduce domestic abuse related homelessness. These areas are:

- Preventing homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic abuse: a human rights approach
- Making women's homelessness visible: a gendered response to domestic abuse and homelessness
- Strengthening the role of social landlords in responding to domestic abuse
- Protecting women's and children's rights to remain in their home
- Providing housing that meets women's and children's needs
- Protecting all women's rights: no recourse to public funds, domestic abuse and homelessness

The BHHSP is committed to carrying out a review to 'Improving the Housing Outcomes for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse', this work was initiated in 2021 and then delayed due to COVID related and other impacts and is currently being rebooted.

10.8 Resettlement Programme

The Scottish Borders like other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom participate in the resettlement of refugees. These are Home Office led schemes and differing levels of funding are available depending upon the arrival route. Scottish Borders Council have staff, including some volunteers, to support these families.

10.8.1 Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (Syria)

Since 2015 the Scottish Borders has hosted 9 Syrian families. They spend 60 months on the scheme supported by Scottish Borders Council and can thereafter apply for leave to remain. The most recent arrivals have approximately 24 months left on the scheme. The council provides a full range of support including language classes to enable families to fully integrate into the local communities, participate in education and employment. This is intended to support a move from reliance to independence.

A number of other resettlement schemes have come together to be known as the UK Resettlement Scheme**.**

10.8.2 Afghan Resettlement

This is a three year scheme and is similar to the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (Syria). The majority of arrivals expressed an interest in the larger urban cities of the United Kingdom and no new arrivals into the Scottish Borders are imminently expected. Although three families initially came to the Scottish Borders they have since moved to be near other family members.

10.8.3 Ukraine Displaced Persons

There are three visa routes with this scheme, a family visa scheme, UK Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme. The family scheme involves a United Kingdom based person hosting a Ukraine family member in their home. The UK scheme involved a match being made between a United Kingdom based host and a Ukrainian person. The Ukrainian person can't travel until a match is made and

agreed. The Scottish Government issued approximately 30,000 visas for the Super Sponsor Scheme, this was accompanied by an appeal for hosts in the community.

At present the Scottish Borders has 114 Ukrainian people in hotels (52 family groups) and 138 with hosts in the community. The number of families accommodated in the Scottish Borders is controlled by the Scottish government and depends upon availability of suitable accommodation across Scotland, which is currently in hotels and ship-based accommodation. Hosts receive a good will payment and are expected to host for 6 months at least (this does not apply to the family scheme). Refusals to take hosted offers and breakdowns in hosted situations are common.

Applications to Registered Social Landlords and other private landlords are being made by Ukrainian families in the resettlement scheme to enable them to move on from hotels and hosted arrangements.

The Scottish Government have commissioned two ships to house people arriving from Ukraine such is the demand for accommodation. The decommissioning of the two ships for Ukrainian displaced persons in March 2023 and June 2023 will increase demand for settled housing and the Scottish Borders will be expected to take a proportion of those moving on from accommodation on the ships. This will likely put additional pressure on existing capacity of Registered Social Landlords and private tenancies.

10.8.4   Asylum Dispersal

All parts of the United Kingdom participate in the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children dispersal. The Scottish Borders have been receiving these children for some months. Children and Families social work take the lead on this programme.

Scotland receives approximately 6.9% of the total United Kingdom arrivals. Of the 6.9% of asylum seekers coming to Scotland many are expected to be housed within Scottish Borders. Originally the allocation for the Scottish Borders was 96 people but this has now been adjusted to 48 people. This is a rolling figure so the number could be adjusted up or down. The Mears Group are responsible for finding accommodation for asylum seekers on behalf of the government. They are currently in discussions with SBC. This is a long-term commitment.

10.9   Temporary Accommodation

SBC have a duty under the homelessness legislation to provide suitable temporary accommodation if there is a reason to believe an applicant is homeless, this is provided until all duties have been discharged following the homelessness presentation. Although the Scottish Borders has experienced fewer statutory homeless applications through 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 this did not translate into a lesser demand for temporary accommodation and 2022/2023 saw statutory homeless presentations rising to similar level of pre pandemic.

SBC have experienced continued high demand for temporary accommodation after COVID in line with the national trend. In meeting this unprecedented demand SBC have increased temporary accommodation stock levels to 150 temporary accommodation units as at 23rd February 2023. This is in contrast to the aims and objectives outlined within RRTP, however SBC remain committed to the reduction in temporary accommodation numbers and use. The impacts of the pandemic continue to be longer lasting than anticipated and the unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation continued throughout 2022. As the key priority was to deliver front line services the full application of resources allocated to the RRTP could not be implemented which, consequently, had a significant delaying impact on many actions within the Scottish Borders RRTP.

In line with national pressures SBC has experienced consistent challenges around managing void properties. These include supply-chain delays for materials, service and trade shortages and the impact of increased pressure on utility companies.

SBC has an excellent record in not having to utilise bed & breakfast accommodation, however during the height of the demand on temporary accommodation a total of seven bed and breakfast accommodation placements were used in 2022/23. These placements included three out of area placements due to a lack of local bed and breakfast facilities. While SBC have utilised bed & breakfast accommodation within the period due to these pressures this has been kept to a minimal level.

SBC continue to provide a flexible model of temporary accommodation, which has resulted in successfully flipping some properties to allow homeless households within temporary accommodation to transition this into their permanent home resulting in a reduced impact for these households. SBC will continue to monitor the temporary accommodation stock and residents to allow further flipping of tenure in this way.

A Crash Pad Pilot was established within the temporary homeless accommodation portfolio and became operational in April 2021. The Crash Pad is a self-contained property that can accommodate households on a short term basis (one or two nights), this provides very short term use for homeless households to enable a quicker process to allow full assessment of housing requirements, both for temporary and permanent accommodation. The aim of the Crash Pad is to make more efficient use of the wider temporary accommodation stock and reduce Scottish Borders Council's risk of breaching the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

10.10 Housing Support

The provision of housing support has been recognised as important in preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness. The Housing Support Duty came into force on 1 June 2013 and places a requirement on local authorities to complete a housing support assessment for people who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness and they have 'reason to believe' need the housing support services prescribed in the regulations.

The Housing Support Service forms part of the Council's Homelessness Service and consists of an internal Housing Support team and a commissioned service. Housing Support offers accessible, flexible and personalised support to individuals in critical need to enable them to secure, establish, manage and maintain their home. The team's objectives are to:

- Prevent homelessness through the provision of person centred housing support
- Prepare individuals/households for independent living, and help them maintain their housing independence
- Assist and support households towards securing suitable, affordable, sustainable permanent accommodation
- Support households regardless of accommodation status i.e. in temporary accommodation, at home and no fixed abode
- Promote the health, wellbeing and social integration of homeless households

The Housing Support team provided vital service provision to supported people throughout 2021/2022. 265 referrals were received during the reporting period. 83% of cases have been closed due to interventions being successfully completed. There were 415 cases open within Housing Support Services during 2021/22.

The service sought the views of our partners in 2021 in order to improve practices, identify service development opportunities and contribute to improvement planning. The survey incorporated different areas of service delivery, accessibility, communication, partnership working, quality of service and

responsiveness. 94.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the Housing Support team provide high quality support.

10.11   South East Housing Options Hub

It is important that SBC continues to contribute to the work of the Hub so opportunities for collaborating with other Hub authorities on priorities identified within the LHS can be considered.

The East Housing Hub consists of local authority representatives from Edinburgh, East Lothian, Falkirk, Mid Lothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian who meet on a monthly basis. The East Hub has developed a strong shared focus to take forward various work strands to progress the development of the Housing Options approach, embedding Rapid Rehousing, sharing best practice and working together on joint projects, including:

- Development of the housing options training toolkit in partnership with the other Housing Options Hubs
- Stakeholder and awareness raising events during the development of RRTPs
- Procurement of training and guidance on trauma informed practice, housing and homelessness rights of foreign nationals and domestic abuse
- The development of Young People's tenancy sustainment videos created in partnership with young people who have lived experience of homelessness
- Collaborating on homelessness/ housing options responses during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Finding solutions to embed legislative changes into frontline practice

It is important that SBC continues to contribute to the work of the Hub so opportunities for collaborating with other Hub authorities on priorities identified within the LHS can be considered.

10.12   Key Issues and Challenges

- The length of time households are homeless
- The supply and demand for a range of properties including, one bedroom properties, housing for larger families
- The high demand for accommodation in the Eildon Locality
- The low supply of accommodation in the Tweeddale locality
- Impact of COVID and the lasting implications which includes implementing the RRTP
- Increasing reliance on temporary accommodation throughout the pandemic which has continued beyond the pandemic
- Implementing the new Prevention Duties which represents the biggest change to Scotland's homelessness legislation in almost a decade. Public bodies will have a legal duty to identify anyone at risk of homelessness and either take action themselves or refer on to more appropriate help
- Local connect suspension and the potential for unintended negative impacts including with regard to risk management, multi-agency public protection arrangements, complexity of case management, continuity of support and strategic planning
- The complex support needs, beyond housing support, of the homeless population and difficulties in accessing support
- Accessibility and affordability of the private rented sector particularly for single people and/or people on low incomes
- Demand on services due to support for the Ukrainian Crisis and Support
- Demand on services due to the Resettlement Programme
- Young people continue to make up the largest proportion of homeless assessments

10.13   Current Progress

- Developed the Rapid rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the Scottish Borders
- Re-established the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP). The key focus of the partnership is on the implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)
- Improving pathways for specific groups who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, these include, prison leavers, care leavers, and women and children experiencing domestic abuse
- Two year Housing First pilot was launched
- Recruiting a Private Rented Sector Development Officer

10.14   Key Actions for Delivery

- **Continue to Implement Rapid Rehousing**
- **Improve access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households across all tenures**
- **People who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible**
- **Ensure homeless households can access the right support at the right time**
- **All partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness**

Successfully tackling these issues is key to our success and provides us with significant opportunity. We need to improve the choices people have for an affordable home that meets their needs in the Scottish Borders, and prevent and end homelessness whenever we can.

The proposed actions in relation to tackling and preventing homelessness will support those ambitions.

11. Delivering LHS Outcomes

11.1 Implementation

The outcomes in the LHS can be best delivered through a managed network of strong partnership relationships. The LHS is monitored through the Borders Housing Alliance who have direct responsibility for the LHS but have a network of groups to co-ordinate a partnership approach to monitoring the strategy.

Figure 5 provides a useful graphic on how the Local Housing Strategy is integrated into a wide range of different groups and partnerships.

Figure 5: Local Housing Strategy and Key Groups and Partnerships
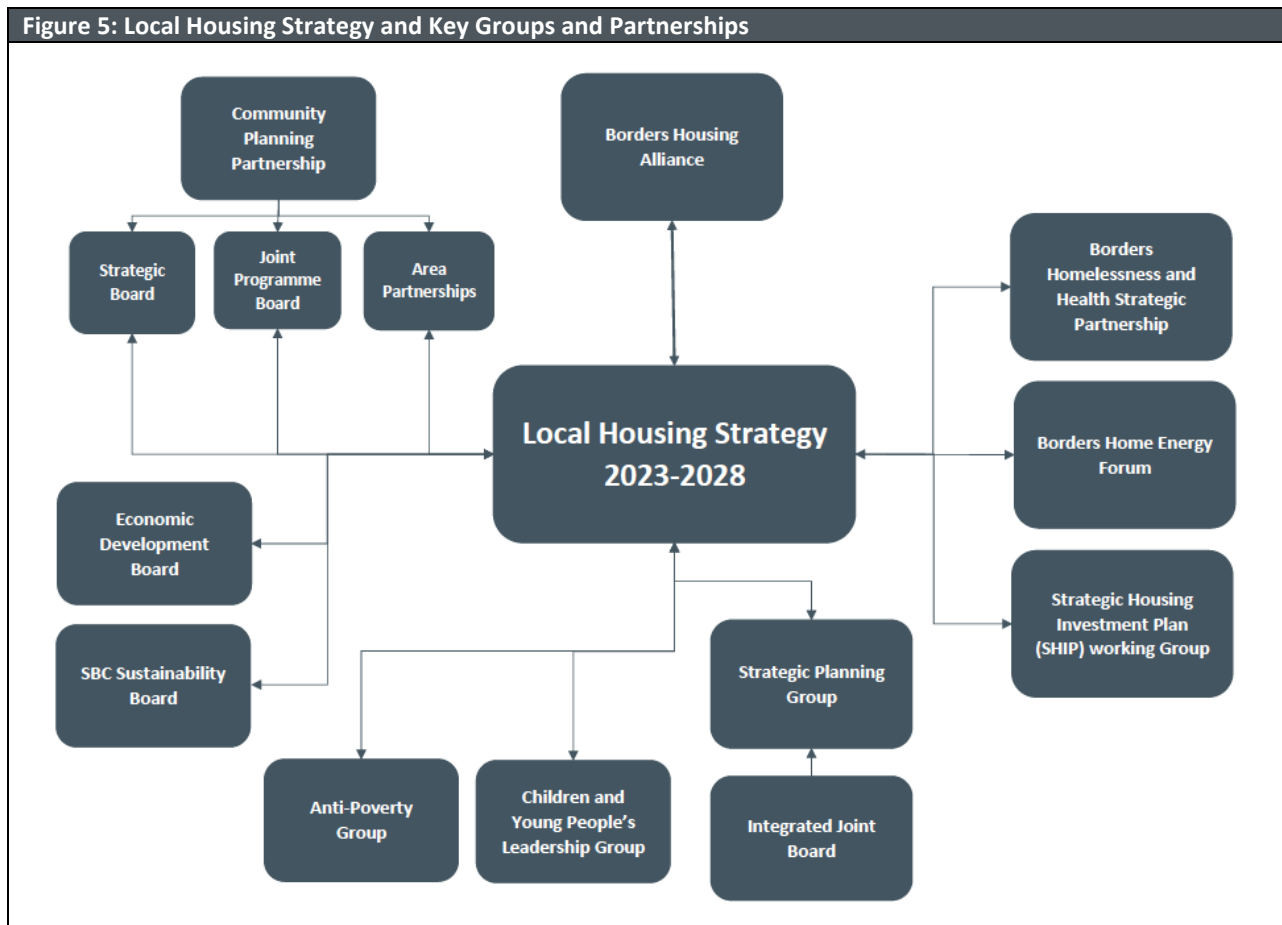
11.2 Monitoring Progress

The outcomes framework is presented at a strategic level. It clearly sets out the outcomes for the LHS, together with the key strategic actions, key performance indicators and targets that underpin its successful delivery. A more detailed action plan linking a range of strategies will outline on an annual basis how the strategic actions and outcomes will be delivered. The LHS will be monitored annually against the action plan, to ascertain progress and to enable remedial actions to be instigated promptly should they be required to ensure milestones set out are achieved, and ensure that services/partners are on track to deliver specific LHS objectives.

The LHS strategic outcomes and any related plans and strategies will be reviewed annually. In addition to strategic monitoring, partners will be responsible for monitoring their operational functions as they relate to the LHS outcomes; for example, housing management, housing investment/capital programme, and homelessness.

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed Outcome and Action Plan that will be used as the template for monitoring the LHS on an annual basis.

11.3   Resources

Whilst the Local Housing Strategy sets out an ambitious framework for action, investment and partnership to meet housing need in the Scottish Borders, it also must be set in the context of the likely resources available to support implementation.

Strategic Outcome	Resources
1. More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive	Scottish Government AHSP Grant RSL Majority Borrowing 2nd Homes Council Tax Levy Commuted Sums Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal Regional Prosperity Framework Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Private Funding Scottish Borders Council Empty Homes Grant Housing Infrastructure Fund The Vacant and Derelict Land Fund Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) Rural Housing Fund SG Charitable Bond Programme
2. People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing	Scottish Government AHSP Grant Health and Social Care NHS Borders Public Works Loan Board Mental Health Service Learning Disabilities Service Private Funding SG Gypsy Traveller Accommodation fund
3. Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy	Regional Prosperity Framework Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme (EES:ABS) Warmer Homes Scotland Energy Saving Trust Scotland Grant and Loan Net-zero Scottish Government funding e.g. Social Housing Net Zero Heat Fund
4. More people live in good quality homes and the built heritage of the Borders is preserved	CARS Missing Shares Private funding RSL capital funding EST Private Landlord Loan funding
5. Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible	SBC General Funded Homeless Service Scottish Government RRTP Funding Ending Homelessness Together funding Scottish Welfare Fund Partnership Working Voluntary Organisations

11.3.1   Affordable Housing Supply Programme

The Council has been previously used borrowing and on-lending from Public Works Loan Board in order to progress affordable Housing delivery via the National Housing Trust Round 1 and Local Authority Variant initiatives. The Council still supports affordable housing delivery through use of available Second Homes/

Council Tax and Affordable Housing Policy Developer Contributions. There are a number of other funding resources that the Council and its development partners can draw upon including Affordable Housing Supply Programme Funding, Open Market Shared Equity Scheme, Rural Housing Fund, RSLs Private Finance Borrowing and Scottish Water Grant Funding. Berwickshire and Eildon Housing Associations secured around £4.6m Charitable Bond funding for the first time in 2017-18 in lieu of Scottish Government Grant which was used to deliver developments at The Glebe Chirnside, High St Selkirk and Howdenburn Jedburgh. The Scottish Government has added an additional £25 million of funding to its Charitable Bond programme, taking the total investment to boost the number of affordable homes in Scotland to £105m.

Most recently, in July 2019, Eildon Housing Association secured a £40m investment from the Pension Insurance Corporation, which is this Lender's first such private placement with a Scottish RSL. Eildon Housing Association has indicated that it may consider "front –funding" projects, in order to ensure project delivery. During 2021/21 Scottish Borders Housing Association secured a £58m loan facility from the Royal Bank of Scotland, which is intended to support a development programme of up to 300 new homes over 7 years.

In 2021/22 the Council used £0.727m from its Second Homes / Council Tax Budget, to directly assist affordable housing delivery in Scottish Borders. This was used by the Council to acquire the Melrose Road site in Galashiels and a subsequent "back to back sale" to Eildon Housing Association, plus a previously agreed grant contribution towards gap funding costs of the Kelso Extra Care Housing development which is under construction. The Council has also used £0.013m towards costs of employing an Empty Homes Officer.

The Council has been deliberately building up an available balance being held in the Second Homes Council Tax budget in anticipation of it being used to assist delivery of extra care housing developments to augment Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant funding from Scottish Government's More Homes Division and Private Finance contributions from both Eildon Housing Association and Trust Housing Association. The Council has also committed to provide a grant of £0.750m to Eildon Housing Association towards costs of delivering 36 Extra Care flats which are under construction through conversion and remodelling of the former High School building in Kelso. In 2021/22 the Council paid grant of £0.262m towards the project, with the balance claimed in May 2022. It is envisaged that the Council will also be required to grant assist RSLs to deliver future Extra Care Housing projects. These Extra Care Housing developments are high cost projects, and the specification contains elements which are not eligible for Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant funding. In order to ensure best value is achieved, lessons learned from Dovecot Court Peebles has helped informed the designs going forward for Todlaw Duns, Langhaugh Galashiels, High School Kelso, Stirches Hawick and High School Eyemouth in due course. A site has yet to be identified for the proposed Peebles development.

During 2021/22 the Council agreed to make a £0.120m grant contribution to the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Companies 5 home Kirkhope Steading project in 2022/23, and also a £0.200m grant contribution to Eildon HA's 64 home former Earlston high school site project in 2024/25. The Council's Second Homes Council Tax budget has finite annual income which will be a key determinant of both the level of financial support available to assist construction of individual developments, and the potential programming of these grant contributions to dovetail with construction activity and provision of complementary Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant and RSL private funding.

The Council made no grant contributions from its Affordable Housing Policy Developer Contributions - Housing Market Area balances, to assist affordable housing and project delivery in 2021/22. See figures provided in Scottish Government SHIP Tables.

Table 9 below illustrates the estimated £268.226 of total investment required to deliver the potential affordable housing projects identified in this SHIP 2023/28. This has been developed on the basis of

financial analysis and the most recent experience of Borders RSL projects, using an AHSP assumption of £96k/unit, and RSL Private Finance assumption of £104k/unit.

Table 9: Estimated required Investment in affordable housing 2023 – 2028*[10]						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	
AHSP new build	21.024	45.312	43.872	11.136	6.528	128.872
AHSP remodelling	0	0	0	0	0	0
RSL Private Borrowing	22.776	48.464	47.528	12.064	7.072	137.904
Extra Care 2nd C/Tax	0	0.200	0.750	0.750	0.750	2.45
Rural Housing Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Private borrowing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	43.8	93.976	92.15	23.95	14.35	268.226
* Figures are rounded up						

11.3.2   Projected Available Resources

The resources needed to deliver the LHS are shared across a number of partners including the Scottish Government, RSLs, the independent sector, private sector and public bodies such as the Health and Social Care Partnership in the Scottish Borders. In terms of public sector resources, it is difficult to predict levels of future available funding, particularly given current economic uncertainty in the public sector. Table 10 sets out the various resource options that the Council's relies on to deliver the LHS. This will be further developed through 2023/2024 financial year and updated in April 2024.

Table 10: Projected General Fund Expenditure 2023-2028	
Council General Fund Spend Category	Total Projected Expenditure 2023-2028
Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation	£4,491,410
Housing Strategy & Affordable Housing From 2nd Homes Council Tax	£7,312,275
Adaptations	£1,975,118
Community Safety	£6,868,790
Total General Fund Expenditure	£1,766,553,000 (Total net revenue as per 23/24 FP)

11.3.3   Projected RSL expenditure

As well as substantial General Fund investment in the delivery of housing and related services, the four main RSLs in the Borders will also invest heavily both in terms of stock improvements but in the delivery of frontline services. Over the next five years, the four largest RSLs are projected to spend over £453m.

Table 11: Projected RSL Expenditure 2023-2028	
Investment over next 5 years: 2023 - 28	Total projected expenditure 2023 - 28
Housing management	£52,837,448
Housing maintenance	£69,830,000
Housing support	£16,325,023
Planned maintenance: SHQS	£73,423,000
Planned maintenance: EESSH	£11,129,000
Disabled adaptations	£1,890,000
New build housing investment	£226,409,000
Regeneration or wider role activity	£2,125,000
Total projected expenditure (2023-28)	£453,968,471

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[10] Calculations were done on the basis of grant of £96k per unit and assumed private borrowing of £104k per unit. Figures were rounded up for modelling purposes.

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Appendix 1: LHS 2023-2028 – Outcomes and Action Plan

Strategic Outcome 1:	More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive
Key Actions for Delivery:	• Increase the supply of affordable housing • Increase the supply of alternative tenure housing to meet a broad range of needs • Increase construction capacity and skills to support delivery of more homes • Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places • Support the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements) • Support the development and implementation of Local Place Plans to help address local housing challenges • Reduce the number of empty homes • Explore innovative approaches to housing delivery in conjunction with partners

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
No. of new homes (Market, Affordable/Rent) (HST)	Not available yet	370					
No. of new build affordable homes	120	141					
Total number of affordable homes delivered	141	150					
No of Mid-Market Rent properties (RSL)	TBC	TBC					
No. of long-term empty homes	1,730	<1550					
No. of Empty Homes brought back into use	37	30 p.a.					
No. of Empty Homes brought back into use by direct officer interaction	19	20 p.a.					
No. of Empty Homes/ Property Grant applications	18	10 p.a.					
Financial commitment through Empty Homes Grant	£ 274,426.99	N/A					
No. of active properties registered through landlord registration	TBC	N/A					
No. of people on the self-build register	-	N/A					
No. of live Local Place Plans	0	TBC					
No. of Community Action Plans	2	4					

	Actions	Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
1.1	Develop the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)			HST	Oct-23
1.2	Review and update the Affordable Housing Policy			HST, Planning	2023-2028
1.3	Ongoing engagement with development industry to understand barriers and opportunities to housing delivery in real time.			HST, RSLs, SOSE, REP	31/03/2028
1.4	Engage with developers and support SME's infrastructure providers (utilities)			HST, Planning	To be agreed
1.5	Exploring the potential of alternative construction and delivery methods to deliver new affordable homes and value for money			HST, RSLs	2023-2028
1.6	Ensure there is enough viable land opportunities to support housing delivery			HST, Planning	2023-2028
1.7	Explore relaxation of Developer Contribution requirements to support housing delivery			HST, Planning	2025
1.8	Identify opportunities for regenerating vacant and derelict land			Planning	2024
1.9	Explore Council led housing development for sale or rent with Scottish Futures Trust, this would include purchasing or developing new homes for market sale or rent			HST, SBC, SFT	2023-2028
1.10	Explore a range of housing models with SFT and RSLs			HST, SBC, SFT, RSLs	2023-2028
1.11	Lobby to Scottish and UK Governments for changes to LHA Rate to enable more intermediate housing in the Scottish Borders			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028
1.12	Making best use of strategic acquisitions to target open market purchases that increase supply of affordable homes and meet local housing priorities			HST, RSLs, SG	2023-2028
1.13	Establishing a register of demand for self-build			HST, Planning	2024
1.14	Explore Council purchase of sites to make them "development ready", including self-build plots			SBC	2023-2028
1.15	Work with partners to consider modular and off-site construction opportunities			SBC	2023-2028
1.16	Strengthen links between housing and the economy through the housing and planning process so that the right homes are being delivered in the right places to enable rural to thrive and grow			HST, Planning, SOSE	2023-2028
1.17	Maximise opportunities for housing and housing development to help unlock the region's economic potential and supporting the delivery of homes in town centres, including empty homes and shops			HST, Economic Development, SOSE	2023-2028
1.18	Further develop partnerships with Infrastructure Providers to promote aligned strategic planning			SBC, SEPA, Scottish Water	2023-2028
1.19	Work with partners and stakeholders to develop housing projects that improve stock condition to regenerate communities			HST, Planning, Building Control, EH	2023-2028
1.20	Work with partners to continue to improve digital connectivity in the Scottish Borders, especially in rural areas			SBC, SOSE, SG, others tbc	2023-2028
1.21	Work with partners to deliver R100 programme which connects properties with superfast broadband as well as Project Gigabit			SBC	2023-2028

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
1.22	Work with Mobile Network Operators to deliver 4G connectivity in areas with very low and no connectivity			SBC	2023-2028
1.23	Improve understanding of housing need & aspirations through community engagement and sharing information across services/ partnerships			HST, CPP, RSLs	2024/25
1.24	Support the development and implementation of Local Place Plans to help address local housing challenges			HST, Place Team	2023-2028
1.25	Support community with available data to understand demand and encourage community led housing development, including reusing assets for residential development			HST, Place Team, SOSCH	2023-2028
1.26	Continue to engage in the Borderlands Place Programme			HST, Place Team, SOSCH	2023-2028
1.27	Work in partnership to improve condition of empty homes in rural areas and town centres			HST, Place Team, SOSCH, SOSE	2023-2028
1.28	Work in partnership with South of Scotland Community Housing and RSLs to deliver housing as an element of community led regeneration			HST, SOSCH, RSLs	2023-2028
1.29	Work with Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal in delivering the Regional Home Demonstrator programme to accelerate affordable housing delivery and housing across all tenures, develop strategic sites and drive efficiencies across the public sector estate.			SBC, E&SE City Regional Deal	2023-2028
1.30	Identify and consider any examples of a rural housing demonstrator programme			SBC	2023-2028
1.31	Consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders for empty residential properties where appropriate			HST, SG, SOSCH, Place Team	2023-2028
1.32	Consider use of potential additional powers giving discretion to charge up to 100% premium (double the full rate) on council tax for second homes and charge more than 100% premium on council tax for second homes and long-term empty homes			HST	2023-2028
1.33	Consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders and/or development site purchases to deliver housing			SBC	2023-2028
1.34	Secure permanency of Empty Homes Officer			HST	2023/2024
1.35	Use empty homes activity to support future regeneration projects			HST, SOSCH, RSLs	2023-2028
1.36	Review the empty homes grant initiative aimed at bringing empty properties back into use as affordable homes, including both residential and commercial space			HST	2024
1.37	Consider purchase of second homes for sale and re-sell with burdens to ensure occupancy as principal homes			SBC	2023-2028
1.38	Consider use of the Rural Housing Fund to allow suitable properties, including empty homes, to be purchased or long leased and turned into affordable homes for key workers			HST	2023-2028
1.39	Develop a regional prospectus on housing opportunities			SBC, RSL's	2023-2028
1.40	Consider application to Scottish Minister to become a "Rural Housing Body"			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
1.41	Support RSLs to increase their development capacity through more innovative financing models (e.g., PWLB, Pension fund opportunities)			HST	2023-2028
1.42	RSLs to progress development programme for new build supply over next 5 years			RSLs	2023-2028
1.43	SBC to consider short term let control areas in areas of housing pressure			SBC	2023-2028
1.43	BHA to undertake review of BHA Enterprise priorities - examining existing activity across Windfarm and MMR homes and conducting feasibility over further growth opportunities.			BHA	2023-2028
1.44	Waverley HA to progress development of Upper Langlee New Build Programme			Waverley	2023-2028
1.45	Support Homes for Good with the establishment of a lettings agency in the South of Scotland			SBC, SOSE, D&G	2024
1.46	Continue to engage with private landlord sector to maximise the quality and impact of the private rented sector in Scottish Borders			HST	2023-2028
1.47	Continue to organise Landlord Forums, share best practice through newsletter and other forms of engagement			HST, LAS	2023-2028
1.48	Maintain progress at Lowood, Tweedbank expansion site, and seek to secure HIF funding to support infrastructure requirements			SBC	2023-2028
1.49	Undertake assessment of suitable housing mix at Lowood			SBC	2023-2024

Strategic Outcome 2:	People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing
Key Actions for Delivery:	• Work in partnership to deliver more accessible homes across tenures. • Increase the supply of wheelchair housing. • Provide information, advice and assistance on housing options and adaptations to meet particular needs across tenures. • Review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected. • Strengthen joint working with partners in HSCP, NHS, RSLs and others to deliver appropriate housing solutions for individuals with complex needs. • Strengthen joint working to support key worker and employer led housing opportunities. • Identify land and funding opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of the Gypsy and Gypsy Traveller community.

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
No. of Wheelchair Accessible Homes built	6	20 p.a. 15 RSL					
No. of particular needs homes built	10	40 p.a.					
No. of adaptations funded to existing homes	674	530 p.a.					
% of private sector homes built to HfVN Standards	tbc	30%					
No. of private major adaptations	68	80 p.a.					
No. of social rented major adaptations	170	120 p.a.					
No. of private minor adaptations + repairs	353	300 p.a.					
No. of social minor adaptations + repairs	88	110 p.a.					
Private Sector Major Adaptations Budget	£450k	N/A					
No. receiving community alarm or other TEC options	N/A	1,500 p.a.					
Number of additional permanent sites provided for Gypsy Travellers	0	1					

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
2.1	Providing holistic advice and assistance in regard to adapting people's homes to meet their needs including the co-ordination of funding options			HST, C&R, SW, H&SC	2023-2028
2.2	Work with partners to address the practical barriers faced by older and disabled home movers by providing support and information.			HST, RSLs, H&SC	2023-2028
2.3	Provide information and advice through the What Matters Hubs – enabling community capacity building			SBC	2023-2028
2.4	Update SBC webpages to provide a 'catch all' point of access for housing related information for older and disabled people and their carers			HST	2023/24
2.5	Engage with private developers to ensure private homes are built to the HfVN Standards			HST, Planning	2023-2028
2.6	Engage with private developers to promote the building of wheelchair accessible & other accessible housing types			HST, Planning	2024/25
2.7	Review the potential for Scottish Borders Accessible Housing Register and securing additional staff capacity to support the delivery of housing for particular needs			HST, RSLs, H&SC	2024
2.8	Work in partnership with care and support providers to improve intelligence around need across a range of client groups considering developments in technology and design innovation			HST, H&SC	2023-2028
2.9	Enable investment in existing homes, and to invest significantly in technology (including telecare) to enable older people to continue living at home as their needs change			HST, RSLs, H&SC	2023-2028
2.10	Provide supported housing through Extra Care Housing and Care Villages work including a "re-fresh" of the ECH needs analysis undertaken in 2018			HST, H&SC	2023-2028
2.11	Explore remodelling specialist housing for older people in the RSL sector			HST, RSLs, H&SC	2023-2028
2.12	Carry out a review of Older Persons Housing Strategy			HST, SW, RSLs	2023-2028
2.13	Carry out a review of Young People's Action Plan			HST	2023-2028
2.14	Carry out a review of the wheelchair housing study			HST	2023-2028
2.15	HSCP to ensure joint Mental Health services can continue to provide/commission services to assess, treat and offer tailored support to meet the needs of people with mental ill health, and to monitor the delivery and impact of those services.			HSCP	2023-2028
2.16	Work with H&SC and RSLs to support the Coming Home Programme			H&SC, SBC, RSLs	2023-2028
2.17	All RSLs to have robust planned and cyclical maintenance and upgrade programmes which consider the needs of customers with particular needs			RSLs	2023-2028
2.18	RSLs to ensure effective management of strategic data and insight to improve services			BHA	2023-2028
2.19	Carry out a strategic review on Care and Repair and identify any expansion options			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028
2.20	Expand out the 'one stop shop' opportunity on adaptations to other RSLs operating in the Borders			Eildon, RSLs	2023-2028
2.21	RSLs to carry out reviews on their Allocations Policy to support keyworkers			SBHA	2023-2028
2.22	Carry out an evaluation of the current key workers model in the Borders			SBC, RSLs	2024
2.23	Identify any funding opportunities to support housing for key workers			SBC	2024/25

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
2.24	SBHA to carry out "most adaptable homes" analysis of existing stock to inform future investment programme			SBHA	2023-2028
2.25	SBHA to deliver the Disability Development Project in partnership with Aberlour and SBC.			SBHA	2023-2028
2.26	Progress funding bid to Gypsy Traveller accommodation fund, including identifying sites and feasibility work			SBC	2023-2028
2.27	Support Stakeholders to contribute to and engage with Public Health Duty			SBC	2023-2028
2.28	Work to identify financial support to upgrade and improve a Travelling Show people site in Greenlaw			SBC	2023-2028

Strategic Outcome 3:	Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy
Key Actions for Delivery:	• Work with partners to improve energy efficiency across all tenures • Develop the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the Scottish Borders • Implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings • Work with partners to develop the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency & zero emissions heating systems • Explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home • Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency • Consider next steps from CLES report including development of joint initiatives with regional partners

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Total number of households supported by EES-ABS	138	150					
Total number of measures installed through EES-ABS	225	220					
EES-ABS investment/allocation in Scottish Borders	£1,806,000	£1,827,840 p.a.					
Total no. of homes in the social rented sector retrofitted with specific measures introduced to improve energy efficiency	TBC	TBC					
% of owner occupied stock compliant with EPC C or higher	30%	>30%					
% of privately rented stock compliant with EPC C or higher	22%	100%					
% of RSL stock EPC C or above	77%	TBC					
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 1 compliant	92%	100%					
% of RSL stock that is EESSH 2 compliant	TBC	TBC					
No. of households in Fuel Poverty	29% (SHCS 2017-19)	<29%					
Number of feasibility studies relating to heat networks	1	3					
Reduction in carbon emissions (see estates)	TBC	TBC					
Number of ECO Flex referrals	0	TBC					

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
3.1	Deliver successful projects under the Energy Efficient Scotland programme targeting investment in hard to treat homes in fuel poverty			HST, BHEF	2023-2028
3.2	Consider how the prioritisation of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency actions can help provide a solution to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis			BHEF	2023-25
3.3	Work with community planning partners including Health Services, Fire and Rescue, to undertake targeted communications and campaigns promoting home energy information and advice.			HST, BHEF, CPP	2023-2028
3.4	RSLs to establish and implement EESSH2 programme - 2025 Plan for Band D and below homes by April 2025 (unless exempt)			RSLs	2023-2028
3.5	Ongoing collaboration with RSLs re opportunities in LHEES			HST, RSLs	2023-2028
3.6	Housing Associations to consider retrofit programmes in the context of a challenging financial climate			RSLs	2023/24
3.7	Continue collaborative work with Borders Housing Network & partners in Changeworks and Fuel Bank Foundation			RSLs	2023-2028
3.8	Develop a LA-Flex Scheme to attract Energy Company Obligation funding			HST	2023-2028
3.9	Carry out a Heat Networks & Feasibility Studies (including communal heating systems) at Tweedbank, Croft St & Ettrick riverside and explore potential for other opportunities through LHEES			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028
3.10	Working with partners and key regional stakeholders to develop a delivery plan to retrofit domestic housing, which builds on current retrofit schemes and develop new and innovative solutions.			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028
3.11	Work with community planning partners to develop projects relating to buildings and energy efficiency/retrofit/heat/grid upgrades and reflecting priorities identified in Local Place Plans			SBC, Community Plan Partners	2023-2028
3.12	Work with partners to develop and progress LHEES pilots			SBC	2023/24
3.13	Develop mini LHEES pilot for able to pay market and targeting specific property archetypes			SBC	2023-2025
3.14	Consider next steps from CLES report including development of joint initiatives with regional partners			SBC, RSLs	2023/24
3.15	RSLs to work with partners, establish the pathway for acquiring skills and qualifications in specialist roles and develop net zero awareness programmes			RSLs	2023-2028
3.16	Develop clear support routes to encourage members of the local supply chain to engage in energy efficiency work			Construction Forum, BHEF	2023-2028
3.17	Grow the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems.			Construction Forum, BHEF	2023-2028
3.18	Continue to facilitate decarbonisation and the creation of new high value jobs supporting low carbon energy generation and carbon reduction as part of the Borderlands City Region Inclusive Growth Deal			Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal	2023-2028

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
3.19	Progress monitoring and development of detailed feasibility to inform Wastewater Circulation and/or Heat Network Scheme at Croft Street			SBC, Recirc	2023-2028
3.20	Agree a Scottish Borders Energy Investment Plan Pilot through the Borderlands Energy Master Plan to invest in, test and develop robust, affordable and sustainable local energy systems			SBC/Borderlands	2023-2028
3.21	RSLs to identify and pilot potential new technology and solutions that increase warmth or lengthen the life of components e.g. smart filters, hybrid heating systems, batteries etc.			SBHA	2023-2028
3.22	SBHA to source funding to mainstream Warm & Well Energy Efficiency Advice Service			SBHA	2023-2028
3.23	RSLs to work with partners such as SBC to explore opportunities for waste reduction and increase recycling in Tenants homes.			SBHA, SBC	2023-2028
3.24	Eildon Housing Association exploring opportunities to develop and extend their DLO			Eildon	2023-2028
3.25	SBHA to explore funding opportunities to introduce technology that increases energy generation and storage opportunities.			SBHA	2023-2028
3.26	Carry out a review of the Borders Home Energy Forum and Construction Forum to clearly identify roles and responsibilities			Construction Forum, BHEF	2024/25
3.27	Carry out a review on all information and advice services available in the Borders and identify clear pathways to each service			BHEF	2025/26
3.28	Monitor delivery and impact of the fuel Poverty Intervention Fund			SBC/CAB	2023/24
3.29	Related to 3.27 monitor and review the SBC/CAB Warm and Well approach			SBC/CAB	2023-2025
3.30	Explore options for the reuse of existing historic buildings (as per Policy in NPF4) recognising the amount of embedded carbon they contain and that they are a key asset in efforts to tackle climate change /contribution to the circular economy.			HST, H&C	2023-2028

Strategic Outcome 4:	Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage
Key Actions for Delivery:	• Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/ energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate or explore funding options. • Provide supporting information and assistance to owners and landlords to meet existing and future house condition standards in private housing. • Review and develop the Scheme of Assistance to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach to house condition standards. • Work to better coordinate the partnership approach to Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Housing, which is complementary to the Scheme of Assistance. • Continue to implement Missing Shares and consider expansion of Missing Shares provision. • Ensure activity in relation to repairs, maintenance, energy efficiency improvements and conversion are sensitive to the built heritage.

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Number of owners supported through Missing Shares scheme	10	10					
No. of private sector properties provided with advice and practical assistance	48	30 p.a.					
No. of s29 Dangerous Building Notices served	16	<16					
No. of s30 Dangerous Building Notices served	1	<1					
No. of Under One Roof events hosted with Borders residents	1	2					
No. of contractors signed up to Trusted Trader Scheme	4	10					
No of individual CARS building grants awarded	59	40					
Town centre buildings supported through CARS	32	24					
No. of Empty Homes/buildings in Town Centres brought back in to use	tbc	15 p.a.					
Percentage of RSL dwellings that meet the SHQS	N/A	100%					
No. of RPN's issued	7	<5					
No. of cases heard by the tribunal	6	N/A					
No. of repairing standard related visits	28	<30					
No. of follow up actions to expired landlords (phone calls, letters, online checks)	381	<280					

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
4.1	Support the Scheme of Assistance and common repair in particular partner with Novoville to introduce the common repair app in the Scottish Borders.			HST, EH, Building Standards	2025
4.2	Review and develop the Scheme of Assistance to provide a more coordinated and collaborative approach to house condition standards, promoting stewardship in the first instance and the use of enforcement action as a last resort.			HST	2023-2028
4.3	Enhance existing working relationships with Environmental Health & Building Standards colleagues to deliver an integrated model of support in regard to house condition issues			HST, EH, Building Standards	2023-2028
4.4	Launch the Missing Shares App in partnership with Novoville			HST	2023/24
4.5	Launch full Trusted Trader Scheme once sufficient number of contractors have signed up			SBC Regulatory Services	2023/2024
4.6	Review Missing Shares Pilot and consider rollout of Missing Shares across the Scottish Borders and resource requirements to support this			HST	2024
4.7	SBHA to establish and implement a model for managing mixed tenure estates and effective engagement with owners, engaging with SBC Missing Share where appropriate			SBHA, SBC	2023-2028
4.8	Submit EOI to HES for future CARS programme potentially in Galashiels			SBC	2023
4.9	Maximise opportunities for sharing information and training across partner agencies involved in tackling house condition			HST, EH, Building Standards	2023-2028
4.10	Commence project to collect condition data on lock ups and garage sites across BHA stock.			BHA	2023-2028
4.11	Monitor Planned investment in RSL stock across the Borders through new RSL Asset Management Strategies			BHA	2023-2028
4.12	RSLs to implement their Asset Management Strategies/ Programmes with focus on reducing long term empty homes and enhancing place, including supporting Town Centre Placemaking to increase opportunities for Town Centre living.			RSLs	2023-2028
4.13	Completion of Upper Langlee Re-generation Programme			Waverley	31/03/2028
4.14	Continue to monitor the number of short-term lets and second homes in the region			HST, SBC	2023-2028
4.15	Ensure Short Term Lets meet repairing standard through licensing scheme			Licensing	2023-2028
4.16	Support to enable PRS tenants to make repairing Standard referral to the FTT (HPC)			HST	2023-2028
4.17	Strengthen communication plan and social media strategy to support landlords and tenants of best practice in regarding to private renting			HST	2023-2028
4.18	Consideration of planning control to regulate short-term letting in some areas			Planning, HST	2023-2028
4.19	Work with a range of services to provide support to ensure repairing standard is met in private rented properties			SBC	2023-2028
4.20	Manage HMO licenses to ensure adequate standards in private rented properties			Licensing	2023-2028

4.21	Continue to hold Under One Roof events			SBC, Under One Roof	2023-2028
4.22	Identify any redundant/ industrial buildings failing into disrepair & explore options to address these, including Buildings at Risk			SBC	2023-2028
4.23	Identify funding to undertake surveying work in the "Meadows" area of Burnfoot and subsequently develop a plan of works to support regeneration in the area				
4.24	Deliver Hawick CARS			H&C, CARS	2025

Strategic Outcome 5:	Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible
Key Actions for Delivery:	• Continue to Implement Rapid Rehousing • Improve access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households across all tenures • People who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible • Ensure homeless households can access the right support at the right time • All partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness

Performance Indicators	Baseline (2022/23)	Target	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
No. of households who approached the homelessness service for advice and/or assistance	827	Context					
Proportion of households who approached the homelessness service assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness	95%	Context					
% Repeat statutory homeless presentations (1 year)	4%	5%					
Total no. of individual homeless households referred to RSLs under section 5	642	Context					
Proportion of RSL lets to homeless households (locally based RSL's)	39%	50% (23/24)					
No. of statutory homeless cases open at close of period, who had an unIntentionally Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness (TWH) decision at close of period	327	Context					
No of Bed and Breakfast placements starting in period	7	0					
No. of Households in temporary accommodation at close of period	116	Reduction 23/24					
% of households requiring temporary or emergency accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%					
Average total time spent in temporary accommodation (days)	169	<10% p.a.					
No. of breaches to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order	1	0					
No of people who received Housing Support in the period (both homeless service and commissioned service)	470	Context					
Proportion of all housing support cases closed due to successfully completed intervention. (Homeless and commissioned service data)	79%	80%					
No. of tenancies commenced where the tenant is supported by Housing First	3	15 (23/24)					

Actions		Progress	Status	Responsibility	Timescales
5.1	The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP) continues to be the lead on the RRTP			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.2	Ensuring a consistent approach to responding to homelessness across the Borders with further "upstream" prevention activities considered to address homelessness			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.3	Consideration as to prevention work could be recorded more accurately and outcomes confirmed from the provision of housing options advice			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.4	Review temporary accommodation provision and model			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.5	Consider developing a (digital) common housing register to improve access to housing, data collection and delivery of online services			BHHSP, RSLs	2024
5.6	Work in partnership to support the 'Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan' - in particular, ensuring that partners are aware of provision across the region			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.7	Develop initiatives to improve housing options and access within the Private Rented Sector for homeless or potentially homeless households			HST, BHHSP	2023-2025
5.8	Roll out trauma informed training across all relevant partners			BHHSP	2023-2028
5.9	Sustainability of the BeFriend and BeWell project (in partnership with Penumbra)			BHA	2023-2028
5.10	Embed Tenancy Sustainability Model			BHA	2023-2028
5.11	Continue to build community capacity across key social agendas			BHA	2023-2028
5.12	RSLs to carry out housing management to ensure tenant sustainment. Providing financial advice to maximise income and address fuel poverty.			RSLs	2023-2028
5.13	SBHA to establish and maintain Vulnerability Risk Framework for new tenancies to support those with complex needs to sustain tenancies			SBHA	2023-2028
5.14	RSLs to review Unified Domestic Abuse Policy with BHN and reasonable preferences withing the Allocations Policy			RSLs	2023-2028
5.15	Continue to participate in Ukrainian Refugee Resettlement Programme and work with Scottish Government to identify suitable funding and re-housing opportunities			SBC, RSLs	2023-2028

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Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-28
Evidence Paper

CONTENTS

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1.   Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a clear understanding of the local area and provide a summary of all the evidence that has been used to inform the development of the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028. This includes developing the vision, priorities, and key strategic actions for the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028. A wide range of data and literature is used to build a profile of the Scottish Borders in order to get a better understanding of the needs of the community.

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. Key factors and issues which require action and intervention are included in the Local Housing Strategy.

2.   Strategic Context

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is underpinned by national, regional and local policy. While the main LHS references a wide range of these policies throughout the strategy it would be a challenge to reference all these within the LHS. This section highlights some of the key pieces of legislation and policy that helped to develop the strategy.

This list provides some of the overarching polices that are embedded throughout the LHS – further policies have been grouped under each strategic theme. All the documents have the links embedded (where possible).

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing to 2040
- Scotland's National Performance Framework
- The Remote Rural & Island Action Plan
- SBC Council Plan
- SBC Community Plan and Locality Plans
- SBC Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action plan 2021
- SBC's Fit for 2024

Housing Delivery and Sustainable Communities

- National Planning Framework 4
- Local Housing Strategy Guidance
- Housing Need and Demand Assessment Guidance
- Community Empowerment Act 2015
- Place Standard
- A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres
- Local Access and Transport Strategy Main Issues Report
- Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and 2016
- Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS)
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation: Delivering Economic Prosperity
- ESESCR Regional Prosperity Framework
- South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy
- The Convention of the South of Scotland
- South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy
- Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal
- Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal
- South East Scotland (SESplan) Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) 3
- Local Development Plan
- SBC Housing Land Audit (HLA)
- Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028

Private Rented Sector

- Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act of 2004
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016

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- Prescribed Information
- The Energy Efficiency (Domestic Private Rented Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2020
- Fair Rents (Scotland) Bill
- Rent Pressure Zones
- The Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022
- New Deal for Tenants

Specialist Housing, Particular Needs and Independent Living

- The Equality Act 2010
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Relevant Adjustments to Common Parts (Disabled Persons) (Scotland) Regulations 2020
- Independent Living Fund
- Accessible housing standards – the Scottish Building Standards
- Age, Home and Community: The Next Phase
- Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013
- Housing Scotland: Models of Housing with Care and Support
- The Right to Adequate Housing: Are we focusing on what matters?
- Still Minding the Step
- Building Better Care Homes for Adults
- The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016
- Care and Repair Scotland, Good Practice Guide
- A Fairer Scotland for all: Race Equality Action Plan and Highlight Report
- Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers
- Keys to Life Strategy
- Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations
- Affordable Housing for Key Workers' Project Group August 2015
- Coming Home Implementation
- Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support 2018-2028
- Health and Social Care Strategic Framework (Draft)
- Integrated Joint Board Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- SBHA Ageing Well Strategy 2021-26
- Scottish Borders Autism Strategy 2015-2025

Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change

- The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route map
- The Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021
- Heat in Buildings Strategy
- The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (Scotland) Order 2022
- Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies (LHEES)
- The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act
- Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH)
- Roadmap to Decarbonisation: Retrofit of social housing stock in the South of Scotland
- Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) 2019-2023
- Scottish Borders Council Climate Change Routemap

Private Sector House Condition

- [New guidance for housing practitioners on tackling damp and mould](#)
- [Tenement dwellings - provision of Building Reserve Funds: report](#)
- [The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006](#)

- [Scheme of Assistance](#)
- [Missing Shares Scheme](#)
- [Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme](#)
- [The Repairing Standard](#)
- [Tolerable Standard](#)
- [Our Past, Our Future: The Strategy for Scotland's Historic Environment](#)

Homelessness

- [Housing (Scotland) Act 1987](#)
- [Housing (Scotland) Act 2010](#)
- [Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 amendment](#)
- [Homeless etc (Scotland) Act 2003 (Commencement No.4) Order 2019](#)
- [Homelessness: Code of Guidance (2019)](#)
- [The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG)](#)
- [Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#)
- [Ending Destitution Together](#)
- [Housing First](#)
- [Prevention Duties on wider public bodies](#)
- [Local Connection Suspension](#)
- [Home and Belonging Initiative](#)
- [Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways](#)
- [Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone' standards (SHORE)](#)
- [Improving the Housing Outcomes for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse](#)
- [The Housing Support Duty](#)
- [Public Health Scotland - Healthy Housing for Scotland: a briefing paper setting out the fundamental link between housing and public health](#)

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3. Demographics

3.1 Population

The Scottish Borders area is 473,614 hectares (1,827 square miles) and is located in the South East of Scotland. It has Edinburgh and the Lothians to the North, Northumberland to the South and Dumfries and Galloway to the West. Scottish Borders is a rural local authority where 30% of the population lives in settlements of under 500 people or in isolated hamlets. The largest town is Hawick with a 2021 estimated population of 13,586, followed by Galashiels with 12,302 people (although, if neighbouring Tweedbank were included, Galashiels would be the largest town in Scottish Borders). The only other towns with a population of over 5,000 people are Peebles, Kelso and Selkirk.

The estimated 2021 population in the Scottish Borders was 116,020: an increase of 0.7% from 115,240 in 2020. In the Scottish Borders, 8.7% of the population are aged 16 to 24 years. This is smaller than Scotland, where 10.2 % are aged 16 to 24 years. Persons aged 60 and over make up 33.5% of Scottish Borders. This is larger than Scotland where 26.2% are aged 60 and over.

Figure 1: Mid-2021 Population Estimates (2001-2021)

Source: NRS
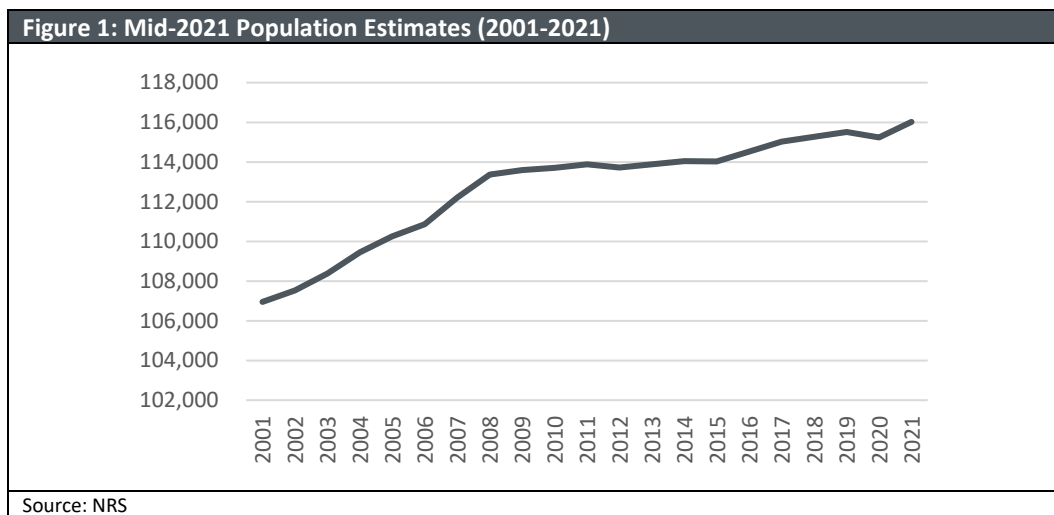
The population of the Scottish Borders is expected to increase by 0.7% from 2018-2043. It is expected to peak in the years 2031/32 and then begin to decline back towards 2018 levels. The structure of the population is also expected to change, with a pronounced increase in older people: the 75+ age group is expected to increase by 29.6% over the period 2018-2028, with 45-65 remaining the largest projected age group.

Figure 2: Population Projections 2018-2043

Source: NRS – 2018 based projections

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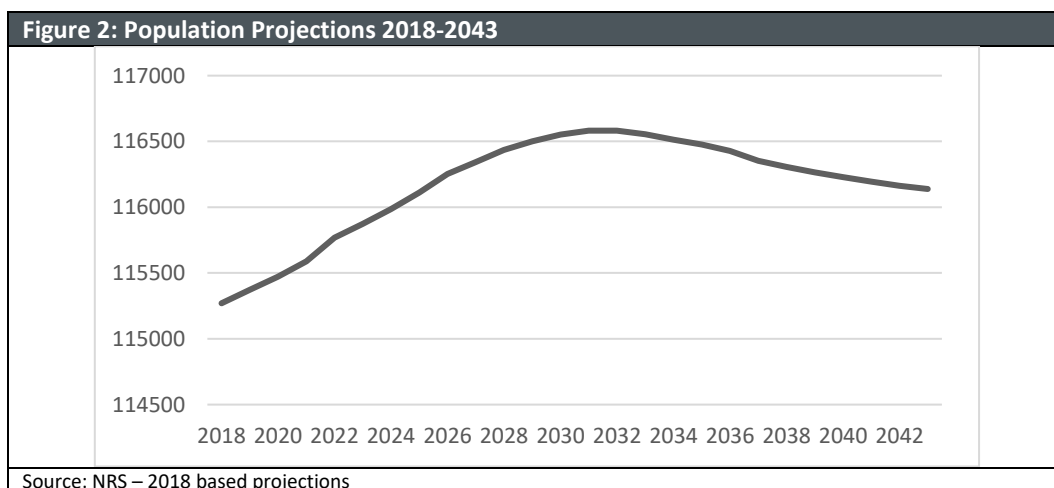
An ageing population means more people in the Borders will be living with one or more complex conditions and therefore will require more specialist housing and more support to live independently. There will also be fewer people of working age within the population to offer that support.

3.2   Households

There were 55,296 households in Scottish Borders in 2021, an increase of 0.9% on the previous year and 5.4% over the past 10 years. In comparison, the total number of households in Scotland as a whole rose by 6.4%.

Table 1 shows the change in household numbers, and percentage change, across the Borders from 2008 – 2018. While the population of the Scottish Borders rose by 1.7% over the period 2008-2018 the number of households has risen by 5.8% (2,977). Figure 3 shows the continued rise in households from 2018-2028.

Table 1: Household Change 2008-2018				
	2008	**2018**	**Change no.**	**Change %**
Scottish Borders	51,436	54,413	2,977	5.8%
Scotland	2,337,967	2,477,275	139,308	6.0%
Source: NRS 2018-based Household Projections				

The 2018 household projections, suggest that number of households will continue to rise, with the projected increase for Scottish Borders around 3.7% for the period 2018-28, compared with 4.9% for Scotland as a whole.

Figure 3: Household Projection 2018-2028

Source: NRS household projections, 2018

While the population is expected to increase across the Borders by 1.7% and the number of households by 7% it is set to be an ageing population, with increasing numbers of smaller households. The numbers of one adult households and two adult households in particular, are growing, while the number of larger households is set to decline. Single person households are projected to increase by 14%.

Table 2: Household Projections 2018-43 (2018 Based)								
Scottish Borders	**2018**	**2023**	**2028**	**2033**	**2038**	**2043**	**Change 2018-2043**	**% Change 2018-2043**
1 Adult	19,595	20,460	21,034	21,518	21,885	22,294	2,699	14%
1 adult, 1+ child(ren)	2,641	2,704	2,677	2,703	2,708	2,682	41	2%
2 person all adult	19,135	19,979	20,488	20,620	20,677	20,738	1,603	8%
2+ adults, 1+ child(ren)	9,347	8,967	8,821	8,848	8,894	8,862	-485	-5%
3+ person all adults	3,695	3,601	3,423	3,308	3,330	3,394	-301	-8%
All Households	54,413	55,712	56,443	56,996	57,495	57,970	3,557	7%
Source: NRS 2018-based Household Projections								

Table 3 shows the average household size is expected to continue to decline throughout this period, reinforcing the trends in table 2 above that the number of smaller households are increasing impact the average size of a household.

Table 3: Projected Average Household Size 2018-2043								
	Year						Change	
	2018	2023	2028	2033	2038	2043	2018-2043	
Scottish Borders	2.10	2.06	2.04	2.03	2.00	1.98	-0.12	-6%
Scotland	2.15	2.11	2.08	2.06	2.03	2.00	-0.15	-7%
Source: NRS Household Projections for Scotland								

The population in the Scottish Borders is ageing with the population aged 65 and over increasing faster than the population of children and younger adults. This impacts on household structure, as children tend to live in larger households and older people in smaller ones. The 2018-based household projections show large increases in the number of older adults living in one-adult and two-adult households; which is consistent with the increase in older age groups shown in mid-year population estimates).

3.3   Economy

The information from this section has been taken from the Regional Skills Assessment (RSA) Scottish Borders, November 2022.[1] The assessment contains information on strategic drivers, the economy, the impact of Covid-19, the labour market requirement and supply of people.

Regional Economy
In 2022, GVA was forecast to be £2,483m in the Scottish Borders, 1.6 per cent of Scotland's output (£150,611). This share of GVA ranks the Scottish Borders in the bottom third of RSA (Regional Skills Assets) regions for GVA contribution to the Scottish economy. The highest value sectors in the regional economy were forecast to be; real estate activities (£440m), human health and social work (£377m) and manufacturing (£284m).

Prior to the pandemic, the region's economic growth rate was greater than Scotland's. On average the Scottish Borders economy grew by 2.1 per cent each year (2012-2019). The economic output in the Scottish Borders was estimated to have grown by 0.1% between 2019 and 2021, in contrast to a 2.2% decline across Scotland during the same period. Here are the regional economy figures at a glance:

Gross Value Added (GVA)

- Total Scottish Borders GVA 2021: £2,483m and 1.6% Of Total Scottish Output
- From 2012-2019, GVA In Scottish Borders: Increases By 15.8% Or £332m
- Mid-Term Forecast Average Annual Growth (2022-2025)
  - Scottish Borders: .1.1%
  - Scotland: 1.2%
- Longer-Term Forecast Average Annual Growth (2025-2032)
  - Scottish Borders: 1.3%
  - Scotland : 1.3%

Productivity

- Scottish Borders Productivity (GVA per job) in 2022: £50,100, in Scotland it was £54,100

- From 2022 to 2025, Productivity in Scottish Borders is forecast to grow by 0.7% per year. The Scottish growth rate for the same period is 0.8%.

- From 2025 to 2032, Productivity in Scottish Borders is forecast to grow by 1.1% per year. The Scottish growth rate for the same period is the same at 1.1% per year.

In the mid-term it is forecast that Scottish Borders GVA will grow by 1.1 per cent per year between 2022-2025. This is below the GVA growth forecast for Scotland, 1.2 per cent per year during the same period.

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[1] https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49109/rsa-borders.pdf

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Between 2022 and 2032, the largest contributions to growth across Scotland will come from human health and social work (contributing 13.2% of overall GVA growth in 2022 and remaining at 13.2% in 2032), and financial and insurance activities (contributing 11.1% of overall GVA growth in 2022 and dropping slightly to 10.9% in 2032). This reflects the size of these sectors.

Labour Market
- Total employment in the Scottish Borders (measured by people) was estimated to be 39,900 in 2022, 1.5 per cent of Scottish employment.
- The employment rate for the working age population (age 16-64) in the region in 2022 was 79.4 per cent, which was above the rate for Scotland (74.4 per cent).
- Across Scotland, and within the region, more people worked full-time than part-time. In 2022 27,600 people (69.2 per cent) were in the full-time jobs in the Borders, a lower figure compared to Scotland where 74.6 per cent of people were in full-time employment.
- Part-time employment accounted for a greater percentage share of employment in the region compared to Scotland, 30.8 per cent compared to 25.4 per cent. Overall, there were 12,300 people in part-time employment in the Scottish Borders.
- In the Scottish Borders the largest employing sectors, and their estimated regional share of employment in 2022 were Human Health and Social Work (22.5%), Wholesale and Retail Trade (11.9%), Manufacturing (11.2%), Education (8.1%), Construction (6.4%) and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (5.9%).

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the key employment industries in the Scottish Borders. Of the industries, Human Health and Social Work was estimated to be the largest in the Scottish Borders in 2022. The sector accounted for 9,000 people. Wholesale and retail was the second largest with a total of 4,700 people. Large sectors are an important source of jobs; however, regions also have sectoral strengths that make them unique. This means that smaller sectors can be more important than their size suggest, as they are more concentrated in the region compared to the national average.

Table 4: Employment by Industry and share of total employment (2022)		
	Number	**%**
Human Health & Social Work	9,000	23.3%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	4,700	12.2%
Manufacturing	4,400	11.4%
Education	3,200	8.3%
Construction	2,600	6.7%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2,300	6.0%
Accommodation & Food Service	2,100	5.4%
Professional, Scientific & Technical	2,000	5.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1,900	4.9%
Public Administration & Defence	1,700	4.4%
Other Service Activities	1,200	3.1%
Transportation & Storage	1,100	2.8%
Administrative & Support Service Activities	1,100	2.8%
Information & Communication	700	1.8%
Real Estate Activities	600	1.6%
Source: https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49109/rsa-borders.pdf		

Pre Covid-19 employment in the region had decreased by 3.1% from 2012 to 2019. There were 1,600 fewer people in employment in 2019 compared to 2012. The contraction within the region compared with 7.1% growth observed across Scotland over the same period. Overall, employment was estimated to decline by 9,300 from 2019 to 2021 in the region (by 18.8%) due to the pandemic.

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Combining the change from 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021, employment declines were observed in 7 of the 19 industry sectors in the region as shown in table 5 below. There were substantial job losses in accommodation and food services, employment declines by 600 which was a 17.8% of the sectors workforce. However, growth is forecast to have occurred in sectors which increased as a result of the pandemic. The number of people in the regions human health and social work and educations sectors increased 200 each.

Table 5: Employment Change by Industry, Scottish Borders			
Declining Sector	Employment change 2009-2019	Employment change 2019-2020	Employment change 2020-2021
Accommodation & Food Service	-400	-300	-300
Wholesale & Retail Trade	-1,900	-300	-100
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	500	-200	-200
Manufacturing	-1,200	-100	-100
Construction	-500	-100	0
Transportation & Storage	-500	0	0
Administration & Support Services	-300	-100	0
Growth Sectors	Employment change 2009-2019	Employment change 2019-2020	Employment change 2020-2021
Human Health & Social Work	-1,100	200	0
Education	300	100	0
Professional, Scientific & Technical	400	100	0
Source: https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/47100/rsa-report-scottish-borders.pdf Decline is less than 100 in 2019-2021 and 2020-2021, however when summed the decline of 100 occurs for 2019-2021			

In the mid-term (2022-2025) the number of people in employment is forecast to grow by 600 in the region. Whilst positive, this growth does not fully replace jobs lost as a result of the pandemic.

For Scotland as a whole, it is forecast to be 2026 when the number of people in employment reaches and then surpasses 2019 employment levels. The regional employment recovery is forecast to be slower, with employment numbers up to 2030 predicted to remain below 2019 levels.

Over the longer term (2025-2032) employment within the region is forecast to grow with a requirement for 300 people. Across Scotland the number of people in employment is forecast to increase.

The level of employment growth in the region equates to an average annual rate of 0.09 per cent over the longer term (2025-2032). For comparison, Scotland's forecast growth rate is 0.19 per cent
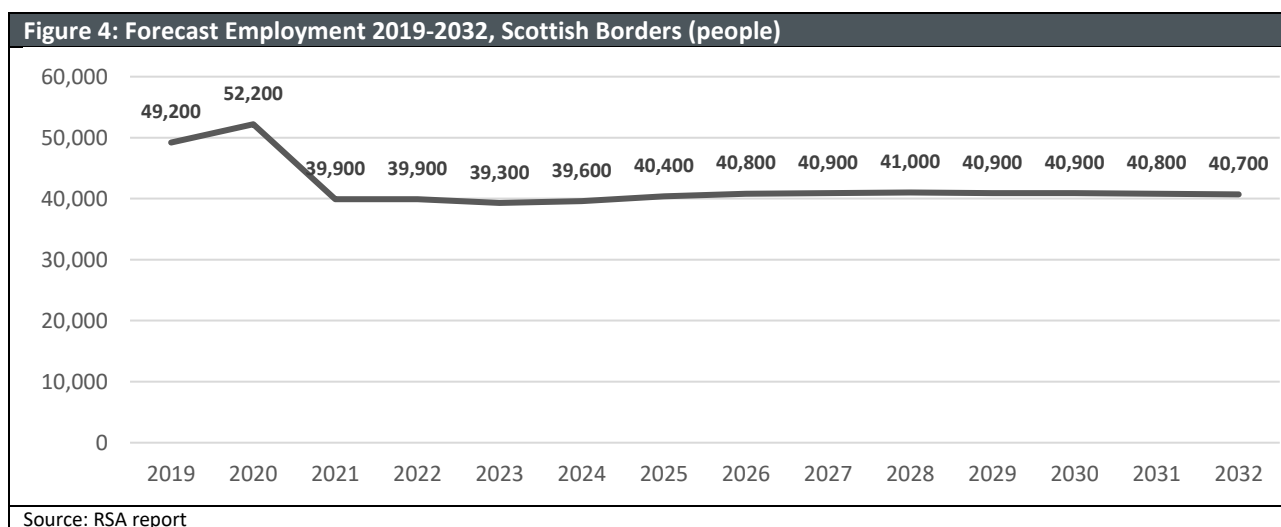
Figure 4: Forecast Employment 2019-2032, Scottish Borders (people)

Source: RSA report

Future Demand for Skills

In the Scottish Borders the labour market is forecast to face some challenges in the immediate term. The forecasts for the mid-term (2022-2025) however suggest there could be some jobs growth and opportunities created as a result of the need to replace workers leaving the labour market due to retirement and other reasons.

As shown in table 6 below, 5,200 job openings are forecast from 2022 to 2025 for the Scottish Borders with 331,700 job openings in Scotland. Whilst positive, caution is needed as there are still a wide range of unknowns concerning Scotland's recovery from the pandemic. Labour shortages are predicted to be the dominant issue, while skills mismatches and job quality will also be important factors to consider.

Table 6: Future Demand Skills – Job openings in the mid-term (2022-2025)			
	Expansion Demand	**Replacement Demand**	**Total Job Openings**
Scottish Borders	600	4,600	5,200
Scotland	31,900	299,800	331,700
Source: RSA report			

Job openings in the mid-term are expected to be concentrated in a small number of sectors, with four sectors in the Scottish Borders forecast to account for 3,000 (58.2%) of the requirement:

- Human health and social work– 1,000 jobs;
- Wholesale and retail trade – 900 jobs;
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing– 600 jobs and
- Accommodation and food service – 500 jobs.

The forecasts for the long-term (2025-2032) highlight that jobs growth should continue in the Scottish Borders. However, it is expected that there could be an ongoing requirement for skilled people to fill opportunities created by people leaving the labour market. This feature of the labour market, known as the replacement requirement, is a symptom of demographic change strategic driver.

As shown in table 7, 11,400 job openings are forecast from 2025 to 20321 (669,300 for Scotland). The replacement requirement of 11,100 people will create a need for labour. The long-term forecast is changeable and could be influenced by a range of factors both related and not to Scotland's post Covid-19 recovery. National and local policy, investment and initiatives could all influence the long-term outlook presented.

Table 7: Future Demand Skills – Job openings in the long-term (2025-2032)			
	Expansion Demand	**Replacement Demand**	**Total Job Openings**
Scottish Borders	300	11,100	11,400
Scotland	40,700	696,900	737,600
Source: RSA report			

Job openings in the long-term are expected to be concentrated in a small number of sectors, with four sectors in the Scottish Borders forecast to account for 6,800 (60.4%) of the requirement:

- Human health and social work – 2,100 jobs;
- Wholesale and retail trade – 2,000 jobs;
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing– 1,400 jobs and
- Accommodation and food service – 1,000 jobs.

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3.4   Tenure

Figure 5 shows the current tenure of households, showing a very similar trend to the national figures. The owner occupied sector and private rented sector are slightly larger in the Scottish Borders compared to Scotland and the social rented sector is smaller.

Some 63% of dwellings are estimated to be owner occupied, 23% social rented sector and 14% private rented sector. Scottish Borders has a higher level of owner-occupied housing, a lower level of social rented accommodation but a higher proportion of private rented housing, than is the case national.

Figure 5: Households by Tenure

Source: Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-19
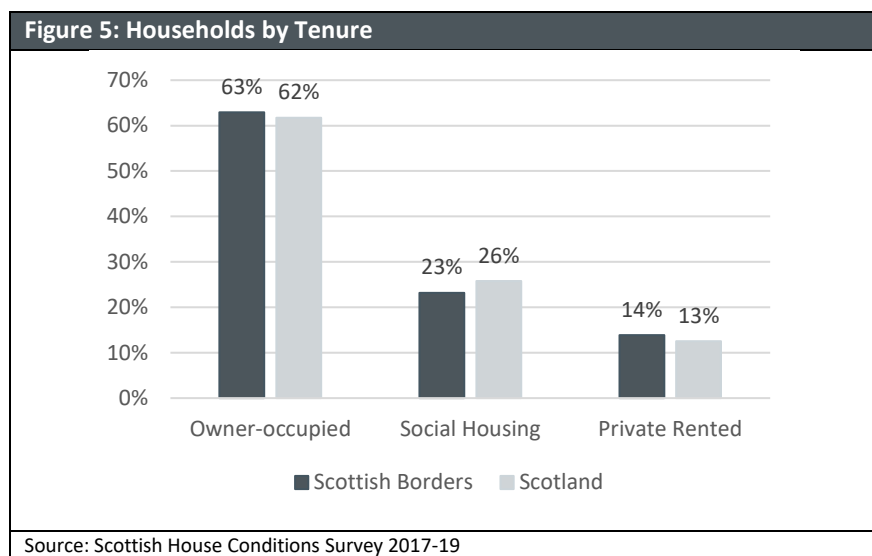
Changes over time can be considered through Scottish Government data on dwellings by tenure, combined with census outputs for 2001 and 2011. These figures differ slightly to those presented in the figure above due to different data sources and methodologies applied in collecting the data but they provide some interesting information on the trends in tenure over the years.

The general trend shows on average a stable (or now slightly reducing) owner-occupied sector while there has been an increase in private renting from 10% back in 2001 up to 14% currently. Tenure changes in the Borders evidence a shift to private renting, accompanied by a net decline in social housing by 4% over the period 2001 to 2018. Table 8 shows that Scottish Borders Council successfully transferred its housing stock to SBHA in 2003.

Table 8: Tenure Spilt by year				
	% Owned	% Rented From Council	% Other Social Rented	% Private Rented
2001	60.8	14.3	10.1	10.1
2011	61.5	0	21.8	13.7
2018	59.1	0	20.3	14.4
Source: Scottish Government Tenure Data				

3.5   Housing Affordability

House Prices

Figure 6 shows the average and median house prices in the Scottish Borders over 9 years. The 2013/14 – 2022/23 data shows that the average house price in the Scottish Borders in 2013/14 was £164,743. Average prices remained steady up to 2019/20 then increased dramatically by 26% between 2019/20 to 2022/23, rising from £176,841 to £222,875.

Figure 6: Average and Median House Prices in the Scottish Borders 2013/14 – 2022/23

Source: Registers of Scotland Data 2013/14 – 2022/23
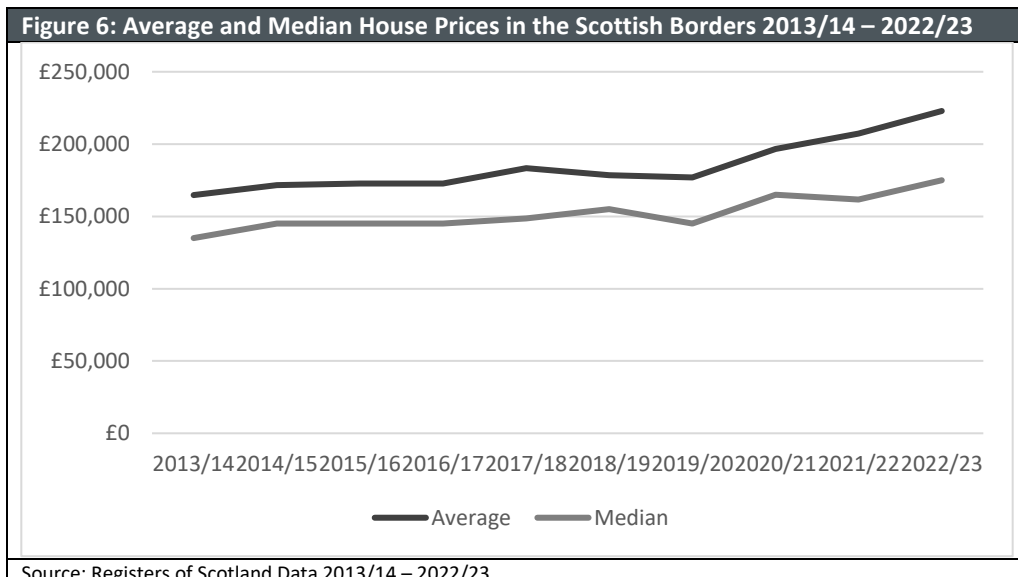
Tables 9 and 10 show the difference in house prices across the four Housing Market Areas (HMAs). Prices in the Northern HMA are on average much higher than elsewhere in the Scottish Borders, and increased from 2013/14 to 2017/18 and have remained stable since. One of the main reasons for this is the close proximity of houses in the Northern HMA to Edinburgh. Prices in the Southern HMA have fluctuated more but have generally been above the Scottish Borders average, with the highest average prices in 2020/21 – overtaking the Northern HMA.

Table 9: Average House Prices for all Sales by HMA 2013/14 - 2020/21								
Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Berwickshire	£177,727	£182,936	£191,901	£178,382	£194,014	£149,231	£190,360	£227,016
Central	£151,076	£159,737	£160,538	£156,292	£163,747	£163,262	£150,115	£167,658
Northern	£209,965	£206,100	£214,685	£224,139	£232,281	£232,544	£230,396	£247,724
Southern	£211,932	£188,587	£189,494	£202,187	£220,530	£183,686	£215,687	£281,310
Source: SBC House Price Data 2013/14 – 2020/21								

Table 10: Median House Prices for all Sales by HMA 2013/14 - 2020/21								
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Berwickshire	£151,250	£160,000	£160,618	£160,000	£170,000	£170,000	£162,500	£161,500
Central	£121,000	£135,000	£129,950	£130,000	£130,000	£135,000	£121,000	£137,500
Northern	£192,500	£192,375	£190,000	£215,000	£205,000	£205,000	£205,000	£187,102
Southern	£137,500	£145,000	£160,000	£143,000	£185,000	£173,000	£181,250	£290,000
Source: SBC House Price Data 2013/14 – 2020/21								

Figure 7 shows the volume of house sales across over the past 9 years grew by 35% in the Scottish Borders. Since 2013/14 sales have been rising steadily, although there was a slight drop in 2022/23. Prior to the recession in 2008 sales in the Scottish Borders were always much higher, and between 2001-2007 sales were on average 2,300 per year and the number of sales had reached similar levels again by 2018/19. So, while house prices have remained steady in the Scottish Borders (as shown in Figure 6), the number of sales has increased indicating that the market is generally getting stronger.

Figure 7: Number of House Sales
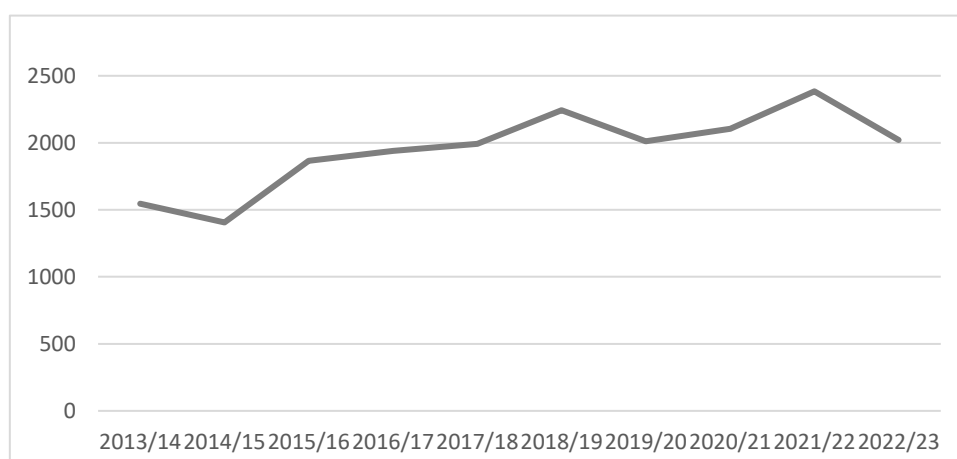
Source: SBC House Price Data 2013/14 – 2022/23

The housing market has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, however Scottish Borders is showing a volume of sales growth between 2020-21 and 2021-2022 of 13.25%, potentially due to movement out of more urban areas.

The Cost of Living crisis and an increase in interests at the end of 2022 and beginning of February could have an impact on the number of house sales as well as the average and median house prices in the next year and foreseeable future.

Mortgages
Table 11 presents the percentage of mortgages to individuals by purpose at quarter 4 (Oct – Dec) over a 9-year period from 2014 to 2022. The percentage of mortgages for first-time buyers increased by 2.88% between 2019 and 2020, this being the highest increase over this timeframe. The percentage of buy-to-let mortgages has followed a downward trend since 2015 with a 4.63% reduction between 2015 and 2022. Several factors are likely to have contributed towards this decrease including the introduction of a surcharge in stamp duty on additional properties in 2016 and a reduction in mortgage interest rate relief in 2017.

The percentage of individuals re-mortgaging has increased the greatest over the years, however, this significantly declined from 29.19% in 2019 to 18.45% in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a role to play in this with lenders reducing the number of high loan-to-value (LTV) mortgages available which limits choices for individuals, as well as some lenders refusing mortgages for those furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). The percentage of individuals re-mortgaging increased again in 2021 (28.12%) and 2022 (27.33%).

Table 11: Mortgage Lenders Information									
	Q4 2014	Q4 2015	Q4 2016	Q4 2017	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	Q4 2021	Q4 2022
First Time Buyer	21.6%	20.9%	22.1%	21.2%	21.3%	21.4%	24.3%	23.3%	24.2%
Buy to let	15.1%	16.5%	14.4%	12.9%	12.5%	12.4%	11.2%	11.8%	11.9%
Other	34.2%	32.3%	30.1%	30.9%	29.7%	30.7%	39.6%	29.8%	31.2%
Total House Purchase (above)	70.9%	69.7%	66.5%	65.1%	63.5%	64.5%	75.1%	64.8%	67.2%
Further advances	2.4%	2.2%	2.9%	2.5%	2.4%	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%	2.4%
Remortgage	23.6%	24.6%	27.2%	29.4%	31.1%	30%	18.5%	28.1%	27.3%
Other	3.1%	3.5%	3.4%	3.1%	3.1%	3.2%	3.2%	3.6%	3.1%
Source: News, publications and events	Bank of England									

The most common Loan to Value (LTV) rate tends to be below or equal to 75% according to the Financial Conduct Authority statistics on residential loans. In 2022, 62.98% of mortgages were at this LTV rate, with

31.96% over 75% but below or equal to 90%. Only 0.25% of mortgages were offered at LTV over 95%. The proportion of mortgages at LTV over 90% has always remained relatively low, however, a significant decline was seen in 2020 which is likely to be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 12: Percentage of gross advances by Loan to Value									
	Q4 2014	Q4 2015	Q4 2016	Q4 2017	Q4 2018	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	Q4 2021	Q4 2022
LTV < = 75%	64.6%	66.1%	65.0%	64.74%	62.3%	59.5%	60.0%	63.3%	63%
LTV Over 75 < = 90%	31.6%	30.5%	30.6%	31.45%	33.4%	34.8%	38.8%	32.5%	32%
LTV Over 90 < = 95%	3.5%	3.12%	4.0%	3.51%	4.1%	5.5%	1.1%	3.9%	4.8%
LTV Over 95%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.29%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Source: Bank of England, residential loans to individuals provided through the Financial Conduct Authority									

Figure 8 highlights the mean LTV for first time buyers and home movers from Q1 2019 to Q4 2022. It is evident that LTV is substantially lower for home movers. Over this period the home mover LTV rate has remained fairly static, with the largest change recorded as a 1.6% reduction between Q3 & Q4 of 2022. For first time buyers, the LTV in Q3 2019 was 82.80%, declining by 4.9% to 77.3% in Q4 2020 before rising again by 6.1% to 83.40% in Q2 2022 and remaining relatively steady in the following quarters.

Figure 8: Mean LTV for first-time buyers and home movers Q1 2019 – Q4 2022

Source: Scottish Housing Market Review provided through the Scottish Government, Q1 2019 – Q4 2022
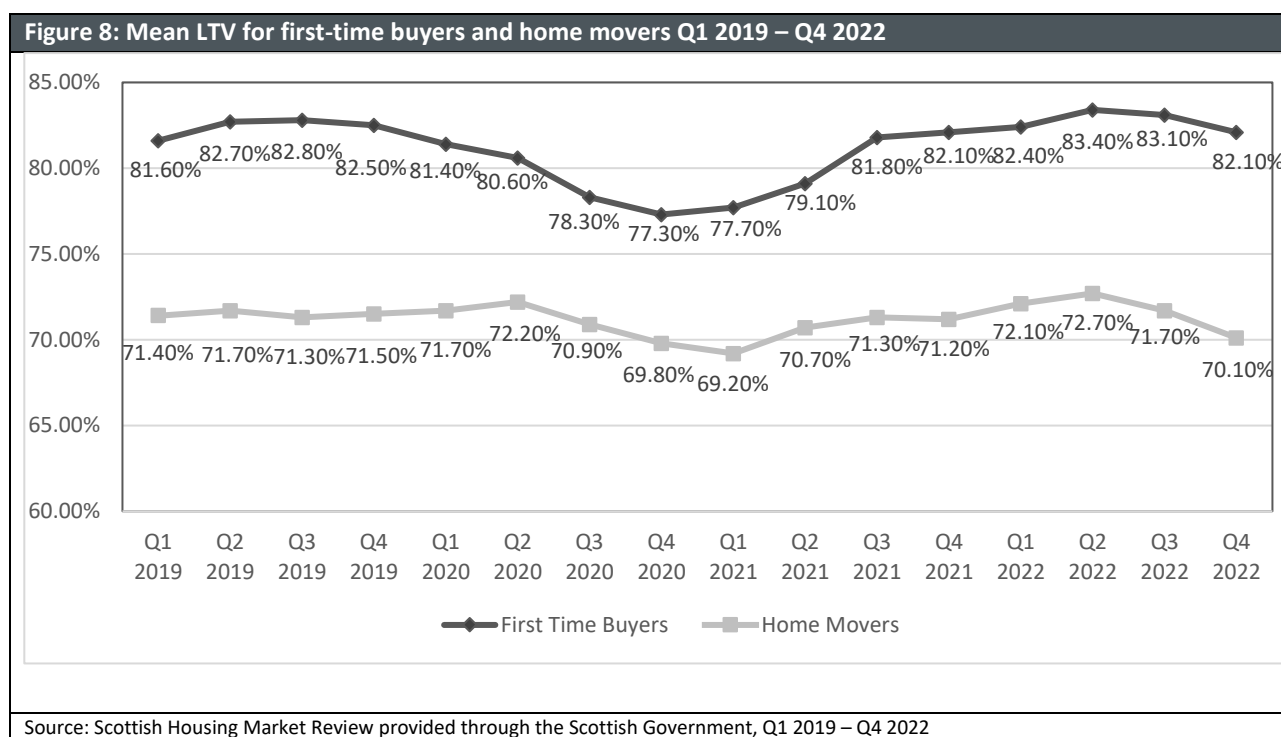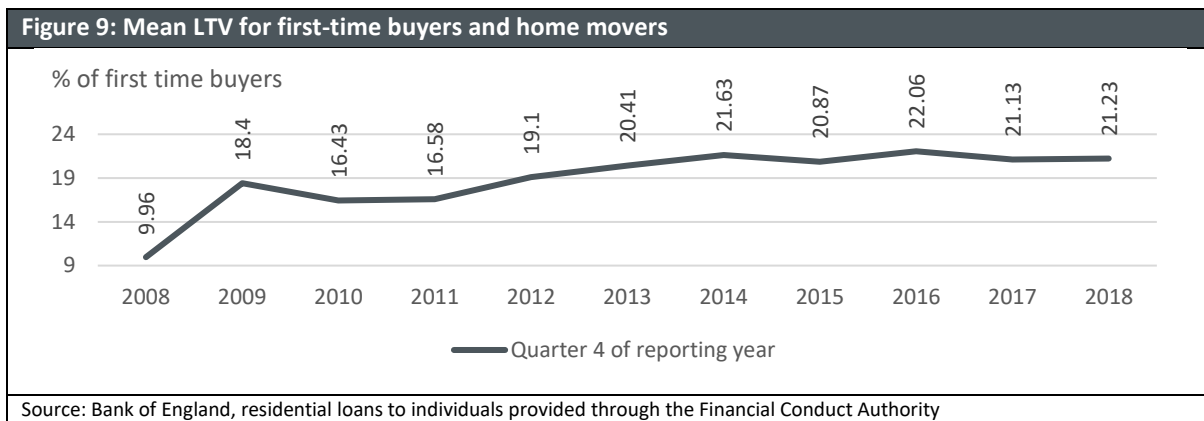
Figure 9 below details the percentage of first-time buyers from 2008 to 2018, after the global financial crisis shows a sharp rise in first-time buyers which has remained relatively steady since 2014. It shows that there were 21.23% first-time buyers in the housing market in 2018, with the average age of first-time buyers increasing from 29 to 31 years over the same ten-year period.

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Figure 9: Mean LTV for first-time buyers and home movers

% of first time buyers

Values shown on line (left to right by year):
- 2008: 9.96
- 2009: 18.4
- 2010: 16.43
- 2011: 16.58
- 2012: 19.1
- 2013: 20.41
- 2014: 21.63
- 2015: 20.87
- 2016: 22.06
- 2017: 21.13
- 2018: 21.23

— Quarter 4 of reporting year

Source: Bank of England, residential loans to individuals provided through the Financial Conduct Authority

According to research from the Bank of Scotland, the number of first-time buyers in Scotland rose to 33,558 in 2019 which was an increase of more than 90% from 17,580 in 2009. In 2020 the number of first-time buyers fell by over 35% to a seven-year low. It's likely the Covid-19 pandemic has had a large impact on this with lockdown and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme preventing first time buyers taking a step onto the property ladder. There were 10,158 first time buyers recorded in Scotland in the first six months of 2020 compared to 15,570 over the same period in 2019. A number of Scottish Government Schemes are available to assist first-time buyers with the purchase of their first property, positively contributing to economic growth at a local, regional and national level.

The Help to Buy scheme (Scotland) (HtB) began in September 2013 and allows people to purchase a new-build home without the need for a large deposit. A property can be purchased through the provision of an equity loan which helps reduce the size of the mortgage required. Between September 2013 and the end of March 2020, 17,250 new build properties were purchased across Scotland with assistance from this scheme with the value of equity loans extended by the Scottish Government amounting to £550m through this period. The table below shows that 130 properties purchased through HtB were in the Borders.

Table 13: Help to Buy scheme financial monitoring

	Total Oct 2013 – March 2016			Total 2016-17 – 2019-20		
	No. of Sales	Average SG HtB Stake	Average Value of Property Purchased	No. of Sales	Average SG HtB Stake	Average Value of Property Purchased
Scottish Borders	60	£34,640	£175,470	70	£23,400	£159,000
Scotland	8,160	£38,000	£190,000	9,090	£26,000	£176,200

Source: Scottish Government administrative data. Some values have been rounded, therefore may not sum exactly to total.

Table 14 presents the change in household interest rates from December 2011 to December 2022 for fixed rate and variable rate mortgages at both 75% LTV and 95% LTV. The interest rate for 90% LTV is reasonably higher than 75% LTV throughout the duration. The 12-year period reports a drop in the interest rate, with the lowest point for fixed rate mortgages recorded in 2019 but an increase in interest rates of in December has led to big increase in mortgage rates. As of the 2nd February 2023, interest rates have increased for the 10 consecutive time in a bid to contain inflation. This will have an impact on the mortgage products available and people's ability to get a mortgage.

Table 14: Interest rates for mortgages				
	2 year (75% LTV) fixed rate mortgage	2 year (90% LTV) fixed rate mortgage	2 year (75% LTV) variable rate mortgage	2 year (90% LTV) variable rate mortgage
31 Dec 11	3.22%	5.45%	3.02%	5.11%
31 Dec 12	3.35%	5.39%	3.44%	NA
31 Dec 13	2.40%	4.36%	2.77%	NA
31 Dec 14	2.08%	3.89%	1.60%	NA
31 Dec 15	1.90%	2.87%	1.78%	2.65%
31 Dec 16	1.45%	2.53%	1.48%	2.40%
31 Dec 17	1.57%	2.21%	1.69%	NA
31 Dec 18	1.73%	2.24%	1.70%	2.13%
31 Dec 19	1.42%	2.07%	1.94%	2.91%
31 Dec 20	1.86%	3.75%	2.19%	3.31%
31 Dec 21	1.57%	1.95%	1.65%	2.45%
31 Dec 22	5.43%	5.96%	4.07%	4.33%
Source: Bank of England, table G1.3 (average quoted household interest rates).				

The LTV rate is reducing which is likely to be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. This limits choices for individuals and makes it more difficult for first time buyers to enter the property market as a larger deposit is required.

Income
Income data is provided through the Scottish Government's local level household income estimates for 2018. These are research-based statistics and do not represent national or official statistics. The lower quartile, median and upper quartile income weekly estimates are shown in table 15 below.

Table 15: Income Data		
	Scottish Borders	Scotland
Lower Quartile	£320	£330
Median	£530	£550
Upper Quartile	£870	£920
Source: Scottish Government, Local Level Household Income Estimates, Banded Income 2018		

Table 16 shows the ratio of lower quartile house prices compared to lower quartile income. This provides an indicator of the relative affordability of owner occupation, enabling analysis of whether households with the lowest incomes can afford entry level housing. The Borders has a slightly above the national average ratio of 5.65. This means that the lower quartile house price paid by a first-time buyer would be more affordable for someone on a lower quartile income on a national level than in the Borders.

Table 16: Ratio of lower quartile house price to income			
	Lower quartile income	Lower quartile house price	Ratio
Scottish Borders	£320	£95,000	5.71
Scotland	£330	£97,000	5.65
Source: Scottish Government (2020) Local level household income estimates, 2018 and Register of Scotland (2020) House Price Time Series by quartile 2008-2018-19 provided bespoke to the Scottish Government			

The long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are not yet known. However, across the UK it is reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) that there has been a 4.5% decline in household income, unequally apportioned to lower income households. It is also widely recognised that there is a disproportionate impact of Covid-19 to the more vulnerable groups in society; including but not limited to younger persons between 16-24 years, persons aged >/= 55 years, lone parents, unemployed, and lower income employees. The financial pressures on the lower income households and the true impact of the pandemic and the "cost of living crisis" have put considerable strain on households.

Household Income

The Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-19 presents the mean annual household income by tenure and household type. Households in the owner occupier properties in the Scottish Borders tend to have a mean annual income around 88% higher than those in the social rented sector. The disparity is mirrored across Scotland with owner occupier households generally having a substantially larger mean income than social housing households.

Older households have a lower mean annual income than family and other household types. The mean annual household income for older households in the Borders is slightly below the Scottish average of £21,600 in 2017-19.

Households with families saw an increase in mean annual income from £30,400 to £38,000 between 2011-13 and 2017-19. Whilst this is large increase, older households have not experienced the same increase and the Scottish Borders has a large proportion of older households.

Figure 10: Mean Annual Income by Household Type

Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-19, February 2021
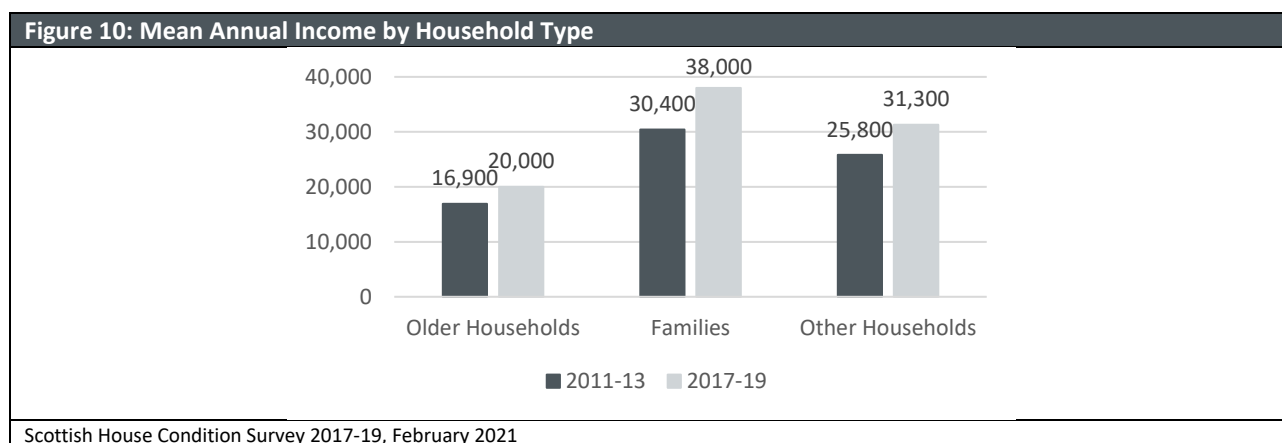
Local Housing Allowance Rates, Private and Social Rents

Table 17 below sets out the monthly Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates by bedroom size in 2021-22, along with the mean monthly private rents in 2020. These are presented by BRMA and demonstrate that current LHA rates are not sufficient to cover the cost of private renting. It is also worth noting that tenants who are under 35 and single with no dependents are only eligible for the shared accommodation rate when renting from a private landlord unless in exceptional circumstances.

Table 17: LHA rates and mean monthly private rents by BRMA					
Monthly LHA Rate 2021-22					
	Shared Accommodation	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Scottish Borders	£269.27	£324.09	£423.84	£523.55	£797.81
Mean Monthly Rent 2020					
Scottish Borders	£330	£366	£502	£630	£1,018
Scotland	£363	£515	£649	£788	£1,138
Source: Scottish Government, Local Housing Allowance Rates 2021/22 and Private Sector Rent Statistics 2020					

The average (mean) rental rate of 2 bedroom rents in the Scottish Borders have been lower than the Scotland average in each year since 2010, with the average rent in 2021 being £516 per month, compared to the Scotland average of £693.

Table 18 sets out the average rent per calendar month for general needs properties within the Scottish Borders social rented sector, by number of bedrooms. This has been averaged across RSLs offering this type of property within the Scottish Borders and rents vary between the RSLs.

Average rental prices of social rented properties start at £274.30 for a studio property, increasing incrementally by bedroom size rising to £534.13 for a 6 bedroom home. The average rental for a general

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needs property is slightly above the LHA rate for Studio/1 bed shared properties, but for 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties rentals are below the LHA rate – with the LHA even covering the cost of 5 and 6 bed properties. Rental rates are higher in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 across the board, except for 6 bedroom properties which have seen a slight decrease.

Table 18: Average Rent by Apartment Size (General Needs)				
No. of Bedrooms	Average Rent 2019/20	Average Rent 2020/21	Average Rent 2021/22	Average Rent 2022/23
Studio	£255.99	£279.84	£273.00	£274.30
1	£314.49	£333.95	£315.00	£333.34
2	£369.23	£390.27	£389.98	£394.55
3	£438.68	£446.29	£452.17	£467.93
4	£443.80	£474.43	£470.20	£507.34
5	£461.82	£508.91	£498.79	£553.68
6	£530.00	£581.64	£549.27	£534.13
Source: RSL Summary of Information 2019/20 - 2022/23				

Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 average rents have increased for 1 bedroom (5.8%), 2 bedroom (1.2%), 3 bedroom (3.5%) and 4 bedroom (7.9%) properties, and have decreased for 6 bedroom shared properties (-2.8%), which compares to Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) inflation of 1.5% in recent years. Although some caution is needed when interpreting the changes over time for 4 bedroom and 1 bedroom shared property size categories, given the smaller sample numbers for these categories.

Figure 11: Average (Mean) 2 bedroom rents, £ monthly
Source: Private sector rent statistics: 2010 – 2021

Table 19 considers how private rents have increased in line with CPI over a 10-year period and compares with the growth nationally for Scotland. The average rent for a 1-bed property in Scottish Borders has shown the lowest increase at 8.9%, followed by the average for a 2-bed at 13.6%. The strongest growth was in 4 bedroom properties with growth more than double CPI.

Table 19: Private rent growth v. consumer price inflation							
	Shared Accommodation	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	Average Rent	Consumer Price Inflation
Scottish Borders	28.9%	8.9%	13.6%	22.3%	47.5%	27.1%	21.59%
Scotland	19.0%	16.5%	17.1%	16.9%	21.2%	18.5%	21.59%
Source: Scottish Government, Private Sector Rent Statistics, 2010-20 and ONS, Consumer Price Inflation 2010-20							

The 2020 private rented data in table 17 above shows the mean monthly rent for a 1-bed property in the Borders was £366. Using the assumption of an affordability threshold of 25% of household income spent on rent, a household would need a minimum income of £17,568 per annum to afford a private rented property in this area. Table 20 below highlights the annual income required for private renting as well as the income required to be considered suitable for below market rent and social rent.

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A household spending between 25% and 35% of their income on private rent can be determined as suitable for below market rent. The income bands were derived through calculating the income required for the proportion of rent to fall between 25% and 35%. Scottish Borders has one of the lowest income levels at an average of £19,515 - £27,322.

A low-income household who spends more than 35% of their income on private rent is classified as suitable for social rent. Using the assumption of a suitability threshold of 35% of household income spent on rent, a household in the Borders area with a maximum income of £17,211 per annum would be classed as suitable for a 2-bed social rent in this area.

Table 20: Income affordability levels						
Income requirement levels for Private Rent to be affordable						
	Shared Acc.	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	Average
Scottish Borders	£15,840	£17,568	£24,096	£30,240	£48,864	£27,312
Income requirement levels for Below Market Rent suitability						
Scottish Borders	£11,314 - £15,840	£12,549 - £17,568	£17,211 - £24,096	£21,600 - £30,240	£34,903 - £48,864	£19,515 - £27,322
Income requirement levels for Social Rent suitability						
Scottish Borders	£11,314	£12,549	£17,211	£21,600	£34,903	£19,515
Source: SES Core Housing Market Partnership analysis of BRMA private rents provided through the Scottish Government, 2020						

The figures in figure 12 highlight the percentage of households suitable for a social rent, below market rent or who can afford a private rent. This has been calculated through analysis of average private rents (2020), Local Level Household Income Estimates (2018) and applying the thresholds set out in the HNDA Tool instructions as follows:

- If a household spends less than 25% of their income on rent the Tool assumes they can afford to rent in the private sector.
- If a household spends between 25% to 35% of their income on rent the Tool assumes they are suitable for below market rent.
- If a household spends more than 35% of their income (including housing benefit) on rent the Tool assumes they are suitable for social rent.

The data suggests half (49.25%) of households Scottish Borders can afford a private rent and 18% are suitable for below market rent. Affordability in the private rented sector is likely to have a direct impact on the levels of social housing required.

Figure 12: Percentage of households suitable for social rent, below market rent and private rent

Source: SESPlan HNDA3
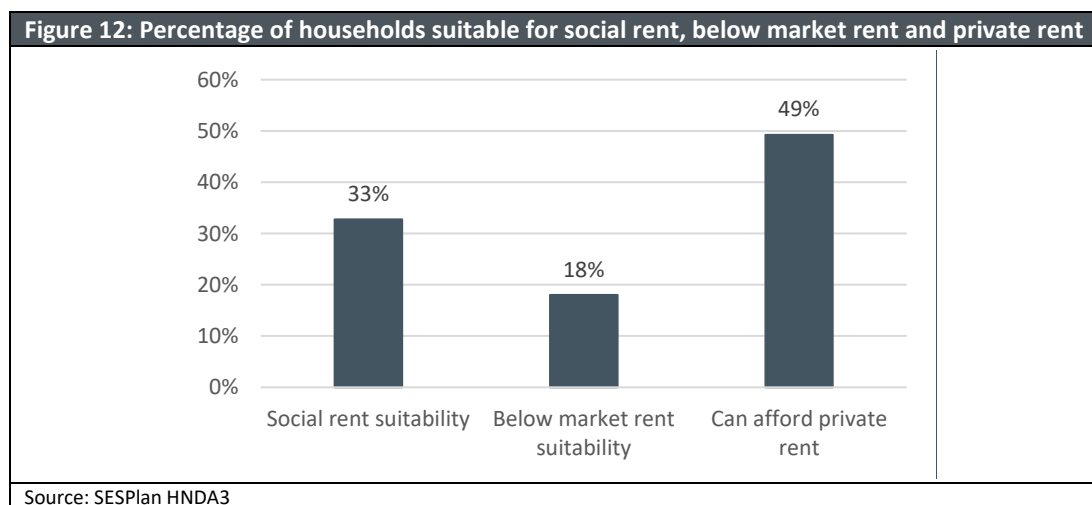
Although private rents are generally lower in the Scottish Borders, more than 50% of the population find the charges unaffordable in comparison to household income. LHA rates tend to be lower than the average rents, resulting in households having to make up the shortfall. The lack of affordable accommodation in the private rented sector adds pressure to the social rented and below market rented sectors.

Rents in the northern housing market area are the most expensive in the region (as shown in table 21), while rents in the other three HMAs tend to be cheaper, this is traditionally because of the northern HMAs having greater ties with the Edinburgh region.

Table 21: Comparison of social properties (general needs) rents and private sector rents by HMA 2022/23					
Number of Bedrooms	Berwickshire	Central	Northern	Southern	RSL Properties
1 bedroom	£440	£438	£498	n/a	£333.34
2 bedroom	£617	£552	£773	£610	£394.55
3 bedroom	£697	£692	£1,033	n/a	£467.93
4 bedroom	£1,433	£1,084	£1,722	£1,100	£507.34
Source: PRS rental figures taken from Zoopla/Rightmove					

Table 22 shows the rental differences between a private rented sector property and an RSL property in some of the major settlements within the Scottish Borders. The data shows that a 2 bedroom property in Peebles costs on average £300 more than one would in the social rented sector.

In terms of three bedroom properties Hawick has the smallest rent difference, with it being £73 more expensive for a two bedroom property in the private rented sector. At the other end of the scale Peebles is once again the costliest with a three bedroom property over £566 per month more expensive than an RSL property.

Table 22: Average rent pcm for 2 and 3 bedroom private rented properties within major settlements				
Settlement	2 Bed Private Rental	Difference between RSL/PRS*	3 Bed Private Rental	Difference between RSL/PRS*
Duns	£513	£118	£616	£148
Galashiels	£539	£144	£684	£216
Hawick	£468	£73	£614	£146
Jedburgh	£613	£218	£613	£145
Kelso	£616	£221	£749	£281
Peebles	£695	£300	£1,034	£566
Selkirk	£564	£169	650	£182
Source: PRS rental figures taken from Zoopla/Rightmove *Figure has been rounded up				

3.6   Poverty

Deprivation is measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020. This takes into account measures of income, employment, health, education, geographic access, crime and housing. Results from the 2020 SIMD show that most areas (datazones) in Scottish Borders are found in the middle rankings, in comparison to the wider Scottish benchmark. This is similar to the pattern identified in 2009 and suggests that most of Scottish Borders does not experience multiple deprivation.

The Scottish Borders is divided into 143 Data Zones. Nine datazones fall into the "20% most deprived" in Scotland: in Hawick these are Central Burnfoot, South East Burnfoot, West Burnfoot, North Burnfoot, Hawick North and Hawick Central. In Galashiels these are Central, East and West Langlee. There is also an area in Selkirk West included. These datazones account for 6.7% of the Scottish Borders population. Notably, this is an increase since the last LHS, which could be explained by the newer introduction of a part of Selkirk in the 20% most deprived category, which previously had not been in this band. Overall some 6%

of the datazones in Scottish Borders and 7% of the Scottish Borders population are located within the 20% most-deprived in Scotland.

The Scottish Borders face a number of unique challenges due to rurality - these include geography, an ageing demographic, income deprivation, fuel deprivation, digital access, poor broadband, and food security. Some key figures include:

- In the Scottish Borders, 18.4% of children live in low-income families, the proportions range from 10.3% for Tweeddale East to 26.5% for Hawick and Denholm.
- 9.5% of the Scottish Borders population is income deprived, although there are 12 Intermediate Zones with more than 10%.
- 8.7% of the people of working age are employment deprived, although there are 12 Intermediate Zones with more than 10%.
- According to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), in February 2020 there were 2,840 people claiming Pension Credit in the Scottish Borders. This equates to about 101 pension credit claimants per 1,000 people aged 65 and older.
- 81.3% of households have home internet access in the Scottish Borders compared to 85% for Scotland. 13% of the Scottish Borders are unable to access decent broadband (as defined by the Universal Service Obligation) compared to 4% for Scotland, this varies across the Scottish Borders.
- 9% of adults in Scotland reported food insecurity (as defined by being worried during the past 12 months that they would run out of food due to lack of money or resources). In January 2020 there were 17 Foodbanks, by July 2020 there were 40. All of these report increased demand.

The impact of Covid-19 has accelerated challenges that the Borders face and as a result SBC developed the Anti-Poverty Strategy 2021 to work together with its partners to reduce poverty.

3.7   Rurality

Scottish Borders is a rural local authority where 30% of the population lives in settlements of under 500 people or in isolated hamlets. There are only two settlements in the Scottish Borders with a population over 10,000, Hawick and Galashiels.

Figures taken from the Scottish Government show that there are on average 0.12 dwellings per hectare within the Scottish Borders, the national figure for Scotland is 0.33 dwellings per hectare. As is shown in figure 13, the majority of the Scottish Borders is classed as being rural.

Figure 13: Non Rural Areas Map
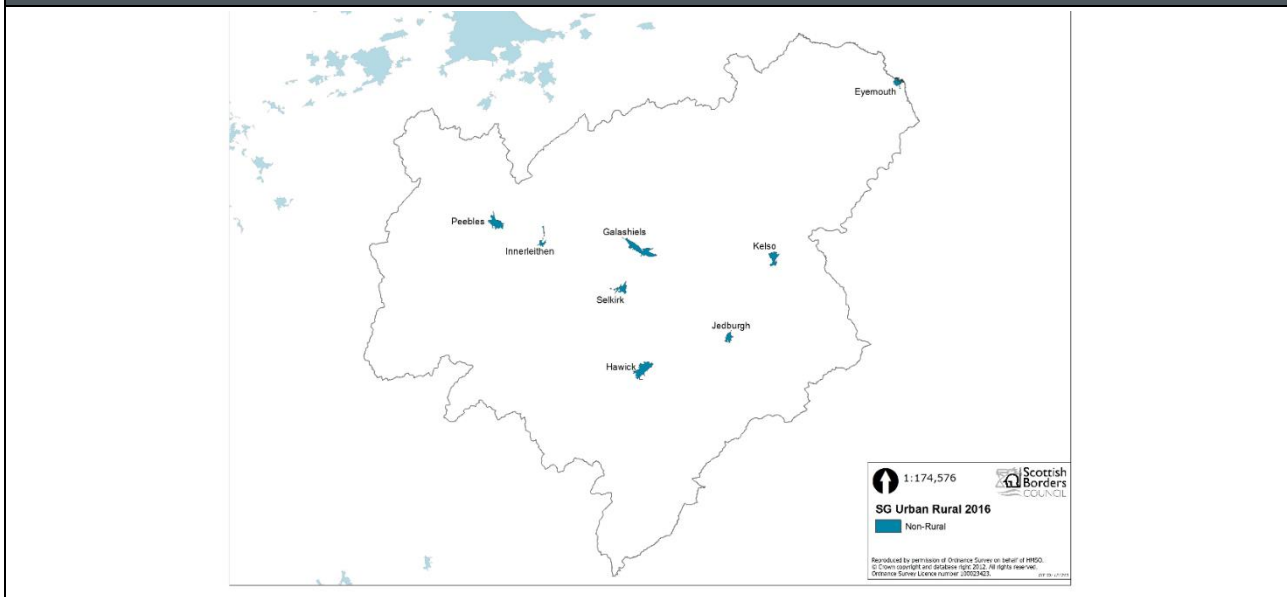
The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification provides a standard definition of rural areas in Scotland. The Scottish Borders has no large urban areas and only two settlements are classed as other urban areas, Hawick and Galashiels.

Table 23 provides the percent of population in each 8-fold Rural Urban category for the Scottish Borders and Scotland. It shows that 53% of the population in the Scottish Borders live in rural areas, compared with the national figure of 21%.

| Table 23: Percent of population in each 8-fold Rural Urban category for the Scottish Borders and Scotland								
	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Access. Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Very Remote Small Towns	Access. Rural	Remote Rural	Very Remote Rural
Scottish Borders	0.0	25.1	22.0	6.0	0.0	36.1	10.7	0.0
Scotland	34.6	36.2	8.5	2.3	1.2	11.2	3.2	2.8
Source: Scottish Government, 2018								

4. Housing Delivery and Sustainable Communities

4.1 Dwelling type, size and age

Figure 14 below provides a summary comparison of some of the key characteristics in housing in the Scottish Borders and Scotland. Most of the dwellings in the Scottish Borders (76%) are houses, compared to 24% which are flats. This proportion of houses is well above the Scottish average, but is lower than many other rural authorities. The number of properties which are considered houses has increased since the period of the last LHS. The number of dwellings with 3+ bedrooms is also much higher (63%) than the national average of 50%, and the rate of social housing tenures is tied for the 4th highest amongst all local authorities at 14%, higher than 13% of Scotland as a whole.

The age profile of the Scottish Borders stock differs from the national levels: 33% of dwellings were constructed pre-1945, compared with the national average of 30%. This has clear implications for the management of property conditions and, in particular, for achieving energy efficiency targets.

Figure 14: Scottish Borders Dwelling Profile

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019
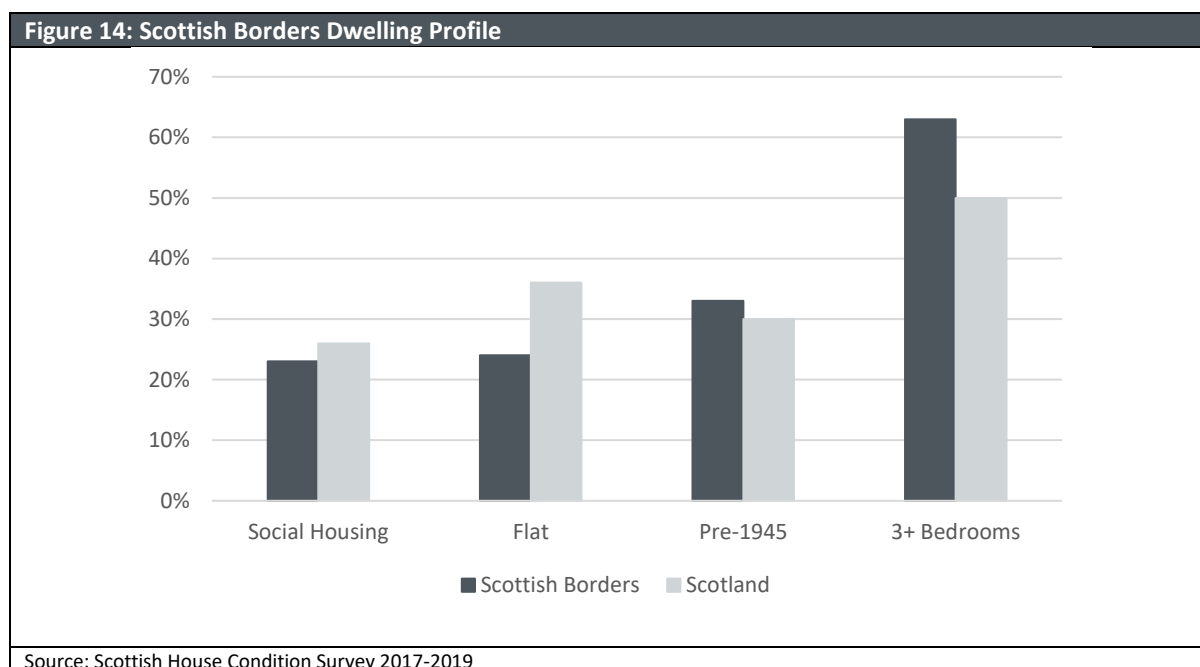
As shown in table 24, the Scottish Borders has a significantly lower proportion of flatted accommodation in comparison with other areas and the national average. This is due to the Borders being a rural area so won't have as many flats as some of the more urban areas of Scotland.

Table 24: Type of dwellings (%)						
	Detached	Flats	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Unknown	Total
Scottish Borders	28.7	27.8	20.6	21.9	1.1	100.0
Scotland	21.5	37.7	19.7	20.5	0.7	100.0
Source: National Records of Scotland (2017) Dwellings by Type						

Table 25 shows the size of dwellings in the Scottish Border, approximately 43% of dwellings contain 1-3 rooms, 49% contain 4-6 rooms and 8% contain 7+ rooms. This is a similar trend to Scotland.

Table 25: Size of dwellings								
	No. of Dwellings 1-3 Rooms	% of Dwellings 1-3 Rooms	No. of Dwellings 4-6 Rooms	% of Dwellings 4-6 Rooms	No. of Dwellings 7+ Rooms	% of Dwellings 7+ Rooms	Total No. of Dwelling	Median No. Of rooms per dwelling
Scottish Borders	25,012	43	25,802	49	4,653	8	58,167	4
Scotland	1,089,913	42	1,297,516	50	155,702	6	2,595,031	4
Source: National Records of Scotland (2017) Estimates of Households & Dwellings in Scotland, excluding 'unknown' category;								

The size of dwellings can be compared to average household size of 2.15 persons in Scotland and 2.10 persons in the Scottish Borders. Around 90% of households in the Scottish Borders are of the single / smaller categories shown in the Scottish Household Survey and data at table 26. The average household size in the Borders is projected to decrease by 6% to 1.98 by 2043.

44% of social housing is provided with 1 bedroom with this being the predominant house size across the region. 37% of social housing properties are provided with 2 bedrooms. The figures for private renting are suppressed due to small sample sizes.

Table 26: Size of dwellings by tenure												
	% Owner Occupier				% Social Sector				% Private Rent			
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed
Scottish Borders	2	26	42	30	44	37	19	-	*	*	*	*
South East Scotland	4	26	42	28	27	44	27	2	25	54	17	4
Scotland	5	28	43	24	27	45	25	3	24	49	21	6
Source: Scottish Government (2019) Scottish Household Survey; *Suppression applied as sub-group too small for reliable estimate												

The analysis of house size by tenure analysis indicates larger house sizes in the owner-occupied sector and proportionately fewer large dwellings in the social sector. In terms of social housing, the profile of house size indicates a supply of dwellings with 3+ bedrooms quite substantially below both the regional and Scottish averages.

Table 27 below shows overall there is a much higher proportion of post 1945 housing in the Scottish Borders than pre-1945 housing. However the Scottish Borders has a higher proportion of older housing than is recorded nationally.

Table 27: Age of dwellings					
	Dwelling Numbers	% Pre 1945 Dwellings	Pre-1945 No. Dwellings	% Post 1945 Dwellings	Post 1945 No. Dwellings
Scottish Borders	58,671	33.1	19,442	66.9	39,229
Scotland	2,636,871	30.4	801,872	69.6	1,834,999
Source: National Records of Scotland (2020) Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland 2019; Scottish Government (2021) Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-19					

4.2   RSL Stock

Table 28 below shows that Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) holds nearly half of all social rented properties within the Scottish Borders (45.3%). Eildon (21.9%), Berwickshire (15.6%) and Waverley (11.4%) all own significant numbers of properties within the region. The five RSLs with smaller stock levels operating within the region account for the remaining 5.8% of RSL properties.

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Table 28: Number of properties by RSL provider		
RSL	No. of Properties	% of Total
Berwickshire	1,939	15.6%
Bield	138	1.1%
Cairn	111	0.9%
Eildon	2,716	21.9%
Hanover	238	1.9%
Link	102	0.8%
SBHA	5,618	45.3%
Trust	135	1.1%
Waverley	1,408	11.4%
Total	12,405	100%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23		

Figure 15 shows that the most common type of RSL property within the Scottish Borders is a flat accounting for 38% of all stock. Terraced properties account for over a third of all stock with 25% of properties being of this type. There is also a significant quantity (19%) of semi-detached properties within the RSL stock in the Scottish Borders. Maisonettes (3%), bungalows (2%), four in a block (12%) and detached properties (1%) account for the remaining stock within the region.

Figure 15: Total RSL Properties by Dwelling Type

Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23
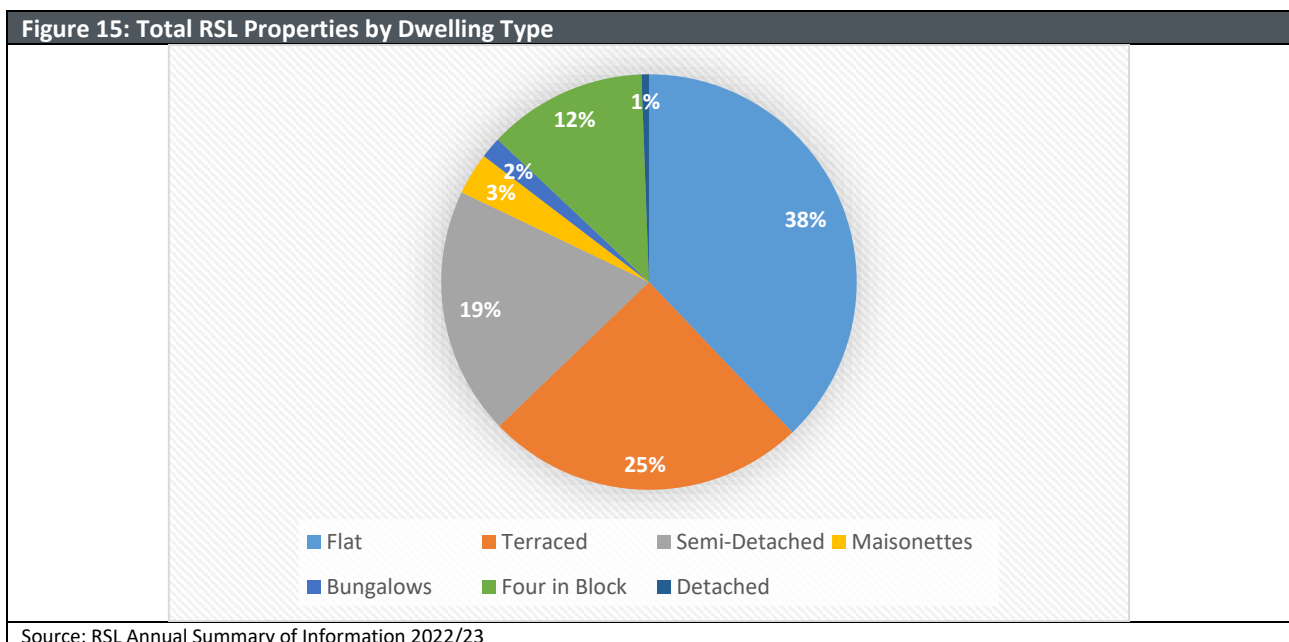
Table 29 shows the percentage of each type of property within the four Housing Market Areas (HMAs). It shows that both the Central and Northern HMAs have a high proportion of flats, with over 41% of dwellings within both of these areas being flats.

Semi-detached houses are the most common type of dwelling within the Berwickshire HMA. The southern HMA which is the most rural and sparsely populated of the areas also has a high percentage of semi-detached and terraced properties.

The Southern housing market area has the highest proportion of bungalows, followed by the Northern HMA.

Table 29: Percentage of each RSL dwelling type by HMA							
HMA	Bungalow	Detached	Flat	Four in a Block	Maisonette	Semi Detached	Terraced House
Berwickshire	2.00%	0.40%	22.60%	12.40%	0.00%	32.00%	30.20%
Central	1.10%	0.70%	41.10%	12.60%	4.70%	16.80%	22.80%
Northern	3.10%	0.40%	47.30%	10.30%	0.80%	11.20%	26.90%
Southern	12.70%	0.00%	4.90%	18.60%	0.00%	44.10%	19.60%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23							

Table 30 shows RSL properties within the Scottish Borders by needs type. The majority of properties within the region (86%) are general needs. The remaining 14% of properties are split between different needs type such as amenity, medium dependency and sheltered housing.

Table 30: Total RSL Properties by Needs Type (number of properties and percentage of total)		
Needs Type	Properties	% total
Disabled / Wheelchair	227	1.8%
Amenity / Medium Dependency	465	3.7%
Extra Care Housing / Retirement Housing / Sheltered / Supported / Very Sheltered Housing	1,016	8.2%
General Needs	10,664	85.9%
Other	33	0.3%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23		

Table 31 below shows the split in numbers and percentage across urban and rural properties within both the social rented and private rented sectors in the Scottish Borders. It shows that there is a higher proportion of rural properties within the Private Rented Sector. Despite almost 4,000 less properties overall, there are 1,635 more properties in areas classed as either accessible rural or remote rural within the private rented sector than are available within the social rented sector.

Table 31: Percentage of properties by urban/rural split in PRS and SRS				
Urban/Rural	RSL Properties	% of total RSL stock	PRS Properties	% of total PRS stock
Urban	9,048	73%	3,425	47%
Rural	2,257	27%	3,892	53%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23				

4.3   Housing Pressures

Social Rented Sector

Bid data was taken from the RSL annual summary of information for the period 2022/23. On average there are approximately over 1,200 lets every year within the four most prominent RSLs, and each of the RSLs operates their own choice based lettings scheme or allocations policies.

1,002 properties were made available to let during the period 2022/23, of these 826 properties received bids, some were allocated directly or exchanged and therefore there is no bid data for these properties. Bids are made by both existing tenants and housing list applicants. Collectively there were 29,007 bids made for available properties, an average of 29 bids per property.

The most popular type of property, by average number of bids received, were bungalows with on average 76 bids per property available. Four in a block (26) and semi detached (46) also received a high number of average bids.

Table 32: Average Number of bids made by property type	
Dwelling type	**Average of Number of Bids**
4 in a block	26
Bungalow	76
Detached	11
Flat	19
Maisonette	14
Semi Detached	46
Terraced House	43
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23	

Table 33 shows the average number of bids received per property by needs type of the home. General needs properties received on average the most bids per property with 36 bids per available home.

Table 33: Average Number of bids made by property needs type	
Needs Type	**Average No. of Bids**
Ambulant Disabled	8
Amenity	5
General Needs	36
Independent Living	6
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23	

Apart from the physical condition of housing stock in the Borders, a range of stock pressures can be identified adding to the need for more housing and better use of existing housing resources.

Private Sector Demand

Although the proportion of households renting privately is in the minority when compared to owner-occupied and social housing, it plays an important role in the housing market. The Private Rented Sector is a diverse tenure, catering for several key demand groups. The characteristics of the sector suggest that its most important role within the modern housing system is to provide flexible accommodation for young and mobile people.

The Private Rented Sector is interlinked with the housing system as a whole, for example the decline in the numbers within social housing stock as a result of Right to Buy. In addition, high demand for Social Rented properties means that for many the Private Rented Sector is the only viable option when looking for a rental property. Furthermore affordability issues of home ownership and the difficulty in saving for a deposit, as well as the availability of mortgage products have reduced access to home ownership for many would-be buyers who are left with little choice but to rent privately.

As demonstrated in the Private Landlord Survey (2022) findings, 43% of landlord respondents said they were very likely or fairly likely to sell part of their portfolio in the next 5 years. We are already seeing some landlords withdraw their properties from private rent, with almost 600 fewer properties registered in August 2023 than in April 2021. Some landlords are moving into short term, holiday lets or selling their property. This will also impact the demand and pressures in the private rented sector.

Over/ under occupancy
Overcrowding is an important indicator of stock pressure and how well the stock is functioning. A dwelling is considered overcrowded if there are insufficient bedrooms to meet the occupants' requirements under the Bedroom Standard.

The data below shows that under-occupancy has been identified in dwellings of 3+ rooms and suggests that around 43% of dwellings are under-occupied.

Table 34: Under-occupancy by dwelling characteristics						
	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
	Pre 1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	1 or 2 Rooms	3+ Rooms
Scottish Borders	8,000	17,000	22,000	3,000	0	25,000
Scotland	228,000	567,000	727,000	68,000	0	795,000
Source: Scottish Government (2021) Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019.						

Table 35 indicates that owner occupied housing is significantly more likely to be under-occupied compared to social housing. Under-occupancy is most prevalent in older and other households rather than families.

Table 35: Under-occupancy of dwellings by tenure / household type						
	Tenure			Household Type		
	Owner Occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older Households	Families	Other Households
Scottish Borders	21,000	1,000	*	12,000	4,000	9,000
Scotland	705,000	52,000	38,000	349,000	107,000	339,000
Source: Scottish Government (2021) Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019, *Suppression applied as sub-group too small for reliable estimate. Data extracted using the SHCS Local Authority Statistics Calculation Tool which rounds to the nearest 1,000.						

Concealed households

The Census defines a concealed household as one with more than one family, that does not include a 'household reference person', this being the lead individual for the household based on a priority of economic activity. In layman's terms, this means where two or more families share the same dwelling. An estimate for the number of concealed households by area can be derived using household estimates and census data for 2011, updated for household change to 2019. This method is not completely robust as the percentages of concealed households are likely to vary across areas over time rather than stay constant. The approach provides indicative figures until new Census data becomes available.

Table 36: Concealed households					
	Households Census 2011	Concealed Households Census 2011	% Concealed Households Census 2011	Households 2019	Estimate of Concealed Households 2019
Scottish Borders	52,485	184	0.4	54,715	192
Source: National Records of Scotland (2020) Estimates of Households and Dwellings in Scotland, 2011 and 2019; National Records of Scotland (2011) Scotland's Census 2011.					

4.4   Affordable Housing Delivery and New Housing Supply

Table 37 provides information on all affordable housing delivered over the past ten years. 2021/22 saw a huge increase in numbers but this is due to Covid-19 where some projects from 2020/21 were delayed. It is important to note that table 37 includes all affordable housing and this doesn't just include new supply.

Table 37: Affordable Housing Delivery									
Year	RSL	RSL (MMR)	NHT	SBC	OMSE	NSSE[2]	RSL/HP	Rural Housing Grant	Total
2012/13	83		26		3	1			113
2013/14	35	3	25		4	5			72
2014/15	49		10		3				62
2015/16	172	12	13		11		11		219
2016/17	75		22	3	26		1		127
2017/18	87				34		25		146
2018/19	130		9		22		31		192
2019/20	114				14		5	8	141
2020/21	94				9		4		107
2021/22	237				16		60	1	314
2022/23	120				8		13	6	147
Source: SBC Annual Affordable Housing Monitoring									

Table 38 provides a breakdown of all affordable housing and total completions, from this we are able to calculate the total market completions. It is important to note that affordable housing figures (point 1) is the total of all affordable homes and this includes RSL purchases and the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme (OMSE). While these are new affordable homes these aren't all new builds, point 2 provides the figure of new supply affordable homes delivered.

Table 38 clearly shows that the proportion of new supply affordable homes continues to grow and continues to make a larger proportion of total completions.

Table 38: Total Housing Delivery (Affordable and Market)											
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
1. Number of Affordable Homes	113	72	62	219	127	146	192	141	107	314	147
2. Number of Affordable Homes (new supply only)	83	38	49	184	75	87	130	114	94	237	125
3. Number of Market Completions (5-2)*	223	250	223	189	175	135	215	210	204		
4. Combined (all) (1+3)	336	322	285	407	302	281	407	358	307		
5. Total Completions	306	288	272	373	250	222	345	324	298		
Source: SBC Annual Affordable Housing Monitoring											
*this figure is based on the total number of completions minus the number of affordable new supply											

Table 39 shows a breakdown of the number of units delivered each year in the Borders by Housing Market Area. The total percentage spilt by HMA follows a similar trend to the proportion of population in the areas and follows the spilt that has been agreed in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).

Table 39: Affordable housing completions by HMA												
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	%
Berwickshire			4	67	10	33	38	58		35	30	22%
Central	38	38	25	103	106	110	124	61		200	98	55%
Northern	67	25	30	38	11	3	30	22		18	1	16%
Southern	8										5	1%
Area Not Known		9	3	11						61	13	7%
Scottish Borders	113	72	62	219	127	146	192	141	107	314	147	100%
Source: SBC Annual Affordable Housing Monitoring												

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[2] New Supply Shared Equity

Table 40 provides information on the expenditure over the past five years from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

Table 40: Affordable Housing Supply Programme Expenditure			
		Scottish Borders	**Total Local Programmes**
2017/18	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	10.088	447.389
	Actual Expenditure (£m)	11.588	463.564
2018/19	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	14.065	591.104
	Actual Expenditure (£m)	11.766	605.858
2019/20	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	15.998	655.5
	Actual Expenditure (£m)	19.375	669.279
2020/21	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	16.972	683.186
	Actual Expenditure (£m)	14.117	639.978
2021/22	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	18.562	724.268
	Actual Expenditure (£m)	18.838	
2022/23	Resource Planning Assumptions (£m)	16.275	
	Actual Expenditure (£m)		
Source: Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP)			

From 2021/22 to 2025/26, the five year resource planning assumption for the Scottish Borders is £82.801m. A Resource Planning Assumption of £16.275m has been made for 2026/27.

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] is the sole strategic document for prioritising affordable housing investment within the Scottish Borders and sets out a rolling five year planning horizon. The SHIP 2024-2029 was approved by Scottish Borders Council in November 2023 and identifies the potential delivery of 1,122 new affordable homes, underpinned by an estimated investment of £267m over the period of the plan. Table 41 provides a breakdown of the 1,122 estimated project completions by year and needs type.

Table 41: Estimated Project Completions			
	Units General Need	**Units Particular Need**	**Units Total**
2024-2025	143	1	144
2025-2026	111	45	156
2026-2027	138	14	152
2027-2028	295	45	340
2028-2029	169	161	330
Total	856	266	1,122
Source: SHIP 2024-2029			

4.5   Self-Build

The number of self-builds is monitored through NB2 completions (Private Sector New Build). Over the past five years the number of self-builds in the Scottish Borders has been decreasing from approximately 35% (2011/12) of private new build completions to 18% of new build completions in 2022/23.

Figure 16: Number of Individual Builds (Self Builds)

Source: SBC NB2 Completions
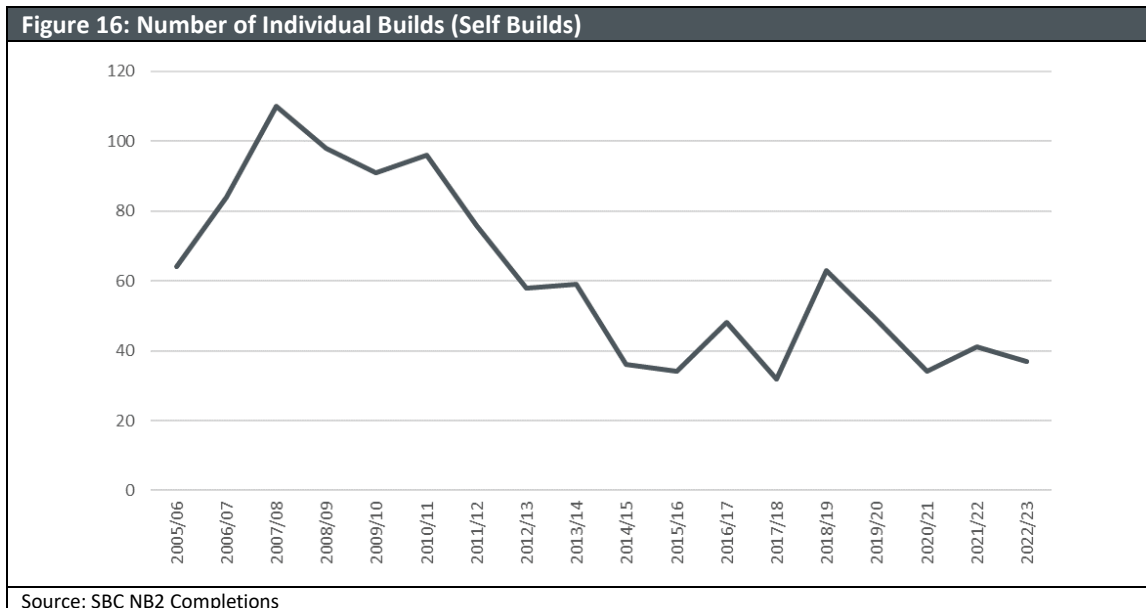
While this provides us with an approximate number of self-builds, SBC are currently working on developing a self-build register which will be online in 2023/2024. This will provide information on people interested in self-build.

4.6 Land Supply

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) undertakes an annual Housing Land Audit (HLA) to identify and monitor the established and effective housing land supply and to meet the requirement for monitoring housing land, as set out within Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The draft Housing Land Audit for 2021/22 has recently been published for consultation. This has been delayed due to Covid-19.

The established land supply comprises the effective land supply (years 1-5), potentially effective land supply (years 6-7), post year 7 land supply and the constrained land supply. Table 42 contains a summary of the established land supply for this audit period, while table 43 contains a summary broken down by Housing Market Area (HMA). Table 44 shows the overall established land supply for the past five years (2016/17 – 2020/21).

Table 42: Established housing land supply (2020/21)

Established Land Supply	Effective (years 1-5)	Potentially effective (years 6-7)	Post 7 years	Constrained
8,746	3,538	1,967	1,945	1,265

Source: Housing Land Audit 2020/21

Table 43: Established housing land supply by HMA (2020/21)

	Berwickshire	Central	Northern	Southern
Established Land Supply	1,909	5,551	1,191	95

Source: Housing Land Audit 2020/21

Table 44: Established housing land supply (2020/21)

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Established Land Supply	8,584	9,342	9,180	8,963	8,746

Source: Housing Land Audit 2020/21

Over the past five years, the established land supply in the Scottish Borders has peaked at 9,342 within the 2018 audit. The established land supply has decreased by 217 units since the previous audit. It should be noted that the Housing Supplementary Guidance (SG) sites were added as part of the 2018 HLA, which accounted for the increased established housing land supply that year.

As outlined previously, the effective land supply is the part of the established land supply which is free of constraints to be developed within the next 5 years. Programming of the effective land supply helps to identify if there is sufficient supply of effective land within the Scottish Borders for the next five years. Table 45 contains a summary of the effective housing land supply for the previous five audits. Over the past five years, the effective land supply has peaked at 3,679 units as part of the 2019 HLA. The total effective housing land supply has decreased by 47 units since the previous audit. Programming of the audit continues to be an increasingly difficult process, due to the market conditions being experienced, COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the difficulty for developers and potential buyers to obtain finance.

Table 45: Effective Housing Land Supply Annually (Units)					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Effective Land Supply	3,469	3,668	3,679	3,585	3,538
Source: Housing Land Audit 2020/21					

4.7   Localities

There are five community planning localities in Scottish Borders: Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot and Liddesdale, and Tweeddale. These localities align with agreed Social Work and NHS Borders localities and are part of the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Plan.

Eildon is the largest locality by population, with a total of 35,899 in 2020, followed by Tweeddale with 21,354, Berwickshire with 20,931 and Cheviot with 19,345.Teviot and Liddesdale was the smallest locality by population, with 17,711 people. Eildon contains eight of the larger settlements including Galashiels, Selkirk, Melrose and Tweedbank, all with populations greater than 2,000.

Figure 17: Localities Map
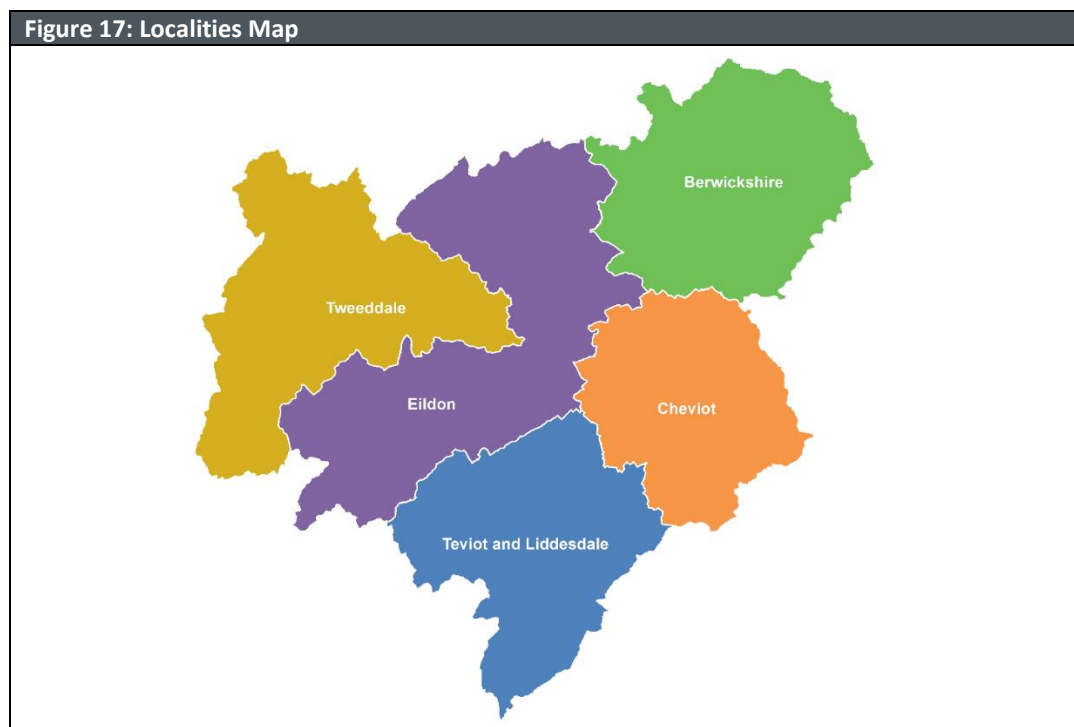
As Table 46 shows, the populations of Eildon and Tweeddale tend to be younger than the other localities and less likely to be income deprived – with Tweeddale also having the lowest % of people in employment deprivation by a wide margin. Conversely, the population in Berwickshire, Cheviot and Teviot and Liddesdale tends to be older, and Teviot and Liddesdale also has the highest rate of both income and employment deprivation in the Scottish Borders.

Table 46: Scottish Borders locality profiles								
	Population				Rurality		Deprivation	
Area	Total	0-15	16-64	65+	% pop in small settlements (<500)	No. of settlements (>500 people)	% population income deprivation	% population employment deprivation
Berwickshire	20,969	16%	58%	26%	46%	6	8.9%	4.2%
Cheviot	19,433	15%	57%	28%	34%	4	9.4%	4.4%
Eildon	35,598	17%	61%	22%	18%	9	8.6%	4.8%
Teviot & Liddesdale	17,925	16%	59%	25%	14%	3	13.6%	6.2%
Tweeddale	21,345	18%	59%	23%	29%	5	6.1%	2.9%
Scottish Borders	115,270	17%	59%	24%	22%	27	9.0%	4.5%
Source: Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership Strategic Assessment 2020								

4.8   Empty Homes

A property which has been empty for in excess of six months is considered to be a long-term empty property.

There are many reasons why a property becomes empty. On a national scale the recession in 2008 has affected the housing market, and households in Scotland have become trapped in negative equity or are unable to manage their mortgage or debt. This could result in repossession where even the lender is unable to dispose of the asset, resulting in the property remaining empty. On a regional level an area may have low demand, or an oversupply of certain properties. Individual factors relating to the property can explain long term vacancy rates including someone buying a property purely to allow the house value to increase; an unwillingness to rent out the property; being unable to afford to bring a property back into habitable condition; and repossession.

As of July 2023, the number of long-term empty properties in the Scottish Borders was 906. The number of exemptions in the Scottish Borders that can be classified as being long term empty is 362, meaning in total there are 1,268 long term empty properties in the Scottish Borders. It must be noted that the numbers do fluctuate as ownership and property use changes and as such the figures are accurate only at the time of issue.

Table 47: Breakdown of empty properties in the Scottish Borders	
	No.
Long term empty	906
Exemptions	362
Total	1,268
Source: Scottish Borders Council Tax records, as of July 2023	

From 1st April 2013 local authorities gained the discretionary power to remove the empty properties discount or set a council tax increase of 100% on certain properties which have been empty for one year or more. The data from table 48 is taken from the 1st Monday in September annually. Since April 2016, the council introduced a levy to increase council tax by 100% on properties that have been empty for over a year, meaning if a property has been empty for over a year the council tax will be 200%.

As shown in table 48, the number of empty homes has remained at a similar level over the twelve year period between 2011-2022. The figures fluctuate but overall the number of homes that have been empty for 6+ months is remaining steady with a slight increase in 2020. The number of homes empty for over twelve months has remained steady since 2016 with the exception of high numbers in 2020 and 2022. The number of homes in 2022 that have been empty for over 12 months was the highest figure recorded so far at almost 1000 homes (992). There was no significant change to the numbers of empty homes following the introduction of the council tax levy. This may indicate that some homes are empty due to factors not within the owner's control or that cost is not a barrier for these owners. As of April 2023 the number of empty

homes brought back into use was 37, reflecting the work of SBC's Empty Homes Officer and the action of individual owners.

Table 48: Long Term Empty Homes and Second Homes												
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Long term empty 6 months+	1,422	1,488	1,379	1,421	1,362	1,379	1,419	1,469	1,443	1,614	1,339	1,431
Long term empty 12 months+						888	897	875	845	986	858	992
Second homes	1,040	1,032	1,149	1,186	1,275	1,036	960	945	968	981	999	1,031
Source: Scottish Government from CTAXBASE for each year												

4.9 Second Homes and Short Term Lets

As of March 2023, the number of second homes was 1,015. This is in keeping with the numbers of second homes in 2011-2012, before figures rose to 1,275 in 2015. Numbers of recorded second homes decreased again after 2015 with the lowest figure of 945 homes in 2018 (see Table 48 in previous section). These trends do not appear to reflect trends in the wider economy such as house prices or the cost of living, so it may be that individual factors mainly impact the numbers of second homes. Table 49 shows the number of second homes by Housing Market area. The percentage of second homes is highest in Central HMA (44%), followed Berwickshire (31%). This is due to Berwickshire being close to the coast so the area will attract more second homeowners.

Table 49: Number and % of Second Homes by HMA		
HMA	Number	%
Berwickshire	318	31%
Central	448	44%
Northern	175	17%
Southern	74	7%
Total	1,015	100%
Source: SBC Revenues and Benefits (as of March 2023)		

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of short-term lets which has led to strong debates on the positives and negatives of short term lets. For many, short term lets using Airbnb and similar platforms have enabled cheaper, more flexible travel, but for others – particularly in tourist hotspots there are concerns that they make it more difficult to find homes to live in. Some of the positive impacts of short-term lets on communities include local economic benefits associated with tourism and increased household income for hosts. However, negative impacts include the impact on communities' quality of life, reduced availability of residential housing and increased strain on local public services.

Some owners may also wish to consider holiday rental. Although this does nothing to alleviate housing shortages, a well-managed, high occupancy holiday use is better than a house lying empty or in use for just a few weeks of a year. This can benefit the local area through increased tourism and the resultant spend within the local area.

While robust statistics are not yet available for short-term lets, the Scottish Government in 2019 commissioned research into the impact of short-term lets on communities in Scotland. The research provided a snapshot figure of properties advertised through active Airbnb listings by local authority area in May 2019. While data will become available following the introduction of the licensing scheme for short-term lets, the figures are indicative of how many dwellings in the Borders may be used as short-term lets.

Table 50: Active Airbnb listings		
	Short term let - entire home / apartment	% of Total Dwellings
Scottish Borders	570	1%
Scotland	22,063	0.8%
Source: The Scottish Government (2019) Research of the impact of short-term lets on communities in Scotland, Active Airbnb listings by local authority area, May 2019, NRS household figures for 2019.		

The Scottish Government has put in place a new record-level data collection from Scottish local authorities on Short Term Lets Licensing Data, to monitor the number of Short Term Lets and to track the number and outcome of all applications. A Data Specification for the collection of data through the Scottish Government ProcXed system has been developed with the first set of quarterly data collected in early 2023, following the local authority licensing schemes being ready to receive applications from 1 October 2022, although existing hosts and operators had until 1 April 2023 to apply for a licence.

5. Private Rented Sector

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) plays an important role in Scotland's housing system with some 700,000 people in Scotland making their homes in the sector nationally, double the number of ten years ago.

Although the proportion of households renting privately is in the minority when compared to owner-occupied and social housing, it plays an important role in the housing market. The Private Rented Sector is a diverse tenure, catering for several key demand groups. The characteristics of the sector suggest that its most important role within the modern housing system is to provide flexible accommodation for young and mobile people.

The Private Rented Sector is interlinked with the housing system as a whole, for example the decline in numbers within social housing stock as a result of right to buy has limited the rental opportunities for some in the Social Housing Sector. In addition high demand for Social Rented properties means that for many the Private Rented Sector is the only viable option when looking for a rental property. Furthermore affordability issues of home ownership and the difficulty in saving for a deposit as well as the availability of mortgages products have reduced access to home ownership for many would-be buyers who are left with little choice but to rent privately.

Demand for properties within the Private Rented Sector within Scotland has increased within recent years as a result of a number of factors including smaller households, a growing population and an increase in the number of students. In addition the trend for buy to let properties saw an increase in the number of properties being let out. This has led to an increase from 120,000 households in 1999 to 360,000 in 2017[3] living within the Private Rented Sector.

5.1 Landlord Registration

At the end of December 2022 there were just under 7,400 properties within the Private Rented Sector in the Scottish Borders. This represents around 14% of the total stock within the region, compared to 26% of stock being held by registered social landlords and 60% being owner occupied. At its peak the number of people living in the private rented sector was 16.5%.

There are also a number of reasons people choose to live within the Private Rented Sector in the Scottish Borders, such as the high demand for social housing, the flexibility private housing offers and the inability to get onto the property ladder.

Private rented households are more likely to live in flats than those in the owner occupied sector, with 35% of private rented households in the Scottish Borders residing in flats according to Home Analytics, compared to 22% in the owner occupied sector and 56% in the social rented sector. Rental properties within the Private Sector are more likely to be 'older' than homes in other sectors, figures on Home Analytics show suggest that 64% of private rented homes were built pre 1950; compared to the 42% in owner-occupation and 16% of social rented properties.

Figures from landlord registration show that the number of properties and landlords within the Private Rented Sector have been slowly decreasing in recent years. As table 51 below shows, at the end of the financial year 2019/20 there were 5,089 registered landlords in the Borders with 7,865 properties registered to them, and this had grown to 5,108 registered landlords and 7,909 registered properties by the end of the next financial year.

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[3] Overview of private rented housing reforms in Scotland

By the end of 2022/23, the number of both registered landlords and registered properties had fallen to 4,640 and 7,368 respectively.

Table 51: Registered Landlords and Properties by Year				
	2019/20	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Registered Landlords	5,089	5,108	4,907	4,640
Registered Properties	7,865	7,909	7,626	7,368
Source: Private Landlord Registration Snapshot				

The ten main settlements in the Scottish Borders make up 78% of the active private rented stock of 7,376 properties as of December 2022. Figure 1 shows that the town with the most private rental properties is Galashiels, closely followed by Hawick. In total the ten settlements with the highest population contain 5,785 properties.

Figure 18: Number of Registered Properties in the Main Settlements

Source: Private Landlord Snapshots Dec 2022
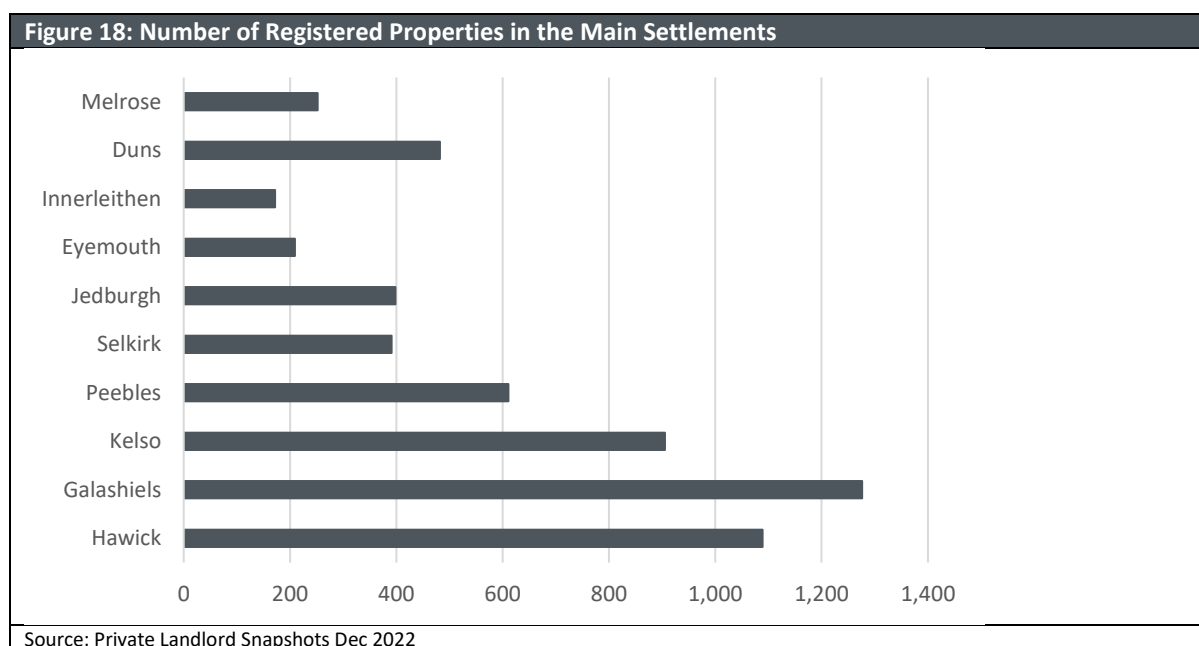
The Private Rented Sector within the Scottish Borders contains a large proportion of individual landlords. A snapshot taken in December 2022 shows that 70% of approved landlords in the Scottish Borders own a single property.

5.2   Private Landlord Survey 2022

At the end of 2022 SBC carried out a survey on private landlords to get a better understanding of the needs and challenges landlords face and to find out about their practice. The survey also asked a range of questions about landlord's portfolios to get a better understanding of the private rented sector in the Scottish Borders. The results of the survey will be used to inform the delivery of future services, gauge landlord practices and inform this Local housing Strategy.

There were 223 responses to the survey, but two of these responded that they were not landlords and were removed from the rest of the analysis. In total approximately 3,800 landlords received an email to respond to the survey, meaning a return of 6%.

Table 52 shows that more than 40% of landlords within the Scottish Borders have been within sector for more than 10 years, with only 4.5% of responses saying they had been landlords for less than a year.

Table 52: How long have you been a private landlord in the Scottish Borders?	
	Percent
Less than 1 year	4.5
1 to under 3 years	12.7
3 to under 5 years	13.6
5 to under 10 years	28.1
10+ years	41.2

30% of landlords classed themselves as being 'accidental landlords' with 22% stating they are a property investor seeking to build up a portfolio of rental homes. Another 39% said they had 'other' reasons, such as using property as a retirement investment or because they were not living in the home. Only 6.3% said they were professional landlords.

Table 53 shows that just over half of respondents let out one property, while another 20.8% let out two. Only 4.5% of landlords rent out more than 10 properties. 72% of landlords said they only rented out properties in the Scottish Borders.

Table 53: How many properties do you hold in your portfolio?	
Number of Properties	Percent
1	50.2
2	20.8
3	10.8
4	4.9
5-9	7.7
10+	4.5

Table 54 shows that 57% of responses said they managed their own properties, with another 37% saying they used an agent for this purpose.

Table 54: How do you manage property you let out?	
	Percent
I provide tenancy management services myself	56.5
I use an agent to provide tenancy management services	37.2
Other	5.4

Nearly half of landlords, with 44%, said that they are in contact with tenants at least quarterly, while a further 31% said they were in contact monthly. Only 2.7% are in contact less than once a year. Additionally, most landlords inspect their properties regularly and plan ahead for improvements, with 40% saying they inspect annually, and another 29% inspecting every 6 months.

Landlords in the Scottish Borders tend to be long-term landlords, with knowledge of legislation and their obligations who are keen to help with issues of housing need if there are protections given to them in return. Many believe that they are under more pressure in recent years due to changes in legislation and protections tenants receive compared to those landlords receive. It is key to take forward both the positive and negative findings of the survey in order to improve engagement and support for landlords in the Scottish Borders and to make sure they keep operating and offering housing options.

5.3   Private Landlord Enforcement

The Private Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer continues to ensure landlords adhere to their responsibilities, by providing advice and support but also enforcement where registrations expire. In recent years emphasis has shifted from registration enforcement to a liaison and support service for landlords and tenants. The service is focused on engagement and enforcement is only applied as a last resort.

Table 55 shows the number of instances of advice and support given to landlords by year. This has increased in the last few years as there has been more focus on advice and support than on enforcement.

Table 55: Number of Instances of Advice and Support given to landlords	
Year	Number of Actions
2019/20	218
2020/21	616
2021/22	1,105
Source: Private Landlord Snapshots	

Table 56 shows the number of follow up actions taken by year, with the highest being in 2019/20 where 563 follow-up actions were taken against landlords.

Table 56: Follow up actions to expired landlords (phone calls, letters, visits, online checks)	
Year	Number of Actions
2019/20	563
2020/21	220
2021/22	289
Source: Private Landlord Snapshots	

Table 57: Summary of breaches, offences and sanctions		
Breach/Offence	2004 Act	Sanctions available
Failure to register whilst letting a residential property	Section 93	Rent Penalty Notice (Right of appeal)
		Report to the Procurator Fiscal
		£50k fine
Non-registered owner communicates with a person about entering into a lease or occupancy agreement	Section 93	Report to the Procurator Fiscal
		£50k fine
Provision of false information, or failure to specify required information in an application form	Section 83	Refuse registration if not FPP (Right of appeal)
		Summary offence fine £1k
Failure of registered person to notify changes in circumstance	Section 87	Review FPP status
		Remove from the register if not FPP (Right of appeal)
		Summary offence fine £1k
Registered person no longer FPP	Section 84	Revoke registration status and remove from the register (Right of appeal)
De-registered/refused person continues to let property	Section 93	Rent Penalty Notice (Right of appeal)
		Report to the Procurator Fiscal
		£50k fine
Registered landlord's agent is found not FPP		Report to the Procurator Fiscal
		£50k fine
Failure to notify appointment of an agent or giving false information	Section 88	Review FPP status
		Remove from the register if not FPP (Right of appeal)
		Summary offence fine £1k
Failure to include required information in an advert	Section 92B	Review FPP status
		Refuse/revoke registration if not FPP (Right of appeal)
Failure to comply with LA request for information	Section 97A	Review FPP status if offence committed by landlord/agent
		Refuse/revoke registration if not FPP (Right of appeal)
		Summary offence fine £500

5.4   Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) were introduced in Scotland from October 2000 and plays a crucial element within the private rented sector regulatory framework, helping to improve both physical accommodation standards and the management of tenancy issues. Houses in Multiple Occupation or HMO properties are those properties which are broadly defined as a property which is occupied by three or more tenants that form more than one household.

Figure 19 shows the number of HMOs since they were introduced, the number of HMOs has remained between 80-120 since 2006.

Figure 19: Licenses in force at 31 March each year

Source: Scottish Government Stats
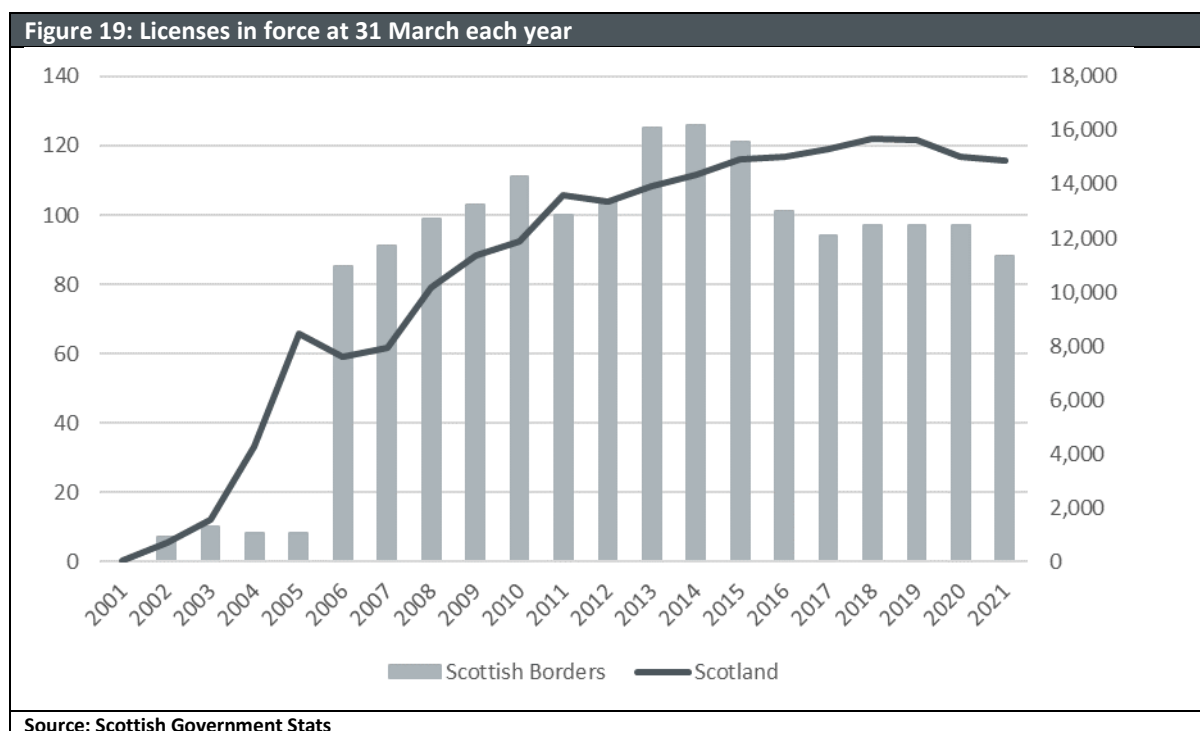
There a number of different types of reasons a property becomes an HMO, table 58 provides a list of the different types. As is shown in the table below, the majority of HMOs are flats or houses for private let/rent.

Table 58: HMO licences by type of HMO licence, year ending 31 March					
	2018	**2019**	**2020***	**2021**	**2022**
Landlord with lodgers					
Bed-sits	1	1			
Flats or houses to let as a whole	45	42		50	37
Nurses Homes	23	23			
Student Halls of Residence	3	3		3	3
B&Bs, Hotels & Guesthouses					
Hostels (LA & Charity)	14	11		4	1
Sheltered Accommodation	9	13		5	16
NHS Hosp. - where emp. Resident				24	
Other employee residences	2	4		2	23
All Types of HMO	97	97		88	80
Source: Scottish Government Housing Statistics. *Was not recorded due to Covid-19.					

6.   Specialist Housing, Particular Needs and Independent Living

6.1   Current Specialist provision

Bield, Cairn, Hanover and Trust are all national social housing providers who provide only specialist housing in the Scottish Borders. Only Link and Waverley have no specialist housing stock at all.

Table 59: RSL Stock				
RSL	General Housing	Specialist Housing	Total	% of Specialist Housing
Berwickshire	1,577	362	1,939	18.7%
Bield	4	134	138	97.1%
Cairn	1	110	111	99.0%
Eildon	2,181	535	2,716	19.7%
Hanover	3	235	240	97.9%
Link	102	0	102	0.0%
SBHA	5,361	257	5,618	4.6%
Trust	27	108	135	80.0%
Waverley	1,408	0	1,408	0.0%
Total	10,664	1,741	12,405	14.0%
Source: RSL Summary of Information, March 2023				

Table 60 shows the specialist housing provision by social landlords across the Scottish Borders. In total there are an estimated 1,711 homes provided as specialist housing. This accounts for 14% of all social housing. Amenity housing (which can also be referred to as medium dependency housing) makes up the largest proportion of specialist housing (41%). Other refers to retirement housing, supported and homelessness housing.

Table 60: Breakdown of Types of Specialist Housing	
Type of Specialist Housing	Total
Amenity	465
Disabled/ Wheelchair	227
Extra Care Housing	239
Sheltered	277
Very Sheltered Housing	123
Other Specialist Housing	410
Total	1,741
Source: RSL Summary of Information, March 2023	

The Scottish Borders Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support (2018-28) sets out a vision where older people will have greater choice in terms of where and how they live, and the services they can access. The plan also sets out how over the next 10 years the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care partners will aspire to deliver:

- 400 extra care houses (including 60 in a new retirement campus)
- 300 new build houses suitable for older people for sale and in the rented sector
- Existing housing, refurbished or remodelled - 300 houses in the social rented sector
- Housing support on site to be offered to 300 more older households across housing sectors
- Over 8,000 adaptations and small repairs to enable people to stay in their own home
- A minimum of an additional 20 specialist dementia spaces to meet the need identified in the emerging Dementia Strategy
- Investment in telecare / telehealth for over 800 households.

Table 61 shows the number of re-lets by specialist housing with 163 re-lets being for specialist housing, which is 14.5% of all re-lets for 2020/21.

Table 61: RSL Re-lets by Specialist Housing Type			
Type of Specialist Housing	New-Let	Re-Let	Total
Ambulant Disabled		2	2
Amenity		32	32
Extra Care Housing		52	52
General Needs	64	864	928
Sheltered	3	45	48
Very Sheltered Housing		31	31
Wheelchair	7	1	8
Other Specialist Housing	2	81	82
Total	76	1,108	1,184
Source: RSL Summary of Information, March 20223			

Currently SBC holds no information on the number of specialist housing in the private sector.

6.2   Developing Specialist Housing

Table 62 below shows the planned affordable housing developments in the Scottish Borders over the next five years, this table has been developed through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028. While the data is constantly changing based on when developments finish this gives an indication of the planned works over the coming years. Throughout the plan period, 24% of all planned works are for particular needs housing which includes amenity housing, learning disability housing, extra care housing and wheelchair housing.

Table 62: Summary of Planned New Affordable Supply Provision in Scottish Borders SHIP 2023-2028[4]			
	General Needs	Particular Needs	Total
2024-2025	143	1	144
2025-2026	111	45	156
2026-2027	138	14	152
2027-2028	295	45	340
2028-2029	169	161	330
Total	856	266	1,122
Source: Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028			

6.3   Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Scottish Borders Council commissioned consultations to develop a wheelchair housing study. In January 2020 the finalised report was published, titled "A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders". The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at a national as well as at a local level by Scottish Borders Council and partner agencies. A target of 20 homes per annum has been identified, of which 15 will be provided by RSLs.

Scottish Borders' local research estimates that 220 households require wheelchair housing. Different surveys report variable estimates of the numbers of wheelchair user households. The resulting figures are summarised in table 63 below. Essentially:

- The North Star (2018) approach involved applying wheelchair user household prevalence rates from the English Housing Survey (EHS) to the latest household estimates for the Borders.
- The Family Resources Survey approach employed a method set out by Perry (2014), who essentially estimated that some 10% of people with a disability use a wheelchair. A weighting was then applied to convert population into household estimates.

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[4] The SHIP sets out proposals for the coming 5 years and it is important to appreciate that the profile of the approved programme as well as actual out-turn typically differ somewhat.

- The first set of Scottish Household Survey (SHS) estimates were based on the average percentage of wheelchair user households for each of the years 2015 to 2017 inclusive. These estimates are substantially lower than the others due to the fact that the SHS only identifies cases where a person uses a wheelchair indoors.
- The second set of SHS estimates incorporated an estimate for outdoor wheelchair use, using figures from the EHS, that suggest up to 74% of people use a wheelchair outdoors only. The resulting estimates are in reasonable alignment with the other survey-based estimates.
- The fifth set of estimates use prevalence rates published by Sports England. However, it has not been possible to track the original source for these, which casts doubt on their validity.
- The final set of estimates are based on NHS wheelchair service users in England. These figures are lower than the survey-based estimates. The two most likely reasons for this are that patient records may be incomplete and/or that a proportion of wheelchair users do not make use of services managed by NHS clinical commissioning groups. Non users would include people that buy or rent a wheelchair privately or access wheelchairs loaned by charitable organisations. For instance, the Red Cross loaned out 138 wheelchairs to people that required the temporary use of a wheelchair in the Scottish Borders in 2018.

Table 63: Alternative estimates of households that contain a wheelchair user		
	Scottish Borders	**Scotland**
North Star approach estimates	2,000	89,200
FRS derived	2,300	103,400
SHS derived estimates (indoor only)	600	23,800
SHS revised (indoor and outdoor)	2,200	96,700
Sports England	1,700	74,800
NHS England	1,600	73,000
Sources: North Star (2018), Perry (2014) SHS 2015-17, NRS household estimates for 2018, NHS England wheelchair patient figures and study team's own calculations Notes: 1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest hundred. 2. All of the estimates are based on the population that live in private households and exclude wheelchair users that live in an institution such as care home. 3. NHS England data was used as the NHS Scotland SMART service had yet to respond to our formal "freedom of information" request at the point when the report was finalised.		

Based on the proceeding analysis:

- Somewhere between 1,600 and 2,300 households contain at least one person that has to use a wheelchair, with a central figure of 2,000.
- The above range suggests that as a general rule of thumb around 3.5% of all households in the Scottish Borders contain a wheelchair user. This equates to 8.5% of all households with a disability, which is a denominator routinely published in SHCS tables.
- There is a minimum of 600 wheelchair user households where one or more persons have to use a wheelchair indoors. This sub-group is likely to be in most 'need' of a specifically designed or adapted accommodation to ensure their home is suitable for everyone in the household.
- This group of 600 wheelchair user households most likely includes most, if not all, of the 80 families with children that use wheelchairs. As these households should be known to children's services, it should be possible to identify and pro-actively plan for those families that would benefit from homes built or adapted to wheelchair accessible standards.

Assuming that wheelchair user households continue to make up around 3.5% of all households, NRS projections indicate that the total numbers of wheelchair user households could increase from 2,000 in 2018, to 2,082 in 2028 and to 2,100 by 2031. Thus by 2023 there would be around an additional 50 wheelchair user households seeking a suitable home and by 2028 there would be over 80 additional wheelchair user households seeking a suitable home. Building on this simple projection of the potential growth in the numbers of wheelchair user households, three different scenarios have been produced

detailing how the additional numbers of wheelchair user households might impact on the overall potential 'gross' need for a suitably designed home in the decade to 2028 and beyond. All three scenarios are based on the assumption that there were 220 wheelchair user households in housing need in 2018. The core estimate of the numbers of wheelchair user households that are unsuitably housed and require a move to a home designed to HfVN wheelchair accessibility standards are that:

- The core scenario assumes that all the additional wheelchair user households likely to emerge in the period to 2028 would require a suitable wheelchair accessible home. Under this scenario, the potential shortfall in HfVN wheelchair standard homes could increase from 220 in 2018 to 266 by 2023 and to 302 by 2030. This would imply that, on average, 30 homes might be required over each of the next 10 years.
- The second scenario assumes that 50% of the 'additional' households would prefer to see their current home modified to suit their needs. Under this scenario, the numbers of HfVN wheelchair accessible homes that might be required would increase to 244 by 2023 and to 261 by 2028. This would imply that some 26 wheelchair accessible homes might be required each year for the next 10 years.
- The third scenario assumes that 75% of the additional households would prefer an in-situ solution, which would lower the potential requirement for HfVN wheelchair standard requirement to around 24 homes each year in the period to 2028.

Data is not published on private housing built to full wheelchair standards and this is a gap that needs to be addressed. There needs to be further work done to enable the council (and other local authorities) to be able to profile wheelchair housing and accessible housing the in the private sector.

6.4   Adaptations – Including Care and Repair

Data on housing adaptations is provided through the Scottish Household Survey 2019, with some limitations in the results when data is presented by sub-category due to sample sizes. This suggests that around 7,500 homes have adaptations in place in the Scottish Borders. The predominant adaptations across the region are handrails, specially designed / adapted bathrooms or showers, ramps and door entry systems.

Table 64: Adaptations in place			
	Household estimates (rounded)	Adaptations in place as % housing stock	Estimated no. of adapted homes
Scottish Borders	50,000	15%	7,500
Scotland	2,500,000	17%	425,000
Source: Scottish Government (2021) Scottish Household Survey 2019 Housing adaptations & support- Adaptations that are already in place			

Further cross-tenure information is available through the Scottish House Conditions Survey. Table 65 indicates that 13% of stock is adapted for a person with limited mobility in the Scottish Borders South East Scotland compared to 15% across Scotland. Around 21% of the Scottish Borders social housing is adapted, compared to 10% owner-occupied housing, unfortunately the private rented housing figure is not available for the Scottish Borders due to small sample sizes.

The range presented through the two national surveys suggest that between 7,000 and 7,500 (13%-15%) of homes in the Scottish Borders have some form of adaptation for a person with a health or mobility issue.

Table 65: Adapted stock by tenure								
	Owner occupied No.	% of Owner-occupied	Social rented No.	% of Social rented	Private rented No.	% of Private rented	Total No.	% of Stock
Scottish Borders	4,000	10%	3,000	21%	*	*	7,000	13%
Scotland	255,000	17%	213,000	33%	48,000	15%	516,000	15%
Source: Scottish Government (2021) Scottish House Conditions Survey 2017-19.								

In terms of the delivery of housing adaptations, local authorities provide grants for disabled adaptations in private housing under their Scheme of Assistance. Based on the trend from 2014-15 to 2019-20, an average of 82 housing adaptations are delivered in the Scottish Borders each year. The number of adaptations across the region peaked in 2015-16, suggesting a move from smaller works to major adaptations.

During the 2020/21 period a total of £173,221 was spent on adaptations throughout the region in the private sector. Despite Covid-19 restrictions a total of 41 adaptations were delivered.

Table 66: Number of Scheme of Assistance / disabled adaptations								
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Average No.
Scottish Borders	88	102	81	92	85	90	41	83
Scotland	6,487	6,482	5,967	5,660	5,458	4,869	2,894	5,432
Source: Scottish Government (2022) Housing Statistics Scheme of Assistance.								

Table 67 details the number of people receiving aids and adaptations in the Scottish Borders.

Table 67: Number of persons receiving aids/adaptations and handyman services									
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Minor Adaptations & Repairs	375	396	429	333	421	400	264	353	353
Handyperson Jobs	4,495	4,632	4,256	4,154	4,058	4,060	2,643	3,931	3,726
Major adaptations	75	102	81	85	94	116	41	33	68
Source: SBC and Care and Repair									

In 2011 there was a significant move to the development of a 'One Stop Shop' model for all adaptations in the Borders, which was achieved through an agreement with each of the four larger Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). This provides a consistent adaptation service to all people in the Borders regardless of tenure. Through the One Stop Shop approach, Care and Repair effectively spend the funding awarded from the Scottish Government national budget, referred to as Stage 3 funding, for each of the RSLs. Table 68 details the number of major adaptations by each RSL.

Table 68: Number of Major Adaptations carried out by RSLs						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Berwickshire Housing Association	18	17	23	13	11	30
Eildon Housing Association	34	37	24	15	22	36
Scottish Borders Housing Association	59	61	55	10	26	91
Waverley Housing	12	13	15	7	13	13
Total	123	128	117	45	72	170
Source: SBC and Care and Repair						

Table 69 provides information on spend on adaptions over seven years. During the 2022/23 period a total of £400,407 was spent on major adaptations throughout the region in the private sector and £564,263k on social rented adaptations, this is considerably more than the previous year which was affected due to Covid restrictions.

Table 69: Spend on RSL and private sector major adaptations						
	2016/17	2017-18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Social Rented Sector Major Adaptations	£322k	£423k	£453k	£409k	£140k	£346k	£564k
Private Sector Major Adaptations	£375k	£442k	£4116k	£429k	£173k	£129k	£400k
Source: SBC and Care and Repair							

The ambition for individuals to live at home for longer as they age, ensuring people can live in the community and not in institutions, points to an increased need for accessible housing for all. Even when the new Accessible Housing Standard comes into force in 2025-26, the provision of adaptations will continue to be in high demand for existing housing, and a broader range of clients, including those with physical disabilities, autism, learning disabilities and sensory impairments.

The Scottish House Condition Survey provides estimates of properties requiring adaptations by local authority area. Table 70 shows the requirement for adaptations over a period of time, with an average requirement in the Scottish Borders of 3%. The requirement in the Scottish Borders has halved from 2016-2018 to 2017-2019 but this data is taken from sample surveys with impacts on data confidence at lower geographical levels and should therefore be treated with some caution.

Table 70: Dwellings requiring adaptations						
	No. 2015-2017	% 2015-2017	No. 2016-18	% 2016-2018	No. 2017-19	% 2017-2019
Scottish Borders	2,000	4%	2,000	4%	1,000	2%
Scotland	62,000	3%	62,000	2%	82,000	3%
Source: Scottish Government, Scottish House Condition Survey, 2015-17, 2016-18, 2017-2019.						

Whilst adaptations numbers and spend can be quantified, projecting the future need for adaptations is challenging, due to the changing demographics of South East Scotland. The 3% requirement for adaptations in dwellings will considerably increase in the context of household growth and an ageing population. There will also be some housing stock that cannot be adapted and, under such circumstances, alternative accessible or adapted housing will be required for the occupant.

6.5   Care Homes

According to the annual adult care home census, on 31st March 2022 there were 26 registered care homes in the Scottish Borders, the majority of which cared for people aged 65+, except for 3. Of the 26 total, 6 were local authority/Health and Social Care Partnership care homes, 17 were private sector, and 3 were voluntary/not-for-profit (these same 3 are dedicated to adults <65 years only). Since 2012 there are the same number of LA care homes, but 2 fewer private sector, and 6 fewer voluntary/not-for-profit.

In 2021, there were on average 684 people residing in Care Homes each month in the Scottish Borders. Each month on average there were 21 new residents and 23 residents whose care home stay ended.

Table 71: Care home provision					
	No. care homes	No. registered places	No. long stay residents	No. short stay/respite	% Occupancy
Scottish Borders	26	798	618	44	83%
Scotland	1,051	40,579	31,863	1,380	82%
Source: Care Home Census for Adults in Scotland Statistics for 2022					

A modelling exercise was undertaken by Public Health Scotland to advise on demand for and commissioning of care home beds in the Scottish Borders for the next 10 years (to 2030).

Demographic modelling indicates that there would be a need for 187 additional care home beds within the Scottish Borders by 2030. This represents an annual increase of between 14 and 20 care home admissions per year. However, past experience is that care home demand will not increase proportionately to demographic change.

- Between 2009 and 2019, care home bed numbers in Scottish Borders increased by just 1%, despite a 20% increase in the population aged 75 and over. This disparity is shared across Scotland with a Scotland overall change of -1% during this period.
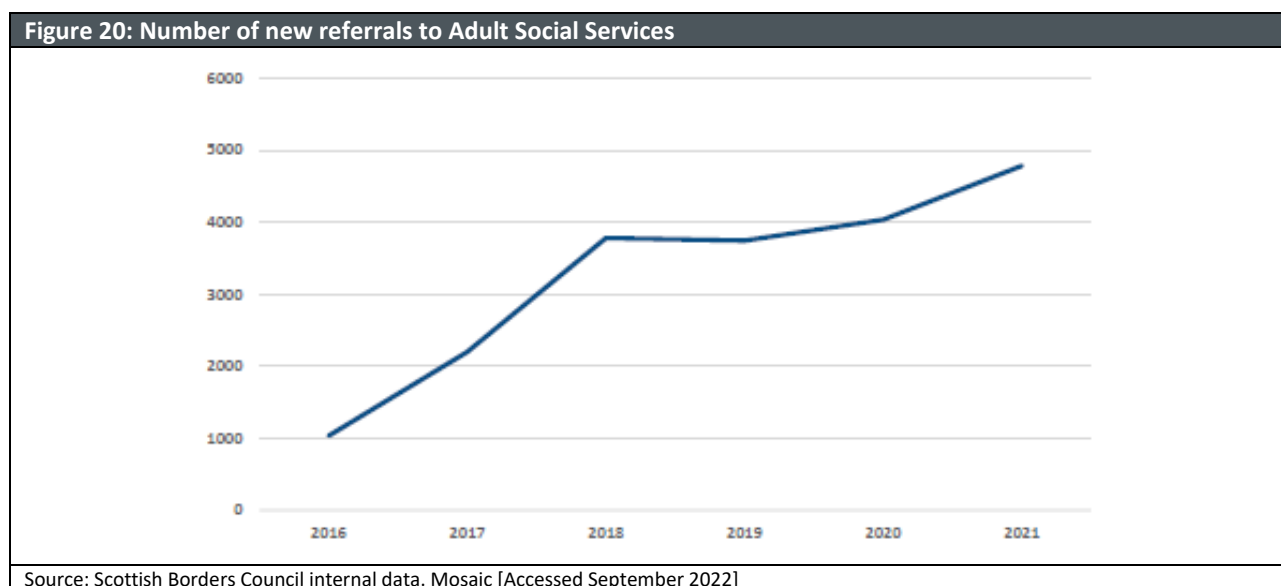
- Scottish Borders has the 3rd lowest number of care home residents per head population in Scotland and has been amongst the lowest 4 local authorities for the past 10 years (2009 to 2019).

Studies show that fewer older people enter care homes in rural areas compared to urban areas and this may be related to closer family support networks. This suggests older people in the Borders manage to remain at home longer than in other places.

6.6   Care and Support for Independent Living at Home

Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care refers to the support and care assessment and provision given to all adults, including older people. There were a total of 6,466 referrals to Adult Social Services in 2021. Of these, 4,782 were new referrals (clients who are new to the service or whose case was previously closed). A further 1,680 referrals were for clients already known to the service.

Figure 20: Number of new referrals to Adult Social Services

Source: Scottish Borders Council internal data. Mosaic [Accessed September 2022]

According to Care Inspectorate data, there are 43 care at home and housing support services registered, employing a total of 793 staff. The third and independent sectors are collectively the largest employer of social care staff comprising of 67% of the staff delivering care to people living in their own homes and 83% of the beds provided in care homes. The remaining 33% of staff are employed by the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership, in the Scottish Borders Council.

Most care at home services are delivered by the organisation SB Cares. Until 1 December 2019, SB Cares was registered as a Limited Liability Partnership wholly owned by Scottish Borders Council, although Councillors have since approved the recommendation to bring the partnership back into full ownership of the Council.

Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support (SDS) is an approach to social care that allows individuals more control and choice over the support they receive. All social work assessments leading to support use a self-directed approach which is built into the assessment process. There are 4 options with Self Directed Support:

1. Direct payment - People receive an individual budget to arrange their own support. People may employ who they choose and when/how the work is done. This option offers the most flexibility but may be challenging as it effectively makes the service user an employer for their care services.
2. Individual Service Fund – When the person's budget is paid directly to the service providing care for them.

3. Social Work Services – When local authority holds the budget and arranges any support needed.
4. A mix of the above options – People have choice to control some of the budget but not all of it.

The number of people using SDS has increased from 2,360 in financial year 2017/2018 to 3,005 in 2020/21. Since 2016, on average most people received option 3 (76%), followed by option 1 (17%) then option 4 (7%). Less than one percent of people used Option 2.

Care at Home

As Scotland policy agenda moves away from institutional settings and congregate environments, the provision of care and support is paramount to ensure individuals can live at home for as long as they want. Individuals may require care and support at different points in their life, or not at all. This section looks at the levels of care and support required to enable the following groups of people to live independently at home providing they would prefer to do so:

- Older People - people are living longer, leading to a higher incidence of frailty, dementia and co-morbidities.
- Individuals with short-term or long-term disabilities/conditions – this covers a range of individuals including those who have multiple and complex needs and require 24/7 care, to individuals who require weekly housing support or peer worker input.

In 2021, there were an average of 1,367 Home Care clients each month and 549,018 hours of care work delivered. Most Home Care clients are over the age of 65.

Table 72: Number of people receiving Home care services in the last week of March 2014-2022		Mar 14	Mar 15	Mar 16	Mar 17	Mar 18	Mar 19	Mar 20	Mar 21	Mar 22
Age 18-64	No. of people receiving Home Care	113	99	99	91	102	-	144	133	130
	No. of hours of Home Care	981	867	828	982	1,072	-	1,791	1,683	1,606
	No. of people receiving personal care at home	101	85	90	83	93	-	-	-	-
	No. of hours of personal care	903	784	725	927	1,013	-	-	-	-
Age 65+	No. of people receiving Home Care	1,259	1,165	1,167	1,095	1,047	-	1,230	1,210	1,112
	No. of hours of Home Care	8,213	7,577	7,584	7,073	7,518	-	9,986	9,785	7,704
	No. of people receiving personal care at home	1,244	1,150	1,161	1,089	1,040	-	-	-	-
	No. of hours of personal care	7,976	7,332	7,013	6,879	7,245	-	-	-	-
Source: SBC (accessed Sept 2022)										

Technology Enabled Care

Technology Enabled Care (TEC) aims to empower people to better manage their health and wellbeing using digital solutions. It consists of equipment to support people to remain safe and independent at home or in a community setting. Equipment can range from personal alarms and devices to activity pattern monitors. A TEC assessment is available for anyone with a social care need. Table 73 below provides local data on the number of people receiving community alarms in the Scottish Borders, clearly showing a big increase in 65 years and over receiving a community alarm from 2018/19 to 19/20, although this reduced significantly in 2021/21.

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Table 73: Telecare Data for Scottish Borders						
	2016/17	2017-18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. receiving community alarm or telecare aged 18-64	239	219	239	290	125	141
No. receiving community alarm or telecare aged 65+	1,690	1,445	1,637	2,564	829	1,103
Total	1,929	1,664	1,876	2,854	954	1,244
Source: SBC data. This includes information on single properties and does not include information on community based housing (ECH, care homes etc).						

Unpaid Carers

Unpaid Carers are defined as people who care without pay for a family member, friend or neighbour, who, because of a long-term illness, disability or neurological difference, could not manage without this support. The illness can be a physical or mental health condition or an addiction. People can become carers at different ages and stages of life, and they do not have to live with the person they care for. Many carers find themselves juggling paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities, including parents of children with additional support needs.

The numbers of unpaid carers in each Health and Social Care Partnership area are difficult to identify exactly and data can only be sourced from the Scottish Health Survey and the 2011 Scotland Census. The Scottish Government estimates the number of unpaid carers living in Scotland to range between 700,000 and 800,000 each year. Carers Scotland estimates that there are 759,000 adult carers in Scotland, including 29,000 young carers. Table 74 outlines Census data on the number of unpaid carers across South East Scotland as a proportion of local population. The total for Scotland during this period is significantly lower than the 2019 estimation of unpaid carers living in Scotland. This suggests the number of unpaid carers has been increasing which is likely to be linked to the ageing population.

Table 74: Unpaid carers		
	People providing unpaid care No.	Population %
Scottish Borders	10,350	9.1%
Scotland	492,230	9.5%
Source: 2011 Census provided through Scotland's carers statistical release by Scottish Government.		

The number of children aged 4-15 in Scottish Borders who act as a carer for someone may be (if the situation in Borders is similar to that for Scotland) roughly 760, translating as around 4% of all children in this age group. This is somewhat higher than the 187 carers aged under 16 who were counted via the 2011 Scotland Census.

The Census figures are acknowledged as under-counting the total numbers of carers in the population, particularly young carers and/or people who provide smaller amounts of care each week. They are, however, felt to provide good estimates of the numbers of people who provide substantial levels of care and support each week, particularly those providing 35 or more hours.

Care at Home

Scotland has been experiencing a Care at Home crisis, with the Scottish Government undertaking a series of meetings to resolve significant interruptions in the care of individuals. During June-July 2021, an increasing number of providers in the independent sector were struggling to maintain their businesses, specifically smaller and more local providers. Across social care, the care is being provided only to those whose needs are critical or substantial. The Care at Home crisis results from the combination of increasing pressure on the sector, with a lack of staff combined with the impact of COVID-19 and withdrawal from the European Union. Care Workers often work in poor conditions, with travel time not being paid and often working over 40 hours a week. There is also a requirement for an increase in skills by care staff. A lack of carers across

Scotland can have a negative impact of other support services and increase pressure on other types of support provision.

The Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership Integrated Joint Board recently completed the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (October 2022) which provides a more information and data on the of the health and care needs of the population in the Scottish Borders (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

6.7 Learning Disabilities

People with learning disabilities have a significant, lifelong condition that starts before adulthood, which affects their development and which means they need help to understand information; learn skills; and cope independently.

The number of people with learning disabilities is growing in Scottish Borders and there is an increase in the complexity and number of health and support needs requiring input from the Health and Social Care Partnership. Demand is from both younger people living with more complex health conditions (including a greater proportion of increased physical support needs) and people living longer into older adulthood.

In 2021, there were 702 people known to the Health and Social Care Partnership with a learning disability, of whom 101 have a diagnosis of a learning disability and autism (14%). This is likely to be an underestimation of both population statistics. The Scottish Government cites that around 32.7% of people with a learning disability also have a diagnosis of autism.

In 2021, 30 adults with a learning disability were placed in support arrangements out of the Scottish Borders and of these, 8 people are a priority to return to the area when appropriate accommodation and support can be established.

In 2022 there were 96 young people between the ages of 14-18 identified to the learning disability service, where transition to adulthood support is needed.

There is a need to ensure accommodation is fit for purpose as people age, including provision of level access; technology being retrofitted into the home (or built in when it is constructed), and dementia friendly accommodation.

The Learning Disability service currently funds 456 packages of support equating to a value of £2,550,734 in residential care costs and £18,370,939 in community care support.

- There are a number of agreements in place with Housing providers to ensure there is appropriate housing available to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. These are:

- Ark Housing
- Autism Initiatives
- Brothers of Charity
- Community Integrated Care, Jedburgh
- Cornerstone
- Eildon Housing Association
- Garvald, West Linton
- Garvald Home Farm
- Mears Supported Living
- Real Life Options
- Streets Ahead
- The Richmond Fellowship Scotland (TRFS)

There are currently 229 tenancies within the Scottish Borders for people with learning disabilities, with approximately 25 vacancies. There are 75 people seeking to move, 25 of whom are deemed as urgent. These tenancies are show in the table 75 below by settlement.

Table 75: Current Accommodation in the Scottish Borders	
Settlement	Number
Coldstream	5
Duns	19
Earlston	4
Galashiels	60
Hawick	33
Jedburgh	11
Kelso	19
Peebles	10
Selkirk	10
St Boswells	5
Tweedbank	12
West Linton	41
Total	229
Source: Scottish Borders Learning Disability Service – as of Feb 2023.	

There are currently 20 potential future developments in Tweedbank and in Stirches in Hawick.

6.8   Gypsy/ Traveller and Show People

Gypsy/ Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group by the Scottish Government. There is a large body of evidence, both in Scotland and in the UK, which shows a lack of access to culturally appropriate housing which is a major contributory factor in poor health, education and societal outcomes experienced by Gypsy/Travellers. It is important to note that local authorities are under no legal duty to provide sites for Gypsy/Travellers or for Travelling Showpeople.

Gypsy/ Traveller Population
The population size of the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller community is unknown. Until 2009 the Scottish Government conducted a biannual count. However, this did not include Gypsy/Travellers living in houses for all or part of the year or those on roadside camps or on private sites. Gypsy/Travellers' ethnicity is protected by the Equality Act 2010, and the 2011 Census was the first to include Gypsy/Travellers as a distinct group. While the 2011 Census only captures, at best, 20% of the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland, it is the only means to evidence Gyspy/Travellers.

Table 76 shows that 1.5% of Scotland's population of Gyspy/Travellers reside in the Scottish Borders. However, it is widely recognised that self-identifying as Gypsy/Traveller is under-reported due to historical and current fears of discrimination and stigma. The actual number of Gypsy/Travellers is thought to be much higher. In addition, the data from the Census does not indicate how many Gypsy/Travellers live in general 'housing' and how many live on public/private sites, nor how many reside in general housing but would prefer to live on sites. Organisations that work with the Gypsy/Traveller community estimate that the truer figure is around 15,000 Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. This would suggest the number of Gypsy/Travellers in the Scottish Borders is more likely to be 225, based on an assumed 1.5% share of Scotland's total.

Table 76: People self-identifying as 'White: Gypsy/Traveller'	
	Total number
Scottish Borders	64 (1.5%)
Scotland	4,212
Source: Census 2011	

The age profile of those living in the Scottish Borders in 2011 is shown in table 77:

Table 77: Age Profile of Gypsy/Travellers	
	Total number
0-15	6
16-24	3
24-34	5
35-49	31
50-64	11
65 and over	8
Source: Census 2011	

Current provision
The only provision across the region is a seasonal site open between April-October. The site is SBC owned but privately run. Allocation of pitches is completely managed by the site operator and no nominations arrangement is in place between the operators and SBC.

Victoria Park in Selkirk was offered as a temporary provision to families identified in unauthorised encampments during the Covid-19 pandemic. The provision ended on 30th June 2022.

Unauthorised Encampments
Table 78 provides information on unauthorised encampments from February 2019 to August 2022. A total of 33 unauthorised encampments were set up during this period, consisting of 73 caravans (on average 2.3 per encampment, ranging from one to nine caravans) for an average of 5.18 days with the shortest stay being one day and the longest being 23 days.

Locations of unauthorised encampments are outlined in table 78 below with Selkirk being the most frequented location.

Table 78: Overview of unauthorised encampments: Feb 2019-Aug 2022	
Location	**Number of Encampments**
Selkirk	11
Tweedbank	6
Galashiels	5
Hawick	4
Kelso	3
Phillip View	1
Lauder	1
Melrose	1
Gunsgreen	1

Assessment of Accommodation Need

In the summer of 2022, the Gypsy and Traveller (GT) Engagement and Needs Report was commissioned and developed to form part of the engagement of the LHS. This has resulted in the table below which provides an overview of the accommodation needs of gypsy/ travellers in the Scottish Borders.

Table 79: GT Accommodation Need Across the Scottish Borders		
Overview	**Pitch provision/ requirement**	**Commentary**
Current Residential Supply		
Current supply of occupied socially rented residential site pitches	0	Based on data from SBC
Current supply of occupied authorised privately owned site	0	Based on data from SBC
Current supply of occupied authorised privately owned seasonal site pitches	9	Based on data from SBC
Pitch provision on authorised sites	9	
Additional Demand		
New local authority pitches planned	0	Based on data from SBC
Temporary provision/ agreed stopping points (Victoria Park)	1	Based on data and commentary from SBC – pitch requirements have changed considering the movements of the families form Victoria Park site
Existing applications for private site provision/ extension	0	Based on data from SBC
On unauthorised encampments	13	Based on data from SBC – 6 households setting up more than one unauthorised encampment with an average of 2.15 caravans (assessment period Feb 19-Oct 22)
Those occupying the seasonal site seeking increased provision	4	Based on data through direct surveys with those occupying the Innerleithen site
In housing but with a need for site accommodation	10	Assuming that 30% of households identified in the 2011 census (31) would take up a place on a site, if offered
Total estimated current backlog of need	28	Note: this includes 4 households occupying the seasonal site that have indicated a need for an increased provision
Estimated current need for permanent site provision	15	Made up of the needs of those from Victoria Park, in housing and with a need for site accommodation provision from seasonal site
Estimate current need for temporary site provision	13	Made up from those setting up reoccurring unauthorised encampments.
Estimated additional household formation 2023-2028	3	This is an estimate of new households likely to form based on those aged 0-15 in the 2011 census, those aged 0-10 identified in the survey exercise (that have remained in the region), assuming that 30% would take up site accommodation, if offered. Note: this does not include data from unauthorised encampments.
Source: Gypsy and Traveller Engagement and Needs Report October 2022		

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7.   Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

7.1   Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty occurs when households cannot afford to keep their homes adequately warm because the cost of heating are higher than average and paying for those costs leave households below the poverty line. A household is considered to be in fuel poverty if it spends more than 10% of household income on fuel, and in extreme fuel poverty if it spends more than 20% of income on fuel.

There are three main factors that influence whether a household is in fuel poverty:

1. Household income – the cost of heating a property forms a greater proportion of total income for those on low incomes.
2. Fuel costs – the prices of different types of fuels varies considerably; in some areas/properties consumers are unable to choose an economical type of heating systems. Even with high levels of investment in energy efficiency measures, the recent increases in fuel prices have pushed many families back into fuel poverty.
3. Energy efficiency – thermal quality of the building and the efficiency of the heating source impact on heating costs.

A fourth factor has also been identified as a cause of fuel poverty:

4. How people use their heating systems and live within their home.

While this fourth factor is not unique to fuel poor households, the absence of energy efficiency behaviours can affect an increased vulnerability to, and entrench people within, fuel poverty. Vulnerable households can also find it more challenging to develop strategies to tackle fuel poverty themselves and participate in support programmes.

Fuel poverty is a particular issue facing households in Scottish Borders. The extent of fuel poverty in the Scottish Borders is worse than across Scotland. In the Borders, 29% of households are fuel poor in comparison with 24% nationally. This is exacerbated by a number of factors including the rural nature of the area, the type of housing and the low wage economy, and contributes to higher levels than the Scottish average.

Tables 80 and 81 below provide a summary of households in fuel poverty by housing characteristics and by housing tenure and household type.

Table 80: % of Households Fuel Poor and Extreme Fuel Poor								
Local Authority		% Overall	Fuel Poverty by Dwelling Characteristics					
			Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
			Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	Fuel Poverty	29%	33%	26%	26%	38%	36%	24%
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	14%	17%	12%	11%	21%	22%	9%
Scotland	Fuel Poverty	24%	26%	24%	21%	30%	29%	20%
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	12%	16%	10%	11%	13%	13%	11%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019								

Table 81: % of Households Fuel Poor and Extreme Fuel Poor								
			Fuel Poverty by Household Attributes					
Local Authority		% Overall	Tenure			Household Type		
			Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	Fuel Poverty	29%	21%	51%	*	38%	20%	24%
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	14%	11%	24%	*	20%	*	14%
Scotland	Fuel Poverty	24%	16%	38%	37%	27%	17%	27%
	Extreme Fuel Poverty	12%	9%	14%	22%	14%	5%	14%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019								

From the previous national survey, fuel poverty levels have stayed the same, but extreme fuel poverty has decreased by 1%. Levels of Fuel Poverty remain a challenge and a priority. With energy cost increases and uncertainty within the energy markets, Fuel Poverty is expected to increase across the country.

Figure 21: Changes in fuel poverty and extreme fuel poverty from 2013-2015 to 2017-2019

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019
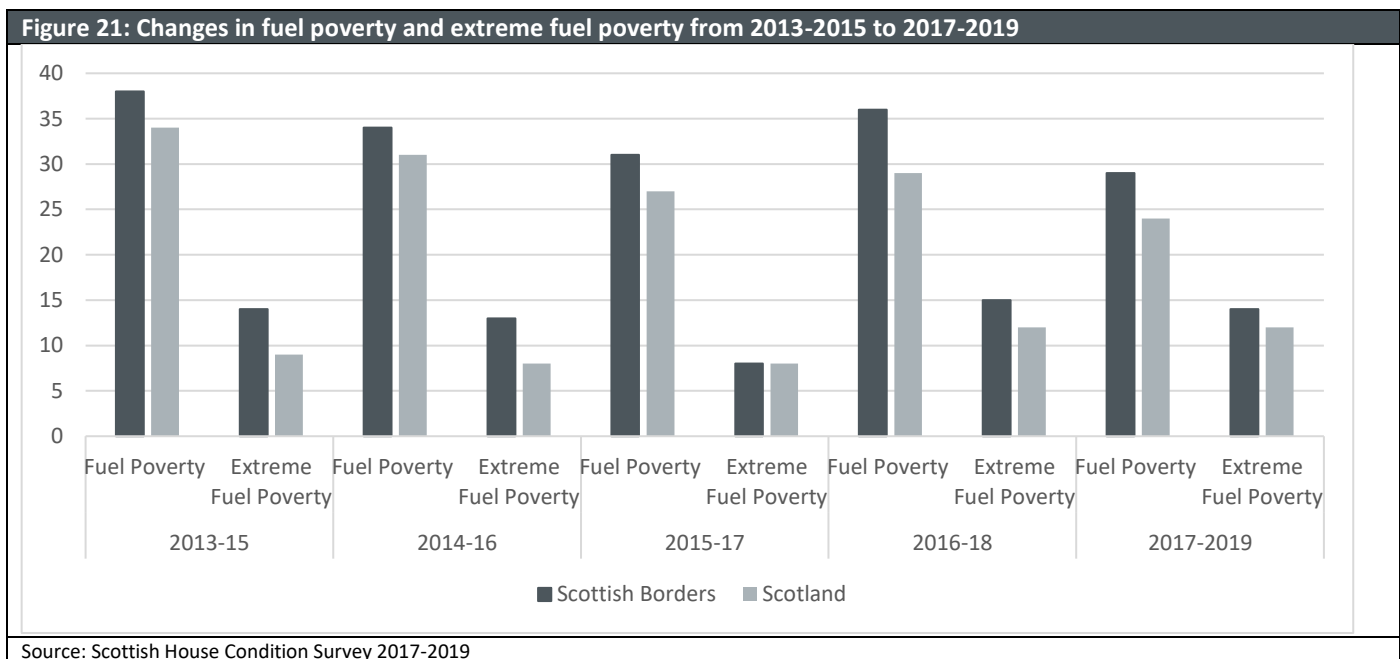
7.2   Energy Efficiency of Housing

The Scottish Borders has a lot of solid stone construction, older properties. Pre-1919 solid stone buildings are very energy inefficient and do not retain heat. Significant energy savings can be achieved by insulating these properties. This requires a lot of investment in property and insulation improvements. There needs to be a focus on fabric first improvements, i.e. insulation. Our strategy is to continue to offer and promote internal wall insulation as a core part of EES:ABS. Other insulation solutions are also considered where a potential scheme area can be identified. Ongoing data analysis is used to identify suitable property types where the households are most likely to meet the EES:ABS eligibility criteria.

Table 82: Dwelling Characteristics of all housing Stock					
Local Authority	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms
	Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	33%	67%	76%	24%	37%	63%
Scotland	30%	70%	64%	36%	50%	50%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019						

Table 83: Housing Attributes of all housing Stock						
Local Authority	**Tenure**			**Household Type**		
	Owner-occupied	**Social Housing**	**Private Rented**	**Older**	**Families**	**Other**
Scottish Borders	63%	23%	14%	39%	26%	36%
Scotland	62%	26%	13%	32%	23%	44%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019						

A success metric is to see the percentage of domestic properties where loft and wall insulation increases. Across the region there has been a steady increase from the baseline measurements established in 2019. Schemes such as EES:ABS, EESSH in social housing and fabric first improvements will continue to address these areas and increase insulation.

Table 84: Wall insulation level			
	Base line	**March 21**	**Nov 22**
Cavity	76%	77.8%	78.8%
Solid brick or stone	13%	14.5%	15%
Loft Insulation>100mm	64%	85.7%	85.5%
Home Analytics 3.8 and previous years Home Analytics 3.7			

The rural nature of the region means we need to have flexible delivery of schemes so that we can reach as many communities as possible whilst still retaining a focus on deprived areas or households in fuel poverty that require support to achieve affordable warmth. Through data analysis and regional profiling SBC look to identify rural communities to support.

The Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification provides a standard definition of rural areas in Scotland. The Scottish Borders has no large urban areas and only two settlements are classed as other urban areas, Hawick and Galashiels.

Table 85 provides the percent of population in each 8-fold Rural Urban category for the Scottish Borders and Scotland. It shows that 53% of the population in the Scottish Borders live in rural areas, compared with the national figure of 21%.

Table 85: Percent of population in each 8-fold Rural Urban category for the Scottish Borders and Scotland								
	Large Urban Areas	**Other Urban Areas**	**Access. Small Towns**	**Remote Small Towns**	**Very Remote Small Towns**	**Access. Rural**	**Remote Rural**	**Very Remote Rural**
Scottish Borders	0.0	25.1	22.0	6.0	0.0	36.1	10.7	0.0
Scotland	34.6	36.2	8.5	2.3	1.2	11.2	3.2	2.8
Source: Scottish Government, 2018								

Table 86 shows that more dwellings in the Scottish Borders (just over a quarter) are off the gas grid, compared to the national figure of just under a fifth of dwellings. Dwellings are more likely to be off gas if they were built pre-1945, if they are houses or larger dwellings, and if they are in the owner occupied sector.

As a lot of areas are not served by the gas grid there is real opportunity to introduce alternative heating systems instead of oil, LPG or old inefficient electric heating. Rather than offer new oil or LPG boilers, there is a move towards replacing these systems with renewable technology. These measures have been recently been offered through the EES:ABS scheme where Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV with battery storage systems have been installed.

Table 86: % of Dwellings which are off the Gas Grid							
Local Authority		**Off Gas Grid by Dwelling Characteristics**					
		Age of Dwelling		**House or Flat**		**Number of Bedrooms**	
	% of LA	**Pre-1945**	**Post 1945**	**House**	**Flat**	**2 or fewer**	**3+**
Scottish Borders	28%	38%	23%	35%	7%	22%	32%
Scotland	17%	16%	18%	23%	6%	12%	22%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Income data is provided through the Scottish Government's local level household income estimates for 2018. These are research-based statistics and do not represent national or official statistics. The lower quartile, median and upper quartile income weekly estimates are shown in table 87. The Scottish Borders has a lower level of income compared nationally, and income is an important part of fuel poverty and the ability to afford heating.

Table 87: Income Data		
	Scottish Borders	**Scotland**
Lower Quartile	£320	£330
Median	£530	£550
Upper Quartile	£870	£920
Source: Scottish Government, Local Level Household Income Estimates, Banded Income 2018		

Although we have been seeing a slow, gradual reduction in levels locally of fuel poverty, the cost of living crisis and huge rise in energy bills will see an increase in households in fuel poverty. We will continue to work to mitigate against this rise through the delivery of energy efficiency schemes targeting households most at risk and making affordable warmth achievable for more households.

Ensuring housing and homes are as energy efficient as possible is the easiest and most direct way to reduce energy consumption. The housing stock across the region presents challenges due to the age and construction type. Part of the ongoing energy efficiency scheme aims to target these property types and to ensure people have access to affordable warmth.

7.3 Energy Performance Certificate – Regional Assessment

Part of addressing fuel poverty, increasing housing standards and delivering council strategies relies on improving the EPC rating of properties. This is a standard assessment measure used nationally to define standards. Whilst the energy efficiency of Scotland's homes is improving, around 55% of properties are still rated below the recommended minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'C'. SBC has a lower than the Scottish average media EPC rating and has a medial average of D. Local strategies are focussing on addressing this to increase EPCs. (Source: - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8)

Currently the EPC average scoring for the localities across the Borders, split by tenure, as shown in table 88 below.

Table 88: EPC rating by Tenure and Locality				
Locality	**Compliant with EPC C or higher (by 2040)**			**Compliant with EPC B (by 2032)**
	Owner Occupied	**Social Housing**	**Privately Rented**	**Social Housing**
Berwickshire	26%	62%	19%	21%
Cheviot	35%	82%	22%	14%
Eildon	32%	72%	24%	13%
Teviot and Liddesdale	25%	77%	24%	4%
Tweeddale	34%	65%	22%	8%
Source: Energy Saving Trust - Home Analytics Scotland V3.8				

Since the previous LHS (2017-2022) there has been steady and consistent improvements made as shown in the below table 89 which is based on the most recent Home Analytics data. The table shows the average increase in EPC rating for the Scottish Borders and in particular the increase in the social rented sector. The improvements reflect the uplift in EPCs required by the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing legislation - EESSH 1 and EESSH 2 and ongoing stock improvement and maintenance, and new builds being to a higher energy efficiency standard.

The key drivers are continuing energy efficiency home improvements through insulation and upgraded heating, either through 5 years of EES:ABS & Warmer Homes Scotland schemes which are for householders paying for measures themselves. Improvements across the private rented sector have seen the lowest increase, but has still shown an increase. EES:ABS is available to some landlords and there are EST loans available also to support home energy efficiency improvements in this sector. The lack of a driver such as the delayed Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards may also have slowed improvements.

Table 89: Current compliance with Energy Efficient Scotland EPC ratings, by locality and tenure type, presented as % of stock			
Averages - EPC C or higher	2018	2023	Increase
Owner Occupied	24%	30%	6%
Social Housing	42%	72%	30%
Private Rented	19%	22%	3%
Source: Home Analytics v3.8 (Feb 2023)			

7.4   Energy Efficiency Programmes

The Council works in partnership with Changeworks (as the managing agent) to deliver Energy Efficiency Programmes – Area Based Schemes (EES:ABS), building on the strong relationships established over previous years. This partnership allows the Council to benefit from the expertise required to maximise the effectiveness of this project and to build on the successful outcomes delivered to date. The schemes follow an area based approach with focus on the most deprived areas, drawing on a range of data including indices of multiple deprivation, child poverty, the Scottish House Condition Survey, heat mapping and local knowledge.

Scottish Government funding for private home energy efficiency improvements is known as the Energy Efficient Scotland Area Based Scheme (EES: ABS). The funding enables investment in: external and internal wall insulation; cavity wall insulation; loft insulation; and underfloor insulation. As well as offering insulation and fabric first measures the scheme will also aim to deliver more renewable technology in off gas grid areas, such as Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar PV and Battery Storage systems.

The EES:ABS continues to be a core delivery channel for addressing fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth across the region. The funding allocated to SBC for EES:ABS has steadily increased. EES:ABS has provided varied insulation schemes and there is a continuing need to offer Internal Wall Insulation given the region's housing stock (i.e. older, solid walled properties that are unsuitable for cavity insulation).

Renewable technology and insulation which enables more economic use of heating energy are both key factors in supporting climate change mitigation within the region. The 2022/23 EES:ABS scheme saw a successful funding application of £1.8 million for the region and in 2023/24, SBC have been allocated £1.82 million to deliver the next EES:ABS cycle. This is an increase on the previous years. We are working with Changeworks to develop a number of schemes to deliver in the region that will focus on supporting those in fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency and reducing energy use.

The Covid pandemic had a massive impact on the delivery of EES:ABS as work could not be undertaken during the lockdown restrictions and this is reflected in underspend. However, the recent scheme delivery has seen positive bounce back as delivery and supply returned to pre pandemic levels. Table 90 below

provides a summary of the funding that SBC has received from Scottish Government over the past nine years and number of measures installed across the number of properties supported.

Table 90: Investment in EES: ABS in the Last 9 years			
Households assisted by HEEPS: ABS	HEEPS: ABS investment levels	Measures installed	Households supported
2015/16	£1.5	311	311
2016/17	£1m	1,256	1224
2017/18	£1.23m	735	623
2018/19	£1.34m	428	387
2019/20	£1.35m	100	81
2020/21	£1.72m	195	176
2021/22	£1.78m	192	116
2022/23	£1.8	225	138
2023/24	£1.82		
Source: SBC and Changeworks monitoring data			

SBC and its partners have been successful in utilising EES: ABS funding for private home energy efficiency improvements. Key achievements in the past two years are:

2021/22
- Scottish Borders Council allocated £1.78m grant funding from Scottish Government for 2021/22 EES: ABS Programme (previously HEEPS:ABS)
- For the second year of EES:ABS renewable low carbon technology was offered as part of the scheme assistance with an Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme, to support properties in off gas areas, and a Solar PV and battery storage scheme delivered in the region.
- Internal Wall Insulation scheme remains a core stream of EES:ABS given the large number of solid stone older properties across the region.
- Warm & Well Borders released £900k of savings and income maximisation for Borders households, working with CAB and Changeworks. A 1 year extension to the scheme was secured up to 2023.
- 92% of properties meeting EESSH as of year-end 2021. RSLs are now working to the higher EESSH 2 standards.

2022/23
- Scottish Borders Council allocated £1.8 grant funding from Scottish Government for 2022/23 EES: ABS Programme.
- For the third year of EES:ABS renewable low carbon technology was offered as part of the scheme assistance with an Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme, to support properties in off gas areas, and a Solar PV and battery storage scheme delivered in the region. This shows the commitment to decarbonisation and promotion of renewable technologies in line with wider climate change targets.
- Internal Wall Insulation scheme remains a core stream of EES:ABS given the large number of solid stone older properties across the region.

2023/24
- Scottish Borders Council allocated £1.82 grant funding from Scottish Government for 2023/24 EES: ABS Programme.
- Early scoping exercise for the 23/24 scheme delivery has now begun. A review is being undertaken of properties within the region that would meet the eligibility criteria and would allow an equitable blend and spread of support measure, including renewable technologies.
- Fabric first measures such as Internal Wall Insulation are being proposed.

Energy Company Obligation. ECO 4 and Flexible Eligibility

As part of the conditions of the EES:ABS grant, Local Authorities are required to outline how they will support ECO 4 and ECO flexible eligibility and to publish a Statement of Intent. Scottish Borders Council recently published our ECO 4 SOI and are actively looking at ways to lever best value whilst protecting households. SBC are reviewing ECO Flexible Eligibility mechanisms to fully understand and realise how ECO can be maximised in our region whilst ensuring the protection of consumers. At present the council will only accept referrals from approved delivery partners.

7.5   Registered Social Landlords

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) fill in an annual summary of information each year, this includes information on stock, re-lets, rents and from 2022 also includes EPC data. Tables 91 and 92 below show information on the main heating type and EPC's of all housing association stock in the Scottish Borders. Table 90 shows that that main heating type in RSL properties is gas (73%) and electric (17%), making up 90% of social rented housing. Table 92 shows the EPC rating in all properties, clearly showing that the majority of stock has an EPC of C or above, accounting for 77.4% of stock.

Table 91: Main heating type RSL/ Housing Association Stock as of March 2023		
	No.	**%**
Heat Pump Ground/Air	698	6.4%
Electric	1,876	17.1%
Gas	7,984	72.7%
Oil	5	0.0%
Room Heaters Only	1	0.0%
Solid	234	2.1%
Other/Not Listed	187	1.7%
Total	10,985	100%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23		

Table 92: Number of EPC's in RSL/ Housing Association Stock as of March 2023		
	No.	**%**
A	31	0.3%
B	1,510	13.7%
C	6,996	63.4%
D	1,649	15.0%
E	534	4.9%
F	120	1.1%
G	4	0.0%
No EPC	141	1.3%
Total	10,985	100%
Source: RSL Annual Summary of Information 2022/23		

Registered Social Landlords across the Borders have their own targets known as Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESSH). The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. It will help to reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases. EESSH 1 standards were due in 2020 and RSLs are now working towards the higher standards required for EESSH 2 which are due to be met in 2032.

RSL stock compliance levels with 2020 EESSH 1 are as follows (delivery was impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic):

- Waverley – 96.1% (March 22)
- SBHA – 97.7% (March 22)

- BHA – 81.7% (March 22)
- Eildon – 95.0% (March 22)

Average compliance with EESSH 1 was 93% across the region in 2022. There were several abeyances and no access issues as well as properties being due for demolition.

SBHA has the highest EESSH 1 score, meaning the largest proportion of their stock complied with EESSH 1, while BHA has a significantly lower score. This is due to BHA having much older stock, where it is more difficult and expensive to improve energy efficiency. Each RSL has their own programme for improvements meaning they are all at a different stage of working through their stock schedules in the most time and cost effective manner for them. RSL's also have a duty to react to the needs of tenants or urgent time sensitive works meaning the rollout of energy efficiency measures can be impacted. Further issues facing RSL's can include tenants not allowing access or improvements and some properties are scheduled for demolition meaning they are not identified for improvements.

8.   Private Sector House Condition

8.1   House Condition

The 2020 Scottish House Condition Survey results show that the Scottish Borders has higher instances in terms of urgent housing disrepair and % properties failing the tolerable standard than the Scotland average. The housing condition profile is worse than Scotland and suggests that the majority of homes (74%) have some element of disrepair. Housing quality levels are poorer than Scotland, showing that almost 1 in 2 homes fail the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Table 93: Summary of Scottish House Condition Survey data – 2017-2019	Scottish Borders	Scotland
Disrepair to critical elements	56	53
Urgent Disrepair to critical elements	25	20
Urgent Disrepair	31	28
Extensive Disrepair	2	6
Disrepair	74	71
Below Tolerable Standard	2	2
Fails Scottish Housing Quality Standard	48	41
Condensation	9	8
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019		

Tables 94 through to 105 provide more in depth information on the information in the above table based on dwelling information and household information. The Scottish House Condition Survey reports that 56% of dwellings in the Scottish Borders have disrepair to 'critical elements' of their fabric, two thirds of which are in need of urgent attention. These cover building elements critical to ensuring weather tightness, structural stability and preventing the deterioration of the property.

Table 94: % of Dwellings with Disrepair to Critical Elements by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	56%	70%	50%	53%	68%	62%	53%
Scotland	53%	69%	46%	48%	61%	57%	49%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Table 95: % of Dwellings with Disrepair to Critical Elements by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	56%	52%	60%	*	53%	57%	60%
Scotland	53%	49%	56%	65%	48%	53%	56%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Urgent disrepair relates to cases requiring immediate repair to prevent further damage or health and safety risk to occupants. Older properties and flats have a higher percentage of urgent repair to critical elements compared to the Scottish Borders figure of 25%.

Table 96: % of Dwellings with Urgent Disrepair to Critical Elements by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	25%	40%	18%	23%	31%	25%	25%
Scotland	20%	29%	16%	18%	24%	22%	18%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Table 97: % of Dwellings with Urgent Disrepair to Critical Elements by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	25%	22%	25%	*	22%	25%	29%
Scotland	20%	18%	20%	30%	18%	19%	22%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Urgent disrepair relates to cases requiring immediate repair to prevent further damage or health and safety risk to occupants. Table 98 shows that the Scottish Borders has a higher proportion of dwellings with urgent disrepair and nearly half of older properties have urgent disrepair.

Table 98: % of Dwellings with Urgent Disrepair by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	31%	48%	23%	29%	40%	31%	32%
Scotland	28%	38%	24%	25%	34%	30%	26%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Table 99: Urgent Disrepair by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	31%	28%	31%	*	28%	33%	34%
Scotland	28%	26%	29%	38%	25%	29%	31%

Extensive disrepair relates to cases where the damage covers at least a fifth (20%) or more of the building element area.

Table 100: Extensive Disrepair by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	2%	5%	*	2%	*	*	2%
Scotland	6%	8%	5%	5%	8%	7%	5%

Table 101: % of Dwellings with Extensive Disrepair by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	2%	3%	-	*	*	-	5%
Scotland	6%	5%	6%	9%	3%	7%	7%
Source: Scottish House Condition Survey 2017-2019							

Any (or Basic) disrepair relates to any damage where a building element requires some repair beyond routine maintenance. For example, a leaking tap would be considered any (or basic) disrepair.

Table 102: % of Dwellings with Disrepair by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	74%	89%	66%	70%	86%	85%	67%
Scotland	71%	84%	65%	66%	78%	75%	67%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

Table 103: % of Dwellings with Disrepair by Households Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	74%	68%	79%	*	73%	73%	76%
Scotland	71%	67%	76%	80%	65%	71%	74%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

The Tolerable Standard is a basic level of repair a property must meet to make it fit for a person to live in. A home may not be fit to live in if:

- it has problems with rising or penetrating damp
- it's not structurally stable (for example, it might be subsiding)
- it does not have enough ventilation, natural and artificial light or heating
- it's not insulated well enough
- it does not have an acceptable fresh water supply, or a sink with hot and cold water
- it does not have an indoor toilet, a fixed bath or shower, and a wash basin with hot and cold water
- it does not have a good drainage and sewerage system
- the electric supply does not meet safety regulations
- it does not have a proper entrance
- there are no cooking facilities – this does not mean the landlord has to provide a cooker, but there must be somewhere suitable for a tenant to install their own

Table 104: % of Dwellings considered to be Below the Tolerable Standard (BTS) by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	2%	5%	-	2%	*	*	2%
Scotland	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

Table 105: BTS (Below Tolerable Standard) by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	2%	*	-	*	*	*	*
Scotland	2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

Information from the Scottish House Condition Survey from the Scottish Borders on damp hasn't been available since the 2015-2017 data. Tables 106 and 107 below provide information on penetrating and rising damp. The most recent SHCS shows the figure for Scotland has remained the same at 3%.

Table 106: Damp (penetrating or rising) by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	4%	4%	4%	4%	*	4%	4%
Scotland	3%	6%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Source SHCS 2015-2017							

Table 107: Damp (penetrating or rising) by Household Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	4%	4%	6%	*	6%	*	*
Scotland	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Source SHCS 2015-2017							

Table 108: % of Dwellings with Condensation by Dwelling Characteristics							
Local Authority	% of LA	Age of Dwelling		House or Flat		Number of Bedrooms	
		Pre-1945	Post 1945	House	Flat	2 or fewer	3+
Scottish Borders	9%	10%	9%	7%	15%	14%	7%
Scotland	8%	10%	7%	7%	10%	9%	7%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

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Table 109: % of Dwellings with Condensation by Housing Attributes							
Local Authority	% of LA	Tenure			Household Type		
		Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Older	Families	Other
Scottish Borders	9%	4%	18%	*	4%	13%	13%
Scotland	8%	6%	12%	12%	5%	11%	9%
Source: SHCS 2017-2019							

8.2   Scheme of Assistance

SBC have been proactive in tackling poor property condition in private sector housing through the Scheme of Assistance, which offers advice and assistance to local households to carry out repair and improvement work to their homes. Housing Officers work with owners and private landlord to tackle issues of poor property condition, common works, and, where necessary, in collaboration with building standards the use of enforcement powers.

The provision of the Private Sector Housing Grant for repair works relative to the tolerable standard ceased with the introduction of the Housing Scotland Act 2006 and the scheme of Assistance. A mandatory grant remains for adaptation to meet the needs disabled people.

Table 110: All info and advice and practical assistance cases						
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Info and advice:						
Website Hits						
Leaflets Issued	89	60	50			
Telephone Advice	105	130	94			
Pro-active Visits	25	22	24	23		
Practical Assistance:						
Provided by Housing Team	25			40	46	38
Referrals		15				
Total	244	227	168	63	46	38

Common repairs are those to parts of the building for which all owners as a group are responsible for maintaining. Action is needed to improve the condition of our tenements to ensure that our buildings can provide good quality, safe and sustainable homes in the future.

The maintenance of common property is an important issue and owners in tenements, both homeowners and landlords, need to fully accept their shared responsibilities for maintaining their property. It is important that where there are powers under existing legislation, these are being used appropriately. Scottish Borders Council have developed a range of guidance to promote joint working leading to pro-active repair and maintenance.

There is a serious disrepair problem re-emerging within our built environment. Scotland's private housing stock is deteriorating because of a lack of regular and on-going maintenance and repair.

9.   Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

9.1   Homeless Population

In the Scottish Borders, the number of homeless applications has remained relatively steady since 2011/12 as a result of a proactive approach to prevention through the delivery of the Housing Options approach. Figure 22 shows there was an increase in the number of homelessness applications between 2016/17 and 2019/20, this decreased slightly in 2020/21 – 2021/22 but rose again in 2022/23. Rates of homeless applications in the Scottish Borders now account for about 2% of households[5].

In 2022/23, there were 784 applications made under the Homeless Persons legislation in the Scottish Borders, which is higher than the 686 applications received in 2020/21 and 682 in 2021/22 during the pandemic. It is also slightly higher than the 770 applications received in 2019/2020. The rate of homeless applications is generally now on an upward trend (despite lower levels during the pandemic). Homelessness in the Scottish Borders accounts for 2% of homelessness in Scotland as a whole.

Figure 22: Homelessness applications, by local authority: 2002-03 to 2022/23

Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023
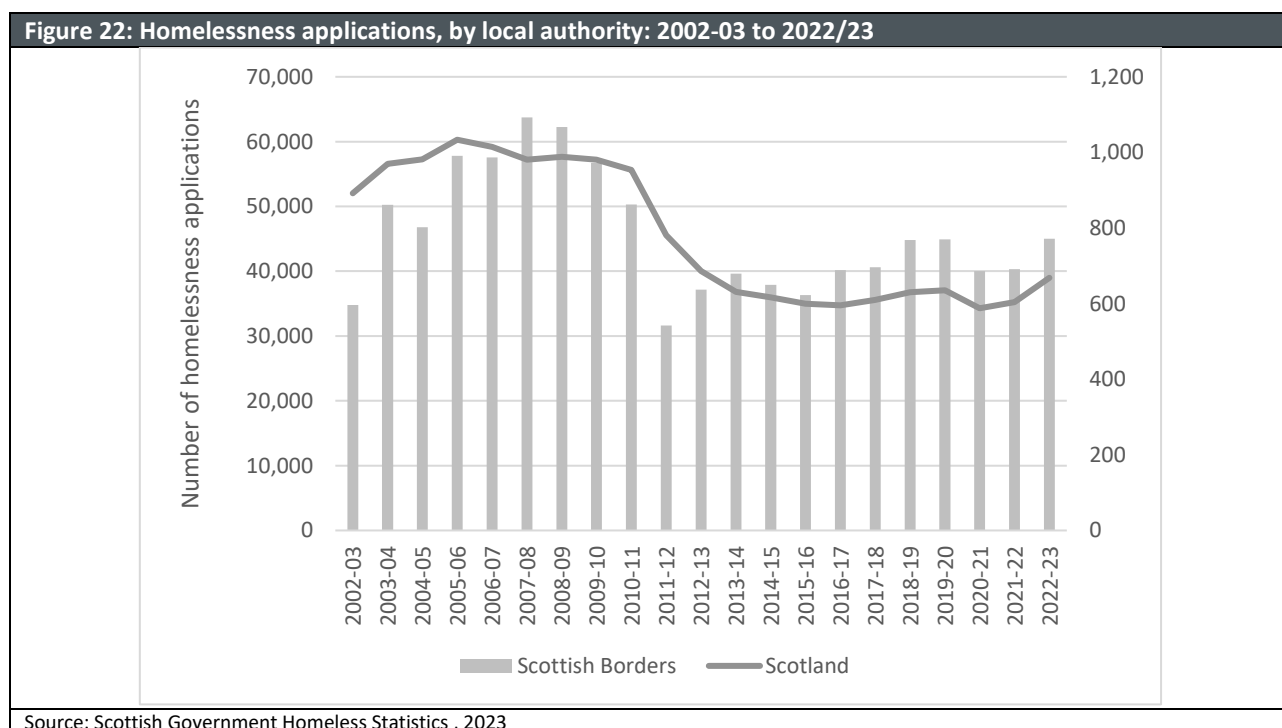
Table 111 shows the number of assessment decisions of homeless applications, showing that 85% are assessed as homeless which is very similar to the national percentage (81%).

Table 111: Homelessness assessment decisions: 2022/23

		All homeless (or threatened)	Unintentionally homeless (or threatened)	Intentionally homeless (or threatened)	Other[6]	All
Scottish Borders	No.	665	660	5	115	780
	%	85%	85%	0.6%	15%	100%
Scotland	No.	32,242	31,732	510	6,865	39,107
	%	82%	81%	1%	18%	100%
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023						

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[5] Please note that any trend data from 2020/21 is not a reflection of previous trends and due to changes to accommodate the pandemic and lockdown measures, it doesn't truly represent the homelessness picture in the Scottish Borders.
[6] Other includes; neither homeless nor threatened with homelessness, applicant resolved homelessness prior to assessment decision, ineligible for assistance, lost contact before assessment decision and withdrew application before assessment decision

Tables 112 and 123 below have a slightly higher figure than the Scottish Government data. This is due to the way the Scottish Government rounds its data and the HL1 database being an active/ working database so the figures can change slightly. Tables 111-112 present data on the numbers of people specifically assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, while Table 113 includes data for all people assessed. Table 112 clearly shows that highest number of homelessness assessments are for single people, accounting for 51% of assessments.

Table 112: Homelessness assessment decisions by household type: 2022/23		
Household Type	Total	%
Couple with children	52	7.6
Couple without children	34	5.0
Other household with children	30	4.4
Other household without children	29	4.3
Single parent female	111	16.3
Single parent male	77	11.3
Single person female	143	21.0
Single person male	204	30.0
Total	680	100%
Source: SBC HL1 data		

Table 113 shows the number of homelessness decisions by age, prior to 2019-2020 the highest number of assessments were in the 16-24 year old age group. Since 2019-20 the highest number of assessments have been in the 25-34 year old age group, accounting for 31% of assessments in 2022-2023.

Table 113: Homelessness assessment decisions by household type: 2022/2023		
Age Range	Total	%
16-24	142	21%
25-34	211	31%
35-44	159	23%
45-54	94	14%
55-64	46	7%
65 and Over	28	4%
Total	680	100%
Source: SBC HL1 data		

As shown in table 114, the most common reasons for homelessness are disputes in the applicant's household/relationship breakdown (22% non-violent and 11% violent or abusive); and the applicant being 'asked to leave' by their landlord or household (28%).

Table 114: Homelessness assessment decisions by reason: 2022/23		
Technical Reason	**Total**	**%**
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	12	1.5
Asked to leave	219	27.5
Discharge from prison/ hospital/ care/ other institution	32	4
Dispute with household/relationship breakdown: non-violent	171	21.5
Dispute with household/relationship breakdown: violent or abusive	89	11.2
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order from Environmental Health etc.)	10	1.3
Fleeing non-domestic violence	11	1.4
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	13	1.6
Harassment	17	2.1
Loss of service/tied accommodation	8	1
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	111	14
Other reason for leaving accommodation/ household	62	7.8
Other reasons for loss of accommodation	10	1.3
Overcrowding	6	0.75
Termination of tenancy/mortgage due to rent arrears/default on payments	22	2.7
Total	792	100
Source: SBC HL1 data		

Key headlines for the homeless population in the Scottish Borders are as follows:

- 50% of homeless assessments are single people
- 27% of homeless assessments are single parents
- 39% of homeless assessment included households with children (225 households)
- 21% of homeless assessments were young adults aged 16-24 (120 households)
- 33% of homelessness assessments were the result of a relationship breakdown

The number of repeat homelessness assessments has remained at a similar level over the past ten years, as shown in Table 115, with the current percentage being 2%. The percentage in the Scottish Borders is lower than the national each year.

Table 115: Households re-assessed as homeless within one year, as a proportion of all households assessed as homeless: 2011/12 – 2021/22												
	2011-12	**2012-13**	**2013-14**	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**	**2017-18**	**2018-19**	**2019-20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
Scottish Borders	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	4%	3%	2%
Scotland	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023												

9.2 Homelessness Prevention/ Housing Options

Homeless prevention has been a major aspect of the national housing agenda for more than a decade, with national policy focusing on the delivery of a Housing Options approach to preventing homelessness in Scotland and delivering national housing outcomes. A commitment to the delivery of person-centred, preventative services which target early intervention and personal choice is now the bedrock of Scottish Housing Options policy.

Since 2012, homeless prevention has been very effective in the Borders. Within the prevention model, the Council recognises homelessness as a complex issue that encompasses health, employment, education, offending, finance, relationships and families. Dealing effectively with homelessness requires a multi-agency approach.

The number of households making prevent approaches has reduced from 2020/21 – 2021/22.

Table 116: Households making PREVENT1 approaches, 2015/16 to 2021/22								Change 2020/21 – 2021/22	
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	No.	%
Scottish Borders	867	848	727	581	425	315	275	-40	-13%
Scotland	56,584	52,372	45,953	44,680	41,936	37,410	40,060	2,650	7%
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023									

The main reason for approaching homeless prevention services is having to leave accommodation or households, accounting for 42% of approaches. This is slightly lower than the national trend of 44%.

Table 117: Reason for PREVENT1 approach, 2021/22					
	Accommodation is no longer available	Had to leave accommodation/ household	Property may no longer be suitable/ available in the future	Other	All
Scottish Borders	70	115	75	20	275
Scotland	6,690	17,820	14,530	1,020	40,060
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023					

Tables 118 and 119 provide information on the activities carried out by SBC with the majority receiving advice of their rights under the homelessness legislation. In the Scottish Borders, the mostly common type of activity is type 1 - active information, sign-posting and explanation.

Table 118: Prevention activities carried out, 2021/22		
	Scottish Borders	Scotland
Mediation/ outreach work	0	1,510
Financial assistance/ advice	15	5,070
Rent/ repairs/ referrals/ negotiation with landlords	10	5,470
Help to remain in accommodation	0	2,030
Mortgage/ home ownership advice	0	360
Tenancy/ social care support/ adaptations to property	0	1,130
Referral to health/ social work/ employment services	0	4,085
Client informed of rights under homelessness legislation	250	24,815
General Housing advice/ tenancy rights advice	10	31,670
Help to move property	25	5,250
Other	0	6,675
Total	320	88,065
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023		

Table 119: Maximum type of activity, 2021/22				
	Type I – Active Information, Sign-posting and Explanation	Type II – Casework	Type III – Advocacy, Representation and Mediation at Tribunal or Court Action Level	All
Scottish Borders	195	80	5	275
Scotland	17,220	22,515	65	39,800
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023				

Table 120 shows the outcome of prevent approaches, over half of approaches result in making a homelessness application (71%) which is much higher than the national figure (55%). As a result of prevent approaches, 15% remain in the current accommodation, 6% get an RSL tenancy and 3% get a PRS tenancy, meaning 26% of all prevent approaches are helped to stay their current accommodation or to access a new tenancy.

Table 120: Outcome of PREVENT1 approach, 2021/22								
	LA/ RSL Tenancy	PRS Tenancy	Moved-in with friends/ relatives	Lost Contact/ Not known	Remained in current accom	Made homelessness application to local authority	Other (known)	All
Scottish Borders	20	10	0	15	45	220	5	310
Scotland	1,790	805	615	3,390	8,040	20,520	1,825	36,980
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023								

9.3 Specific Groups

Significant government focus has been on specific groups at risk of homelessness, including people leaving prison, young care leavers, and women (with accompanying children) experiencing domestic abuse. The expectation is that local authorities should develop specific pathways for each of these groups to prevent them from entering the homelessness system. Some of the wider pressures in the Scottish Borders include:

Young people
The number of young people presenting as homeless has remained steady since 2011/12 with figures decreasing in the past three years. This is in line with the national trend where the number of applications has continued to decrease since 2010/11.

Figure 23: Households (aged 16-24) applications as homeless or threatened with homelessness

Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023
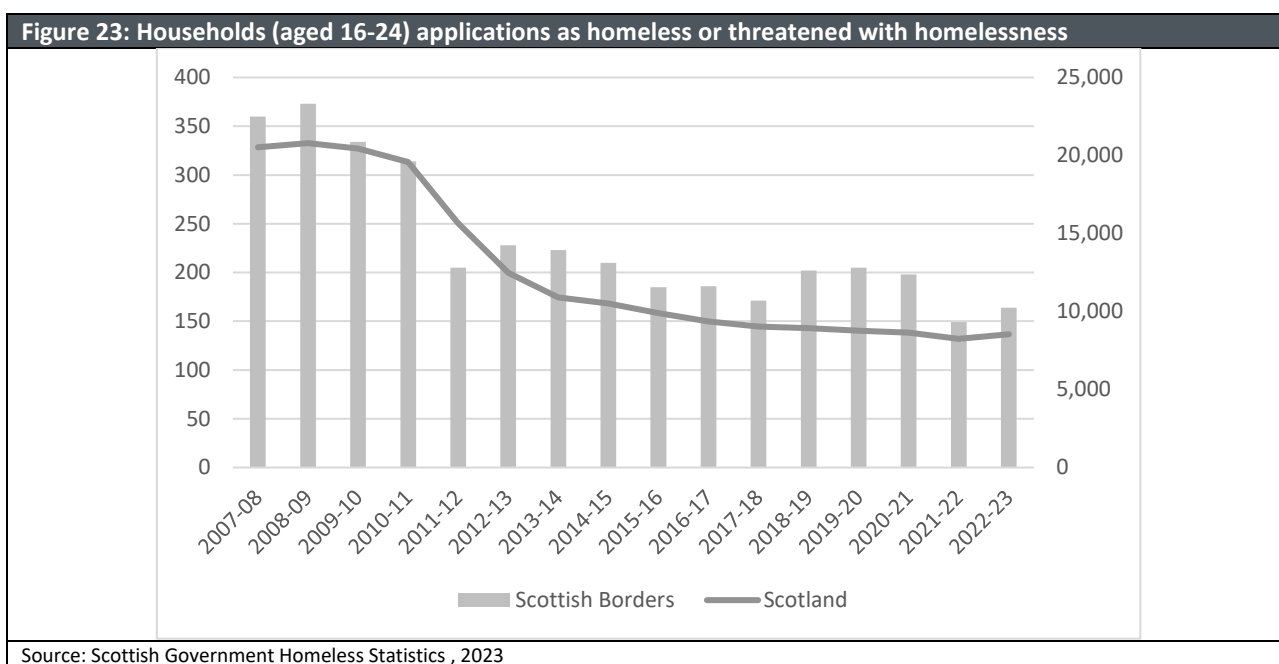
The Scottish Borders has the 14th highest number of young people assessed as homeless as a proportion of the population (out 32 local authorities). As shown in table 121 it is 14 per 1,000, with the average for Scotland being 12.6.

Table 121: Youth homeless hotspots (2022/23)			
	Assessed as homeless	Mid-2019 population	Youth Homeless per 1000 population
Scottish Borders	141	10,077	14.0
Scotland	7,015	557,816	12.6
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023			

Table 122: Outcomes for households assessed as unintentionally homeless where contact was maintained 2022/23									
	LA tenancy	Private rented tenancy	Hostel	Returned to previous/ present accom	Moved-in with friends/ relatives	Other (known)	Not Known (Contact maintained)	RSL	All
Scottish Borders	0	5	0	5	5	0	0	105	120
Scotland	2,779	143	40	284	336	348	119	1,660	5,709
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023									

Veterans

The number of applications and assessments of veterans has remained at a steady level over the last ten years although in the last three years the figure has dropped, fluctuating between 15 and 20.

Table 123: Homeless Applications from former members of the armed forces												
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
Scottish Borders	10	20	10	35	25	30	30	30	30	15	20	15
Scotland	1,240	1,085	965	925	890	810	920	995	920	835	780	820
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023												

Table 124: Assessed as homeless from former members of the armed forces												
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
Scottish Borders	10	15	5	30	25	25	25	25	25	10	20	10
Scotland	1,005	895	795	770	740	690	740	830	810	685	650	690
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics , 2023												

Domestic violence

Based on the data available, 64 women on average presented as homeless following incidences of domestic abuse each year in the Scottish Borders (over a ten year period). In 2018/19, 65 women presented as homeless, this is 22% of all single females and single female parents.

Table 125: Homeless applications from single female or female single parent households due to a violent or abusive dispute in the household												
		2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
Scottish Borders	Single Female	45	25	35	30	40	30	30	*	*	*	*
	Single Female Parent	30	20	35	25	30	25	35	*	*	*	*
Scotland	Single Female	1,575	1,495	1,615	1,475	1,470	1,605	1,640	1715	1700	1,740	1,690
	Single Female Parent	1,680	1,555	1,585	1,510	1,570	1,625	1,710	1800	1660	1,705	1,755
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023												
*Data not available												

Table 126: All applications by single female or female single parent households												
		2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
Scottish Borders	Single Female	160	155	130	135	155	165	165	*	*	*	*
	Single Female Parent	75	75	90	80	100	100	125	*	*	*	*
Scotland	Single Female	8,316	7,752	7,590	7,286	7,059	7,217	7,640	7560	7184	7573	8185
	Single Female Parent	6,688	6,085	5,921	5,750	5,897	6,163	6,360	6042	5248	5653	5985
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Statistics, 2023												
*Data not available												

Prison Service

Table 127: Homeless Applications from Prison Service											
	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019	2019/ 2020	2020/ 2021	2021/ 2022	2022/ 2023
Scottish Borders	30	35	35	35	35	25	30	30	35	20	25	25
Scotland	2,245	2,210	2,135	2,085	1,985	1,955	1,875	1,840	2,005	1,815	1,675	1,630
Source: Scottish Government Homeless Analysis 2023											

The Scottish Borders Council Homeless Service is the interface point for people leaving prison who have no fixed address.

Table 128: No of statutory homeless applications where the last settled address is recorded as Prison			
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/2022
28	34	21	23

9.4 Temporary Accommodation

Table 129 shows the number of households in temporary accommodation at 31st March over a 7 year period. From 2022 to 2023 there was an 9% increase in households in temporary accommodation across the Scottish Borders, compared with 6% nationally. The demand for temporary accommodation has continued to increase since Covid, which is also the case nationally. To ensure homeless or potentially homeless households within the Scottish Borders had suitable accommodation available to them that allowed them to comply with the imposed lockdown measures, homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to increase the availability of temporary homeless accommodation by 15 properties, and ensured homeless applicants had continued access to permanent accommodation and support.

Table 129: Households in temporary accommodation									Change 2022 to 2023	
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	No.	%
Scottish Borders	82	87	83	81	81	97	108	117	8	9%
Scotland	10,543	10,873	10,933	10,989	11,807	13,753	14,214	15,039	825	6%
Source: Scottish Government (2023) Households in temporary accommodation at 31 March.										

In terms of the type of temporary accommodation placements, 17% of households were placed in a local authority ordinary dwelling and 66% were placed in 'other place by LA', this includes all other property not owned by the local authority, such as mobile homes, caravans or chalets. While the aim had been to reduce temporary accommodation by 14 units in 2021, that target has been reviewed due to the legacy created by the pandemic.

Table 130: Temporary accommodation placements								
	LA	RSL	Hostel	B & B	Women's Refuge	Private Sector Lease	Other placed by LA	Total
Scottish Borders	50	45	0	5	0	0	190	290
Scotland	12,180	2,900	7,580	10,425	255	1,495	4,680	39,515
Source: Scottish Government (2023) Number of temporary accommodation placements, by type of accommodation 2022/23								

Table 131 shows the average number of days spent in temporary accommodation, while the average length of stay has increased since 2014/15 it has remained similar for the past nine years, with an average of 120 over the nine years.

Table 131: Average length of stay in temporary accommodation	
Year	Days
2014/15	100
2015/16	92
2016/17	116
2017/18	118
2018/19	128
2019/20	116
2020/21	124
2021/22	145
2022/23	142
Source: SBC Data and SG data	

9.5 Housing Support

The Housing Support Service forms part of the Council's Homelessness and Financial Support Team and consists of an internal Housing Support team and a commissioned service.

Housing Support offers accessible, flexible and personalised support to individuals in critical need to enable them to secure, establish, manage and maintain their home. The team's objectives are to:

- Prevent homelessness through the provision of person centred housing support
- Prepare individuals/households for independent living, and help them maintain their housing independence
- Assist and support households towards securing suitable, affordable, sustainable permanent accommodation
- Support households regardless of accommodation status i.e. in temporary accommodation, at home and no fixed abode
- Promote the health, wellbeing and social integration of homeless households

Table 132 provides information on the number of cases opened each year with 470 opened in 2022/23.

Table 132: Number of cases open within Housing Support Services (inclusive of Commissioned service(s)	
Year	Number
2014/15	237
2015/16	383
2016/17	356
2017/18	278
2018/19	296
2019/20	395
2020/21	386
2021/22	415
2022/23	470
Source: SBC Data	

Table 133 provides the number of referrals received to housing support services, since 2019/20 there has been a decrease in the number of referrals as the method for calculating this has changed. This has reduced double counting and made the figures more robust.

Table 133: Number of referrals received to Housing Support services (inclusive of Commissioned service(s)	
Year	Number
2016/17	580
2017/18	476
2018/19	592
2019/20	388*
2020/21	261
2021/22	265
2022/23	301
Source: SBC Data * Please note new method is being used. Previous years have included some double counting between services	

Table 134 shows the percentage of cases that recorded a positive outcome, since 2019/20 this has remained fairly steady clearly showing that people who receive housing support are than likely to receive a positive outcome.

Table 134: Case closed with positive outcome recorded as a proportion of total number of housing support cases closed	
Year	Number
2017/18	73%
2018/19	74%
2019/20	82%
2020/21	85%
2021/22	83%
2022/23	78%
Source: SBC Data	

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Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028

Consultation and Engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

The LHS Guidance states that early engagement with key partners and stakeholders is key to identifying priorities and agreeing, through a range of options, how to address the priorities identified. The LHS can also draw on information obtained through local authorities' continuous engagement with residents, through tenant's organisations, satisfaction surveys and specific topic consultations.

The Council has a duty to consult widely on the LHS, and in that consultation, involve the wider community to ensure that equality duties are met. To build the new Local Housing Strategy, Scottish Borders Council has engaged with key partners and stakeholders to:

- Define a vision for the housing system in the Scottish Borders
- Identify the main issues facing the housing system in the Scottish Borders
- Propose actions and solutions that will address these issues

This report provides an overview of the consultation carried out for developing Scottish Borders Council's Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028. This report will provide a summary of the key messages from the consultation and what we have done to include this in the LHS (you said, we did). There will then be a full breakdown of the key findings in sections 3-11.

2.   KEY FINDINGS/ SUMMARY

This section provides a summary of the key points from all the consultation and engagement that has taking place during the before and during the development of the LHS.

The table details below the comments and key findings and how these have helped shaped and underpin the LHS.

Engagement	Comments/ Key Findings	Response
Young People's Housing Study	• Demographic projections show steady reductions in the working age population, but a stable population of children. The Scottish Borders demographic trends are more positive than other large rural and remote regions in Scotland. • The key challenge for young people who want to continue living and working in the Borders is the inextricable linkages between jobs, transport and housing. • The quality of life in the region is a key factor for those wishing to stay and those wishing to return to the Borders, and along with its proximity to Scotland's leading economy this is a key pull factor to retain and attract people to the Borders. • Limited further and higher education opportunities are a major push factor for young people leaving the Borders, and there is an opportunity gap for those without the means to move out of the Borders for further and higher education. • There is a moderate need/demand for new housing supply for young people – around 80 new homes per annum for the next five years with areas of highest need/demand in Galashiels, Lauderdale and Melrose, Tweeddale East, and Berwickshire. • The housing investment challenge relates to lack of supply in areas of pressure, and over-supply in other areas – i.e. housing is not always available in the right place at the right time. The large geographic spread in the Borders makes this mismatch between location supply and demand more challenging than in smaller geographic regions. It makes achieving work and further education ambitions difficult for young people, especially lower income households. This returns to the wider strategies around affordable transport, economic development and accessible further/higher education that would help young people with these challenges. • Most newly forming young households will be renting in the short to medium term (5 years), through a combination of social rent, mid-market rent and predominantly private rent. The strategy for young people's housing needs to carefully consider supply options in the private rented sector – both improving existing supply and developing potential new supply. • SBC's and RSLs should recognize the housing aspirations of young people – the current public funding emphasis on social rent should be very carefully considered against the choice in range of housing options. • The long-term aspiration of young people is for home ownership. There is common call from young people for more affordable housing supply to buy, and to a lesser extent to rent in the social sector. Wider options such as shared equity, Mid-Market Rent, sharing and lodging schemes and transition flats could be explored for niche markets. • Housing investment in new supply should be concentrated in areas of pressure, with investment on reconfiguration in existing stock and investment in place in areas of oversupply.	There is specific section in the LHS around young people Recommendations and actions from this have been carried forward into the LHS and will be included in the action plan

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Engagement	Comments/ Key Findings	Response
	• Current needs data is lacking on vulnerable young people but a common view is that more supported housing options are required, both in terms of volume and types of provision. Particular geographic gaps are in Berwickshire and Peebles. A range of actions in relation to homeless and potentially homeless households are identified in the new RRTP	
Wheelchair Housing Study	• To date, very few studies have been undertaken specifically on housing related needs of wheelchair users and their families anywhere in the UK. One unintended consequence of this is that national and local data is not well placed to report the numbers of wheelchair users or their current housing circumstance's and unmet housing needs. • To compensate for the lack of definitive national or local figures it has been estimated that there are currently around 2,000 wheelchair user households living in the Scottish Borders, with alterative estimates ranging from 1,600 and 2,300 households. • We also estimate there are a further 2,000 -2,500 mobility limited households, mainly older person households, where someone has substantial difficulties moving around the house but does not necessarily use a wheelchair. • Just over half of all wheelchair user households are owner-occupiers with most others renting their home from a social landlord. There are marked differences in the tenure of older and younger households. Two thirds of those aged 65+ are owner occupiers compared to a third of those under retirement age. The net result is that there is a high concentration of children and working age adults that make use of a wheelchair or other mobility aids in social housing. • SHS analysis confirms that many wheelchair users struggle to carry out daily activities such as bathing in spite of the fact that their home many have been designed or adapted to make them more accessible. • Illustrative scenarios suggest that the size of the current backlog will continue to rise upwards unless actions is taken to boost supply. The core scenario suggests that in the decade to 2028 up to 300 new wheelchair accessible homes (30 pa) across all tenures would be required to resolve unmet need. • The views and experiences of wheelchair users point to considerable mismatches between the space, layout and design standards of the home they occupy and the home their family requires. These mismatches often persist even where their home has been adapted, especially in the social rented sector.	New Wheelchair housing target set for the Scottish Borders, this is included in the SHIP and the LHS Recommendations and actions from this have been carried forward into the LHS Webpages on specialist and supported housing being developed
Early Engagement Survey	Housing Issues identified: • Teaching climate change, making homes more energy efficient and more affordable to keep warm • Limited housing options for young people and/or first-time buyers • Access and affordability across all tenures • Bringing empty properties back into use • Lack of amenities to support new housing developments e.g. schools, GP surgeries, dentists Top four priorities identified: • Local residents are able to afford to either rent or buy a property in the location of their choice • Residents can afford to heat their homes • Homes are fuel efficient and do not damage the environment • Bringing more empty homes back into use The survey was carried out after lockdown and it was clear that respondents were very aware of housing issues and their surrounding areas, access to housing and affordability issues and community were the key areas mentioned by respondents	The responses from the survey formed a large part of the Housing Issues paper which were used as part of the resident and stakeholder workshops and surveys Community and placemaking has a much higher importance in this LHS LHS tries to address these issues and the priorities have been taken forward into the LHS and action plan

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Engagement	Comments/ Key Findings	Response
Resident & Stakeholder Workshops & Surveys	<u>Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency</u> SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis in particular: • The ability of Housing Associations to deliver retrofit programmes in light of the rent freeze • Consider how the prioritisation of Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency actions can provide a solution to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis SBC should prioritise the following key actions: • Action 14 – implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings • Action 17 – Grow the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems <u>Housing Delivery and Placemaking</u> SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis, in particular: • The impact of interest rate rises to future development capabilities • Key concerns raised by residents and stakeholders in relation to the supply chain for new housing delivery SBC should place importance on the following key actions: • Action 3: Supporting the delivery of homes in town centres • Action 4: Support more community involvement in placemaking Based on the feedback from residents and stakeholders, SBC should place lower importance on the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods and consider wider infrastructure issues and vehicle dependency across the region. <u>Homelessness</u> Overall, residents and stakeholders were supportive of SBC's planned actions for homelessness. Discussions with stakeholders and residents identified that SBC should place importance on the following key action: • Partnership working through the 'Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan' - in particular, ensuring that partners are aware of provision across the region (e.g. women's refuge services) and offer them to residents accordingly. <u>Particular Housing and Specialist Provision</u> SBC should take steps to consider the broader impacts of a reducing younger population on the ability to provide care to those who need it. SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis, in particular: • The ability to deliver more accessible homes SBC should place importance on the following key actions: • Addressing the practical barriers faced by older and disabled home movers – in particular, the impact of being rehoused outside the community in which they currently live	A number of the actions identified in the workshops and surveys have been added to the LHS action plan The feedback and comments from the engagement helped form the base on the LHS and have been included in every section of the LHS
Key workers	• An emerging drawback to successful recruitment and candidate attraction is housing, the private rental market has all but disappeared during the pandemic. • Issues with staff looking to move to the Borders, finding appropriate affordable housing. • Recent market conditions and inability to recruit in Social Care means looking to recruit from international markets and students to fill gaps. Housing provision is a significant issue in relocating workers to the area • Need to address and clearly define what a key worker is • Access to good communication links and local facilities, while being close to work due to commuting costs. This is difficult in the Borders as there is limited public transport. • More information needs to be available online. There is a need for greater support and/or awareness of options and timescales for access. • It is not only key workers who are having problems accessing housing	Key worker have been included in the LHS as a key action Local Lettings Discussions – housing being made available for key workers from local RSL Fact sheet developed for key workers Developing housing options page on website that will include key workers

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Engagement	Comments/ Key Findings	Response
	• Infrastructure issues: Particularly in a rural setting such as Scottish Borders, working patterns can also impact on affordability for key workers needing to commute during unsocial hours when public transport is less accessible or not available at all.	
Gypsy Traveller Need and Demand Study	• It is clear that the length of seasonal provision is not enough to fully meet the needs and there is a strong message of ensuring that any future provision accommodates travelling needs. • The inability to offer provision to those occupying unauthorised encampments has been a source of frustration in providing appropriate support to the Gypsy/Traveller community. • The consideration of a location for a future site should address the need of the Gypsy/Traveller community to access services and amenities and be informed by the locations of unauthorised encampments, which present across the central Borders area. • In taking further steps towards site development a thorough and robust engagement process both for the Gypsy/Traveller community and the settled community will be required. • That in relation to future delivery of services to the Gypsy/Traveller community, adequate training is given to officers and face to face engagement techniques are prioritised. • Consideration should be given to the different ethnic groups encompassed within Gypsy and Travellers, which is an umbrella term.	Section included in the LHS Action included in the LHS Gypsy/Travellers Site Provision - Call for Sites
Private Landlord Survey	• 41% said they had been landlords for 10+ years, with a further 28% saying they had been landlords for between 5-10 years • 50% of responses had only 1 property, followed up by 21% who said they had 2 properties. 86% of total responses said they had less than 5 properties. • More than 70% of landlords own property exclusively in the Borders • 22 % of landlords tend to be 'accidental' and 39% said for other reasons • 57% of landlords said they manage their own properties, while another 37% use an agent • Nearly half of landlords, with 44%, said that they are in contact with tenants at least quarterly, while a further 31% said they were in contact monthly. • Most landlords inspect their properties regularly and plan ahead for improvements, with 40% saying they inspect annually, and another 29% inspecting every 6 months. • 44% said they had plans to install some kind of energy saving measures, where 56% said they did not. The most common reasons for not installing measures were; measures too expensive, need financial incentive, no return on investment and listed building so installing measures is difficult • 70% of landlords were aware of reforms in the private rented sector. • 43% said they were very likely or fairly likely to sell part of their portfolio in the next 5 years, while 45% said they were not at all likely or not very likely to do so.	While the response to the survey was approximately 6% is did provide some trend information that is useful to understand the sector better and issues landlords have. This information will help inform the LHS and actions within the LHS The survey will be used as a starting point for the newly appointed Private Rented Sector Development Officer

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3.   YOUNG PEOPLE'S HOUSING STUDY

In 2018, SBC appointed consultants to undertake extensive research and consultation with young people in the Borders focusing on the housing needs and aspirations of young people.

The work involved a multi-method approach to establish the housing needs and aspirations of young people. A wide range of engagement with young people and stakeholders took place throughout 2018, this included:

• Qualitative study of young people in schools in May 2018: Six focus groups were undertaken across six different schools across the Borders with young people aged between 14 and 17 years. 48 young people were consulted on reasons for staying and leaving the Borders, the importance of housing and affordability (and a range of other factors) and where they may live on leaving school.

• Data report in September 2018: Detailed secondary data analysis on the demographic and economic context, the local housing market and affordability, estimates of new housing need for young people, and housing needs of vulnerable young people.

• Quantitative and qualitative survey of young people in September 2018. Three surveys were undertaken:

    1.   Borders wide quantitative face to face survey involving 398 young people;
    2.   Qualitative telephone depth interviews involving 21 interviews; and
    3.   A former resident's online survey with 72 responses achieved.

• Stakeholder consultation in Autumn 2018: Face to face/telephone consultation with 14 people representing a range of statutory and third sector service providers including education, employment services, homelessness, social work, Youth Borders, and four Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

• A steering group involving a range of Community Planning partners has overseen the research and the development of the Action Plan. This has included representation from The Children's and Young People Leadership Group, the Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership, Health and Social Care and the local RSLs. These partners have shaped and agreed the outcomes and priorities identified in the action plan.

The work of the consultants resulted in a final report on the Housing Needs and Aspirations of Young People and five year Action to better understand and identify:

• The extent and type of housing need and demand for young people in the Scottish Borders,
• Identify and explore housing solutions for young people, and
• How Scottish Borders Council and its partners can improve the housing outcomes of young people.

The results of all the engagement and evidence resulted in the development of an action plan which identified four priorities and outcomes.

• Priority 1: A holistic strategic approach for jobs, housing and transport
  Outcome 1: Community planning partners take a holistic and strategic approach to the skills and employment, housing and transport needs of young people in the Scottish Borders

The recurring theme coming through this research, and the priority for Community Planning partners is that optimising life chances and independence for young people requires a holistic approach that responds to the interdependencies between jobs, housing and transport which is so critical in a large rural region.

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- Priority 2: Increasing housing choice and options
  Outcome 2: Young people are able to access a range of different housing options which enable continued skills development and access to employment in the Scottish Borders

The importance of location of housing relative to education and work opportunities in rural areas means rebalancing current supply relative to demand. The priority, and challenge for housing investment, is offering a range of housing options where there is high demand that is also feasible for housing developers in the private and housing association sectors. Making best use of existing housing resources may include lodging schemes, encouraging sharing in the private rented sector through matching services, and bringing redundant space over shops into residential use, all of which may overcome locational challenges.

- Priority 3: Meeting the needs of vulnerable young people
  Outcome 3: Young people are able to access a range of housing information, advice and support to enable independent living

The consultation with stakeholders suggests there is under provision of supported accommodation for a range of vulnerable young people, and for those with complex needs. Data is weak in this area and more analysis of individual needs should establish need relative to supply. This is also identified in the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan with the key actions replicated in this Plan.

- Priority 4: Monitoring and review of the Action Plan
  Outcome 4: The housing needs of young people are understood and services implemented in the context of a wider Local Housing Strategy and the Integrated Children and Young People's Plan

The steering group called for a review of the mechanisms for strategic oversight on the range of housing and related strategies – so that Partners are clear on the relative priorities for housing investment and management of action across these different strategies. There are a number of strategic groups considering similar and overlapping agendas, and there is scope to consolidate through regular review of the Local Housing Strategy to bring together a whole range of priorities and actions. This Action Plan must also dovetail with the work encompassed through the Integrated Children and Young People's Plan.

Please note that the following information was collated in 2018 so some of the data is out of date.

Population and household projections
Looking at the population projections over the next 25 years we see modest population increases for the Scottish Borders overall (0.7% compared to 2.2% Scotland and 4% in the SESPlan area (South East Scotland). The projected population profile for young people shows:

- Steady reductions in the number of 16-34 year olds, although picking up post 2034
- Stable population of 0-15 year olds.

Comparing this with other rural and remote regions of Scotland, the Scottish Borders is projected to have a more stable younger population over the coming decades compared with Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway and Highland. What is striking in the Scottish Borders is that the number of children (aged 0-15 years) is projected to be similar to the number of young people aged 16-34 years, while in other local authorities, there will be far fewer children.

In terms of household projections, the principal scenario suggests 7% increase in households overall in the Borders to 2037, but 0% increase in households headed by people aged between 16-35 years. Again, comparing to other rural and remote regions the Scottish Borders profile is more positive than others e.g. Argyll and Bute is projecting 16% drop in households aged under 35 years, Dumfries and Galloway 7% drop and Highland 6% drop in households headed by people aged under 35 years.

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Therefore, while there are challenges, there are some relative positive demographics projected for Scottish Borders compared to other rural areas.

Migration

Migration statistics show that the Scottish Borders experiences significant net out-migration of young people, particularly those aged 16-24, and since 2011-2012 there has also been a net loss each year in those aged 20-24 years. However, recently released data shows a positive change in 2016-2017 with a net growth across the 15-34 year old group of 27 young people compared to net losses in each previous year between 2008-9 to 2015-16. Looking at other rural and remote regions in Scotland for this most recent year shows a backwards slide - a net loss of -292 people aged 15-34 years in Argyll and Bute, -284 young people in Dumfries and Galloway and a slight loss (-8) in Highland.

Why people stay or leave the Scottish Borders

The research with young people and former residents of the Borders has explored why people leave, why people stay and why people return to the Borders. This topic has also been explored with professional stakeholders.

When young people are asked what they think of young people that stay in the Borders there is a strong belief that they are "lucky" to be able to do so, earn a living or study locally. This is also associated with being able to enjoy the quality of life and continuing their links with the local community. Some of the younger age groups at school interestingly had different opinions that people who stay in the Borders are unlikely to succeed compared to those that leave to get further education.

When asked about people that leave the Borders the most common perception from young people is that this is about broadening their life experience, accessing education and employment opportunities, and they have to leave to get on in life.

Figure 1: Attitudes to Young People that Leave the Local area (figures represent net agreement)
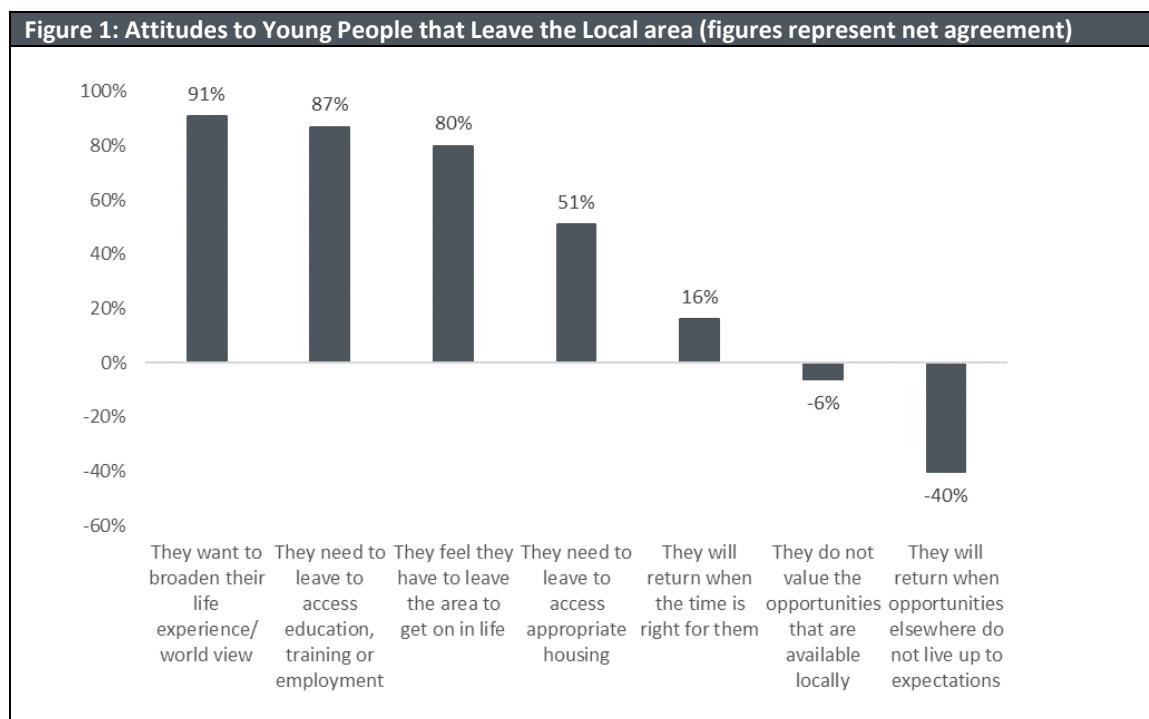
However, a significant proportion (51%) also identified access to appropriate housing as a motivator to leave the Borders, with significant area / age / gender variations:

- More significant for 25-34 year olds (62%), compared to 16-24 year olds (53%).

- Females are more likely to see this as an issue "to a significant extent" (62% compared to 54% of males).
- Duns / Eyemouth is significantly higher (92%), but less so in Peebles (39%).

A large proportion (73%) of people responding to the former residents survey said they have a desire to return, with majority leaving in the first place for education and work (75%). In terms of motivators to return the most important factor is availability of a suitable job, followed by quality of life. Compared to the current young Borders residents, these former residents were firmer in their view that young people that stay in the Borders are unlikely to meet their full potential.
Current young residents and former residents all think the three most important things that would make the Scottish Borders a good place to live are availability of high quality jobs, good access to housing and affordable transport links.

Consultation with professional stakeholders agree with concerns around the lack of availability of further education and employment opportunities being the key push factors for leaving the Borders. These consultees identified the geographic challenges and large distances in the Borders which make taking up job or education opportunities very difficult and expensive for some people living in rural and remote areas.

The key challenge for young people who want to continue living and working in the Borders is the inextricable linkages between jobs, transport and housing. The quality of life in the region is a key factor for those wishing to stay and those wishing to return to the Borders, and along with its proximity to Scotland's leading economy this is a key pull factor to retain and attract people to the Borders.

Economic context and outlook
Like the rest of Scotland and UK, the Scottish Borders experienced a considerable economic downturn between 2008 and 2010, but the SBC Economic Strategy pointed to local improvements in 2011 where Gross Value Added (GVA) and local employment rate improvements were better than the national rate. However, in overall terms the projected economic performance (by GVA) is poor relative to other regions in Scotland.

However, a major challenge for the Scottish Borders in future is likely to be high levels of economic activity but lower earnings. The earnings of people living in the Scottish Borders were close to the Scottish average in 2013, but since then earnings have not increased at the same rate. In 2017 the median income in the Scottish Borders was just 94% of median income in Scotland.

The number of young people claiming benefits aged 18-24 years has halved since 2013, with the claimant count stabilising at around 300 claimants across the Borders. The claimants are highest in Galashiels and Hawick and lowest in Leaderdale and Melrose, Jedburgh and Tweeddale.

As discussed above, young people identify the availability of quality jobs as the most important factor in making the Scottish Borders a good place to live, and for leavers (potential returners) this is also the case, who also identify opportunities for career progression as an important factor in potentially returning to the Borders.

In depth interviews with young people identify some of the concerns around the local economy:

Despite the recent investment in the public transport infrastructure (especially trains) the option to commute is not always seen as practical due to distances involved. For people with jobs (or potential jobs) there was a common feeling amongst young people consulted that the additional travel costs (and associated time and hassle) outweigh the benefits of perceived lower housing costs in the Scottish Borders.

Education attainment, further and higher education, and training

Educational attainment figures for the Scottish Borders for 2015/16 show broadly similar attainment levels overall compared to Scotland at SCQF Level 3, slightly lower at Level 5 and slightly higher at Level 6. There has been a gradual improvement in attainment from School over the last five years or so. However, there are signs of significant attainment gaps between pupils at the same schools who live in the most and least deprived areas. Hawick and Galashiels High Schools are particular examples.

In term of modern apprenticeships, the Scottish Borders has one of the highest attainment rates in Scotland – 83% of leavers achieving their qualification compared to 78% across Scotland.

Results for 2012-2013 showed proportionately more young people in East Berwickshire, Tweeddale East and Hawick and Hermitage leaving school into unemployment. However, more recent data on claimant counts shows reducing numbers, but a higher claimant count for those aged 16-24 in Galashiels and Hawick, followed by Selkirkshire. Levels of economic activity are high among young people in the Scottish Borders, but, as discussed above, wages are lower and have not increased at the same rate as in Scotland overall, particularly for lower earners.

In terms of further and higher education opportunities, consultation with young people identified the fact that people who want to go to university have to leave the Borders to meet these aspirations and comment that the range of courses at Borders College is limited, and again the geographic challenge makes accessing further education in the Borders difficult.

Consultation with professional stakeholders confirm concern over the low wage economy, limited employment opportunities (focused in traditional industries or the public sector), and limited range of further and higher education opportunities particularly for those without the means to move or travel to Edinburgh. The issue of the attainment gaps and social polarisation was raised which should be considered not only around education, but also in terms of housing and community environments. Some consultees suggest this points to the need for a strategic approach being taken to community well-being which should include developing mixed housing tenure/mixed income communities.

In conclusion, there continues to be areas of the Scottish Borders where young people face challenges in educational / training attainment and high value employment without moving out of the Borders. There is evidence to suggest that the attainment gap between pupils in the most and least deprived areas is a particular concern for the Scottish Borders. There could be opportunities to take a more strategic approach to community well-being which should include action for new housing development, and in the management of existing places / communities.

Current and household tenure
The current household tenure of young people in the Scottish Borders shows:
- A third of younger households in the Scottish Borders are home owners, which is similar to the Scottish rate amongst young people. This compares to over 60% of all households across the Scottish Borders and Scotland.
- A higher proportion of younger households in the Scottish Borders rent from a social landlord (33%), compared to young people across Scotland (25%).
- Private renting is more common among younger households than households overall – 35% in the Borders (14% all SB households) compared to 40% of younger households across Scotland.

The population of the Scottish Borders young person's survey is different to published survey data sets as it includes young people that have not yet set up their own home. This showed that a high proportion of respondents were living with parents (55%), followed by private renting (20%), social housing (12%), and ownership (12%). Excluding people living with their parents, we can see that the most common household tenure is private renting.

Housing costs, household incomes and affordability for young people
House purchase and rental costs may be summarised as:
- Scottish Borders house purchase prices in 2017 were similar to Scottish house average prices, ranging from lower quartile £97,000 to upper quartile £236,000 with an average of £184,540 (similar to the Scottish average of £180,663).
- Private rental costs for a 2-bedroom property range from an average £346 per month, with a low of £315 in Hawick to high of £443 in Peebles.
- Social rental costs for a 2-bedroom property are typically £320 per month.
- Mid-market rent for a 2-bedroom property are typically £340 per month.

Scottish Household Survey data shows the household incomes for householders aged under 35 years in the Scottish Borders:

- On average £21,490 (median £18,540), lower than the Scottish average of £24,170 (£22,000).
- For newly forming younger households (those previously living with parents) incomes are an average of around £17,112 (median £13,440) lower than Scottish average of £19,227 (£16,000 median).
- A newly forming young person household with an income of £13,440 would be able to afford an RSL rent and a 2-bed mid-market rent, but not a private let, assuming they were spending around 25% of income on housing costs. With an average household income of £17k, the private

renting in some areas would be more feasible. House purchase would be out of reach at the lower quartile price of £97,000.

The apparent lack of affordability needs to be measured against the proportion of younger households that are actually living in the private sector (a third in private rent and over a third own their home) suggesting higher incomes than the median for these young households, or a willingness to pay a higher proportion of their income on housing costs.

Future housing tenure
Considering likely future housing tenure, from the Scottish Household Survey we can see that where a young person's last tenure was in the parental home the majority of newly forming households rent their first home - we find that 55% rent from a private landlord, 23% rent from a social landlord, only 19% own their home while 3% are in other housing tenures.

The Scottish Borders young person's survey confirms this trend. We see that within the next five years the largest proportion of young people, 36%, want to be renting privately, 30% want to own their home, and 16% expect to be living in social rent. The aspiration for home ownership increases significantly over 10 years where nearly 70% of respondents expect to own their home.

This combined evidence suggests for newly forming households we can expect the household tenure choice to be renting, with owning in the longer term.

Table 1: If you stay in the Scottish borders in the future, in which of the following forms of housing would you HOPE to be living in over each of the following time periods?				
Area	**Current**	**1 Year**	**5 Years**	**10 Years**
Living in parental / family home	55%	53%	16%	1%
Living in private rented home, by self or with partner	20%	20%	36%	15%
Living in Council / Housing Association home, by self or with partner	12%	13%	16%	16%
Living in own home (owned or with a mortgage), by self or with partner	12%	13%	30%	69%
Other (including shared accommodation and student accommodation)	2%	1%	1%	0%
Base	398	389	366	362
Source: Scottish Borders Young Person Survey 2018				

Estimates of housing need/demand
The estimates for new housing supply is based on modelling in the SESPlan Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA). In terms of volume of new housing supply, the total projected new supply requirement for young people is 1,465 new homes between 2012 and 2038. This is around a quarter (27%) of the total 5,407 housing need/demand projected by SESPlan for all households in the Scottish Borders. The new housing supply requirement for young people (16-34 years) is broken down by:

- 2012-2022 – 832 new housing supply, 83 new homes per year
- 2022-2032 – 526 new supply, 53 new homes per year
- 2032-2038 – 107 new supply, 18 new homes per year.

The higher supply rate in the early years is related to tackling existing housing need, which in later years should be resolved, which means lower supply requirements later. If this higher need/demand is not met in the short term then the new supply requirements will just carry forward to future years. Location of new supply varies, with the greatest volume of new supply is required in:

- Galashiels and District
- Leaderdale and Melrose, and
- Tweeddale East
- Mid and East Berwickshire (combined).

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The lowest level of new supply is required in Hawick, Selkirkshire and Tweeddale West. The data report sets out volumes and tenure by ward (Table 34 and 35).

Qualitative feedback from young people and stakeholders suggest that there appears to be inadequate supply of housing available for young people. However, consultees also suggest that the difficulty in accessing housing for young people is about the lack of housing supply in the right place, at the right time. Consultees note there are areas of oversupply (Hawick) and undersupply (Galashiels, Peebles, Berwickshire), which is all supported by the HNDA data analysis. Again, a key challenge for housing strategy in rural areas is matching need and demand over large geographic areas, and many small rural communities have no affordable housing supply with the effect of potentially losing the future generation of young people and families in these rural communities.

The household tenure required for newly emerging households should be focused on renting, ranging from a low of 64% in Leaderdale and Tweeddale East, to 95% in Hawick. The likely level of ownership is driven by migration rates – there will be higher levels of ownership where there are higher levels of migration, with lower levels of ownership in areas with moderate to low migration expected and much lower ownership where a net loss of young people is expected so that most of the additional need will be for social housing. Higher levels of ownership / lower levels of renting for young people are projected in Leaderdale and Melrose, Tweeddale East and Kelso and District.

The data report shows the likely profile of renting, breaking this down by private rent, social rent and mid-market rent area according to affordability of young households. This shows that for renters, around two thirds can afford private renting, but this is less likely to be affordable in Galashiels and Hawick. Other options will be social rent (around 25-34% of the renting population depending on the area) and Mid-Market rent (around 10% of renters).

These estimates raise a number of questions for housing investment policy. In theory private renting or Mid-Market rent may be affordable for most young people in the Borders, but with relatively low rent levels and a low Local Housing Allowance rate, the feasibility of expanding the Private Rented Sector (PRS) or providing below market rent housing needs careful consideration.

There were some concerns raised about private renting by professional consultees, specifically around the affordability and quality. However, all the research (secondary data analysis, projections and primary research with young people) suggests that private renting should play an important role in meeting future housing needs and demands for young people in the Borders. Looking at the feasibility of different mechanisms for expanding and improving quality in the PRS will be important in a future housing strategy for young households.

In terms of house size requirements, the Scottish Household Survey shows that 47% of younger households in the Scottish Borders have two bedrooms, 25% have three-bedroom properties, 22% have one bedroom, and 6% have four bedrooms or more.

Poverty and deprivation among young people
The analysis of housing need undertaken by consultants Indigo House looks beyond the standard HNDA methodology which does not take account of 'hidden households', and other young householders that may be struggling in housing due to poverty. There are three measures –

- Being 'Young and stuck' – these are young hidden households - young people who are old enough to be independent and are working but are not living independently. These households contain someone aged 26 or older who works full time or is self-employed and lives in a household where they are neither the highest income householder or the spouse of the highest income householder. Most of these young people are living with parents and could potentially create their own household if the right housing option was available.

- 'Young and struggling financially' – these young people (aged 16-34 years old) are householders who say they have 'some financial difficulties' or are in 'deep financial trouble'.
- 'Young and in fuel poverty' – these young people (aged 16-34 years old) are householders who say that they cannot afford to heat their home.

The table shows 1,100 potentially 'young and stuck' hidden households - these are households in addition to the need identified in the HNDA and in addition to the new supply estimates. There are also 685 young people who are struggling financially, and 560 young people that may be struggling with heating their home.

Table 2: Locations with the highest proportion of 'young and stuck' (Estimated 3% of households or more)			
Locality	Young and stuck	Young and struggling	Young and fuel poor
Berwickshire	205	100	70
Cheviot	190	110	80
Eildon	355	250	240
Teviot and Liddesdale	170	140	110
Tweeddale	190	85	60
Scottish Borders	1,110	685	560

Social rented sector demand and sustainability for young people
Data provided from the local RSLs suggests that younger people (aged under 35 years) make up 29% of social tenants but 44% of new lets and 41% of the waiting list. This shows there is a high level of demand from young people, and that the profile of social renting may be changing. In all localities, young people make up about half the proportion of current tenancies compared to numbers of new lets and the waiting list.

In terms of demand for social housing from young people, Hawick is projected to see a loss in younger households over the next ten years, and has a low level of new supply requirement, but currently has high numbers of new lets and waiting list demand from young people. This is in line with the data analysis that shows that demand from young people in this area will predominantly be for social housing. Demand from younger people is also high in Eildon.

Data provided by two of the local RSLs for 2016-2017 lets suggests that tenancy sustainment rates are lower among younger tenants, with one RSL reporting tenancy sustainment rates of 76% for under 35s, compared with 80% among tenants overall. Another RSL reported that 76% of tenancies let to people aged under 35 years lasted at least 12 months, compared with 87% of tenancies let to those aged 35 years old or older.

Consultation findings from young people and stakeholders provide a range of different viewpoints about the demand for, and perception of social housing. Those young people interviewed living in the social rented sector included a mix of people who were well settled and happy where they were, but also a number of people that had an aspiration towards home ownership; this was driven by whether or not individuals were currently economically active. From wider consultation with young people there is a perception of stigmatization in the social rented sector, and while this is also true from professional consultees, there is a strong sense of the need for greater supply of affordable housing but a mismatch between current demand and supply by location.

Young people's housing aspirations and experiences
The Scottish Borders young people's housing survey outlined the housing tenure that young people are ideally looking for in the next five to ten years. As outlined above the majority see themselves moving to private rented sector and then eventually aspire to home ownership. Looking at the tenure preferences of former residents that may want to return to the Borders, the vast majority of these are looking at home ownership – most of these potential returners are aged over 25 years.

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The preference for eventual home ownership was also reflected in the qualitative telephone interviews. Taking the cohort of younger people, typically living with their parents currently, the broad housing path they saw for themselves follow was:

- Typically, to remain with parents for a period of time, with there being some sense that people were staying an increasingly long time with their parents;
- To rent a property at some stage, with the desire for this being much more commonly "a small house" rather than a flat.
- To potentially buy in the future though, especially for people in their late teens and early twenties, this was sometimes seen as a relatively distant aspiration.

Being able to save for a deposit was the challenge identified by most of the people that were interviewed, and aspiring to home ownership was seen as an increasingly long-term aspiration and, in some cases, not something that people could see attainable due to issues of affordability:

> "I am 29 now and the thing for me is to be able to save for a deposit and that's why I moved back with my parents. Over the medium term I would aim to buy my own property."
>
> "A lot of my friends are not bothering to save anymore because they know home ownership is unattainable."
>
> "It is difficult for people to save for a mortgage because rents are so high."

However, there were a number of observations from slightly older and more settled respondents that there could be achievable options for young people to buy:

> *"In the area where I am, I managed to buy my first flat for £45,000. There is definitely property in this area to buy that is much more achievable than the likes of Edinburgh."*

There was a common theme of there being a lack of housing generally. This was articulated most commonly around more affordable homes to buy, but also lack of social housing. When asked to rate housing issues in their local area the most positive responses were around attractiveness, and the most negative were around the availability of housing in the local area.
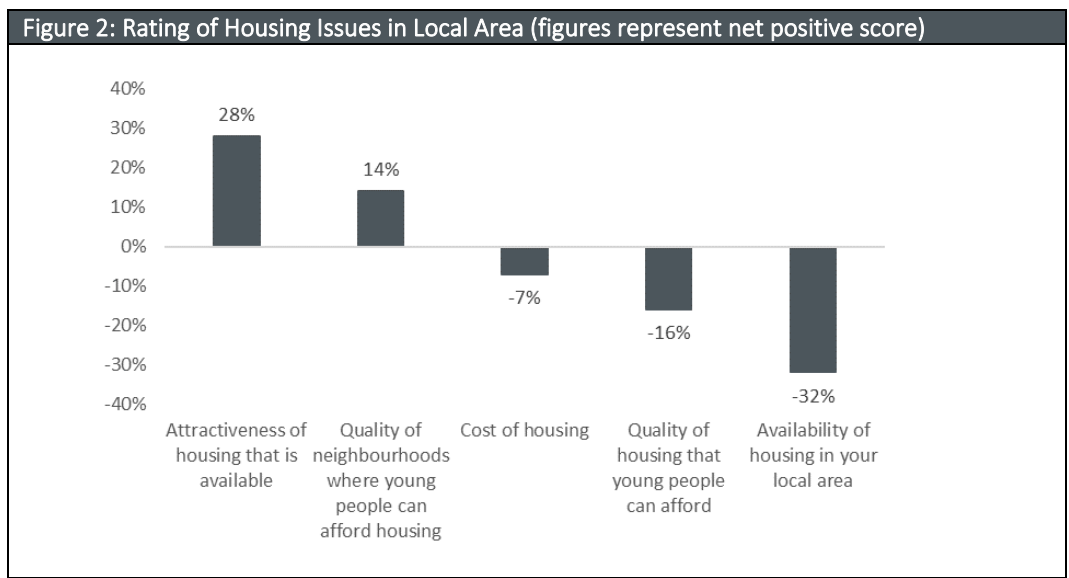
Figure 2: Rating of Housing Issues in Local Area (figures represent net positive score)

However, despite this general opinion about overall supply the great majority of interviewees (85%) indicated that their current housing arrangements were appropriate.

However, despite this general opinion about overall supply the great majority of interviewees (85%) indicated that their current housing arrangements were appropriate for their needs. It is notable that the proportion of people that disagreed with this statement was higher in Duns / Eyemouth (22%), supporting views from some professional stakeholders that there is lack of affordable housing options in the East of the Borders.

There is general agreement that housing in the Scottish Borders is less expensive than in neighbouring areas (though this is clearly seen as a matter of degree, given the poor ratings noted above for cost of housing), but a small majority (51%) also felt "it is getting harder to live here because property prices are going up". Agreement with this statement was particularly apparent in Duns / Eyemouth (86%) and in Peebles (76%) but was much less evident in Hawick / Jedburgh / Kelso (24%).

Wider housing options
The appetite to look at broader housing options was explored through the qualitative telephone interviews. It should be noted that this was a small sample of 20 respondents. The options and responses discussed are set out below.

Mid-market rent – where rents are between the cost of private and social renting. They are often managed by a Housing Association but targeted at people in work.

Some interviewees that provided a view on mid-market rent were generally positive and saw particular benefits in it:

> "This would be good if it gave you a bit more security. Part of the problem with private renting is that they can give you short notice."

However, people would generally compare any mid-market rental offer to the offer in the private rented sector and so support would be conditional on the detail of what was offered:

> "It is maybe something that I would look at in the future but it would depend on the property and on the price."
>
> "This is fine in principle but the price would need to be right."

In general terms, therefore, people were open to the idea of mid-market rent. It would be fair to say that the concept was not one that people always understood clearly, and its benefits and relative costs would need to be articulated clearly.

> A 'matching service' for sharing a rented home - to help young people share properties with others rather than having a tenancy themselves; this could be private rented or Housing Association properties.

It was clear from a number of the interviews that the prevalence of sharing properties amongst friends was not as common as in cities (albeit not unheard of):

> "There is not a lot of flat sharing here. It seems to be more of a city thing."

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Some people saw this option in positive terms as it gives some young people an option that they did not have previously:

> "I could see this being a good thing for people if they find it hard to find someone to share with."

However, it was seen as being a short-term approach for most people:

> "People prefer to have their own home. This is really just a short-term thing, like for people that are studying."

A key issue here would be the extent to which young people choose (and are able) to stay in the parental home for longer, often with the aim of building a deposit for their own home, as opposed to incurring costs in renting a flat, even if those costs are kept to a minimum by being shared with other people.

Lodging scheme - where a homeowner lets out a bedroom for a young person and the rent includes other costs (heat, electricity, possibly meals).

There was considerable skepticism about this concept amongst the people that we interviewed:

> "I would have zero interest in this. You would have no privacy and would be as well staying with your parents."
>
> "To be honest, you would want to know the person you were moving in with."
>
> "I think people would be in and out of places like this; I don't think it is something people would stick with."

Worries about issues of independence and privacy were very common in interviewees' reaction to this concept and it will be important to clearly identify the specific nature and scope of any need and demand that may exist for this.

Shared ownership / shared equity - where the homeowner has a mortgage/deposit for a share of the home and pay rent for the remainder, or shares the equity with Scottish Government. Over time, the owner could buy a greater share of the home, when they could afford it.

A range of views were apparent about shared ownership / shared equity schemes. For a number of people, they recognised it as potentially a significant opportunity for them to get onto the housing ladder:

> "This could be a good option for me in the future. My wages are not the highest but if it can keep costs down it might help me to get my own home. It would be slower but maybe more realistic."
>
> "This sounds like a good idea to me. I'm also pursuing a "help to buy" scheme through my bank."
>
> "We had shared ownership before. We bought 70% and it helped us get on the property ladder. In principle, the scheme was good."

Others were considerably more skeptical, with the concerns often relating to the practicality of the arrangements:

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> "I would rather do one thing or the other. If I decided I wanted to own a property I would want to invest as much in it as I possibly could. I wouldn't want half of it going on rent."
>
> "What happens if you want to enhance the property? You wouldn't get all the benefit."
>
> "My dad's partner had something like this and bought 25% of the house but it was quite hard to sell part of a house when she came to do so."
>
> "This sounds like a complete mess."

In general, shared ownership / shared equity does have the potential to be of value to a number of young people in the Scottish borders but the devil would be in the detail in terms of what would be offered and at what cost. The content of some of our discussions suggested that the rights and responsibilities of shared ownership / shared equity may not be fully understood and would need to be articulated clearly.

Transition flats - where young people may learn about keeping a home, cooking and budgeting through light touch support / concierge.

In no instances did interviewees see this concept as being "for them". Some did, however, see it as having a relevance to certain young people in specific circumstances:

> "A very good idea for young people who have been in care."
>
> "I think this is a good idea for vulnerable young people."
>
> "Something like this should only be for people who are vulnerable or have learning difficulties."

Others were significantly more sceptical:

> "These skills should be taught at home and in schools"
>
> "Surely it is parents that should prepare young people for moving into their own place?"
> "I could see that this could make life easier for some young people but it might be better to throw them in at the deep end."
>
> "This wouldn't be for me; I would rather just go out on my own."

In general, this would be seen as a specific offering for a relatively narrowly defined group of people who may not have formed part of the depth interview sample.

In conclusion, the data analysis confirms that there is a moderate need/demand for new housing supply for young people – around 80 new units per annum for the next five years with areas of highest need/demand in Galashiels, Lauderdale and Melrose, Tweeddale East, and Berwickshire. The impression from young people and professional stakeholders is the lack of affordable housing is greater than this, but this is likely more to do with challenges of lack of supply in areas of pressure, and over-supply in other areas – i.e. mismatch between supply and demand - housing is not always available in the right place at the right time. The large geographic spread in the Borders makes this mismatch between location supply and demand more challenging than in smaller geographic regions and makes achieving work and further education ambitions difficult for young people, especially lower income households. Wider strategies around affordable transport, economic development and accessible further/higher education would help young people with these challenges.

Most newly forming young households will be renting in the short to medium term (5 years), through a combination of social rent, mid-market rent and predominantly Private Rent. The strategy for young people's housing therefore needs to carefully consider supply options in the private rented sector – both existing supply and potential new supply.

In the social rented sector this is an ambition for a minority of young households, although a necessity for young households on lower incomes, and there is a call for more affordable rented housing. There appears to be scope to address the polarisation between social housing and other housing options through community well-being approaches, and ensuring future development is mixed tenure and mixed income. Housing strategists in the Council, and RSLs should be careful around future housing investment – the current public funding emphasis on social rent should be very carefully considered against the need for balanced communities to ensure there are mixed communities and choice in housing options. Housing investment in new supply should be concentrated in areas of pressure, with investment/reconfiguration in existing stock and place in areas of oversupply.

The long-term aspiration of young people is for home ownership. There is common call from young people for more affordable housing supply to buy, and to a lesser extent to rent in the social sector. Options such as shared equity and Mid-Market Rent are tentatively welcomed, but options such as matching for sharing, and lodging schemes are viewed less favourably. Transition flats are acknowledged as a potential option for more vulnerable young people.

Housing needs of vulnerable young people
The number of young people assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness just over 300 in 2016-2017, down from a high of almost 500 in 2008-2009. The change in numbers over the last decade reflects a 'Housing Options' approach has been adopted, which is consistent with high levels of acceptances and more advice and assistance to prevent homelessness. Young people make up a higher proportion of temporary accommodation residents, compared to all homeless applicants - 61% of applicants aged under 35 years (compared with 53% of all homeless applicants).

Most recent data for 2017-2018 shows the Scottish Borders at 11th place out of 32 local authorities in terms of ranking of youth homelessness, at 13.9 per 1,000 persons aged 16-24 11th place. This is a change from the previous 10th place.

Young people at risk
The Adult Protection Interagency Operational Group (APIOG) has flagged up a growing unmet need in relation to support for young people at risk and appropriate available supported housing. The group has identified an increasing number of young people at risk due to their vulnerability, specific health conditions, or substance abuse, or at risk of social exclusion, and even becoming involved in offending behaviour.

Data on the exact nature and scale of the gap in supported accommodation for young people is lacking. Qualitative feedback from professional stakeholders suggests there is lack of a range of support housing options, from transition (e.g. with concierge), to a range of higher supported accommodation options. Particular shortfalls are identified in Berwickshire and Tweeddale. The lack of caretaker at Maxmill Court (temporary accommodation) is suggested to make this resource unsuitable for vulnerable young people.

There is a call for generic housing support that does not necessarily have to follow a diagnosis, and a suggestion that housing officers could provide more low-level support. Stakeholders also called for more holistic working between education, social care and health to break down professional silos to meeting the housing support needs of vulnerable young people. A total of 146 young people (aged

under 35 years) received housing support services from Scottish Borders Council in 2017-2018. These were split through the localities as follows:

- 20 in Berwickshire
- 27 in Cheviot
- 81 in Eildon
- 34 in Teviot and Liddesdale
- 18 in Tweeddale.

Disabled young people
It is difficult to quantify the true 'market' for housing for young people with physical or mental health needs, including those with Autism/Asperger's but current provision is not suitable. Even if only 1 in 10 young people with health needs wanted to live independently, this would be 75 households.

Information about young people in institutional care is also incomplete. For historical reasons Scottish Borders Council do not have comprehensive contractual residential placement records for young people in institutional care. However, qualitative data suggests that some young people with complex needs live in residential care out of area apart from their families and local communities. There is currently an exploration underway for new residential accommodation, but apart from housing needs, consultees note that the barriers faced in relation to employment, housing and transport are even greater for disabled young people than they are for able bodied young people.

The evidence base of housing provision for at-risk young people is patchy and incomplete, but points to significant concerns about a lack of specialist and supported provision for vulnerable young people, both in volume and range of options. Particular geographic gaps are in Berwickshire and Peebles.

Summary and conclusions
This large body of research provides a strong evidence base around the key challenges facing the Scottish Borders in retaining and attracting young people to the Borders. We see that the demographic projections show steady reductions in the working age population in the Borders, but a stable population of children. Scottish Borders' trends are actually more positive than other large rural and remote regions in Scotland and public sector agencies and their partners could use this potential to develop its economic development, education and training, housing and transport strategies to retain young people.

The research with young people and wider stakeholders has confirmed the key challenge for young people who want to continue living and working in the Borders is the inextricable linkages between jobs, transport and housing. The quality of life in the region is a key factor for those wishing to stay and those wishing to return to the Borders, and along with its proximity to Scotland's leading economy this is a key pull factor to retain and attract people to the Borders. However, the limited further and higher education opportunities are a major push factor for young people leaving, and there is an opportunity gap for those without the means to move out of Borders for further/higher education.

The focus of this work is about the housing needs and aspiration for young people, and developing a housing strategy/action plan to meet those needs. However, it should be recognised that housing is only one element of a complex landscape of needs that young people have to meet their potential living in the Borders – education, jobs, transport and housing all need to be considered by the local authority in the round.

In terms of housing needs there is a moderate need/demand for new housing supply for young people – around 80 new units per annum for the next five years with areas of highest need/demand in Galashiels, Lauderdale and Melrose, Tweeddale East, and Berwickshire. These projections are

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based on current demographic and economic projections - if education / economic development strategy changed positively then these housing needs would grow.

The impression from young people and professional stakeholders is the lack of affordable housing is considerable, but this relates to the challenges of lack of supply in areas of pressure, and over-supply in other areas – i.e. mismatch between supply and demand - housing is not always available in the right place at the right time. The large geographic spread in the Borders makes this mismatch between location supply and demand more challenging than in smaller geographic regions and makes achieving work and further education ambitions difficult for young people, especially lower income households. Again, we return to wider strategies around affordable transport, economic development and accessible further/higher education would help young people with these challenges.

Most newly forming young households will be renting in the short to medium term (5 years), through a combination of social rent, mid-market rent and predominantly Private Rent. The strategy for young people's housing therefore needs to carefully consider supply options in the private rented sector – both existing supply and potential new supply.

In the social rented sector this is an ambition for a minority of young households, although a necessity for young households on lower incomes, and there is a call for more affordable rented housing. There appears to be scope to address the polarisation between social housing and other housing options through community well-being approaches, and ensuring future development is mixed tenure and mixed income. Housing strategists in the Council, and RSLs should be careful around future housing investment – the current public funding emphasis on social rent should be very carefully considered against the need for balanced communities to ensure there are mixed communities and choice in housing options. Housing investment in new supply should be concentrated in areas of pressure, with investment/reconfiguration in existing stock and place in areas of oversupply.

The long-term aspiration of young people is for home ownership. There is common call from young people for more affordable housing supply to buy, and to a lesser extent to rent in the social sector. Options such as shared equity and Mid-Market Rent are tentatively welcomed, but options such as matching for sharing, and lodging schemes are viewed less favourably. Transition flats are acknowledged as a potential option for more vulnerable young people.

The evidence base of housing provision for at-risk young people is patchy and incomplete, but points to significant concerns about a lack of specialist and supported provision for vulnerable young people, both in volume and range of options. Particular geographic gaps are in Berwickshire and Peebles.

4. WHEELCHAIR ACESSIBLE HOUSING STUDY

In 2019, the Council commissioned Consultants to carry out research regarding the need for wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders, which was completed in January 2020. The Consultants were supported by a working group consisting of Council officers, and representatives from other related communities of interest including service users and carers, voluntary sector service providers and the Registered Social Landlord sector. The final report recommended 20 additional wheelchair accessible homes as an annual all tenure wheelchair accessible housing target, and also provided a proposed action plan.

The study was based on a mixed method approach. It involved a review of research and policy relevant documents, an analysis of available statistical evidence and a programme of interviews and meetings with stakeholders from the public, voluntary and private sectors, including organisations that represent people with disabilities in the Borders. The study also included an e-survey to allow wheelchair users and their families the opportunity to share their experiences. A total of 48 individuals submitted a valid response, of which 13 participated in in-depth follow up phone interviews.

Perceptions and Experiences of Wheelchair Users

This section explores the housing related arrangements and experiences of wheelchair user households it draws on information from 48 individuals (or their carers/representatives) that participated in the on-line survey and 13 follow up interviews with survey participants. Whist both exercises relied on self-selection, participants come from a wide range of backgrounds and live in different localities throughout the Scottish Borders.

Profile of participants and their current home

People that participated in the survey range in age from children to older people but the largest concentrations are in the 65+ age group (31%) the 25-49 age group (31%) and the 50-64 age group (29%). This age profile is not too dissimilar to national survey evidence and confirms that in the case of wheelchair users, the overlap between disability and old age is less pronounced than policy documents can inadvertently imply. Most participants are female, partly reflecting the concentration of female wheelchair users in the 65+ age group and all participants described themselves as Scottish, English or British.

Figure 1 illustrates that three quarters of survey participants, including all wheelchair users under the age of 18 years, live with other people, typically in couples, lone parent and extended family households. Most other wheelchair users live alone, with the numbers more or less evenly split between those under 65 years and those aged 65+ years.

Figure 1: Self-reported household type of survey participants (%)
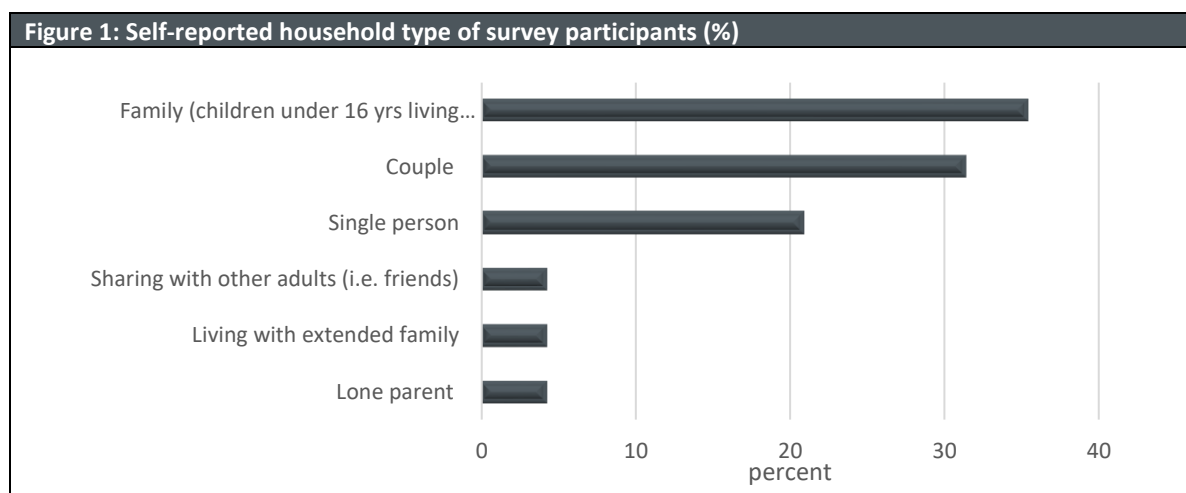
Over 70% of participants live in a house or bungalow and 30% live in a flat (see figure 2). Interestingly, the proportions in each tenure that live in a bungalow is in line with the tenure distribution of the population as a whole. Most of the 14 participants that live in a flat are social renters, including 4 that live in supported housing. Participants that live in a bungalow or house typically have access to three or more bedrooms whereas those living in a flat mostly have access to one or two bedrooms. Equal proportions of survey participants have lived at their present address for more than and less than five years.

Figure 2: Type of dwelling occupied by survey participants' tenure (%)
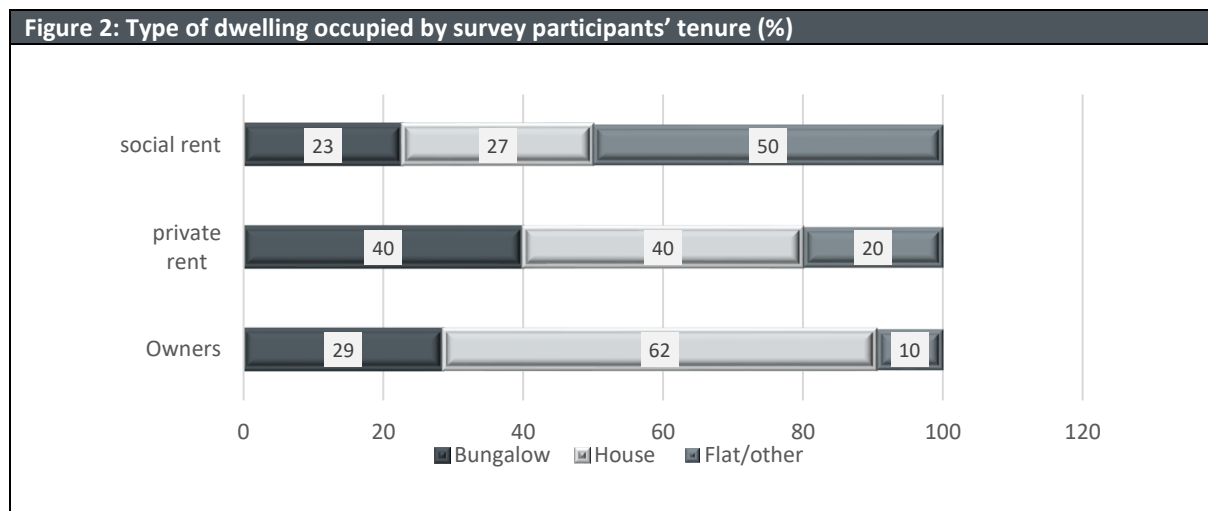
Tenure, income, work and benefits

Virtually identical numbers of participants live in the owner-occupied and social rented sectors but the tenure profile of working age and retired households are distinctive (see figure 3). Two thirds of those aged 65+ years are homeowners and the remaining third are social renters. In contrast, slightly over half of working age participants are social renters and a third own their home. Participants that live in the private rented sector are all of working age.

Figure 3: Tenure of survey participants under and over the age of 65 years
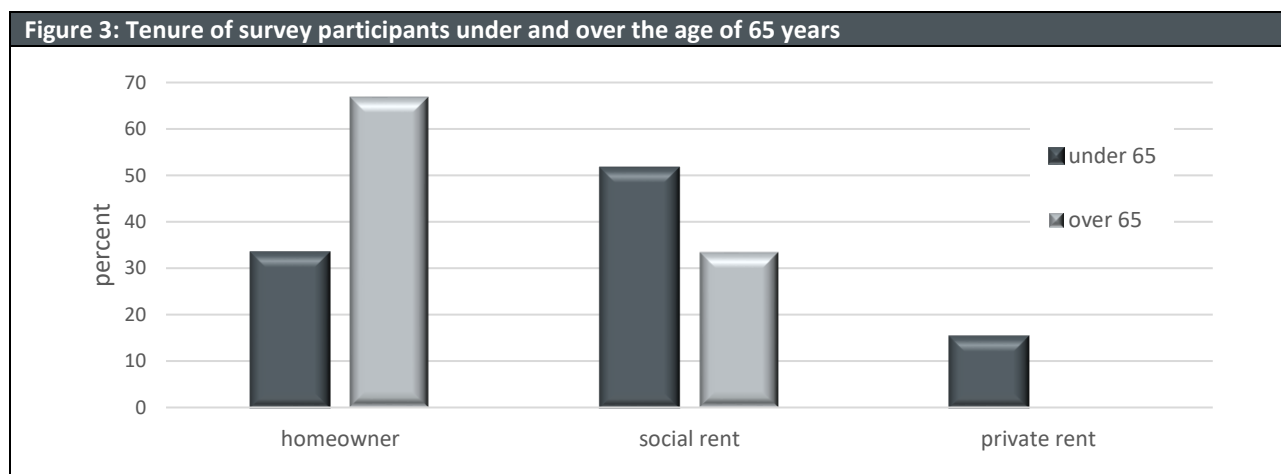
The different tenure patterns of retired and working age participants is consistent with national survey evidence. The follow up interviews also confirmed that older wheelchair user households generally acquired their disability later in life, long after they had become homeowners. Younger homeowners also say they had been homeowners prior to a deterioration in their health, which in some cases was the result of an adverse life event such as an accident at work or road traffic accident.

In contrast, working age wheelchair users that rented their home tended to be excluded from the workplace and were not in a financial position to buy a home[1].The need to provide care for children that

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[1] Around 40% of all survey participants of working age were in paid work, which is only slightly below the UK employment rate amongst people with disabilities of working age (46%).

use wheelchairs also routinely prevents those who care for them from seeking work. Interviews with private renters suggest that other than money, difficulties accessing social rented housing and a desire to live close to family and social networks also influence tenure choices.

The survey provides little background information on the income of wheelchair user households[2], but it broadly corresponds with evidence from national studies in the sense that:

- Wheelchair user households that own their home generally report higher incomes than those that rent their home and are far more likely to have at least one member of the household in work or has recently retired.
- Most social and private renters are in receipt of Housing Benefit, indicating they are lower income households.
- Upwards of 80% of participants claim a disability related benefit such as PIP, DLA or Attendance Allowance.

A fifth of participants said they struggle to pay their housing costs, increasing to a third if outright owners are excluded. Most of those who are struggling are of working age[3].

General health, access to support and wheelchair use

The online survey did not examine medical and care needs but it did collect some basic information on the kind of difficulties that individuals face as a result of their disability and housing situation. As figure 4 shows, these problems often extend beyond mobility difficulties:

- Over three quarters of participants report having difficulties with moving around their home, with most participants finding it difficult or impossible to climb stairs, access upstairs bedrooms, access bathrooms and reach cupboards. Some participants also told us they have problems with reaching light sockets and using door handles.
- Similar proportions also experience difficulties with personal care such as getting in and out of bed, washing, dressing and eating, whilst around half report problems of incontinence.

Figure 4: General health and difficulties
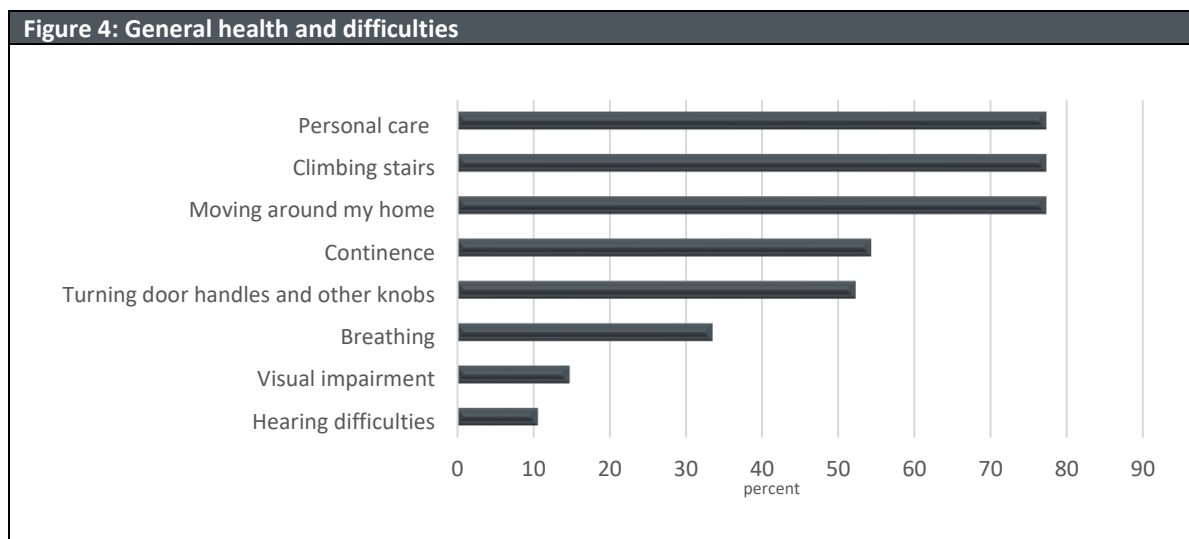
Whilst responses suggest mobility related difficulties do not vary significantly by tenure or dwelling type, it does suggest there are differences in terms of age and household composition. As expected, children and older people aged 75+ years typically have more extensive and more complex health conditions and

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[2] Aside from the small sample size, 16 participants did not answer the income question and it is well documented that survey respondents under-report income, especially Housing Benefit and other state benefits.

[3] Other than age, there were no obvious patterns in terms of tenure, income and so on that might be plausibly associated with difficulties paying housing costs.

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personal care needs. In contrast, wheelchair users that live alone are less likely to report mobility difficulties such as moving around the house or personal care needs. This may be partly because they are less likely to have multiple health conditions and partly because they are more likely to live in property better suited to their mobility needs.

A total of 38 (79%) survey participants say they receive regular help with household tasks and/or personal care. Of these, as figure 5 illustrates almost all rely on family or relatives, most commonly other members of their household, although those living alone rely on visiting support from their family. Slightly over half also receive formal or paid care, most commonly paid personal care or assistance.

Figure 5: Who provides regular assistance with household tasks and/or personal care
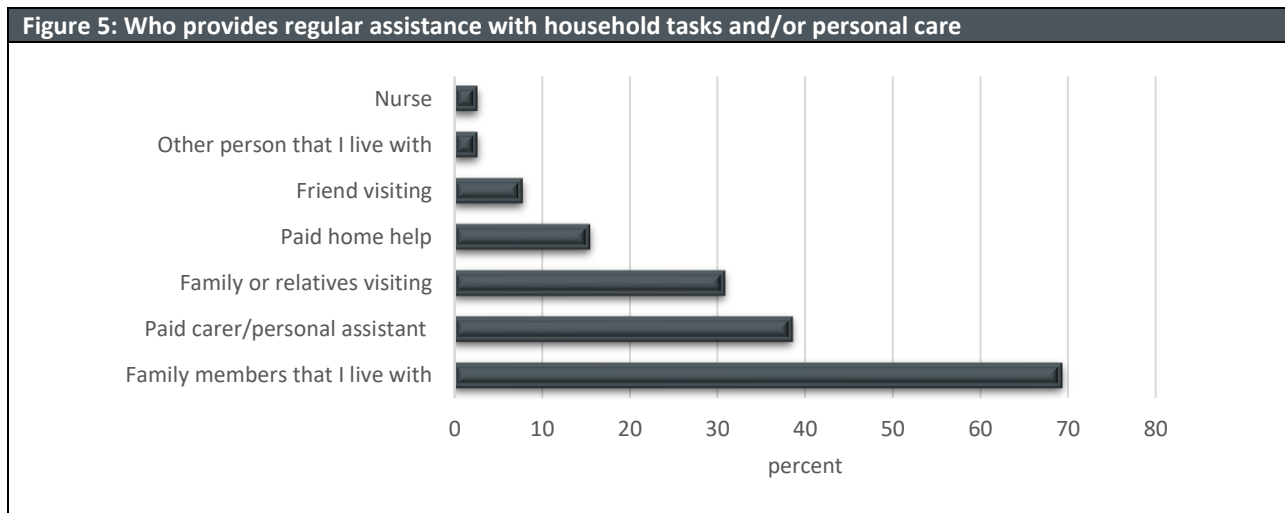
Use of wheelchair and other mobility aids and equipment

Three out of five participants have used a wheelchair for 6 years or more and virtually all have used a wheelchair for a year or more. Participants were asked how often they use a wheelchair within and outside the home. Of those who responded, two thirds use a wheelchair 'all of the time' when outdoors and a third use a wheelchair 'all of the time' when indoors (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Frequency with which use wheelchair indoors and outdoors
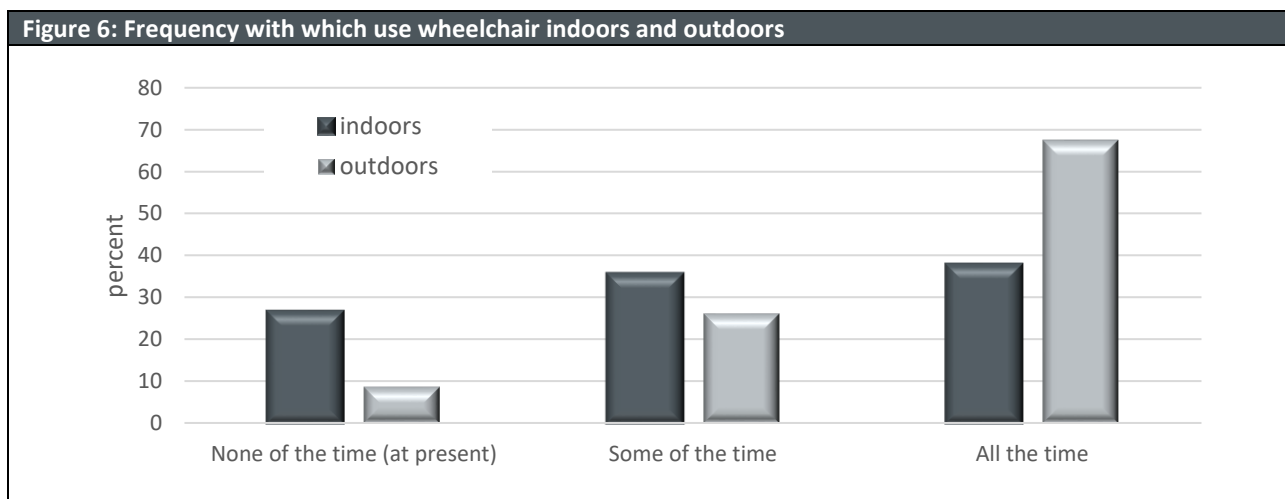
Participants use a range of other mobility aids and equipment depending on the nature and severity of their disability. When prompted, 10 or more participants say that they use one or more of the items of equipment listed in table 1. Some 17 participants said unprompted that they use other equipment indoors, such as:

- Hospital or other specialist beds
- Commodes and Closomat toilets

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- 'Sara Stedy' and other standing aids
- Grabrails and bedrails
- Raised toilet frame and other forms of toilet and shower seats.

Table 1: Use of equipment or vehicles (No.)	
Equipment	No.
Stick	13
A Zimmer frame	11
Powered wheelchair	18
Self-powered wheelchair	17
Wheelchair pushed by another	34
Mobility or adapted car	26
Hoist	10

Design features and adaptations

Less than half of participants say their home has been designed or adapted for wheelchair use or that their home is in the process of being adapted. There is also a lot of variation in the presence of design features that are associated with the Housing for Varying Needs (HfVN) 'standard' and 'wheelchair' accessibility guidelines within the homes of participants. Figure 7 shows that upwards of 3 out of 5 respondents say their home has at least one accessibility feature such as a ground floor toilet, level access or ramp access to the house, step free interiors and a level access shower room. However, less than half say their home have 'wheelchair accessible' features such as accessible switches and environmental controls or widened doorways. In addition, less than a fifth say their home has covered access from carports/garages, stair/through lifts or features that affect kitchen accessibility such as lowered or moveable worktops. Responses also indicate that owners are more likely to have a stairlift or through lift within their home than households in other tenures.

Figure 7: Percent of all respondents that state home has design feature (%)
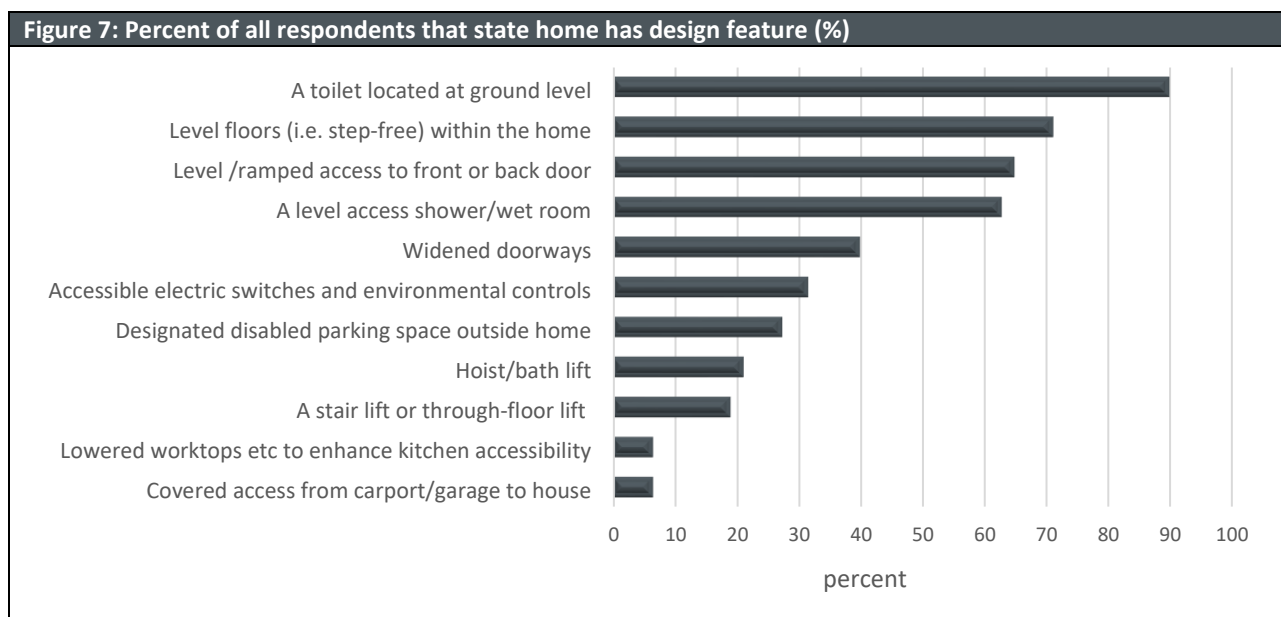
A list of adaptations and design features was presented to survey participants who were asked to say whether they needed them but do not have them. Participants also had the opportunity to identify other adaptations they needed. Both prompted and unprompted responses are summarised in figure 8. There is considerable overlap between the Scottish Household Condition Survey (SHCS) 2015-2107 and the online responses as to the most commonly required adaptations which are needed but not available, with upwards of a quarter of participants saying they need but do not have:

- Widened doorways

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- Level access and/or ramped access to the front or back door
- Level access shower/wet room
- Covered access from a carport and/or garage to the house.

Figure 8: Adaptations respondents' state they require but do not have (%)
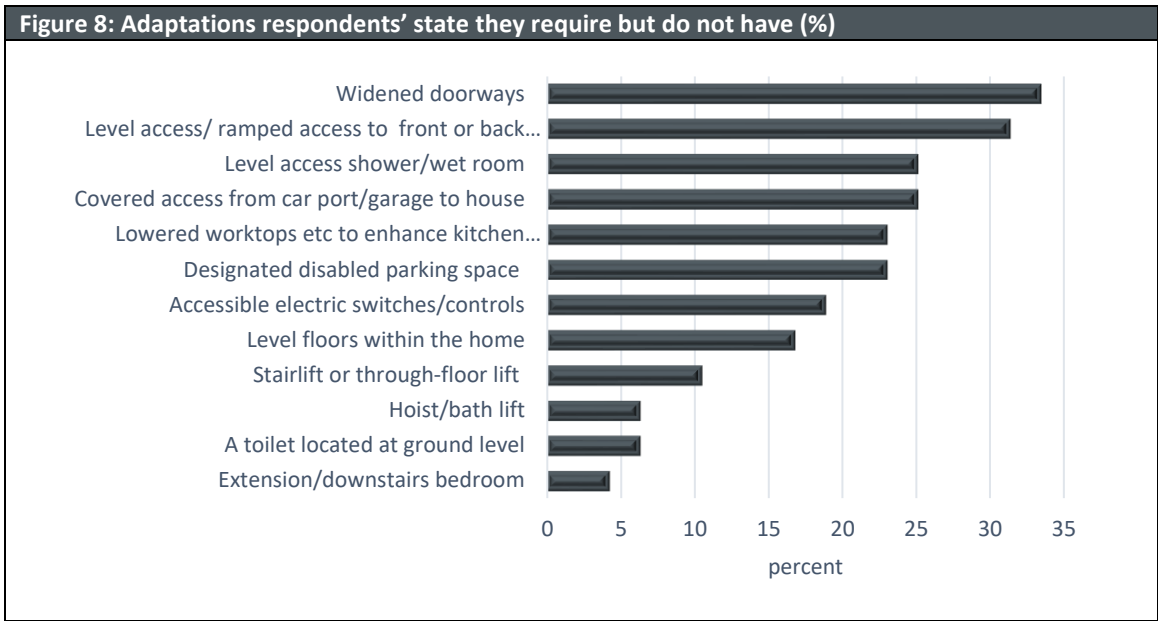
As a general rule, single person households are less likely to say they require further adaptations than other types of household. In terms of the two main tenures, there is little apparent difference in the propensity for owners and social renters to have access to 'standard' accessibility features such as ramps, downstairs toilets and wet floor showers. On the other hand, social renters are more likely to have access to 'wheelchair' accessible features such as accessible switches and environmental controls, hoists and bath lifts but they are also far more likely to say they require additional adaptations. In particular, families and couples of working age that live in the social rented sector (as opposed to older people and single adults) tended to express a need for further adaptations.

Experience of adaptations and equipment

The programme of interviews shed light on some of the lived experiences wheelchair users have in trying to secure adaptations and the impact of living with or without them made.

Feedback from homeowners pointed to a keen sense of independence, choice and control and a strong desire for solutions that addressed both their disability and the housing needs of their whole family. All had experience of adaptations services at some point and some believe they receive a good service and are very satisfied with the work undertaken, often pointing to the benefits derived from improvements to the accessibility of their homes, especially the ground floor. This view was summed up by one person who described the 'Help to Adapt' service as 'a 'fabulous scheme'.

Those with less positive views voiced frustration with the lengthy waiting times and processes involved. OT services and advice are generally well regarded but there is a view that OTs can be overly rigid and fail to recognise the need to create a living environment for the whole family. Owners also talked about the importance of good communication with architects and other professionals, with suggestions that architects may be less familiar with accessibility standards that with environmental sustainability standards and features. Owners also queried why funding for adaptations was not subject to the arrangements as direct payments for care.

"I have been waiting for a portable ramp to be installed for some time and there has been little contact from 'social services' on what stage the process was at."

To gain greater choice and control, some homeowners with the financial capability had opted to organise and pay for adaptations themselves. We also heard from owners that they had taken the decision to commission a bespoke house to secure a home suitable in spite of the fact that the process of acquiring land and planning permission is far from straightforward.

Private renter experience of adaptions was also variable, but for different reasons. One tenant described their landlord as 'extremely supportive' and gave examples such as explaining that his landlord had voluntarily funded and fitted a walk-in shower when they realised that "I could not use a bath". The other said had asked for an assessment 3 months ago but was still waiting.

Social renters, two of whom had a child that used a wheelchair, expressed the strongest and most extreme views. At one end of the spectrum tenants felt their RSL had been responsive and had made all the necessary adaptations. At the other end of the spectrum tenants had been left feeling angry and helpless at RSL decisions to refuse adaptations and queried the rationale for such decisions.

Perceptions about current home

Participants were asked whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the design and layout of their home. Participants were also asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the design and layout of their home (see table 2).

Table 2: Survey respondents that agree or disagree with statements about their home			
Layout and design questions combined	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither (%)
I can move around (and turn around) the kitchen in my wheelchair	56	29	8
I find it easy to get in and out of my home	52	40	15
I need more storage space for equipment	46	50	35
The design and layout of my home has helped me live more independently	35	52	31
The design of my home meets the needs of everyone who lives here	33	54	29
I can move around (and turn around) the bathroom in my wheelchair	33	38	17
I am not able to access the garden	33	52	19
Design features/adaptations have reduced the care/ assistance I need from others	31	58	31
My home makes it hard for me to do many of the things I want to do	31	63	33
Doors are too narrow to allow me to move around the house in my wheelchair	29	52	19
I need more storage space for medical supplies	27	67	40
I can move and turn around with ease in my wheelchair throughout my home	27	56	23

Just 54%, of survey participants are satisfied with their home. Although national surveys in different parts of the UK consistently report that disabled people are significantly more dissatisfied with their current home than non-disabled people, these figures are still very low. However, we doubt survey bias is the only factor at play, in the sense that wheelchair users who participated in the study are more frustrated with their housing situation than those who did not participate in the survey. Looking more closely at the responses to the layout and design of their home summarised in table 4.2, survey responses suggest that:

- Wheelchair users that live in a property designed or adapted for wheelchair use are markedly more satisfied with their home than other survey participants. Only one such participant expressed overall dissatisfaction with their home.
- Most participants that live in a suitably designed or adapted property agree that their home has improved their ability to live independently and increased their freedom of movement within the home and garden. However, views on whether it has reduced the need for care are mixed and some have concerns about the lack of storage space.
- Participants between the ages of 25 to 64 years and who live in a household comprised of 2 or more persons are considerably more dissatisfied with their home than single adults of working age or respondents aged 65+ years.

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Discussions with participants reinforced our survey-based perceptions that issues around a lack of space, inadequate toilet and bathing facilities and perceptions ofthe home being unsuitable for the whole households needs all contribute to their low rates of satisfaction amongst wheelchair users under the age of 65 years, most of whom are renters.

> "The housing situation is really difficult and is causing us great stress but we want to stay in the area."
>
> "My daughter has to sleep in the living room as she cannot get upstairs and the two boys need separate rooms. This means that the boys have to go upstairs really early as daughter goes to sleep early evening."
>
> "The house has a temporary ramp which is unstable and the bathroom is not a wet floor shower which makes washing daughter difficult."
>
> "It was a brand-new home but there are many issues – the wet floor shower room flooded because the shower was installed wrongly; the bedroom is not big enough for the size of bed they require and for the hoist equipment. The kitchen is all adapted but it is not required but there is no fire escape for my son."

Perceptions about location

Just under half of participants are satisfied with the location of their home and a third are dissatisfied with the location of their home, again most of whom are renters. Dissatisfaction with location is partly linked to the local terrain, lack of public transport and problems accessing local amenities (see table 3).

Table 3: Percent respondents that agree or disagree with statements about the location where they live				
	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither (%)	Total (%)
I find it difficult to get out of my home	33	38	29	100
The roads or pavements where I live are too steep for me to get about in my wheelchair without help	69	13	19	100
Pavements near my home are difficult to navigate due to obstructions	45	34	21	100
I have difficulty travelling to shops, leisure facilities, health services etc.	50	30	20	100
I need help to go outside to access shops, leisure and other facilities	70	17	13	100
It is difficult for me to access or use public transport	71	16	13	100

Discussions also highlighted other aspects about their local areas that wheelchairs users were less than positive about. This include older style shops in traditional town centres which were sometime inaccessible and led some preferring to use the larger supermarkets and 'out of town' centres. Cambers on pavements and unaligned dropped kerbs also cause problems for wheelchair users.

> "The condition of roads make life difficult – bumps, rough surfaces and speed bumps are very painful. Too many shops have steps up to them and the bank staff have to come into the street to attend to any business because cannot get the wheelchair even close to the door."

Curiously, survey participant views about their home and/or location of their home often appear to conflict with their views about their current housing situation. More specifically:

- Most participants that say they are dissatisfied with their home also say they would prefer to remain in their current home, typically with adaptations to enable them to live more independently.
- Over half of those who express dissatisfaction with the location of their current home also say they would prefer to remain in their current home, again with adaptations.
- Just a handful of participants that express dissatisfaction with their home and/or location say they want to move house, usually to a property designed or adapted for wheelchair users.

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<u>Moving house and future housing requirements</u>

Whilst survey participants report that their current property or the location of their home or both are less than suitable, 7 out of 10 participants do not want to move home. Moreover, less than a quarter say they are currently looking to move home or might consider moving home in the next five years. Of these 11 participants, most are under 65 and currently rent their home.

Figure 9: Features that would make participants more likely to consider moving property
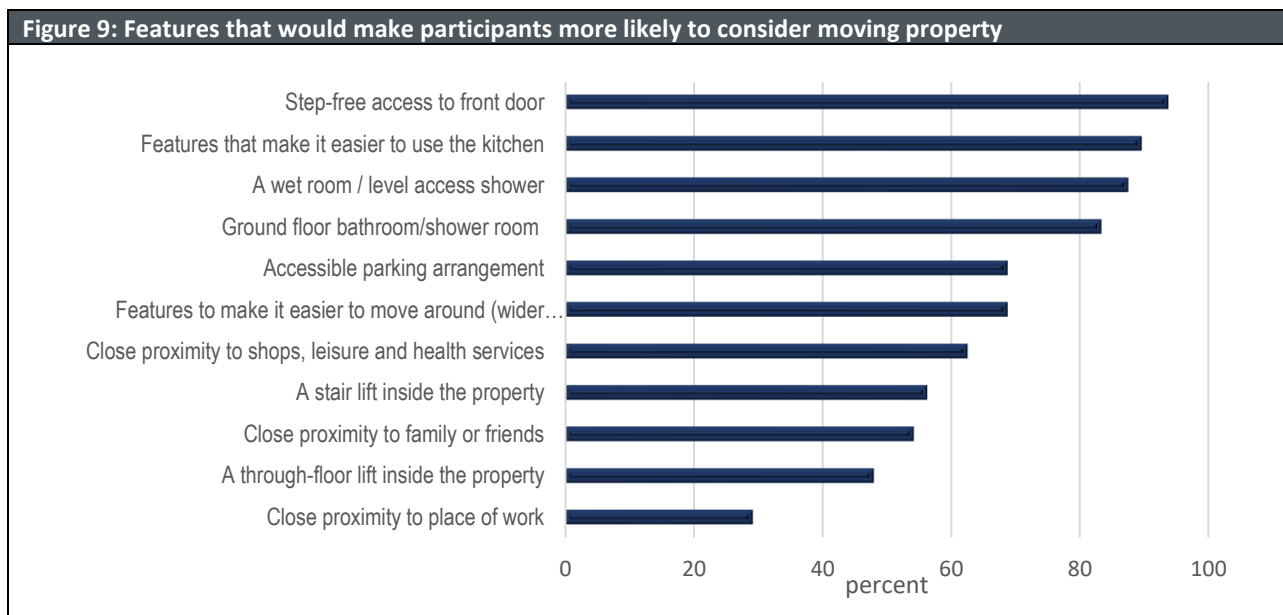
Participants were provided with a list of statements and asked which of these factors would make them more or less likely to consider moving to another property. Results are summarised in figure 9, which shows that the ability to secure accessibility features was a bigger motivator to consider moving to another property than locational factors. As it was far from clear why this pattern may have emerged the follow-up interviews asked people about these matters.

Homeowners told us they generally wished to remain in their current home for as long as possible, although one or two were considering a move to modern bungalow type accommodation at some point. Some homeowners that lived in older and more spacious properties also explained that they had found ways to make their home work for them, albeit in more than one instance this had meant effectively abandoning the upper storey of their home.

For the majority of people that we spoke to across all tenures, remaining in the same settlement and in close proximity to family and friends were over-riding factors. We repeatedly heard that people were fearful that due to a lack of suitable and /or affordable homes they could find themselves in a position of having to move elsewhere. Based on our discussions it appears that people already tend to live near their support networks so moving to be near them is not a primary issue. Moreover, while wheelchair users appear to be prepared to move to an accessible property it is doubtful that many would be prepared to move to another settlement to achieve this.

"The area is nice and there are some nice parks. Mum lives next door and other relatives nearby so the network support is great. I couldn't manage without that."

"We both love the area they are in and do not want to have to move out of their area in order to try and secure a more suitable long-term home."

Irrespective of the future movement intentions, survey participants were asked what their tenure preference would be if they were to move to another property. More or less equal numbers of participants say their preference would be the owner-occupied sector or the social rented sector. Not surprisingly

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existing renters generally would prefer a social rented tenancy whilst homeowners almost exclusively would prefer to remain in their current tenure.

Survey participants were asked what barriers might prevent them from moving and although not all answered this question, their feedback was reinforced through the follow up interviews:

- I couldn't afford a suitable home
- There are no suitable homes available that can meet my needs
- I would have to move away from friends and/or family
- I couldn't face the upheaval of moving.
- I need to be close to services and facilities (e.g. GP, Council, shops, leisure)

The following topics were considered: participant views on moving to another property, the factors that might encourage them to move house and the barriers to moving house help to explain why two thirds of participants, when asked about the feelings about their current housing situation, express a clear preference to stay put (see figure 10).

Figure 10: Number of participants that concur which various statements about their current housing situation
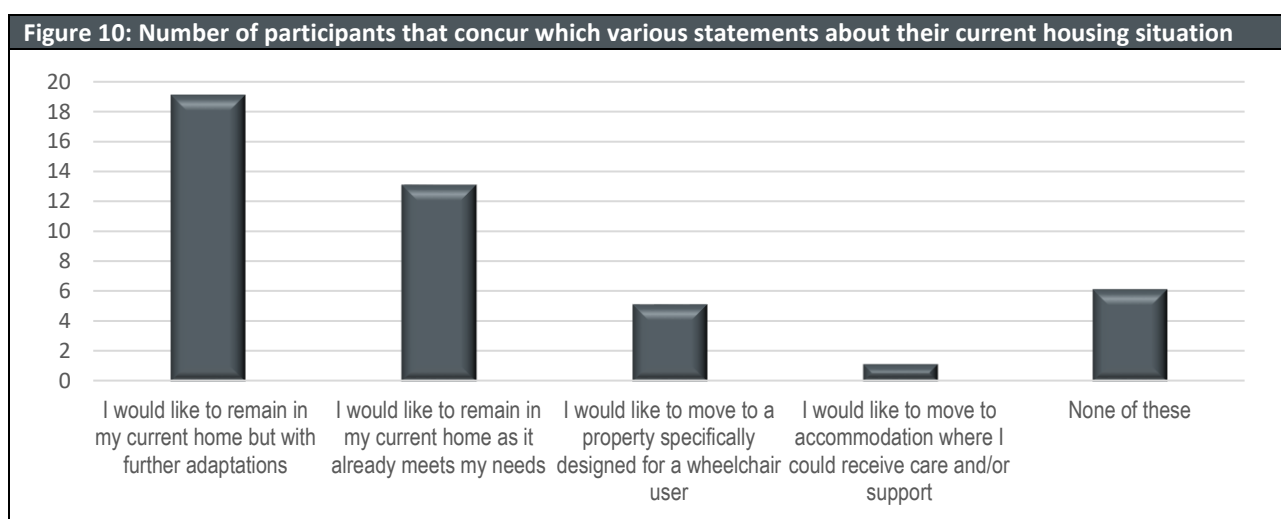
Information and advice

Participants were asked if they know where to go to obtain housing advice or general advice on issues such as employment, financial matters and welfare benefits. They were also asked a more specific question on who they would contact if their needs changed in order to obtain advice on making their house more suitable or to explore other housing options. Responses to these questions suggest that knowledge of where to secure information and advice is limited:

- Only 20 participants said they agree that know where to go to find general advice.
- Only 16 said they agree they know where to go to find housing advice.
- 15 participants said they know who they would contact if their needs were to change but only 10 named one or more organisations they would contact if their needs changed.
- The Council (including Adult Services and OT Services) and RSLs were the main sources of advice mentioned. Care and Repair was the only other source of advice mentioned.

Homeowners, especially those who are outright owners, seem to struggle to know where to turn to obtain information and advice on housing issues. Only one owner that took part in the survey referred specifically to Care and Repair. None mentioned Housing Options Scotland or the Council's Housing Options Service.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, the online survey and follow up interviews point to a lack of accessible housing, difficulties securing housing adaptations, potentially problematic allocation systems, barriers to accessing information,

and problems navigating services and accessing appropriate support. They also suggest there is potential hidden demand for bungalows and other forms of accessible housing in the private housing market that mass built housing developers are not yet catering for. These and other challenges are examined further in the following section.

Policy Workshop Findings

The workshop was held in the Committee Room of the Scottish Borders Council Offices on the morning of 11th November and 17 people participated in the event. This included three people who use or represent wheelchair users alongside representatives from housing, planning and social work services and the private sector.

Overview of the workshop discussion

A number of inter-connected actions were proposed that could form part of Scottish Border's Local Housing Strategy and, if implemented, could help to:

- Reduce the barriers that can hinder or prevent wheelchair users and their families for accessing suitable housing and housing services such as adaptations.
- Increase the numbers of wheelchair users and their families that are able to attain their human rights to independent living and adequate housing.

These proposals were used to inform the preparation of the Delivery Plan set out in Appendix 2. It sets out proposed actions and accompanying monitoring indicators that members of the Advisory Group felt would be appropriate for the Housing Strategy Team to pursue, subject to the availability of resources.

In arriving at these proposed actions, workshop participants identified several issues and principles that should drive the development of a more strategic approach to improving the supply of homes that are accessible to wheelchair users and other people with mobility issues. Many of the same issues were also raised by stakeholders that were interviewed in the run-up to the Workshop. The following paragraphs therefore summarise the main issues and principles that informed the Draft Delivery Plan.

Key principles and issues

Engaging with wheelchair user and their representatives

- A key principle is that the housing needs and aspirations of wheelchair users and other people that find it difficult to move around their home should be at the centre of the collective efforts of the Council and its partners to shape the local housing markets to deliver good quality, well-located and accessible housing.
- Consistent with feedback throughout this study, wheelchair users and their representatives who attended this workshop stressed the need for their voices and those of other people with mobility issues to shape the planning, delivery and monitoring of new accessible homes and housing related services.
- From the view point of wheelchair users and their families and/or carers, housing is integral to their ability to live healthy, active and independent lives and to enjoy everything that their local community and the wider Scottish Borders area has to offer.
- The Housing Strategy Team's approach to communication and engagement should build on this understanding and look to 'piggy back' on and make best use of existing mechanisms for gathering and sharing information and engaging with wheelchair users and their representatives. These key mechanisms include the Joint Physical Disability Strategy Group, the Access Panels, RSL resident participation activities, the Council's "Have Your Say" Survey programme and leaflets issued with Council Tax Notification Letters and local newsletters of organisations such as Borders Care Voice and RSLs.

Engaging with health and social care

- A second key principle is that more effort is required to further strengthen relationships and pool resources between housing, planning, health and social care.
- Accessible housing and housing related services can have positive outcomes for the public purse by exerting downward pressure on demand for health and social care services and this is therefore a central element of care and support. Individual housing organisations can make changes that will benefit households. For instance, Eildon HA is revising its social housing allocation policy to ensure applicants that use a wheelchair or have other specific housing needs have fairer and more equal access to their stock of social housing. Nonetheless, there is a strong and clear impression that greater collaboration and joint working between public services (housing, planning, health and adult and child social services) and local organisations is required to deliver better and more efficient services and to deliver substantial improvements in the living arrangements of wheelchair users and other households that need accessible housing.
- Greater collaboration is not easy to achieve and much will depend on the continued efforts of the Scottish Borders Health & Social Care Partnership to drive forward efforts to:
  - o Improve engagement between housing, health and social care partners, including RSLs, the voluntary, community and private sector.
  - o Ensure funding streams and decisions across all partners are more closely aligned and more focused for prevention.

Joined up information, advice and advocacy services

- Wheelchair users in all tenures require access to free, independent information, advice and support to enable them to make more informed choices about their current and future housing and living arrangements. Moreover, this advice and information has to be available in a range of channels and formats (e.g. digital, paper, telephone and face-to-face). We heard that:
  - o People who use wheelchairs and their families are often unaware of the options for moving home in their area of choice or the different services that can help improve the accessibility of their current home and maximise their independence and well-being.
  - o Frontline staff working across different organisations and services do not always have the knowledge about these options or where to refer people requesting advice and assistance.
  - o Online advice specific to the Scottish Borders could be improved. Whilst not all wheelchair users may access the web, it can be an effective vehicle for sharing information and advice with their families and carers.

- There is widespread support for an integrated service person-centred approach for all older and disabled people, including wheelchair users that straddles housing, health, social care housing and finance. This reflects awareness that the housing needs and aspirations of older or disabled households are interwoven with their health and social care needs and financial circumstances.
- We heard that this policy option, albeit in rather different guises, has been outlined in previous local plans and strategies. However, little progress has so far been made in terms of translating this policy ambition into service delivery. This suggests that a feasibility study to scope out what such an integrated advice service would look like and how it could be delivered might be advisable.
- Feedback from workshop and other study participants suggest any such feasibility study should be underpinned by a review of existing provision and a deeper understanding of the experience of the diverse range of older and disabled households in seeking and accessing advice across the Borders. The feasibility study would also have to consider:
  - o How to secure collaboration between housing, health and social care in the planning, funding and delivery of such services and possible efficiency gains.
  - o How to involve older and disabled people and carers in order to ensure an integrated approach would meet their needs.
  - o How to achieve a focus on early advice and support to prevent problems reaching a crisis point.
  - o Suitable access points, suitable providers, the role of volunteers and a manageable set of outcomes for collectively monitoring services.

- Workshop discussions also pointed to a need to think creatively about how people receive and share information. For instance, we heard that getting people to tell their stories to neighbours and the wider community can be a powerful way of sharing information and advice.
- Overall, it would be appropriate for the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership rather than the SBC Housing Strategy Team to lead on any future appraisal of the feasibility of integrated approach to the delivery of advice. In large part this is because it is the Partnership that has overall responsibility for investing and commissioning services to deliver an integrated approach to information and advice would rest with the Partnership.
- Irrespective of what longer term plans emerge for the delivery of an integrated service, there is scope to strengthen housing related information and advice for older and disabled households in the shorter term. In particular, there are opportunities to improve the accessibility of housing related information throughout the Borders. This includes improvements to the Council's webpages to ensure these provide an accessible route to independent information and advice.

Increasing the supply of wheelchair accessible housing
- There is broad support for an overall numerical target for new supply of wheelchair accessible housing that covers all tenures, although there are differing views on whether and how this could be applied to the private sector.
- In the main, there is support for the adoption of a numerical target of anywhere between 15-25 new homes to be built to wheelchair accessible standards each year. Most stakeholders take the view that the large majority of these units will be delivered by the affordable housing sector and that this may necessitate a higher target than the provisional 10% target of new social homes set out in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2019-24.
- Current plans for wheelchair accessible housing largely rely on the Council's plans to expand the provision of extra care housing. This is somewhat at odds with local evidence confirming that the majority of applicants seeking wheelchair accessible social rented housing are represented by someone of working age. This includes families with at least one child who has to use a wheelchair.
- The delivery of additional wheelchair housing suitable for families and other working age households who require wheelchair housing may also partly rely on Waverley Housing's regeneration plans for Upper Langlee in Galashiels. This phased programme will see the demolition of 156 properties, the construction of around 100 new homes and refurbishment of 68 flats at a cost of some £21.5 million. At present, Waverley Housing is still investigating the suitable composition of the new homes, including the numbers that could be built to wheelchair accessible standards. The Council will therefore want to be assured that the numbers of wheelchair and other accessible housing incorporated into these plans is reasonable, taking into account local need and the local terrain.
- Demographic trends indicate that the drive to build higher numbers of private homes risks being short-sighted if the dwellings constructed are not accessible for what older and disabled people both want and need. Recent planning legislation provides added impetus to explore new ways to encourage and incentivise the construction of well-designed private homes that are suitable for wheelchair users and other older and disabled people looking for accessible homes.
- On saying that, there are perceived barriers to increasing the supply of wheelchair accessible housing in the private sector. One is the perception that it could be cost prohibitive. Another is that private developers are not familiar with wheelchair specifications and layouts.
- Some local authorities, such as Moray Council, have issued supplementary planning guidance to secure the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures. It took some time to develop and implement the policy, secure support from elected members and planners and explain the policy to developers. Although only a small number of private sector homes have been so far been built, others are now in the pipeline.
- One way forward may be to develop a deeper understanding of local demand for wheelchair accessible housing across the 5 locality areas and to use this information as a platform for engaging with private housing developers to raise awareness of local demand and the potential benefits of delivering wheelchair and other forms of accessible housing. A potential starting point would be to ensure regular

updates are obtained in respect of the numbers of people in each Health and Social Care Locality Area that are issued a wheelchair by the NHS.

- A further consideration is what Accessibility Standard the Scottish Borders would like to see housing designed to, especially affordable housing. Wheelchair users perceive the Housing for Varying Need (HfVN) Standards for general needs and wheelchair accessible housing to be out of date. Discussions also suggest there is continuing uncertainly around how precisely the different accessibility standards relate to each other.

- One way forward would be to follow the example of some other local authorities and look at the possibility of introducing a Scottish Borders Accessibility Standard that would set of accessibility requirements applicable to new wheelchair and other forms of affordable homes. However, a prior necessary step would be to review the increasing range of Accessibility Standards that exist and weight up their potential impact and costs in the Scottish Borders.

Making best use of existing stock
- As most people with mobility problems will continue to live in mainstream housing that already exists, the adaptation, allocation and maintenance of the current housing stock will continue to have the greatest impact on the wellbeing of older and disabled people and consequent costs for social care and health.

- Workshop discussions confirmed that major adaptations (ramps, bathroom conversions, extensions, stair lifts, etc.) often transformed people's lives. Discussions stressed the need to sustain funding support for mandatory grants for adaptions in the private sector and to continue to seek additional funding from the Scottish Government to support the adaptation of RSL properties. They also stressed the need to continue efforts to ensure people have greater choice and control over the adaptation process and to reduce the length of time that can elapse from making an initial enquiry through to works completion.

- Workshop discussions reinforced the research evidence that wheelchair users often struggle to find information and advice about where to get support with organising adaptations. There was also a clear sense that households that adapt their home without grant support would benefit from information and advice on how to identify and secure reputable products, builders and designers. Although it is appreciated that Scottish Borders Council interpret the mandatory grant regime as flexibly as possible, there is some continued frustration that mandatory grant funding is not available for property extensions to enable people to live with dignity and comfort in their home.

- There was more limited discussion around the process of allocating social rented housing. The main focus was on the potential development of an Accessible Housing Register to improve the ability to match individual wheelchair users to a suitable newly built or adapted property.

- The term Accessible Housing Register covers a variety of different arrangements. Simpler models involve documenting the accessibility of the housing stock whilst more complex models combine data on accessible properties and applicants requiring accessible housing for all social landlords in a given area. At present there is no clear view or consensus on what kind of accessible housing register might be feasible. An important first step would therefore be to establish which model might be appropriate for the Scottish Borders.

Build a stronger evidence base
- An Accessible Housing Register would generate valuable data to both inform and monitor local policies and activities to improve the ability of wheelchair users to secure fair access to housing and other services. To maximise the strategic benefits of this data, consistent data definitions and data sharing arrangements would be required, and these would therefore have to be scoped out as part of any work to refine and test the feasibility of developing a local register.

- More generally, there is need to ensure that data systems are more attuned to capturing data on the characteristics of people using services, including whether they use a wheelchair, and the outcomes that are achieved in terms of independent living and wellbeing.

<u>Asks for the Scottish Government</u>

- Finally, participants called for sustained action from the Scottish Government to ensure:
    - o That the planned reviews of the HfVN Standard and Building Regulations take full account of the human rights of wheelchair users and balances the short-term financial interests of developers with the longer-term financial interests of the public purse.
    - o The importance of ensuring grant funding for new homes and RSL adaptations is better aligned to the anticipated growth in the need and demand for wheelchair accessible housing.
    - o Local authorities report the number of new homes constructed to wheelchair accessibility standards (which is already allowed for in the new build annual returns) and thereafter publish annual statistics on the numbers of social and private homes built to this standard, thereby allowing Scottish Borders to compare progress with other local authorities.

5.   EARLY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The early engagement survey ran from 1st October 2021 to 30th November 2021. The main aim of the survey was to find out what Scottish Borders households and organisations thought were the main housing issues and priorities for the region. This took the form of an online survey that was widely publicised through social media, press release and working closely with RSL tenant groups and other community groups to gain maximum responses. In total there were 330 responses (301 from individuals and 29 from organisations). This summary report provides some analysis of the key findings.

How are you responding to this survey?		
	No.	**%**
Individual	301	91.2
Organisation	29	8.8
Total	330	100

Of the 29 responses from organisations these were grouped into categories, table 1 shows the breakdown of organisations that replied to the survey. The majority of reponses were from Third Sector Organisations or other (70%). Other included; solicitor, country estate, consultant and landlord.

Table 1: What type of organisation are you? (%)	
Community Council	7
Government Organisation	17
Housing Association	7
Other	35
Third Sector Organisation	35

For those who responded as individuals, we asked a number of questions about their characteristics, and the next five tables provide a breakdown of answers. Of the 301 individuals, over 60% of respondents to the survey were female, with males accounting for 30.9% of respondents.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents		
	No.	**%**
Female	201	66.8
Male	93	30.9
Other (please specify)	1	0.3
Prefer not to say	6	2.0
Total	301	100

A large % of the respondents were aged 55+ accounting for 44% of all those who took part in the survey. Younger age groups, those aged under 35, accounted for around 16% of total respondents.

Table 3: Age Group of Respondents		
	No.	**%**
Under 18	3	1.0
18-24	5	1.7
25-34	41	13.6
35-44	53	17.6
45-54	59	19.6
55-64	67	22.3
65+	65	21.6
Prefer not to say	8	2.7
Total	301	100

The majority of those responding to the survey were owner occupiers (60.5%) with those in the social rented sector accounting for 21.6% and the private rented sector (15%). This is similar to the tenure spilt of housing in the Scottish Borders.

Table 4: Housing Tenure		
	No.	%
An Owner Occupier in the Scottish Borders	182	60.5
Renting from a Housing Association in the Scottish Borders	65	21.6
Renting from a Private Landlord in the Scottish Borders	45	15.0
Other (please specify)	9	3.0
Total	301	100

Table 5 shows the number and percentage of individuals who consider themselves to have a disability or not. 13.6% consider themselves to have a disability. It might be worth carrying out analysis on the responses to housing issues and priorities to see if there is any difference between those who consider themselves to have a disability or not as the housing experiences of individuals could potential differ greatly.

Table 5: Do you consider yourself to have a disability?		
	No	%
Yes	41	13.6
No	249	82.7
Not Answered	2	0.7
Prefer not to say	9	3.0
Total	301	100

Table 6 shows the postcode area for individual respondents, clearly showing that the largest number of responses comes from TD1, which is Galashiels (19.3%).

Table 6: Postcode Area			
	%		%
EH26	0.3	TD14	4.7
EH38	0.3	TD15	0.3
EH43	1	TD2	0.7
EH44	3	TD3	0.3
EH45	9	TD4	2.7
EH46	8	TD5	9.6
ML12	0.3	TD6	10.3
TD1	19.3	TD7	5.3
TD10	2.3	TD8	5.6
TD11	5.6	TD9	6.6
TD12	1.3	Out with Scottish Borders	1
TD13	2.3		

Housing Issues

As part of the survey those responding were asked to what extent they felt certain housing issues were an issue within the Scottish Borders. Over 78% of respondents indicated that they feel tackling climate change, making homes more energy efficient and more affordable to keep warm was a big issue to them. Limited housing options for young people and/or first-time buyers was also seen as a big issue to many with 76% of respondents rating this as a big issue within the Scottish Borders. Table 7 provides a full breakdown of how the respondents viewed each housing issue.

Table 7: To what level do you believe these are housing issues within the Scottish Borders?	A big issue	A small issue	Not an issue	Don't Know
Teaching climate change, making homes more energy efficient & more affordable to keep warm	79%	14%	4%	4%
Limited housing options for young people and/or first-time buyers	76%	14%	2%	8%
Demand and affordability for home ownership	70%	19%	3%	8%
Availability and accessibility of social housing	65%	18%	4%	13%
Affordability of private rented accommodation	60%	22%	5%	13%
Bringing empty properties back into use	59%	21%	5%	14%
Lack of amenities to support new housing developments e.g. schools, GP surgeries, dentists	54%	27%	8%	12%
Lack of specialist housing	48%	15%	4%	33%
Second homes and holiday lets	44%	22%	11%	24%
Property condition issues	42%	24%	7%	27%
Capacity of construction sector locally to support new build housing projects	31%	18%	15%	36%
Homelessness	28%	35%	8%	32%
Lack of appropriate land for house building	27%	29%	19%	25%

When examining the differences between the responses from individuals and organisations the top housing issues were the same. Respondents were asked if there are any additional housing issues they would like to highlight. Out of 117 comments, here is a breakdown of the issues that were raised:

Table 8: Are there are any additional housing issues you would like to highlight (%)	
Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)	51%
Place making - Infrastructure, Communities and Outside space	10%
Holiday Homes	8%
Specialist Housing	15%
Energy Efficiency and Quality	14%
Homelessness	3%

Below is a selection of quotes by each theme:

Homelessness
'Adults and young people at risk who are also vulnerable are not usually safely placed in wider homeless accommodation where there are other people who may present a risk to them. There is an acknowledged lack of safe homeless availability for these groups. There is also a shortage of local supported housing for younger adults with disability, mental health, addiction or other support needs.'

Energy Efficiency and Quality
'I private rent, it's expensive and the property is in poor condition, it's costing a fortune to heat (oil) as there's no insulation! Please pressure landlords to look after their properties, tenants and the planet!'

'Current housing is not energy efficient and is expensive to heat. Windows and doors are not fit for purpose and heating systems are out of date, useless and extortionate.'

'Tackling improving and maximising energy efficiency/affordability of energy bills for EXISTING properties.'

Place making - Infrastructure, Communities and Outside space
'Never build new houses where there are inadequate services (health services, education, shops, etc) in the immediate area to support the increased population.'

'The lack of sufficient public transport in rural areas means that the location of housing for those who do not own a car is constrained.'

Holiday Homes
'Allowing people out with the area to buy second homes here for Air BNB purposes inflates the prices and means locals cannot afford to buy property and are therefore excluded from the market and may have to move away from the area.'

'I think that second homes and holiday lets are a small issue at the moment but will in the next 2-5 years become a big issue.'

Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)
'The availability of rental properties for young people is a huge problem. Prices are far too high and this is driven up by tourism. The huge number of empty properties / second homes mean that although I deeply wish to live and work in the beautiful borders it is becoming increasingly difficult. I think young people will continue to move away from the area and we will lose community because of it.' *'Not enough provision for single elderly requiring affordable housing. Too many larger properties being built and not enough smaller units. Houses should be built with a view to mixed incomes and family size. Small Social housing communities should be more available in rural areas not just concentrated in larger towns. Councils should consider buying individual houses for sale on open market and then make them available for social housing market. House construction industry should have to pay some percentage towards additional community infrastructure as part of planning agreements. Help should be available to those who can't afford to upgrade their oil heating in rural areas given climate impacts.'* *'We believe that any new housing strategy should prioritize investment in the on-going maintenance, use and re-use of our already existing buildings and places. This will be essential in meeting the challenges of climate change and our current target of achieving net zero emissions by 2045. Investment is also required to sustain the value of our historic environment and the important contribution it makes to our well-being, economic prosperity and the quality of our places.'* *'Young people are struggling to buy homes as the Borders has become so popular.'* *'Cost of housing association houses is ridiculous and only just under private rents by a few pounds.'* *'There is just not enough affordable housing and is really hard for the younger population to get renting.'*
Specialist Housing
'There is a considerable lack of disabled accessible housing, especially wheelchair accommodation which is not being addressed!!!' *'There is a real lack of affordable housing for people with learning disabilities or challenging behaviour in Scottish Borders. There is a lack of specialist accommodation that can meet their needs. Having more 'sheltered' type environments where there is a degree of security, or sound-proofed properties, where noise issues are key elements are also severely lacking.'*

Housing Priorities

Respondents were given a list of housing priorities and asked to select which of these they thought were the top 5 priorities within the Scottish Borders. 75% of respondents felt that local residents being able to afford to either rent or buy a property in the location of their choice was a housing priority within the Scottish Borders. The second most selected issue was that residents can afford to heat their homes (61%). Priorities where over half of respondents picked as a priority include:

- Homes are fuel efficient and do not damage the environment (56%)
- Bringing more empty homes back into use (50%)

Table 9: What do you think are the top five housing priorities in the Scottish Borders?	1	2	3	4	5	Total Selected	Not Selected
Local residents are able to afford to either rent or buy a property in the location of their choice	35%	13%	8%	9%	11%	75%	25%
Homes are fuel efficient and do not damage the environment	8%	15%	12%	14%	7%	56%	44%
Houses are well designed, functional and of a high standard	8%	10%	13%	9%	5%	46%	54%
Where we live is safe, easy to get around and has good transport links with good quality amenities in the vicinity	5%	11%	5%	8%	10%	39%	61%
Residents can afford to heat their homes	11%	12%	15%	12%	10%	61%	39%
There is a range of housing options available to suit the different needs of people in the community	8%	12%	10%	10%	8%	48%	52%
Households have the ability to reside in a home that is the right size and meets their needs	1%	1%	2%	3%	8%	15%	85%
Bringing more empty homes back into use	8%	10%	12%	10%	11%	50%	50%
New housing developments contain a mixture of both private and social housing, with the same quality of build standards	3%	5%	7%	5%	6%	25%	75%
Improved access to both green space as well outdoor facilities and activities to promote both physical and mental wellbeing	1%	3%	4%	7%	5%	21%	79%
To live comfortably in a home which can be adapted over their lifetime	4%	3%	3%	6%	4%	19%	81%
Availability of help and advice for both home owners and private renters to help repair and maintain their homes	10%	5%	8%	8%	15%	47%	53%

Respondents were asked if there are any additional housing priorities they would like to highlight. Out of 39 comments, here is a breakdown of the priorities that were raised:

Table 10: If you have a housing priority that is not listed above please detail (%)	
Housing Supply and Place Making	54
Specialist Housing	18
Energy Efficiency and Quality	18

Below is a selection of quotes by theme:

Specialist Housing
'Housing to support people who have traditionally been hard to find homes for - e.g. ground floor accommodation, wheelchair accessibility; dementia designed,; robust construction to support people who may challenge support services; good design and use of assistive technology and TEC to enable people to have greater independence.'

'More single story, accessible housing needed to cope with ageing population, for both private and social housing, near to public transport.'

Energy Efficiency and Quality
'Houses are safe and practical to live in.'

'EPC recommendations need to be economic & more tailored to the age of the housing stock. EPCs need to take account of the carbon being destroyed when they recommend the removal of traditional features e.g. lath and plaster replaced by insulation that forms a vapour barrier. Condensation and its implications on building & residents health needs to be understood as the air circulation in traditional homes is slowly strangled by current recommendations.'

'More housing opportunities for younger people.'

'There should be more rural options as well as in towns.'

'Availability of services adjacent to new housing.'

'To live in a multi-generational co-housing community where common facilities are shared and members mutually support one another. Such arrangements, slightly similar to residential mutual care, could easily be included in large new developments were developers pressed to do this.'

'New houses should have good-sized gardens. I think often, too many houses are squeezed into a site with gardens that are smaller than the footprint of the house. The quality of the house AND garden area should be more important than the quantity of houses.'

COVID-19

Respondents were asked in what ways had the COVID-19 pandemic impacted upon their housing situation and/or housing within the Scottish Borders in general. There were in total 219 comments with 29% of respondents say Covid had little or no impact on them personally.

Table 11: In what ways has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted upon your housing situation and/or housing within the Scottish Borders in general? (%)	
Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)	32
Increased Living Costs	10
Repairs/ Condition	11
Communities and Infrastructure (Place Making)	7
Homelessness	1
No impact/ small impact/ not personally impacted	29

Below are a selection of quotes by theme:

Repairs/ Condition
'Unable to get repairs /improvements done in a timely fashion during lockdowns, and shortage of supplies available in shops.'

'Ability to source trades has become chronic, possibly a function of jobs held over from the lockdown period but probably more likely a lack of trades generally and a very difficult labour market for trades people to cope with the regulation and cost of having employees.'

'People have spent more time at home and have invested in their properties. So there are a number of properties in better condition now than prior to the pandemic.'

Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)
'Slowed down new developments. Costs increased for material and labour.'

'It has clearly delayed some RSL projects.'

'Huge lack of rental properties, private rental in huge demand so Costs have soared with no prospect of getting social housing.'

'Increased demand for rural properties has led to a huge increase in property prices and reduced availability of affordable rental properties. People with more cash have moved out from the cities and bought up local properties, including some going for 'buy to let' properties that make it harder for struggling families locally to compete.'

'In our area, the pandemic and now staycation culture has led to a dramatic increase in property being bought up to be used as holiday lets. The property prices have also risen significantly, and the housing market is out of control. There are no houses available at affordable first-home prices.'

'Young people are struggling to buy homes as the Borders has become so popular.'

'More people coming on staycation and mountain biking, meaning more available housing is put for tourism rather than local residents. Work being only part-time now rather than full-time meaning it's harder to save towards a deposit or paid rent.'

Increased Living Costs
'Working from home now needs to be accommodated. This will require my property to be retrofitted at a cost to me and the running costS of my property have increased significantly and this is far beyond the value of the tax incentives for working from home for an employee.

It is more important now that my property is as fuel efficient as possible, but the costs of this work is increasing, the capacity of the local construction industry is not there and there is no guarantee of any government support until after the works are complete (100% risk on homeowner).'

'Working from home and the impact on electricity and heating bills.'

'I am unable to work due to Covid so am reliant on universal credit so unable to afford my rent plus council tax.'

Communities and Infrastructure (Place Making)
'Communities have supported one another however there is a number of individuals who have suffered due to isolation; illness; loss and general inability to meet other people. There is a huge disconnect in our communities and housing has a role to play to ensure people are supported and their mental health does not continue to deteriorate.'

'It was good for properties with outside spaces so that people could get out for some recreational purposes and to take an interest in their gardens for growing vegetables etc. Also a space for young families to keep together in a safe environment.'

'We have seen a general trend toward home-working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and there is now a requirement that our homes should be digitally connected and able to accommodate work spaces. People have also become better connected to their neighbourhoods and there is an increasing requirement for access to services and green space within localities. The trend towards home working may also necessitate the conversion of some town centre buildings from office to residential use.'

Homelessness
'The impact on domestic abuse victims was felt with the reduction in and ability of temporary homeless accommodation during Covid; victims having to make housing choices that don't keep them safe; lack of affordable housing and safe housing across the Borders means choices are reduced.'

'Increased stress has affected individual's wellbeing, particularly the mental health of younger adults, and also safety such as domestic violence. This have potentially led to increased housing and homeless needs.'

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any additional comments, this is a useful way for people to share their views on housing that haven't already been covered in the questions, in total there were 203 comments (62% of all responses). Table 12 provides a breakdown on the themes of the comments.

Table 12: Are there other issues that you believe we should consider in our Local Housing Strategy? (%)	
Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)	56
Communities and Infrastructure (Place Making)	21
Holiday Homes	3
Homelessness	4
Energy Efficiency and Quality	8
Specialist Housing	5

Below IS a selection of quotes by theme:

Holiday Homes
'Restricting second homes and holiday rents. Taxing them more and increasing their Council Tax, homes should not be sitting empty while people are desperate for a decent home in their own town.'

'There needs to be positive discouragement to second homes and holiday cottages to help free up supply locally.'

Homelessness
'There has to be some recognition of locality for homeless people. I have come across people forced to move from Peebles to Kelso as they are only entitled to one offer and if they refuse this then the Homeless service won't assist them further. The Borders is a huge area and this cuts people off from their social supports.'

Specialist Housing
'More disabled adapted properties need to be included in each new build projects.'

'Not just housing being accessible, but the streets and services that go along with it.'

'Do as promised and INVOLVE disabled people in planning their homes. INVOLVE their own medical experts instead of building to minimum acceptable dimensions. These do NOT work as a one size fits all!'

Communities and Infrastructure (Place Making)
'The infrastructure needs to support new development.'

'Developing infrastructure before permitting ANY new development. Includes schools, doctors, roads, parking to allow access to supermarkets.'

'Greenspace within new housing developments. I have seen developments with 50+ houses and no public greenspace was provided as part of it. It shouldn't only be on the Council to provide decent greenspace.'

'Holding meetings with local people. Town hall type meetings can be productive if done the right way, and they give the public the opportunity to be heard. I think we need to know who Borders people are and give them the chance to speak about where they live.'

'If transport links were improved more families could enjoy living in smaller rural communities.'

Energy Efficiency and Quality
'Making new houses more eco-friendly , installing solar panels to the roofs ground source heat pumps installed , better insulation , heat exchange units.'

'Fixing the older houses that people live in instead of fully concentrating on new builds.'

'Building standards should demand PV cells on every roof and heat pumps where at all possible. Now is the time to be phasing out gas.'

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Supply - New builds, access to housing and affordability (rent/ mortgage)

'Allow smaller villages and building groups to grow organically, with one or two houses at a time, instead of the stupidity of imposing large developments on communities. The damaging impact of dumping a mass of people into a community can be devastating to village communities and take years to recover.   Communities historically always grew by small steps, and this worked well - the experiment of large estates has failed, and it is time to recognise that.'

'There really needs to be more capacity for single occupants, and childless couples. Whenever I see new builds going-up, they always have a minimum of two bedrooms. As a single male who is now in his 40s, and still can't afford to leave the family home, this is no help to me, whatsoever.'

'Location, location location of new sites with due consideration of appropriate size and design of developments that do not adversely affect the environment'

'Limit new house building, especially in greenfield sites. Do not allow developers to cut down ANY trees.'

'It is important to look at areas within towns (e.g. Galashiels) that can be redeveloped rather than developing new homes on green space. As a thought and as there are so many derelict shops in many of our towns (which have been this way for many years) it may be worth considering turning these into homes too.'

'Consider distance from town centres when allocating building land to avoid the use of cars.'

'Incentives to Local House Builders.'

'Priority to local residents to stay in the area particularly if working, have children and are contributing to local economy.'

'Support for young people to afford to rent or buy housing to enable them to live and work in the Borders.'

'Give people a greater incentive to move out of properties that have more space than they require.'

'Allow single people in 3 / 4 bedroom properties to move to a 2 bedroom property rather than just a 1 bedroom as most people want another room for grandchildren / carers/ relatives staying over etc.'

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6.   RESIDENT & STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS & SURVEYS

Introduction and Methodology

The previous LHS for Scottish Borders was developed in 2015-16 and covers the period 2017-2022. Elected members made the decision to defer this new LHS by one year and carry forward the previous LHS for an additional year.

This current (new) LHS has been informed by the third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HDNA3).

The LHS sets out how SBC plans to address housing related opportunities and challenges from 2023 – 2028. Scottish Government expects councils to collaborate with residents and stakeholders in relation to the LHS.

The four housing issues papers for the engagement are as follows:
- Housing Supply and Place Making
- Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
- Particular Needs and Specialist Provision
- Homelessness

This report shares the findings of a series of opportunities for residents and stakeholders to share their views on the housing issues papers through workshops and surveys. The methodology for the engagement is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Methodology for engagement		
Stage	**Approach**	**Dates**
Early Engagement Survey for residents and stakeholders (carried out by SBC)	Survey hosted on SBC's website	November 2021 – October 2021
Resident Survey – Housing Issues Papers	Survey hosted on SBC's website	17th July 2022 – 9th September 2022
Resident Workshops	Four workshops scheduled around each of the four housing issues papers	• Housing Supply and Placemaking: Monday 8th August 3pm – 5pm • Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency: Tuesday 2nd August 11am – 1pm • Particular Needs and Specialist Provision: Wednesday 10th August 9am – 11am • Homelessness: Wednesday 3rd August 5.30pm – 7.30pm (rearranged to Wednesday 24th August 10.30am – 12noon)
Stakeholder Survey	Survey hosted on SBC's website	Survey dates 17th July 2022 – 30th September 2022
Stakeholder Workshops	Three workshops scheduled around the housing issues papers and one workshop for key housing delivery partners	• Key Housing Delivery Partners: Monday 5th September at 2pm-4pm • Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency & Housing Supply and Place Making: Wednesday 7th September at 9.30am – 11.30am • Particular Needs and Placemaking: Thursday 15th September at 2pm-4pm • Homelessness: Tuesday 13th September at 2pm – 4pm

Resident Survey Findings

The resident survey sought to identify the views of residents against each of the planned actions outlined in the housing issues papers. Overall, residents rated the following action as the most important:

- Set tenure-neutral standards so that everyone can live with dignity and in comfort, no matter what tenure they live in – overall rating 8.97 out of 10.

Residents rated the following action as the least important:

- Develop approaches and test new models to attract and accelerate private investment in housing programmes and projects and in the transition to decarbonised heat – overall rating 7.05 out of 10.

Residents were asked to rank the four housing issues (housing supply and place making, condition climate change and energy efficiency, particular needs and specialist provision and homelessness) by importance, the most important housing issue to residents was improving the build quality and energy performance of homes (with 51.9% of respondents ranking this first), followed by tackling homelessness, building more general use homes and the least important issue to residents was building/modifying homes for particular/ specialised needs (with 54.1% of respondents ranking this as the least important).

For each of the four housing issues, residents were asked if they felt anything was missing from the proposed actions. In response to the Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency actions, 19 respondents provided commentary. In the main respondents raised the following key themes:

- Environmentally friendly housebuilding including not building on flood plains or the green belt, poor build quality of new build homes, building homes that are gas dependent.
- Considering the rural nature of Scottish Borders including the use of alternative fuels (stoves and fireplaces) and the level of emissions from the region in comparison to larger towns.
- Holding private landlords to account.

In response to the action for 'All new homes delivered by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and local authorities to be zero emissions by 2026' those living in Social Housing rated the importance of this action to be 8.08.

In response to the Homelessness actions, 16 respondents provided commentary as to whether there were missing actions. Respondents discussed the following key areas:

- Repurposing homes and shops to house the homeless
- Increasing the supply of (social) housing
- Proactive activity and addressing homelessness before it occurs, including specific commentary about considering employment opportunities for young people
- Broadening the status of homelessness to consider overcrowding
- Better use of resources to address homelessness

In response to the Housing Delivery and Placemaking actions, 11 respondents provided commentary as to whether there were missing actions. Respondents discussed the following key areas:

- Repurposing homes
- Prioritising affordable homes and reducing second home usage
- Ensuring that there is the appropriate infrastructure around new homes such as schools, shops, and employment opportunities

In response to the Particular Housing and Specialist Provision actions, 8 people provided commentary about missing actions:

- The length of time to wait for future Scottish Housing Standards is too long
- Consideration of integrated social housing for multiple needs and generations
- Providing accommodation in the local community for older people, including an increase of bungalows and one bedroom homes
- Delivering Specialist Housing for younger people either leaving home and offering more employment opportunities for younger people
- Providing specialised mental health accommodation

Resident Workshop Findings

Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency workshop findings
The most prevalent discussion themes were around the importance of applying effective engagement and clear communication techniques to both retrofitting social homes and encouraging private owners to invest in the condition of their homes. These were discussed specifically in relation to the use of new technology in homes and clear communications for private owners so they can make the right choices about their own homes. Additional concerns raised included:

- The technical difficulties involved in renovating older, pre-1945 housing stock, which is very common across Scottish Borders.
- CARS – the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme – was highlighted as an exemplar of effective communication surrounding the maintenance and restoration of older properties. Conversely, the campaigns run by Home Energy Scotland were perceived by focus group attendees as superficial and ineffective.
- It was suggested that collaborative community networking initiatives, such as the Oxton & Channelkirk Community Council (OCCC), were more likely to receive a positive response than one-way, sender-receiver information campaigns. Residents reported that when residents are engaged in the council's decision-making they are more likely to respect those decisions.
- The threat of fuel poverty, particularly against the backdrop of rising energy prices and the inefficiency of much of Scottish Borders' housing stock, was raised as a growing concern.
- Some participants suggested that there was a lack of local technical expertise to implement new energy efficiency (EE) adaptations. Attendees reported that some local technicians are skeptical about new technologies, such as heat pumps.

Housing Delivery and Placemaking workshop findings
The strongest discussion themes were concerns about expected future demand exceeding development targets, and the difficulties of balancing competing priorities, such as retaining younger people across the region whilst providing appropriate support to older people. Additional issues raised included:

- The Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 strategy was praised as being admirable in its intentions; equally, however, doubts were raised over whether it would be affordable or realistically achievable.
- Some noted that the rise of short-term lets, via Airbnb and similar sites, was exacerbating the shortage of long-term private rental stock. One participant suggested that private developers have greater incentive to develop large 3-4 bed homes, due to larger profit margins, and that this lies behind the ongoing shortage of smaller starter homes for first-time buyers and young renters.
- Some residents expressed confusion or concern regarding how SBC classifies a home as under-occupied. They noted that older couples may wish to remain in properties after their adult children have left, due to an emotional attachment to the home.
- Some participants supported SBC's efforts to subject empty homes to higher rates of Council Tax.

Particular Housing and Specialist Provision workshop findings
The strongest discussion themes emerging were about understanding older people's needs in relation to staying in their own communities in later life. In particular, concerns were raised about the rural nature of the region, causing older people having to relocate and facing loneliness when they do so. Other issues raised included:

- The worsening labour shortage is afflicting care homes and care at home. Solutions proposed by the group included providing more training courses at local higher education colleges, and raising the wages and social status of carers.
- Those discussing the labor shortage also discussed the barriers for young people to stay within the Scottish Borders such as poor public transport links and expensive housing mean that many who want to stay are unable to.

Homelessness workshop findings
Unfortunately, attendance at this workshop was insufficient for it to proceed, despite attempts to reschedule. The findings in this report are from the discussions held at the stakeholder session and the feedback from the resident and stakeholder surveys.

Cross cutting themes – resident workshops
Several cross-cutting themes emerged through the three sessions:
- Ensuring new developments (Housing Delivery and Placemaking) meet future zero carbon targets (Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency).
- Ensuring that new developments (Housing Delivery and Placemaking) meet the multifaceted needs of the community (Particular Housing and Specialist Provision).
- Taking account of the rural nature of the region across all objectives.
- Applying effective local engagement for all objectives.

Stakeholder Survey Findings

Stakeholders prioritised improving build quality and energy performance of homes as the most important priority (50% selecting this as the first choice, 37.5% as second choice and 12.5% as the fourth choice) and building or modifying more homes for particular or special needs as the less important priority (37.5% selecting it as third choice and 62.5% selecting it as fourth choice).

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to make specific comments about each of the actions in a free text box.

Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency – stakeholder survey feedback
Key concerns that stakeholders raised in relation to condition, climate change and energy efficiency were:
- Skills and labour shortages – responses in relation to this were particularly strong from private sector stakeholders
- Concerns about available technologies being appropriate for homes across the region
- Broad concerns about the timescales for delivery being unrealistic

When asked whether there were any missing planned actions, one stakeholder responded as follows:
- The council should seek to understand the quality of housing stock and the requirements for improvements

Homelessness – stakeholder survey feedback
Key challenges that stakeholders raised about SBC's planned actions for homelessness were:
- Considering the infrastructure around accommodations and that provision of housing is not the only solution
- Exploring further partnership options (a shared housing register and data sharing)

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- Linking tenancies and support

The Homelessness housing issues paper included one action so to further understand perceptions of stakeholders, they were asked to share their views on the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) and whether services had been impacted by COVID-19.

Five stakeholders responded in relation to the RRTP, two of which responded 'don't know/no opinion', one responded that the RRTP was 'very effective' in tackling the problems associated with homelessness, one chose 'quite effective' and one selected 'completely ineffective.'

One stakeholder identified that COVID-19 had an impact on homelessness, sharing the following key points:

- Increased staffing absence
- Reduction of the willingness to allow others to 'sofa surf' in accommodation
- Remote engagement has made it a challenge to deal with complex cases

When asked if anything was missing from the planned actions, stakeholders responded with the following key points:

- Increasing prevention duty
- Improving collaboration between SBC and their partners
- Impact assessment of homeless prevention activity

Housing Delivery and Placemaking – stakeholder survey feedback
Key challenges raised by stakeholders in relation to the delivery of housing and placemaking actions were:

- Viability of new development considering rising interest rates and costs – this was a significant concern for stakeholders
- Impact of rent freezes on the future viability of development in the social housing sector
- Quality site provision responses included a direct request to engage in discussion about any vacant land owned by SBC
- Caution about high density and low-quality developments across the region and applying urban approaches to rural areas

When asked if anything was missing from the planned actions, stakeholders responded with the following key points:

- Including a practical approach to the current high inflation
- Ensuring future development includes consideration of infrastructure, e.g. transport, access to shops and health services

Particular Housing and Specialist Provision – stakeholder survey feedback
Key challenges raised by stakeholders in relation to the delivery of particular housing and specialist provision actions were:

- The challenges in ensuring that all future new build housing can meet all imagined future needs of residents
- Concerns about supply chain (skills, materials, and workforce) being able to deliver
- Reviewing the adaptations process
- Not having a clear picture of supply/demand for specialist accommodation

When asked if anything was missing from the planned actions, stakeholders responded with the following key points:

- The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the efforts to tackle poverty and personalise services
- How the plans will be financed

Stakeholder Workshop Findings

Four workshop sessions were held with stakeholders. The aim of the workshops was to gather feedback on the housing issues papers and the new LHS from professionals whose work is within or adjacent to the housing sector.

The stakeholder workshops were structured slightly differently from the resident workshop sessions. The first session was an invite-only event for specified "key delivery partners;" i.e., organisations who were identified by SBC as playing a particularly important role in helping the Council to achieve the LHS objectives. Discussion covered all four housing issues papers.

The remaining three sessions were more focused on particular themes, and open to any interested stakeholders. Session two combined themes from two housing papers: Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, plus Housing Delivery and Placemaking. Session three looked at the issues raised by the Homelessness paper, while the fourth and final session covered Particular Housing and Specialist Provision.

SBC directly approached stakeholders to send representatives to attend the workshops. Apart from the first workshop, for key delivery partners, all sessions were advertised in advance to stakeholders through SBC's website, Facebook, and Twitter pages.

All attendees to the first stakeholder session were directly invited by SBC. For the remaining sessions, some attendees were invited by SBC directly, while other attendees signed up by filling in a short Microsoft Form providing their contact details. All attendees were provided with the Teams meeting link through email, upon invitation or sign-up.

Attendance at the stakeholder workshops was higher than at the resident workshops. This, combined with the high level of engagement during the workshops, has meant that each session has provided useful insights which SBC can use to inform the final development of its new LHS.

Sessions with stakeholders covered:

- An overview of the engagement approach
- An overview of the housing issues papers
- Actions and achievements from the previous LHS
- Current housing issues as identified by SBC
- Findings from the early engagement survey
- In progress findings from the resident and stakeholder surveys
- SBC's intended actions

Key Housing Delivery Partners – workshop findings

As this session covered themes spanning all four housing issues papers, discussion was varied and wide-ranging. The cost-of-living crisis was a salient topic, with many participants highlighting the damaging impact of inflation on both housing supply (e.g. with regards to construction material costs) and household budgets, with a growing number of residents at risk of falling into arrears with rent or mortgage payments, with some in danger of falling into homelessness.

In terms of property condition, climate change, and energy efficiency:

- Participants noted that property owners are more inclined to spend limited resources on immediate repair and maintenance needs, such as stopping roof leaks, rather than investing in retrofitting for greater energy efficiency (EE).
- Participants expressed frustration that Scottish Government funding for EE was blind to the different needs of newer and older properties. Which presents a challenge for Scottish Borders with a higher proportion of older properties.
- Participants discussed that the impact of the fuel poverty crisis was exacerbated to older accommodation across the borders, the aging local population and that many homes are off the grid.

In terms of homelessness:
- It was noted with concern that people are spending longer periods living in temporary accommodation.
- Homelessness amongst younger residents was linked with wider problems regarding retaining young people in the area. Participants discussed that many young people are deterred from remaining in or coming to the Borders due to lack of decent job opportunities, lack of training opportunities, insufficient provision of affordable housing, and poor transport infrastructure.
- Participants discussed that many applicants for homelessness support are presenting with complex needs, which requires specialised expertise.

In terms of housing delivery and placemaking:
- The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership was highlighted as a potential means of reducing the number of empty homes in Scottish Borders. One participant suggested that compulsory sales orders should be deployed more frequently.
- Experiments in Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) by firms like the Wee House Company were suggested as one model of upscaling housing delivery.

In terms of particular housing and specialist provision:
- The average speed at which adaptations were made in care homes was criticised as being too slow.
- It was noted that there are low levels of public support for providing supported housing for individuals in recovery from substance abuse. Participants suggested that consideration was needed about possible means of building public support for this issue.
- Participants highlighted that there is a limited amount of housing choice for older people and this presents an issue for the options for older people needing care beyond that provided at home.

Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, and Housing Delivery and Placemaking - stakeholder workshop findings

Participants noted that a high proportion of homes in the Scottish Borders are off-grid, relying on gas cannisters for their energy supply; this is expensive for residents and acts as a source of carbon emissions, worsening climate change. Enhancing the energy efficiency (EE) of existing housing stock is one way of ameliorating these issues; however, the shortage of local skilled labour – required for making EE adaptations – was repeatedly raised as an issue, as was the fact that Scottish Borders' aging housing stock requires a specialized approach to retrofitting.

Some participants criticised the fact that grassroots community organisations are not given enough say in planning decisions. Some of the key concepts used in the new National Planning Framework (NPF4), such as the "20-minute neighbourhood," were criticised as an example of central-belt bias, unsuitable for predominantly rural areas like the Scottish Borders.

Empty homes were flagged as an issue, although some participants noted that building new homes may be a more effective use of limited resources than renovating a relatively small number of abandoned, isolated

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farmland properties. Short-term lets were described as a growing threat to the availability of homes for residents; it was suggested that it would be useful to learn from the negative experiences of island and rural communities elsewhere in Scotland.

Homelessness – stakeholder workshop findings

Participants recognised that the ambitious plans set out in the previous LHS, particularly the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP), were massively disrupted by the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the demand for homelessness support. It was also recognised that SBC and local RSLs handled the COVID-19 crisis relatively well – SBC managed to increase lettings without resorting to bed and breakfast accommodation throughout 2020 and 2021, while the incidence of repeat homelessness is generally on a downward trend. While the pandemic appears to be receding, the cost-of-living crisis has placed renewed pressure on homelessness services. It was highlighted that women's refuge services are under-utilised. The reasons behind this are unclear, although it may be due to a lack of public awareness about available services. Some participants noted that statistics about homelessness can sometimes obscure the complexity of individual cases.

Particular Housing and Specialist Provision – workshop findings

A recurring theme discussed was the need to avoid working in silos: the work undertaken by housing services must be coordinated with that of the NHS and social care partners, for example. Participants argued that future homes should be designed so that they are suitable for every stage of an inhabitant's life cycle; in the meantime, re-allocations and adaptations should be undertaken. Participants emphasized that adaptations are not needed only for residents with physical limitations or disabilities, but mental illnesses, such as dementia, as well.

Cross Cutting Themes

The engagement activities identified a number of cross cutting themes across the views of stakeholders and residents and across the four housing issues papers. The cross-cutting themes are outlined below.

The current economic crisis was a prevalent concern of both stakeholders and residents in the delivery of the LHS. Key concerns related to:

- The ability to finance future development in light of rising interest rates
- The impact of the rent freeze on viability of future developments
- Increasing household expenditure exacerbating SBC/Stakeholder efforts to address poverty and other inequalities
- The increased importance and urgency of activity to decarbonise homes

Both residents and stakeholders have identified that there is an acute shortage of one-bedroom homes across the region with the following specific point:

- Residents reported that the supply of one-bedroom homes needs to be well considered and located within existing communities rather than out of town developments.

Residents and stakeholders frequently raised specific concerns about the rural nature of the region as follows:

- Delivery of particular housing and specialist provision is incredibly location-dependent and consideration should be given to ensuring that specialist provision is located within communities, where possible.

- Delivery of retrofit programmes need to take account that programmes will be needed for stone-built homes that are hard fuel dependent.
- There was a low appetite for 20-minute neighbourhoods from both residents and stakeholders, who felt that this was the application of an urban answer to specific rural issues.
- Residents identified that new developments should include parking spaces, due to the nature of relatively high vehicle dependency across the region.

Residents and stakeholders frequently raised concerns about linking the LHS to infrastructure:
- They felt that new developments should be located close to amenities.
- Residents regularly stated that consideration should be given to repurposing properties into homes, which already benefit from local infrastructure.

Residents and stakeholders raised concerns about the impact of the reduction in the numbers of young people across the region as follows:
- Ability to provide care services.
- Not being able to develop key skills in relation to new retrofit technologies.

Residents particularly discussed the importance of community involvement in the delivery of the LHS actions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The approach to the engagement enabled a broad range of both resident and stakeholder views to be captured through different means, as the project captured resident views in the main through the survey and stakeholder views in the main through the stakeholder sessions. There were low response levels for the resident sessions and low responses for the survey by stakeholders.

The approach to this engagement has enabled Altair to identify strong cross cutting themes and key recommendations for consideration by SBC, with the appropriate assurance that a broad range of residents and stakeholders have engaged in the discussion around the new LHS.

Broadly, the housing issues papers were well received by stakeholders and residents. However, the exercise has naturally identified key areas that SBC should revisit, and consider placing increased or reduced importance on during the development of the new LHS. Specific recommendations in relation to each paper are outlined in table 2 below:

Table 2: Recommendations for further consideration in the development of the LHS	
Housing Issues Paper	**Recommendations**
Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis in particular: • The ability of Housing Associations to deliver retrofit programmes in light of the rent freeze • Consider how the prioritisation of Condition, Climate Change and Energy Efficiency actions can provide a solution to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis SBC should prioritise the following key actions: • Action 14 – implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings • Action 17 – Grow the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems
Housing Delivery and Placemaking	SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis, in particular: • The impact of interest rate rises on future development capabilities • Key concerns raised by residents and stakeholders in relation to the supply chain for new housing delivery SBC should place importance on the following key actions: • Action 3: Supporting the delivery of homes in town centres • Action 4: Support more community involvement in placemaking Based on the feedback from residents and stakeholders, SBC should place lower importance on the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods and consider wider infrastructure issues and vehicle dependency across the region.
Homelessness	Overall, residents and stakeholders were supportive of SBC's planned actions for homelessness. Discussions with stakeholders and residents identified that SBC should place importance on the following key action: • Partnership working through the 'Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan' - in particular, ensuring that partners are aware of provision across the region (e.g. women's refuge services) and offer them to residents accordingly
Particular Housing and Specialist Provision	SBC should take steps to consider the broader impacts of a reducing younger population on the ability to provide care to those who need it. SBC should revisit the proposed actions in the paper considering the current economic crisis, in particular: • The ability to deliver more accessible homes SBC should place importance on the following key actions: • Addressing the practical barriers faced by older and disabled home movers – in particular, the impact of being rehoused outside the community in which they currently live

Identified Specific Housing Solutions

During the course of the engagement Altair has identified a few specific housing solutions that SBC may wish to consider in the development and implementation of the new LHS with partners.

Housing Issue/ Cross Cutting theme	**Potential Solutions**
Particular Housing and Specialist Provision – key concerns about the location of specialist provision outside of residents existing communities	The provision of smaller multi-use residential units within existing towns to be used for a range of particular housing and specialist needs with access to the appropriate care and support.
Reducing levels of younger people/key workers across the region	The provision of key worker accommodation linked to employment opportunities such as in the NHS/Care services

7. KEY WORKERS

At the beginning of September 2022, SBC sent out a survey to a wide range of partners to find out about key workers in the Scottish Borders and if there are any accommodation issues when recruiting key workers in particular from other areas or overseas. This piece of work is to inform the LHS and to identify any evidence that accommodation is an issue for key workers.

In total there were 7 responses to the key worker questions. These responses were from:

- SBC - Justice Services
- SBC - Commissioning and Partnerships
- SBC - Children and Families, Social Work
- NHS Borders - HR
- Waverley Housing
- SBHA
- Eildon Housing Association

This section provides a summary of these responses. For the purpose of this piece of work we identified key workers based on the definition from the *'Affordable Housing For Key Workers' Project Group August 2015'* A 'key worker' should be defined as a public sector employee who provides an essential service (as well as workers in the public sector, it was noted that this definition could also apply to low paid employees in the private sector/ service industries who are also providing essential services).

Summary of Results

There were two sets of questions that were sent out, one for employers and one for Housing Associations/ Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). These were different as we wanted to ask RSLs about their allocation policies. The list of questions asked can be found in Appendix 1. A full breakdown of responses can be found in Appendix 2.

To what extent do you believe that accommodation issues have an impact on the recruitment and retention of staff? Do you have evidence that you can provide or examples?
There were two responses where there was no accommodation issues that had an impact on recruitment, however other responses noted that accommodation was an issue in recruitment. Some anecdotal evidence includes: • Issues with staff looking to move to the Borders and finding appropriate affordable housing. Feedback included there being few private lets of a suitable size for families within preferred areas Cheviot/Berwickshire and limited affordable properties to buy. • Recent market conditions and inability to recruit in social care means current recruitment is from international markets and students in order to fill gaps. Housing provision is a significant issue in relocating workers to the area. • Accommodation issues are linked to recruitment and retention challenges but it is difficult to disentangle this from the wider dynamic of other household costs – it is a complex web of costs that households face alongside how they trade-off other issues such as travel to work and the costs of travel to work etc. NHS Borders believe this is a significant and growing issue since the pandemic. An emerging drawback to successful recruitment and candidate attraction is housing, the private rental market has all but disappeared during the pandemic. Temporary rented accommodation is in very short supply and that is a disincentive for incoming health professionals if they cannot immediately access the local property market. Here is some evidence that supports NHS Borders view: • The local labour market cannot provide all of the workforce demand; so we will rely on people moving to the area (from elsewhere in the UK or overseas) to sustain local delivery of health & social care services. • For NHS Borders there has been 627 new starts or candidates with offers pending since January 2022, of which 90 had addresses on application out with the Scottish Borders area (around 15%). We estimate that going forward for the next 3 years around 75 new members of NHS staff annually may come from out with the Borders and move to the area. • The turnover for registered nurses is higher than average at 16%, for all occupational groups it is slightly less at 12.5%. The average age of our workforce reflects our local demographics being higher than the Scottish average in turn leading to higher rates of staff turnover, and also in turn for the nursing profession the need to recruit replacement staff.

- The lack of housing options has been referred to by at least 3 health professionals from elsewhere in the UK as a reason for rejecting our offer of employment since April 2022.
- We are aware of 2 further health professionals who have delayed their start dates, the temporary accommodation issues were resolved by colleagues who gave informal help.
- A further 3 health professionals have reported that the only option for temporary accommodation whilst they completed house purchase was Airbnb at high cost.
- The focus has been on recruitment of new staff into the area but there are concerns also about retention and we can refer to two examples:
  - One senior manager informed us of a member of their team living in East Lothian and commuting to Borders not through personal choice given the shortage of affordable accommodation in Scottish Borders, circumstances not conducive to retention.
  - One senior manager reported that staff on temporary contracts have declined our offer of permanency, looking to resign as their short term let was coming to an end and they could not secure another tenancy locally.
- Since January 2022, 17 overseas recruits have been employed by NHS Borders, mostly nurses but also 2 doctors. There has been provision for short term onsite shared accommodation in the BGH Huntlyburn Residencies – in fact 15 of the recruits are accommodated there on a temporary basis, which is a significant support to international nurses as they study for the final professional examination (OSCE exam usually taken between 8 weeks – 12 weeks after arrival to the UK). Only 2 of the international nurses have successfully found accommodation and that was a result of informal contacts; a colleague on their ward sign-posting them to an available 2-bedroom property for rent before it was advertised.
- The demand for the on-site BGH Huntlyburn residencies exceeds available supply given the contractual responsibility (with Higher Education) to provide housing for healthcare students. Housing at Huntlyburn terrace is required thereafter for short term supplementary staffing e.g. agency nurses and locum doctors who provide an essential component of the workforce (for short notice gaps as well as vacancy time lags) and training grade junior doctors on rotation (4 month placements so cannot secure tenancies easily).
- Feedback from our international recruits is that there is excessive demand, when they pursue rented accommodation and arrange viewings there are many other prospective tenants which leads to international recruits not hearing back from landlord/ agents after the viewings.

RSLs responded that there haven't been any significant issues in relation to recruitment or retention specifically linked to accommodation but there is a risk that this could be an issue in the future. Some RSLs are generally seeing challenges in recruiting to construction roles and high turnover in these areas, but have no evidence at this time that this is due to accommodation issues. Due to the nature of hybrid working, successful applicants living out with the area are looking for more flexible tenures (e.g. longer-term, non-secure accommodation for part of the week to fit with their work patterns) which can be challenging for them to find at affordable cost. Lockdown also highlighted the challenges of home working due to accommodation size and space for home working, which would previously not have been considered as making best use of the home (particularly in areas of high demand), resulting in the home being considered as under-occupied. Particularly in seasonal working industries there can be affordability issues for the tenant during periods of unemployment.

To which groups of staff and in which locations do these issues particularly apply? Which groups of staff would you consider to be key?

There was some discussion about the term key worker and if there is a need to clearly define this. For example what occupations are covered by key worker and does this need to be expanded beyond essential public services to include key local industries in the Scottish Borders such as tourism/hospitality, construction, care, fishing & agriculture. Is this something that needs to be reviewed regularly to fit in with demand over time? It might be worth linking in with SoSE on work that has been carried out recently on the Regional Economic Strategy. Other responses agreed with the current definition and responded to identify key workers and key locations:

- NHS Borders agrees that the definition of a key worker being "public sector employee who provides an essential service" is adequate. Whilst there is a major focus on clinical staff the definition allows for non-clinical staff to be included as key workers. The main priority for recruitment in NHS Borders is Registered General Nurses of which there is approx. 40 vacancies at any one time in the BGH and in central Borders.
- Frontline social care staff are required to deliver social care across all localities in the Scottish Borders.
- Social Workers, including Newly Qualified Social Workers moving from university and experienced workers moving to Scotland need to be included as key workers.

What approaches do you use, or have you tried to date, to overcome the difficulties at point 1?

- We have reprioritised and accommodated Junior Doctors out with on-site residency in University accommodation and agreed provision with letting agencies for 2 properties in Galashiels to extend the available accommodation. This has released temporary space in the on-site hospital residencies for international recruits, much preferable for them to be housed on site during the OSCE training.
- Further international cohorts have been offered 3 months accommodation provided on site or with external partners; a reduction from the initial 6 months.
- We have examined the key worker initiative in Grampian; but NHS colleagues have informed us that they were not involved.
- Looking at converting office accommodation back to residency (original purpose) but early stages and depends on capital / estates strategy.
- H.R. have prepared an information leaflet for international recruits and new staff about options for local accommodation for new recruits and made contact with letting agencies and private landlords.
- Discussions with a Housing Association for an informal referral scheme for international recruits and NHS staff moving to Scottish Borders from elsewhere in the UK.
- Shortly after their arrival from overseas and at the point when International Nurses obtain NMC registration and therefore confirmed in a permanent nursing post; the HR Lead has met / will meet with them personally to outline options.
- Informal contact with our own staff, appeals are made and volunteers do step forward with offers of accommodation but they cannot meet HMO standards if shared family accommodation is on offer. However, no requirement for HMO when we seek more permanent housing from our staff (i.e. family home for the international recruit).
- Introduced hybrid working/ home working/ flexible location policy and have more flexible recruitment approaches. This has broadened the applicant pool but recognise that not all roles can be delivered working from home.
- Current Allocations Policy allows for under-occupation of homes resulting from downsizing – will consider them for a property with an extra bedroom.
- Offering attractive terms and conditions (as an accredited Living Wage employer).
- Support staff in training and development.
- Being increasingly creative in marketing and advertising opportunities.

What factors would make key worker housing attractive, where you believe it is required?

- Availability mostly in Central Borders, on bus routes and affordable rent furnished rental preferred are usually preferred by international recruits.
- Unfurnished properties are usually the preference of recruits from elsewhere in the UK.
- Housing that is suitable for families - most of the international recruits have a spouse and children.
- Social Care are looking internationally for low paid workers. These workers would want to live close to one and other for support. In addition they would need to have access to facilities but local to area of work. Given salary would need to be affordable, living potentially in shared ownership or subsidised rent – low utility costs etc.
- Access to mid-market lets/ varying sizes of properties for individuals and families. Access to affordable homes to buy. Prioritising key workers within plans for new build developments.
- Access to good communication links and local facilities, while being close to work due to commuting costs. This is difficult in the Borders as there is limited public transport.
- More information needs to be available online. There is a need for greater support and/or awareness of options and timescales for access. Workers tend to find accommodation in the city and then seek employment closer to home. Workers don't want to come from University to live in the middle of the country with no amenities nearby (farm cottages are sometimes available for rent).

From these answers, could you describe characteristics – for example – rough salary or household income bracket, age band, and household composition of key workers who would benefit from a targeted housing policy in the relevant areas?

- Recruitments are all ages and backgrounds but generally Registered General Nurses who are in their 30s with family dependants. Wages are between £26k and £33k depending on experience. Unsocial hours allowance are variable depending on roster commitment.
- In social care wages are lower (approx. £19k) so housing needs to be affordable.
- Social care workers have a similar demographic to nurses (age 18-40) single or with young families.
- Newly Qualified Social Workers and Social Workers moving to Scotland would benefit from targeted housing policy.
- Social Workers who are single households need access to affordable properties near to work bases as commuting is very expensive.
- Social Workers with families need affordable accommodation near to work bases/ amenities. Properties of a sufficient size for families.

What would you like to see included in a Key Workers Housing Policy for the Borders?

- Increased availability of mid rent properties in the Scottish Borders area for key workers.
- Promotion of shared ownership schemes open to key workers, hopefully encouraging long term commitment.
- Affordable key worker housing – (shared ownership or subsidised rent) local and specific to staff shortage areas.
- Guaranteed rents – for example provide cheaper or free rent for a short period of time .
- Access to Housing Support.
- Prioritise housing locally for key workers where there are staff shortages.
- Access to local amenities.
- Better transport infrastructure.
- Access to priority points system which would give a realistic chance of access to local housing.
- Prioritise key workers within the planning and development of new housing stock similar to what is in place for new development planning e.g. mixed of share ownership, tenanted, owned etc.
- Support with energy efficiency measures for those living off gas and in rural areas. Heating costs are very high, especially as many Borders' houses are on oil tanks or LPG.

Do you have any other comments or information you can provide?

- Helping spouses of key workers gain employment - Our concern for attracting overseas candidates with families is that a dual income is often key to affordability of local accommodation; we can direct spouses to advertised employment opportunities, give advice on applications, interview preparation, arrange informal meetings but we cannot guarantee employment.
- Demand and Balanced Communities: Careful consideration of the eligibility criteria for key worker is required if introducing key worker status priority. Given the diverse local housing and economic markets across the Scottish Borders, there could be unintended consequences on housing demand and diversity of communities and there needs to be a balance to meet a plethora of housing needs and create balanced communities.
- Infrastructure issues: Particularly in a rural setting such as Scottish Borders (and a volatile fuel market currently experienced) working patterns can also impact on affordability for key workers needing to commute during unsocial hours when public transport is less accessible or not available at all.
- Given housing is the major cost to most households, it is logical that the availability and cost of housing is a substantial factor in decisions on taking up employment. It is not however obvious what the appropriate public policy response should be. The current affordable housing supply has very many pressures already placed on it. Substantial amounts of public funds are in place to support affordable supply provision (not least through HAG) and it is important that these resources are used where they most make a difference. Whilst we believe there is a specific set of issues in terms of health and social care workforce pressures, it would be concerning if these scarce resources were to be to spread too thinly or misdirected to address issues that are not well evidenced – we need to proceed with caution in pursuing 'key worker' housing initiatives.
- We believe there is a key argument that housing is a factor in the recruitment and retention of workers in the health and social care sector. However, it is also arguable that this is dynamic in several other sectors of the economy as well.
- It is important to consider how the needs of 'key workers' (however defined) sits against other priorities for the scarce and rationed resource of housing in general.

The following questions were only asked to RSLs on their allocations policies.

Do you collate information from individuals when they register for choice based lettings that would identify themselves as key workers?
None of the RSLs who responded collect specific information on key workers. Although there is the flexibility to consider local employment when determining priority, with the potential to award social points for those who are taking up employment in the local area.

Are key workers considered in your current allocation policy? If so in what way?
While key workers are not part of the allocations policies all the RSLs stated that they can be considered under community and family support, community needs and Local Letting Initiative (LLI).

How are you planning on considering key workers in your next review of your allocations policy?
Two RSLs are updating their allocation policies in 2022/23 and will consider key workers. The other RSL has been having discussions with NHS Borders about providing a small number of homes for overseas workers but this would be limited. There is also a meeting with IJB colleagues to discuss potential sites and innovative funding to build homes for future health and social care workface needs.

8.   GYPSY TRAVELLER NEED AND DEMAND STUDY

Altair Consultancy and Advisory Services Ltd (Altair) were commissioned by Scottish Borders Council to identify the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy and Traveller (GT) community across the region. The purpose of engagement and needs analysis was to provide an evidence base to inform SBCs approach to meeting current accommodation needs for the GT population and projected needs from 2023-2028.

This research did not include travelling show people and is focussed on the GT population. The assessment undertaken by Altair reviewed the following data sources; national and local data, surveys with households residing at Victoria Park and Innerleithen sites, a survey of those attending the St Boswells Fair and one response to an open survey.

Engagement Methods	
Group/ engagement opportunity	Method
Those vacating Victoria Park	Face to face surveying by the Gyspy Traveller Liaison Officer (GTLO) (held w/c 23rd June 2022)
Those occupying the Innerleithen site	Face to face surveying by the GTLO arranged through the site operators (held 2nd Sept)
Those visiting St Boswells fair	Online surveying promoted by the GTLO at the fair
Those living in bricks and mortar accommodation or not picked up through other methods	Online surveying advertised on SBC's Twitter and Facebook accounts
Those identified in unauthorised encampments	No surveys have been conducted with those in unauthorised encampments

Victoria Park

Initial findings from Victoria Park (June 2022) identified a high need for appropriate accommodation, however upon further discussions with the GTLO, it has been identified that there is a reduced need in light of the movements of the families from Victoria Park both out of the region and into bricks and mortar accommodation.

Innerleithen Findings

The GTLO conducted short interviews with those at the site willing to engage in the analysis. The GTLO reported that four families are currently living across nine pitches.

The only provision across the region is a seasonal site open between April-October. The site is SBC owned but privately run. Allocation of pitches is completely managed by the site operators and no nominations arrangements are in place between the operators and SBC.

All those interviewed at the Innerleithen site indicated a need for the provision at Innerleithen to run longer than the season. Both families expressed that they wish to retain the ability to travel. Therefore the need for an increased provision is outlined in the analysis is a permanent 4 pitch requirement.

Unauthorised Encampment Findings

The consultants were provided with the log of unauthorised encampments running from February 2019 to August 2022. A total of 33 unauthorised encampments were set up during this period, consisting of 73 caravans (on average 2.3 per encampment, ranging from one to nine caravans) for an average of 5.18 days.

Some of the unauthorised encampments were set up repeatedly by six of the same families, with one family setting up seven unauthorised encampments for a total of 63 days. 11 families set up a single unauthorised encampment during the time period.

From the data provided, none of the reoccurring unauthorised encampments appear to constantly reside within the region, however the GTLO has advised that management and recording of unauthorised encampments generally only happens if complaints are made to SBC. The GTLO also reported that some unauthorised encampments get set up without complaint to SBC.

Stakeholder Workshop

A stakeholder workshop was held on 18th August attended by stakeholders from:

- COSLA
- NHS
- Police Scotland
- SBC (housing, planning, social care, homelessness and legal)

The purpose of the stakeholder workshop was to share the findings to date, to understand the opportunities and challenges in the delivery of future provision and current services, and to obtain broader engagement in relation to the scope of the analysis.

The following key opportunities for delivering services to the Gyspy Traveller (GT) population were raised during the workshop:

- Increasing training and awareness of the GT population across local service providers
- Direct engagement has proved successful for education, and this could be broadened
- Bring health workers to the GT community

The following key challenges for delivering services to the GT population were raised during the workshop:

- The infrequent usage of the Innerleithen site makes it difficult for those occupying it to be able to access education and GP services
- Institutional racism by way of some officers not wanting to visit GT sites or only visiting accompanied by another officer or the police
- Low school attendance which participants understood was linked to GT concerns about racism in school and a perception of oversexualisaton of the curriculum by the GT community
- Late presentations for healthcare

The following key opportunities for delivering housing provision to the GT population were raised during the workshop:

- Finding GT community – appropriate locations for sites which are close to local services and businesses
- Engaging with the settled population alongside the GT community for an future site provision
- Using church-based organisations to support specific communities (specific churches mentioned were the Catholic Church and the Baptist Church)

The following key challenges for delivering housing provision to the GT population were raised during the workshop:

- The Police Act 2022 potentially triggering an increase in the GT population travelling to Scotland

- That GT is an umbrella term representing lots of different ethnic groups and that consideration of engagement between different ethnic groups should be given
- Concerns about potentially low political will to support the delivery of a site

St Boswells Fair Findings

During the recent St Boswells fair, SBC conducted a survey of attendees with questions prepared by the consultants. Due to the festive nature of the gathering, very few attendees took part in the survey.

Responses to the survey identified the areas of important for those interviewed including the importance of council/ housing association run sites and within those sites the importance of reasonable pitch fees.

Full Report

The full report on the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy and Traveller (GT) community across can be requested from the Housing Strategy Team.

9.   PRIVATE LANDLORD SURVEY

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) plays an important role in the Scottish Borders with approximately 14% of households living in the private rented sector. The Private Rented Sector is a diverse tenure, catering for several key demand groups. The characteristics of the sector suggest that its most important role within the modern housing system is to provide flexible accommodation for young and mobile people.

Scottish Borders Council is currently developing the new Local Housing Strategy (LHS), this will cover the period 2023-2028. As part of the LHS process, there has been a wide range of early engagement and consultation to identify the key housing issues and priorities for the LHS. Part of the engagement for the LHS included a private landlord survey which included information on letting practices, identified concerns and what the council can do for landlords. This report provides a summary of these results. In total there were 223 responses to the survey from October 2022 to November 2022, although the two responses who answered no in table 1 have been excluded from the rest of the analysis.

Portfolio

Table 1 shows 41% of respondents have been a landlord for more than 10 years, with those who have been landlords for between 5 and 10 years following behind (28%). The smallest group were those who have been landlords for less than a year.

Table 1: How long have you been a private landlord in the Scottish Borders?		
	Total	**Percent**
Less than 1 year	10	4.5%
1 to under 3 years	28	12.7%
3 to under 5 years	30	13.6%
5 to under 10 years	62	28.1%
10+ years	91	41.2%

Table 2 shows half of all private landlords in the Scottish Borders rent out one property with only 5% of landlords rent over 10 properties.

Table 2: As a registered private landlord, how many properties do you hold in your portfolio?		
Number of Properties	**Total**	**Percent**
1	111	50.2%
2	46	20.8%
3	24	10.8%
4	11	4.9%
5-9	17	7.7%
10+	10	4.5%

28% of respondents to the survey said they had at least one property outside of the Scottish Borders. Table 3 shows 23% who have property outside of the Scottish Borders said they had between 1-4. A small proportion said they have between 5-9 properties and 10+ properties.

Table 3: Number of properties outside the Scottish Borders		
Number of Properties	**Total**	**Percent**
1-4	51	23.1%
5-9	6	2.7%
10+	6	2.7%

Of those who said they had properties outside of the Scottish Borders, the largest number were in Edinburgh, followed by the Rest of Scotland and Rest of UK respectively. The rest of the properties were in the Lothian area as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Other areas where property is held		
Location of Properties	Total	Percentage
Edinburgh	18	14%
Lothians	9	7%
Rest of Scotland	13	10.1%
Rest of UK	13	10.1%

Table 5 shows how landlords describe themselves, in past surveys a larger number of landlords class themselves as 'accidental landlords', outside of the 'other' category, the highest number of respondents said that they were 'accidental landlord' (30%) who are letting out their former home or a property they inherited, followed up by those who said they were an investor building their portfolio. Only 6% of respondents classed themselves as professional landlords.

Table 5: How would you describe your business activity as a private landlord?		
	Total	Percent
I am an 'accidental landlord' who is letting out my former home/property I inherited	67	30%
I am a property investor seeking to build up a portfolio of rental homes	48	21.5%
I am a professional private landlord with a portfolio of assets as my full time business	14	6.3%
I provide tied accommodation to employees within my business	14	6.3%
Other	87	39%

Some common responses to 'other' were:
- Those who were using property as an investment towards a pension income for later in life
- People renting out their homes while working or living abroad
- People using property as a location to live in upon retirement, but renting in the mean time
- Farm cottages or other buildings being rented out as they are not currently needed for farm workers

Table 6 shows 67% of respondents owned between 1-4 properties outright, with 23% not owning any of their properties outright.

Table 6: Number of properties owned outright		
Number of Properties	Total	Percentage
0	50	22.6%
1-4	147	66.5%
5-9	16	7.2%
10+	8	3.6%

As expected and shown in table 7, 63% of the respondents had 0 properties with a mortgage as this coincides roughly with the number who owned their properties outright. The second most common number of properties with a mortgage was between 1-4, followed by 10+ which had a very small number.

Table 7: Number of properties with mortgage		
Number of Properties	Total	Percentage
0	139	62.9%
1-4	71	32.1%
5-9	5	2.3%
10+	6	2.7%

Sourcing Tenants

Table 8 shows over half of landlords said that they provide tenancy management by themselves without any help, followed by a third of those who said they use an agent to manage such services.

Table 8: How do you manage property you let out?	Total	Percent
I provide tenancy management services myself	126	56.5%
I use an agent to provide tenancy management services	83	37.2%
Other	12	5.4%

Some common responses to 'other' were:
- Landlord has different ways of managing different properties in portfolio, depending on the property
- The landlord handles some elements of management themselves but leaves others to agents

The most common tenant group is couples at just under half (49%), followed by single (41%) people and followed up in third by families as shown below in table 9.

Table 9: Who is your main tenant group?	Total	Percent
Single people	92	41.3%
Couples	109	48.9%
Families	78	34.9%
Other	12	5.4%

Landlords were asked if there any groups of tenants who they would prefer not to rent to, landlords were able to pick multiple options. Table 10 shows the most common requirement for landlords to rent to someone was if they had a reference from a previous landlord or a positive credit reference check and if they were in employment. The most common groups who landlords would not rent to are tenants who have been previously evicted from a tenancy and homeless households. 10% of landlords said they would accept any tenant.

Table 10: Are there any groups of tenants you prefer not to rent to?	Total	Percent
No, I will accept any tenant	24	10.8%
Yes, I will only accept tenants who are in employment	71	31.8%
Yes, I will only accept tenants who can provide a reference from a previous landlord	117	52.5%
Yes, I will only accept tenants who have a positive credit reference check	114	51.1%
Yes, I will not accept tenants claiming Universal Credit	51	22.9%
Yes, I will not accept homeless households	77	34.5%
Yes, I will not accept tenants who have been evicted from a previous tenancy	115	51.6%
Yes, I will not accept a particular household type, for example young people or households with children	19	8.5%
Yes, I will not accept tenants with pets	42	18.8%
Yes, other (please state)	24	10.8%
Prefer not to say	18	8.1%

Some common responses to 'other' were:

- The landlord will not consider smokers in any capacity
- Tenants are considered on a case-by-case basis and there is not general rule for who they will or will not offer tenancy to

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- Letting is done on the recommendation of an agent and therefor might change depending on the tenant

Landlords were to comment on why they would not want to rent to any of the groups of tenants selected in the previous questions. Some common responses were:

- Landlord had previous bad experience with some or all of the groups above – this could be to do with non-payment of rent or builds, or to do with issues like causing damage to the property or antisocial behaviour
- Some feel that maintaining the property is more difficult when extra factors like those above are included
- Some also feel that they need reliable and stable income, and do not believe some of the groups above can offer this with their tenancy

Two thirds of respondents have not needed to end a tenancy in the last 5 years. As table 11 shows, out of those that have the most common issue has been a tenant stopping paying rent, followed by tenants dealing significant damage to the property. The less common causes were the length of time before a First Tier Tribunal ruling and the tenant refusing to leave after a refusal to quit.

Table 11: Have you had the need to end a tenancy in the last 5 years?		
	Total	Percent
Tenant abandoned tenancy/absconded	24	10.8%
Tenant would not leave at due date after issuing notice to quit	9	4%
Tenant stopped paying rent	38	17%
Tenant (anti-social) behavior	17	7.6%
Tenant caused significant damage to the property	32	14.4%
Length of time for First Tier Tribunal ruling	4	1.8%
Other	12	5.4%
Not applicable	154	69.1%

Some of the most common 'other' responses were:

- The landlord has had good long-term tenants throughout the last 5 years
- The landlord has decided to sell their property or otherwise leave the rental market behind
- All tenants have left the properties in good order upon leaving

Table 12 shows 58% of landlords know where to direct tenants who need support with struggling to pay their rent. A further quarter do not know where to direct tenants, and the rest do not think it is their business and would not get involved.

Table 12: If one of your tenants was struggling to pay their rent, would you know where to direct them for information or advice?		
	Total	Percent
Yes	129	57.9%
I would not know where to direct them	55	24.7%
I don't think it's any of my business and I wouldn't get involved	37	16.6%

When landlords stated yes, they were asked to state where they would direct them for advice, the answers included:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Scottish Borders Council

- Agents
- Charities e.g. Crisis and Shelter

Over half of landlords set their rents upon the advice of an agent or solicitor as shown below in table 13, followed by basing rents on other rents across the Borders. A small number of landlords base their rents on Local Housing Allowance, or on what a tenant is willing to play.

Table 13: How do you set rents for your property?	Total	Percent
Advised by letting agent/ solicitor	123	55.2%
Same as/based on other rents in the area	84	37.7%
Based on local housing allowance for the area	10	4.5%
Based on what I need to cover my costs	38	17%
Based on what tenant was willing to pay	13	5.8%
Other	14	6.3%

Table 14 asks landlords about how they set their rent, over half of landlords (56%) said they do increase their rents, while just over 40% do not.

Table 14: Do you increase your rent?	Total	Percent
Yes	124	55.6%
No	97	43.5%

When landlords replied that they do increase their rents, they were asked to state how often and how it was calculated:

- Update rents at the end of a certain time period (yearly, every two years)
- Update rents at the end of tenancy
- Update rents in response to increasing expenses
- Update rent based on the advice of agent

Letting Practices

Table 15 shows the most common time-frame for contact by landlords or agents with tenants is quarterly, followed by monthly. Only a small amount of respondents are in contact with their tenants weekly or less than once a year.

Table 15: How often are you or your letting agent in contact with your tenants? (e.g. face to face, messaging, phone calls or emails)	Total	Percent
Weekly	17	7.6%
Monthly	69	30.9%
Quarterly	97	43.5%
Annually	32	14.4%
Less than once a year	6	2.7%

Table 16 shows over two-thirds of landlords will not let the property without receiving a deposit paid in full in advance. Out of those that would, the number was similar between accepting a deposit paid in installments in certain situations, and accepting a deposit guarantee from the council/third sector. The least common option was to accept a deposit of less than the amount stated.

Table 16: What is your approach to deposits?		
	Total	Percent
It must be paid in full in advance without exception or I won't let the property	164	73.5%
In some circumstances I would accept a deposit being paid over time in instalments	44	19.7%
In some circumstances I would accept less than the full amount stated	25	11.2%
In some circumstances I would accept a deposit guarantee (or bond) from the Council/third sector service to the value of the deposit, instead of upfront payment	45	20.2%

The Deposit Guarantee Scheme has been available at SBC for over ten years and can help people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, to access private rented sector housing if they are not able to pay the deposit normally required by a landlord.

Table 17 shows 76% of landlords who responded have never heard of the scheme, and most of those who have heard of it have never used it. Only around 6% of those who have heard of the scheme have made use of it.

Table 17: The Council has a scheme that provides rent deposits to those in housing need. Do you know about this scheme?		
	Total	Percent
Yes and I have used it in the past	13	5.8%
Yes but I have never used it	39	17.5%
No I have never heard of it	169	75.8%

When landlords were asked if they had used or heard of the scheme, they were asked to provide comments:

- Useful and have used before, or would use again for future tenancy
- "I will not use it again as it is seriously flawed with difficulty in getting anything from the councils at all. The council do not provide the deposit, they give a worthless guarantee."

Table 18 asks landlords if there is anything that would put them off not using the scheme, this will help us to identify if there is anything we can do to promote the scheme or to reassure and support landlords who decide to use it. The most common issue was landlords not wanting or needing to take tenants through the council, followed by their concern that the council would not support them once the tenant was housed.

Landlords also had concerns about the tenant not being supported after moving in, and that the process would take too long and extend their void times/be more difficult.

Table 18: What would put you off accepting a tenant through the Council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme?		
	Total	Percent
Nothing, I use this scheme	6	2.7%
I think the Council process at start of tenancy would take too long which would extend my void times	34	15.3%
I think the claims process would take too long, or would be more difficult than using the Tenancy Deposit Scheme	37	16.6%
I simply don't want to deal with the Council	19	8.5%
I'd be concerned that once the tenant is housed they would be left without support	45	20.2%
I'd be concerned that once the tenant is housed the Council wouldn't support me, as the landlord, with any problems	83	37.2%
I don't want or need to take tenants through the Council, regardless of the scheme features	89	39.9%
Other	54	24.2%

Other responses included:

- The process is too complex, is not worth the time and effort it would take to make use of it
- Never heard of the scheme before

Table 19 asks landlords about any concerns they have over tenants who are on Universal Credit. A quarter of those asked had no concerns about renting to people on Universal Credit. 44% said that changes to private tenancy law had made them stricter on who they rent to because eviction is harder and takes more time and 42% were concerned over rent arrears.

Table 19: If you have concerns about renting to people on Universal Credit please tell us why?		
	Total	Percent
I have no concerns about renting to people on Universal credit	56	25.1%
Benefit rates (LHA) in this area don't meet the rents I charge	24	10.8%
My mortgage agreement specifies I cannot let to benefit claimants	7	3.1%
I use an agency and they advise me not to let to claimants	28	12.6%
I am concerned about benefit administration issues and delays	56	25.1%
I am concerned about rent arrears	94	42.2%
I feel people on benefits are more likely to have lifestyles which makes them poor tenants	55	24.7%
I have had bad experiences renting to claimants	44	19.7%
Changes to private tenancy law have made me more strict on who I let to as the process for eviction has become more complex/longer	98	44%
Other	26	11.7%

Other responses included:

- My property is unsuitable and mortgage/insurance would make it difficult

Landlords were asked about providing housing for those most in need. For the purpose of this survey, we class people to be in "housing need" if their circumstances include the following:

- At risk of losing current accommodation; for example due to relationship breakdown / being asked to leave;
- Current accommodation is unsuitable; for example due to health issues or overcrowding
- Current accommodation presents a risk including a risk of violence / abuse, including all forms of domestic abuse;
- Homeless or at risk of homelessness

Table 20 shows almost half of respondents would be happy to address housing need locally but they would need assurance of good tenants. Nearly a quarter said they see it as a part of their responsibility to help address housing need. 26% said that they do not see this as their responsibility, and that it is instead the role of the public sector, or that they would need more incentives or profits to do so. Lastly, 16% said they feel some responsibility but do this through charity or volunteering rather than expressly renting to those in housing need.

Table 20: As a private landlord, which of the following statements best reflects your view on providing housing to people who are in housing need?		
	Total	Percent
As a landlord, I see it as part of my responsibility to do what I can to address housing need locally	48	21.5%
I'd like to do more to address housing need locally and would if I could be assured of good tenants and no loss to my finances	107	48%
It's not my responsibility to address housing need locally & I would need incentives / profits above that of my normal business model to do so	20	9%
It's not my responsibility to address housing need locally: I see this as the role of the public sector	58	26%
Though I feel some responsibility for addressing housing need locally I would do this by donating to charity, volunteering etc, rather than directly providing rented properties tenants	36	16.1%

Table 21 shows over half of respondents have concerns about changes to private tenancy law and this has made them stricter. A third are worried about rent arrears, as well as believing that people in housing need are more likely to have negative lifestyles which impact on tenancy.

A third also believe that those in housing need are likely to need more support than they will be able to provide, and 16% say that those in housing need are generally on benefits and they do not rent to those on benefits. 19% of responses have no concerns about renting to those in housing need.

Table 21: What are your concerns about renting to people who are in housing need?		
	Total	Percent
I have no concerns about renting to those in housing need	42	18.8%
People who are in housing need are generally on benefits and I don't rent to people on benefits	37	16.6%
People who are in housing need are more likely to get into rent arrears	76	34.1%
People who are in housing need are more likely to need support I cannot provide	81	36.3%
People who are in housing need are more likely to have negative lifestyles which impact on tenancy management – such as addiction issues, antisocial behaviour and damage	75	33.6%
Changes to private tenancy law have made me stricter on who I let to as the process for eviction is more complex/longer	118	52.9%
Other	20	9%

There were 25 responses to this part of the question – all just elaborations on the options. 62% said that they would start a tenancy with someone in housing need if they were in paid employment. Over a third said they would if housing support was available to them, and only 17% outright said they would not start a tenancy with someone in housing need.

Table 22: Would you start a new tenancy with someone who is in housing need if…		
	Total	Percent
They are in paid employment	137	61.4%
Housing support was available to them	84	37.7%
No, I won't start a tenancy with someone who is in housing need	38	17%
Other	34	15.3%

Other responses included:

- Provided the tenant had good guarantors and/or were able to pay the deposit

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- This would be considered on a case by case basis, or would be done at the recommendation of an agent

Repairs and Improvements

Landlords were asked a number of questions relating to repairs and maintenance of their properties and how often they carry out repairs and if they have a maintenance programme. Table 23 shows 40% of landlords have their property inspected annually, or once every six months. Far fewer answered that their properties were inspected either monthly or less than once a year.

Table 23: How often do you or your letting agent inspect your tenants' properties?	Total	Percent
Monthly	9	4%
Quarterly	42	18.8%
Every six months	64	28.7%
Annually	88	39.5%
Less than once a year	18	8.1%

Table 24 shows nearly half of responses said that they carry out a property survey or inspection annually or at the end of a tenancy and prepare an improvement plan. Around 30% said they do so if they are requested by the tenant. Only a small number do so less frequently than annually or at the end of tenancy, with 14% giving 'other' as an answer.

Table 24: How do you plan ahead for improvement or modernization works in your properties?	Total	Percent
I carry out modernisation or improvement works if they are requested by a tenant	65	29.2%
I carry out a property survey or inspection either annually or at the end of a tenancy and prepare an improvement plan	105	47.1%
I carry out a property survey or inspection at least every 5 years and prepare an improvement plan	9	4%
I commission a property condition survey and prepare a long term improvement plan	4	1.8%
Don't do it/don't know	6	2.7%
Other	32	14.4%

Other responses included:

- Repairs and improvements on the property are done as and when they are necessary
- The property has been renovated or repaired before a tenancy and does not need/get repairs throughout unless needed

Table 25 shows over half know how to arrange common repairs and who would be responsible, with 43% not knowing how to go about this.

Table 25: If you own a tenement property (including flats and four-in-a-blocks) do you know how you would go about arranging common repairs, and who would be responsible?	Total	Percent
Yes	125	56.1%
No	96	43.1%

If landlords answered yes, they were asked to explain their answer:

- Contact other homeowners/ landlords to work together to fix the issue

Landlords were also asked about installing energy efficiency measures. Table 26 shows more than half of landlords do not have plans to install any energy saving measures in their properties, although 44% do have some form of plans.

Table 26: With an increasing emphasis on and recognition of climate change and the part housing plays in this, do you have plans to install energy saving measures in your property?		
	Total	**Percent**
Yes	97	43.5%
No	124	55.6%

Landlords were asked to provide details of measures they planned to install or reasons why they had no plans:

- If yes, measures planned: Double glazing, bringing up to EPC standard, new heating and boiler systems
- If no, why not: Too expensive, listed building so installing measures is difficult, need financial incentives – no return on investment

Table 27 shows 69% of landlords are aware of reforms within the private rented sector in Scotland, such as the recent legislation introduced by Scottish Government which has brought in both a rent freeze and an eviction ban until at least early 2023.

Table 27: Are you aware of any recent and proposed reforms within the private rented sector in Scotland?		
	Total	**Percent**
Yes	154	69.1%
No	67	30%

Landlords were asked what their views were on these reforms:

- EPC requirements are impractical and this is especially true for older properties
- EPC targets are inflexible, hard to meet and put large burden on landlords
- Rent freezes and evictions bans heavily impact landlords – many heading towards selling their properties
- There needs to be more support in place for landlords

Table 28 shows nearly half (48%) of landlords use the Scottish Borders Council Private Rental Sector newsletter as a source of information on changes to the sector. This is followed closely behind by news outlets and the Scottish Government's website, with word of mouth and social media following these.

Table 28: How do you keep informed about changes to the Private Rental Sector in Scotland?		
	Total	**Percent**
Scottish Government's Website	85	38.1%
Scottish Borders Council's Private Rental Sector newsletter	107	48%
Word of Mouth	49	22%
News outlets	85	38.1%
Social Media	36	16.1%
Don't Know	24	10.8%

How can the Council help?

We asked landlords a number of questions on ways SBC could support them more as landlords, this us helps to ensure we are providing landlords with the right housing information and advice and identify areas in which we can improve.

Table 29 shows 48% of responses said that a good source of 'vetted' tenants seeking long term homes would make them more likely to rent to people who are in housing need. Half also said an insurance policy against damages, arrears and lose purchase by the council would help with this. Guaranteed rent was also considered a good option, alongside having a single point of contact for landlords to report problems or get advice/training.

Table 29: What could the council do to help you to rent to people who have presented to the Council for help with housing (some of whom may be claiming benefits)?	Total	Percent
A trustworthy source of good, "vetted" tenants seeking long-term homes	107	48%
Trusted trader scheme	21	9.4%
Assurances that the tenant has ongoing support from a service I can rely on	93	41.7%
A single point of contact for me, as a landlord, to report tenancy problems and get advice/ training	77	34.5%
A financial incentive (such as deposit, rent in advance plus a "finder's fee" at the start of a tenancy)	41	18.4%
Additional rent in advance – such as 2-3 months rather than one	40	17.9%
Guaranteed rent for a set period – such as 6 months or one year	90	40.4%
A cheap/free property management services provided by the Council or a third sector agency to collect rent and deal with problems	67	30%
An insurance policy from a provider, against damages, arrears and loss, purchased by the Council	113	50.7%
National government measures – such as increase in benefit rates so that they meet rents, changes to the tax regime or changes in mortgage conditions	49	22%
Some other action – please say what in comments	25	11.2%
Nothing	38	17%

Other responses included:

- Property won't be re-let after current tenants leave
- Guaranteed rent/deposit
- Never thought of using council help to rent properties

Landlords were asked if they had any experience of helping tenants across a wide range of services, table 30 provides a breakdown of when landlords replied yes they did have experiences with these services. While the majority of landlords have not had experience using a lot of these services, there are some who have accessed these services, in particular benefits or debt advice.

Table 30: During your time as a landlord, have you had experience of helping tenant's access support or advice?	Total	Percent
Financial, benefits or debt advice	44	19.7%
Mental health services	16	7.2%
Physical health services	21	9.4%
Help with addiction	5	2.2%
Visiting housing support (i.e. budgeting, tenancy skills)	12	5.4%
Social work (or community care) assistance	18	8.1%
Other	16	7.2%

Other responses included:

- Landlord has helped tenant seek Council tax advice
- Provide any help when asked
- Helped tenants sign up for benefits

Table 31 shows nearly half of responses said they did not know what services were available for tenants but have never needed to make use of them, with a quarter saying they did know what was available but have never needed to use them. A smaller number don't know how to access services and don't know what's available. Just under 10% know what services are available but have had problems access or availability. Lastly, 6% know what services are available and said they responded well when needed.

Table 31: As a landlord, which of the following statements best reflects your experience of "helping" services in your local council?		
	Total	Percent
I know what services are available for tenants and services have responded well when needed	13	5.8%
I know what services are available for tenants but have had problems with service access, availability and/or quality	21	9.4%
I know what services are available for tenants but have never needed to use them	57	25.6%
I don't know what services are available for tenants & would have no idea where to find out about this	27	12.1%
I don't know what services are available for tenants but have never needed to use them	103	46.2%

Any other comments included:
- Landlord has been advised of services and how to access them by an agent
- Booklet/advertisement of services and contact details could be supplied to landlords and tenants

The Future

Landlords were asked to rank from a list, the top three things that would help to improve their practice as a landlord. As shown in table 32, the top option picked that landlords felt could improve their practice was information on grants to improve energy efficiency or install adaptations. This was followed by training and info on landlord obligations and the law, and a local landlord forum. The least chosen options were training and info on Local Housing Allowance and benefits, training and information on signposting tenants to help, and development of an Owner Association to plan and manage repairs.

Table 32: What are the top three things you feel would improve your practice as a private landlord?	
	Ranking
Information on the availability of grants to improve the energy rating or install adaptations	1.39
Training or information on tenancy law/landlord obligations	0.84
A local landlord forum providing regular updates on sector issues	0.50
Advice on how to improve the energy efficiency of my properties	0.47
Other	0.31
Training or information on good practice in housing management	0.28
Training or information on property maintenance and repair	0.28
Access to a property management or professional factoring service to plan and manage common repairs	0.23
More support from the Council or housing associations to source potential tenants	0.19
Training or information on Local Housing Allowance and Benefits System	0.18
Training or information on where to signpost tenants to get advice or support	0.17
Support to develop an Owner Association to plan and manage common repairs	0.08

Table 33 shows a quarter of responses said they were very likely to sell some or all of their portfolio in the next five years, and this raises to just under half with those who said it was 'fairly likely'. 24% said it was not at all likely they would sell their property in the next five years.

Table 33: How likely are you to sell any part of your property portfolio in the next five years?		
	Total	Percent
Very likely	56	25.1%
Fairly likely	41	18.4%
Not very likely	46	20.6%
Not at all likely	54	24.2%
Don't know/Not stated	24	10.8%

Landlords were asked if they would consider purchasing empty homes to rent out in the future. Table 34 shows over half said they would not consider purchasing empty homes and bringing them back into use if they were to expand their portfolios.

Table 34: If you were expanding your portfolio, would you consider purchasing empty properties and bringing them back into use?		
	Total	Percent
Yes	96	43.1%
No	125	56.1%

Landlords were asked to explain their answer if they had selected no:
- No support for landlords, new legislation making it too risky with no rent increase or evictions
- EPC requirements making it too difficult to maintain or upgrade properties
- No time or finances for making investments on empty properties
- Would need immediate returns on investment, not having to do properties up

Final Thoughts

The final part of the survey asked landlords if they had any final thoughts or comments on being a private landlord in the Scottish Borders. In total there were 115 responses to this question (52%). A lot of the comments centered on the impact of recent legislative changes and the impacts these will have on landlords:

Legislation has become too restrictive for private landlords
- "Regulation is now strangling the sector and adding costs that are not sustainable. The new tenancy laws are also going to make landlords think twice about letting out to unknown tenants." - "There are now far too many regulations making it too complicated and financially unsustainable for a single property "accidental" landlord like myself. The draconian actions of the Scottish Government giving themselves the power to stop evictions and stop rent increases at will are also quite disgraceful."

Positive experiences with SBC's Housing Strategy Team
- "I find the newsletters helpful." - "I was really happy with the professional and friendly service when registering as a landlord. They were really helpful." - "Yes. I am fortunate to be able to deal with such an amazing team at the council. It's true for all aspects of owning the property, from buying an empty property (in inhabitable state), renovating (warrant), and even paying (fast response)." - "I have always had a positive experience with the council especially initial training." - "Scottish Borders have been the most proactive and inclusive authority I have ever dealt with!" - "No - I actually think your communication and the frequency of it is great!"

Concerns over making properties energy efficiency

- "It's becoming more difficult to meet the increasing EPC requirements, which may result in me selling the properties."
- "Very little/ no consideration appears to be given to supporting the difficulties and costs of ensuring that a several hundred years old small private residential property in conservation village meets all standards. The requirement is fine but the assumption is that the landlord has access to limitless resources. In my case that simply isn't true."
- "I find that Private Landlords in Scotland generally have an unfair burden of responsibility. The main issue being trying to make old properties compliant with the new energy efficiency regulations in too short a timescale."
- "My only big worry is that we will not be able to afford to bring it up to the standards required for energy efficiency without spending many thousands of pounds and/ or ruining the charm of the house. It is completely wind and waterproof and comfortable to live in as it is, and I am slowly but surely replacing the old windows with double glazed ones. All roofing and other issues have been fixed."

"More rights to tenants has made landlords feel powerless

- "It is a thankless business. Current rules mean that tenants have become increasingly unreliable and there is little or nothing that the landlord can do about this. I would leave the sector if I could."
- "I wholeheartedly agree that tenants have rights and cannot be evicted without reason. However, I do not understand the reasoning behind the government's ban on evictions on tenants who do not pay rent (mine was on housing benefits but didn't pass it on) and do not look after the property. My tenants finally left on their own accord and the cottage needs significant repairs."
- "There are good landlords around that really do care and try and do a proper job to keep tenants and their neighbours happy. It seems to me that the law is mainly with tenant and landlords are seen as the bad guys. This attitude needs to change or landlords will pull out of the market and it's happening right now."
- "Legislation has become too restrictive for the private landlord. Erosion of landlord rights in recent years and particularly the housing tribunal process has made this sector intolerable. Private housing landlords are not social housing landlords. There has been a decline in social housing for many years and it is left to private landlords to pick up the pieces whilst receiving no assistance in dealing with real issues - rent arrears, damage to property, anti-social behaviour, evictions. Yes, local authorities put on seminars on how landlords can improve their properties, choice of tenant etc, but, in reality all that is meaningless if there is no system in place to protect the landlord from the above issues."
- "Being a private landlord is not economically viable now and the tenant has all the support on their side even when they are being bad tenants. Too much hassle for little or no payback."
- "The Scottish Government makes it harder to justify letting homes when they take away our ability to remove problem tenants or to regain properties if we need them for new employees or other legitimate purposes."

Landlords want to leave the sector

- "I shall be out of this market at the first opportunity - I run my business my way, not how the government wants me to"
- "Rent is low here in Hawick so any additional burden will mean I need to sell."
- "The government's rent controls and excessive bureaucracy have prompted me to decide to withdraw my property from the market as soon as the law allows."
- "I am concerned that the inappropriate and excessive legislation is forcing me to sell rental properties. They are currently let to local people, some working locally and with children in the local school. When they decide to move on, I will have to sell the properties because they cannot meet EPC C standard. The likely buyers will be second home owners or retired non-locals, not local people who cannot get a mortgage. This will impact negatively on the rural economy and the local community, and put a further burden on Council housing services"
- "I know a few landlords and I would say most, if not all, are planning to sell up due to recent SG freeze on increasing rents, increasing mortgage costs and removal of mortgage tax relief."

Suggestions from landlords

- "It is difficult to get rid of tenants who are anti-social, drug, addicts, in rent arrears or who don't look after their dwelling. If the council perceive a need for properties then they could set up a panel to encourage landlords to join and then the council could manage the property for a small fee rather than use an agent."
- "Good tenants are precious commodities to landlords and good landlords are precious to tenants. Education to both parties of the benefits of a good relationship."
- "I am open to buying and renovating an old house and bringing it back into use but I would like incentive to do so e.g. 5% VAT or no VAT on all renovation costs. I am on your search service but no matches to date in my chosen area. I am very particular about the sort of property I would take on."
- "Much of the available property stock, in the Hawick area, is in very poor condition. The tenement buildings are in a poor state of repair e.g. roofs, wiring etc. and are no longer fit for modern living with narrow flights of stairs, limited parking, no gardens, poorly insulated, small bathrooms etc. Ideally these types of houses need to be demolished and make way for proper family homes that will enhance an area and bring about a better community."

10.   FORMAL CONSULTATION

Formal consultation on Scottish Borders Council's draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 opened in May 2023 and closed in July 2023.

The LHS guidance states that the consultation should be conducted using a range of media to ensure engagement with as many local communities, interest groups and individuals as possible and that the make-up of the local population is accurately reflected in the process. The Housing Strategy Team worked closely with the departments across the Council to ensure the consultation draft was widely circulated to all the relevant stakeholders and households in the Scottish Borders. This included:

- Attending meetings with:

    - Borders Homeless and Health Strategic Partnership
    - Home Energy Forum
    - Area Partnerships
    - RSL meetings
    - Physical Disability Group
    - Town Place Making Group

- Holding Face to Face events
- An online survey on Citizen Space with consultation questions to capture the views of respondents
- An online drop in session to capture comments and feedback from members of the public and stakeholders
- Engagement through Social Media Video to raise awareness – posted on the website and circulated on social media
- Engagement with staff through internal updates

A summary of the approach to consultation and responses is contained within Appendix 4.

11.   PEER REVIEW

Each Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is subject to a robust review process involving Scottish Government officials and local authority peer reviewers. The review process helps to ensure alignment of the LHS with Scottish Government priorities, outcomes and targets and facilitates improvement and/or change through collaborative working between Scottish Government and local authorities. The review process drives a level of consistency in the review of the LHS, ensures that there is robust feedback to local authorities, and helps identify areas of best practice that can be shared with local authorities. Local Authorities are strongly encouraged to submit its LHS for review at the consultative draft stage.

This will be the third time the Scottish Borders LHS has went through this process. The council submitted the draft LHS 2023-2028 for peer review in May 2023 and received feedback on the 10th of August. A summary of the peer view can be found in appendix 4.

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Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028

Formal Consultation Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act requires that local authorities consult on their Local Housing Strategies, and the statutory Equality Duty on public bodies requires the involvement, consultation and engagement of as wide a range of local residents and tenants and communities of interest as possible.

Appendix 3 summarises the wide range of engagement undertaken to ensure the draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028 was developed collaboratively and reflected the views of partners, stakeholders and residents.

Following this engagement, a consultative draft of the LHS was produced which set out the draft vision for housing and housing related services, outcomes and actions for the Scottish Borders covering the period 2023-2028. A 12 week period of formal consultation on this draft document sought to ensure that local people, communities and stakeholders had the opportunity to have their say on whether the priorities identified will make a positive contribution to meeting housing need in the Scottish Borders.

This report provides an overview of the formal consultation process on the draft LHS. It summarises the approach to the formal consultation (Section 2), presents the responses received and outlines how we have considered the responses including, where relevant, how we have incorporated the responses into the final LHS (Section 3). The peer review process has been summarised (Section 4), and a copy of the consultation questions are included at the end of the report (Section 5).

2. FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

The formal consultation process on the draft LHS began on 2nd May 2023 and lasted for a period of 12 weeks, closing on 21st July 2023. The draft LHS set out the proposed vision, strategic outcomes and delivery plan framework for the new Housing Strategy for the period 2023-2028. This document clearly outlined the issues affecting housing, summarised housing need and proposed a housing supply target, as well as providing other background and contextual information to ensure the purpose of the LHS was clear.

A full communications plan was developed which identified a range of engagement approaches to ensure everyone had the opportunity to engage in the consultation.

The Housing Strategy Team worked to ensure the consultation draft was widely circulated to all relevant stakeholders and households in the Scottish Borders, including "hard to reach" groups. This comprised:

- An online survey on Citizen Space with consultation questions to capture the views of all residents and organisations in the Scottish Borders
- A number of regular posts on social media during the 12 week consultation period
- A dedicated LHS consultation webpage
- A video showcasing the LHS to raise awareness – posted on the webpage and circulated on social media
- Engagement with SBC staff through internal updates (Yammer)
- Approximately 450 stakeholders were emailed
- A template was circulated to key stakeholders gathering their suggestions to include in the LHS action plan
- Presentations were given at 15 partnership meetings (3 face to face and 12 on Microsoft Teams) and feedback was collected from:
    - Community Planning Programme Board
    - Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership Executive
    - Integrated Joint Board

- Borders Homeless and Health Strategic Partnership
- Home Energy Forum
- Area Partnerships (Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon and Teviot and Liddesdale)
- RSL tenant groups
- Borders Older Peoples Planning Partnership
- See Hear Group
- Physical Disability Group

As part of the formal consultation process the draft LHS was sent to Scottish Government officials in the More Homes Division and Policy Teams, as well as a local authority for peer review. The review process helps to ensure alignment of the LHS with Scottish Government guidance. More detail on this is provided in Section 5.

3. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

In total, 59 responses to the formal consultation were received in addition to feedback from 15 partnership meetings (totalling 74 overall responses). This section provides a summary of the key points raised in responses and outlines how we have considered the responses.

Table 1: Number and Type of Responses	
Response Type	Number
Online Survey	38
Stakeholder Template covering suggested actions	4
Email responses	17
Partnership meetings feedback	15
Total	74

3.1 Online Survey

A total of 38 responses were received to the online survey. Just over two thirds (68%) of respondents were responding as an individual, while just under one third (29%) were from an organisation. Only 3% of people did not provide an answer on whether they were an individual or from an organisation. The respondent average age was 57 years old, and there were similar numbers of female and male respondents with 29% stating they were male and 29% stating they were female. The remaining 42% provided no information on their gender.

The postcodes of survey respondents have been proportionally mapped below (see Figure 1), showing a widespread response throughout the local authority area. Only 5% of responses were from outside of the Scottish Borders.

Figure 1 – Online Survey Respondent Postcodes
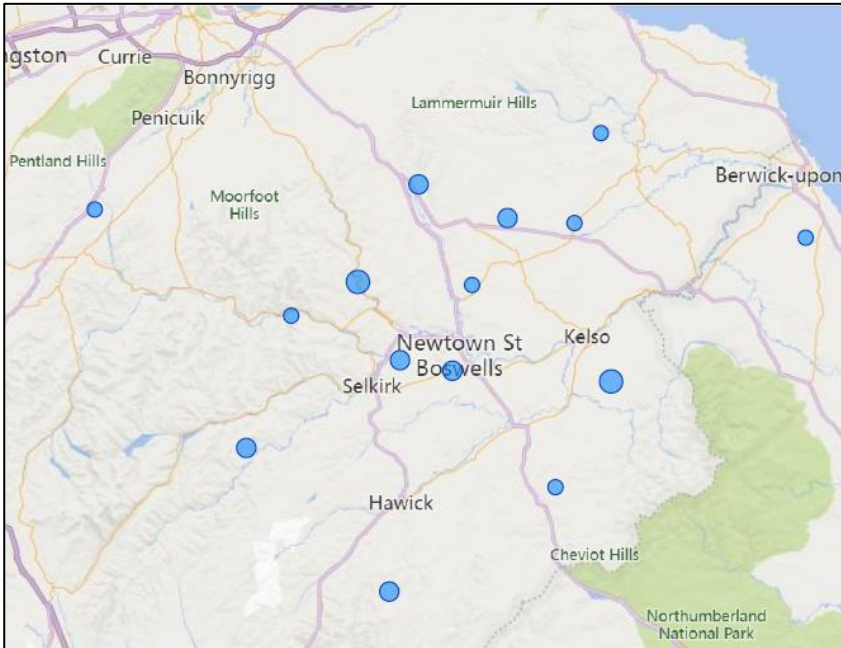
A list of the organisations who submitted responses is provided below.

- Community Councils
- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
- NHS Borders
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Scottish Water
- Homes for Scotland
- Developers
- MND Scotland
- Age Scotland

Key takeaways from the survey responses have been summarised:

Housing Supply Target

When asked if they agree with the proposed housing supply target, 45% of respondents agreed (16% of respondents "strongly agreed" while 29% of respondents chose "tend to agree"). 42% of respondents disagreed (18% strongly disagreed and just under a quarter of people, 24%, chose "tend to disagree").

There were a range of comments on the housing supply target, with many people expressing contrasting views around the proportion of affordable homes:

> *"This area has a very low average wage level and it would be beneficial to have more affordable homes."*
>
> *"Affordable homes are what is most needed in the Borders to stem the drift away of young people/families, not attracting more commuters who are the only ones who can afford the majority of housing being built in the area."*
>
> *"There are already enough affordable homes in the Borders. There is a shortage of high quality and large property."*
>
> *"Affordable homes should be the priority."*

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A majority of respondents (82%) agreed that the vision of the LHS was clear, and a majority also agreed with this vision (42% strongly agreeing and 39% tending to agree). Comments on the vision included:

> *"A good vision, but it must be met."*
>
> *"…it connects with our commitment to enhance people's lives and complements the commitments to home and place at a national, regional and local level."*
>
> *"We strongly agree with the vision especially the delivery of more homes well designed in sustainable communities as set out in Outcome 1 of the strategy."*

Strategic Outcomes

The Strategic Outcomes (as outlined in the draft LHS) were ranked by importance in the survey:

- Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive
- Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing
- Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy
- Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage
- Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible

Strategic Outcome 5 was felt to be very important by the most respondents, followed by Outcome 2 (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Importance of Strategic Outcomes
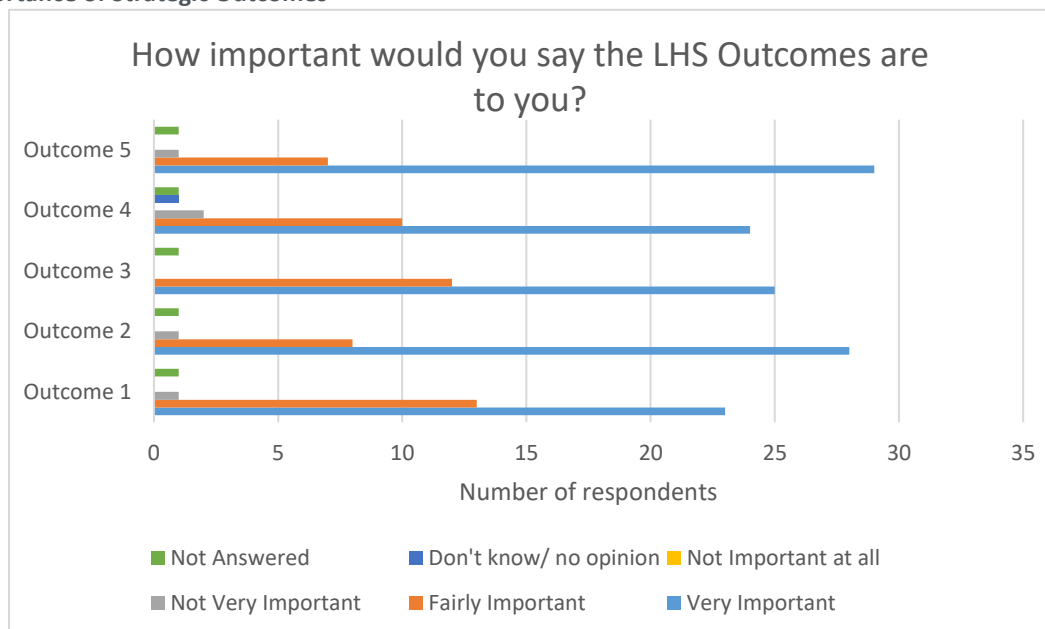
Just over half (55%) of respondents felt that the LHS Strategic Outcomes reflected the main housing problems in the Scottish Borders. A variety of other issues were put forward, including (but not limited to):

- the requirement to retrofit and increase efficiency of existing homes instead of building new homes
- the requirement for housing supply near employment hubs

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- the need to bring empty homes back into use
- tackling the poor quality of private rented housing stock
- the affordability of all housing stock
- the increased requirement for accessible housing

When asked if the key actions proposed for each Strategic Outcome were the right ones, respondents tended to agree however there was variation in agreement between the outcomes. Actions under Outcome 3 were most supported and actions under Outcomes 4 and 5 were supported but to a slightly lesser extent.

Figure 3: Are the right actions listed under each Strategic Outcome?

Strategic Outcome 1 - More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all	Strategic Outcome 2 - People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing
3% / 8% / 13% / 76% — Yes ■ No ■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Not Answered	5% / 13% / 8% / 74% — Yes ■ No ■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Not Answered
Strategic Outcome 3 - Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy	Strategic Outcome 4 - Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage
3% / 8% / 8% / 81% — Yes ■ No ■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Not Answered	3% / 18% / 8% / 71% — Yes ■ No ■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Not Answered
Strategic Outcome 5 - Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible	

Barriers to Delivery

When asked about the major barriers to delivering the strategic outcomes, people identified the following major barriers (more detail is provided in Section 3.2):

- Budget and resource constraints
- Construction costs
- Infrastructure constraints e.g. transport infrastructure, net zero service infrastructure
- Inadequate workforce
- Supply of willing developers
- Developer desire to build on greenfield sites
- Developer preference to build at the expensive end of the market
- Second home and holiday lets proliferating in some communities
- Quality of existing housing stock
- Skills/capacity for retrofit
- Lack of clarity between different targets e.g. EESSH2, Heat in Buildings Strategy and Net Zero
- NIMBYism and opposition to local traveller sites

Additional Actions to Deliver the LHS Vision

When asked what additional actions were needed to support delivery of the LHS vision, respondents provided the following suggestions:

- Ensure new houses are built to better space standards
- Address the issues of meeting EPC C in Scotland
- Acquire land in strategic areas for social housing
- Include the community in the planning process of managing town expansions, to ensure services can cope and there is an adequate mix of commercial and residential
- Compulsory purchase of long-term empty property in town centres
- Ensure affordable housing is spread throughout the region including rural communities so that the young and the elderly have housing opportunities in the areas where they have grown up in or spent their working lives

Action by individuals or organisations to help contribute to the LHS vision and outcomes

When asked what action they could take, respondents provided the following relevant suggestions:

- Help to produce a town action/place plan that the community has bought into.
- Help to develop "clever solutions" which could be delivered in partnership with the Integrated Joint Board - for example identifying those in fuel poverty or those who may become homeless.

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- Implementing green policies in individual homes, engaging in consultations, suggesting workable and costed solutions.
- Providing assistance to project the need for adapted housing for the next 10/15 years.
- Working closely with the council and key stakeholders to get early visibility of sites and programmes to ensure support connection to the Scottish Water network and reduce any delays.
- Providing information on the requirements of the community.
- Working proactively with Scottish Borders Council, both directly and through the Regional Economic Partnership, to help address the housing challenges facing the region and in doing so to unlock and realise new economic opportunities.

3.2 Comments and Other Responses

The table below summarises comments received as part of the online survey, in addition to the comments from all other responses received via email, stakeholder templates and at meetings. It outlines the comments raised and summarises how each of these have been considered.

Table 2: Consultation Responses

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Stakeholder Email response	• Support is requested to improve facilities for showpeople in the Borders.	**Email**	• The Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) did not identify any accommodation needs not being met via existing arrangements, however this is being reviewed. • A new section specifically on Showpeople has been added to the LHS. • We are engaging nationally to discuss the requirement for showpeople facilities and to identify funding that may be available to provide/improve facilities.
Stakeholder Email Response	• Concern has been raised around the annual target figure for accessible wheelchair homes being too low and not being fulfilled quick enough.	**Email**	• The target for new wheelchair housing is 20 homes per annum, with 15 of those being provided by RSLs. This is based on a needs analysis and evidence. • We acknowledge that more work needs to be done with private sector developers to support delivery of accessible wheelchair homes. This has been included in the LHS and action plan. • We are currently also drafting a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on proposed updates to the Housing for Varying Needs guidance which will inform requirements for accessible homes.
Community Email Response	• There is no mention of the Newtown St Boswells strategic housing site.	**Email**	Apart from Lowood (Tweedbank) we have not specifically mentioned individual sites, however these sites are referenced in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and the Local Development Plan (LDP).
Borders Older People's Planning Partnership	This group suggested that: • Community place making should be a priority for consideration. • We could utilise older buildings such as old mill buildings for housing. • It is important to have access to services and transport.	**Meeting**	• SBC intends to put Place at the heart of our work and action plan, making it easier for homes to be at the heart of strong communities with housing that is well designed without compromising on the aesthetics. This is reflected in the LHS and action plan. • We will work with RSLs and developers to take forward suitable projects which may involve older properties depending on ownership and use. • The LHS and its actions are linked to other policies informing service and transport planning to ensure a coordinated approach. Services and transport links are also considered during the planning process and within local place plans which communities can feed into. • SBC continues to promote the Place-making approach and principles, including supporting communities to develop Local Place Plans which will help influence the LHS in future.
Borders Home Energy Forum	The importance of the LHS was highlighted and a positive response to the draft LHS was noted.	**Meeting**	This is welcomed.
RSL Tenant Group	• The group questioned what exactly is meant by the term affordable housing. • The group asked if the vision is too ambitious. • How do we ensure we have housing for local people. Often people move to the area and are able to pay more. What can be done to stop	**Meeting**	• We have added a definition of affordable housing to the main LHS document. This is taken from the Scottish Government's NPF4 which defines affordable housing as housing "of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on low incomes. This can include social rented, mid-market rented, shared ownership, shared equity, housing sold at a discount, self-build plots and low-cost housing without subsidy." In the LHS evidence paper we have used an assumption of an affordability threshold of 25% of household income spent on rent. • The proposed vision seeks a balance between ambition and realism.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
	this? How do we build private housing and offer it only to locals? • Can planning be streamlined for housing associations, for building and for acquiring sites? – making it easier to develop affordable housing • What money is available or going to be available for delivering net zero? Will the council be supporting housing associations? • Second homes/ short term lets. How do we stop these as more and more show up, taking housing away from being residential housing to holiday homes?		• We are limited in what we can do to ensure private housing is specifically for local people, however we can work to review house price data to understand what may be affordable for local people. • The planning process is a legislative process which considers applications in the context of the local development plan for the area. Housing associations and developers are required to follow this process. • RSLs have the opportunity to bid for national funding to deliver net zero improvements. Additionally, the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), once developed, will inform an area-based approach to heat and energy efficiency planning and delivery, covering all building stock within the area. • We'll review short term lets data once this is available and consider options to address any significant issues that are apparent. This will be included as an additional action within the Action Plan. Data on second homes is being monitored and if any issues are identified, again this will be addressed. • The LHS highlights actions related to exploring short term let control zones, local lettings plans and opportunities to apply "burdens" to homes.
RSL Customer Voice Group	• Questions were raised around the definition of affordable housing. • There was concern expressed around the cost of living crisis and the impact of this on homelessness. How are we providing housing for homeless people and are they being treated as a priority? • How do we encourage more young people to stay in the Borders? E.g. having an adequate supply of one bedroom properties. The costs of living in houses also needs to be affordable.	**Meeting**	• As per above we have added a definition of affordable housing to the LHS. • Tackling homelessness is a key priority within the LHS. RSLs treat those at risk of homelessness or who are homeless as a priority group. The Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan sets out a vision: "Homelessness is prevented wherever possible but where homelessness cannot be prevented a settled, mainstream housing outcome is secured as quickly as possible." The LHS Action Plan sets out steps toward this, which are also reflected in the LHS. • Providing the right homes in the right place for people (including young people) is also a key consideration which the LHS and which the action plan seeks to address. More detail and actions are outlined in the LHS.
See Hear Meeting	• There was discussion around how housing could be improved for those with hearing and sight loss, and the requirement to prioritise housing for disabled people was raised. • There are certain changes that can be made to improve homes for visually impaired residents, e.g. changing facing colours (toilet seat different colour) etc (not white on white); railings inside and outside the home; outside lights; doorbells which identify who is there.	**Meeting**	• We are currently drafting a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on proposed updates to the Housing for Varying Needs guidance, which discusses requirements for housing to suit those with varying needs including hearing and sight loss. This will inform better design in houses for people with specific needs. • RSLs have priority groups which include people requiring wheelchair or specially adapted housing. • Homeowners and RSLs are responsible for making changes to homes, and grants are available: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20011/housing_and_homeless/369/adaptations/2

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
	Who is responsible for making these changes and are there grants available? • OTs could be engaged with at the beginning of new housing developments.		• RSLs typically engage with users and subject matter experts including OTs at the design stage prior to construction, meaning that OT's and others may have the option to engage at the start of new housing developments.
Physical Disability Strategy Group	• There is a long waiting list for adaptations in homes. • How can we make private housing more accessible when being built? • How can we make existing homes more accessible, not only for people with disabilities? • How can we best utilise empty homes?	**Meeting**	• We know Covid-19 has impacted the waiting time for adaptations and this is still affecting waiting times due to the build up in demand. The availability of trades also impacts this. We have also included an action within the LHS Action Plan to review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected. • We have a target for accessible homes, some of which will be delivered by the private sector. We will engage with private developers and self-build owners to encourage more accessible elements. We will also feed into the updates to the Housing For Varying Needs guidance which will inform requirements for accessible homes. • The Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 sets out actions to improve accessibility, affordability and standards across the whole rented sector. This, alongside new building standards from 2025/26 to underpin the new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard and future-proof new homes for lifelong accessibility, will contribute to improved accessibility in the private sector. • Our designated Empty Homes officer is working with property owners to make empty homes habitable again through providing advice and support and administering the Empty Homes grant.
Area Partnerships	• Is there a better term than "affordable housing" which does not have as much stigma attached to it? • Why is the term market housing used? • How does the LHS tie in with community led housing? • How does this link in to planning and other policies? • How is the LHS delivered and how is it operational?	**Meeting**	• We are working to tackle the stigma associated with the term "affordable" housing, we acknowledge the issue and will work with partners to address negative perceptions. • The term market housing is used to ensure consistent terminology across policy and strategic documents. • The LHS is linked in with Place Plans and Place Making which includes community-led development, as well as the LDP, other planning documents and relevant policies. Section 2 of the Evidence Paper Appendix 2 provides more detail on this. • Housing issues have been identified in the SBC Community Plan and Locality Plans and these have been discussed in the LHS. The LHS Action Plan provides detail on specific actions to address issues discussed, naming which partner is responsible for delivery, and a monitoring tool is used to report on actions annually. The LHS is a partnership document delivered by a range of partners.
Integrated Joint Board (IJB)	• Positive response to the draft LHS • Need to add Physical Disability Strategy to the IIA appendix • Are office spaces in homes being considered? • How do we ensure we retain our working age population and ensure there are opportunities for this demographic?	**Meeting**	• There is now reference to the Physical Disability Strategy in the IIA Appendix. • Changing housing need is monitored, and that includes the requirement for office spaces. RSLs are increasingly including an additional room for office use. • Providing the right homes in the right place for people (including the working age population) is also a key consideration which the LHS and action plan seeks to address. • The LHS and its actions are linked to other policies informing service and transport planning to ensure a coordinated approach.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
	• Is the LHS linked with Transport Strategies? • Is Place making considered when new homes are being planned? • Is modular housing being considered?		• SBC intends to put Place at the heart of our work and action plans, making it easier for homes to be at the heart of strong communities with housing that is well designed without compromising on the aesthetics. • Modular housing is being considered as well as other modern methods of construction.
SBC Learning Disability Service	• Coming Home Programme – there is a need for robust, accessible accommodation / homes for 17 people. There are currently 4 placements in 2 properties confirmed. Soon to be looking for accommodation for 3 people with very complex support needs. An additional project is still trying to source land and accommodation for up to 8 people. • There will be future demand from young people coming up from Children Services with increased physical support needs. • Some accommodation is not fit for purpose going into people's later years. How do people access more level access accommodation? • Need ability for technology to be retro fitted or built in from the start for new builds. Links to future proofing of accommodation. • Need for appropriate dementia friendly accommodation for people with Down Syndrome and dementia who are generally younger than traditional cohort of people in generic Care Home settings. • Is there scope for building opportunities to enable young people to practice skills for independence? • Financial Inclusion Team - there is a need for enough resource to support individuals. • Consideration of modular building - for quicker access to and quick future adaptations/add-ons.	Email	• We will update the Coming Home Section of the LHS to include the most recent data • Actions outlined in the Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing Care and Support, the Integrated Children's and Young People Plan, and the Wheelchair Accessible Housing Plan include the use of technology in homes to make them liveable for older people. We will ensure these are reflected in the LHS and action plan. • The LHS seeks to address these issues and requirements listed, and the priorities have been taken forward into the action plan.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
South of Scotland Enterprise	• The strategy is generally responsive to the area's needs and opportunities. • The strategy would benefit from strengthened and more explicit acknowledgment of the critical dependency between housing and the economy, e.g. within the vision or foreword. The vision could be updated as follows ""Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community, helping our economy to thrive". • The strategy could benefit from referencing a greater ambition to innovate and embrace research and new ways of potentially addressing longstanding challenges. • The strategy would also benefit from stronger links between growing the region's skills base and development planning. • There is scope to further emphasise Place Planning as a mechanism through which localised housing challenges can be addressed. • Suggested additional action which commits to ongoing engagement with the development industry as a means of understanding barriers and opportunities in real time. • Suggested additional action to better reflect the ambition to develop new and innovative solutions to retrofit.	**Email and Survey**	• When we say "homes that meet their needs" as outlined in the vision, we mean that the home is well designed, of sufficient quality, promotes independence, is energy efficient, is affordable, in the right location, and contributes to the wider area's regeneration and helps the economy to thrive. • We are opting not to change the vision as acknowledging the economy may imply that this is more important than other aspects, e.g. whether the home is affordable, or whether it contributes to regeneration of the area. • We will update Strategic Outcome 1 to make specific reference to the economy. "Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all, helping our economy to thrive." • We have updated references to the economy in the foreword and throughout the LHS we have sought to emphasise links to the economy. • The Convention of the South of Scotland, a forum composed of all public sector partners and Scottish Government, seeks to ensure effective public sector partnership working and delivery, assessing and planning for existing and future challenges, and driving inclusive growth and regional priorities. In February 2023 the forum focused its discussion on the housing challenges and opportunities across the South of Scotland. Following this the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP) established a housing subgroup to consider and explore in more detail constraints to development and help identify future investment priorities and opportunities. • Place Planning is a key action but we will ensure this is referenced and emphasised throughout. • We have made added the additional actions suggested to the LHS Action Plan.
RSL Email response	**General** • The introductory section could further emphasise the whole system focus of the strategy. • The economic impact/significance of the housing sector could be further emphasised, both as a contextual fact and also as a	**Email**	• We have emphasised the whole system focus of housing within the introduction. • We will update Strategic Outcome 1 to make specific reference to the economy. "Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all, helping our economy to thrive." • We have updated references to the economy in the foreword and throughout the LHS and Action Plan we have sought to emphasise links to the economy.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Page 471	reminder of the opportunities arising from the delivery of the strategy. • The Private Rented Sector issues and references need to be strengthened across the strategy, both in terms of its historic and current role as well as the likely future direction of this tenure. • We think it would be helpful to make specific reference to the Public Health discipline and linkages with respect to the consideration of health and social care issues – also at page 17. • In terms of the 'key indicators' list at 1.4 – we think some further refinement and clarification is needed. For example, we all need to be clear what we mean by 'retrofit'. • We recognise the significant achievements listed under priority 4 on page 11. However, we suggest there is current work needed to revise and refresh the 'older peoples', 'young peoples' and 'wheelchair housing' plans. • Following on from the most recent meeting of the Convention of the South of Scotland, a collaborative piece of work has been requested by the (then) Deputy First Minister to explore actions to increase the supply of housing across the region. Given the potential importance of this work, it would be logical to make specific reference to this. • Key worker issue – we support efforts to explore and understand this issue and also test creative solutions to address the challenges faced. However, we need to think very carefully about definitions, terminology and clarity of objectives in the complex and challenging area.		• We have revisited the Private Rented Sector section and added narrative on the future of the tenure based on the evidence available, specifically the Private Landlord Survey section. • Working with partners in public health a health inequalities impact assessment has been undertaken on the LHS. • Key indicators will be revised and supporting narrative provided. • The achievements listed are highlights from the previous LHS. The plans will be refreshed, particularly young peoples and older peoples plans, while the actions for the wheelchair housing plans will be a part of the LHS already. • We will include reference to the commitment made by partners at the Convention of the South of Scotland to work together to help address housing challenges in the region. This will be included in the main LHS and Action Plan. • We acknowledge the issues associated with defining a key worker, and that this definition changes over time. For the LHS we have used the Scottish Government definition: "A 'key worker' should be defined as a public sector employee who provides an essential service. (As well as workers in the public sector… this definition could also apply to low paid employees in the private sector/ service industries who are also providing essential services."

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Page 472	**Housing Delivery and Sustainable Communities** • The publication of the Remote Rural and Islands Action Plan has been delayed. However, we understand this is imminent and we would welcome the opportunity to jointly consider the Scottish Borders response to this and feed these ideas into the finalised LHS, timescales permitting. • We recognise the plurality of responses and contributions required to address the various issues facing the housing market in the Scottish Borders. However, we feel it is important to map onto this the scale and impact of various interventions to give a sense of what actions will make the biggest difference to the stated objectives of the strategy. Within this context, the ASHP is by far and away the biggest single contribution. It is important this is not 'crowded out' in any way. • We welcome the consideration of current tender price issues on page 33. This is a major constraint currently and the current trends are that these costs are still escalating. We all understand that these dynamics are cyclical, so we need to trade off the short, medium and longer term consequences of this dynamic. **Specialist Housing, Particular Needs an Independent Living** • We appreciate the significant section devoted to the operation of the Care & Repair service. Whilst this sets out the valuable contribution that this service, delivered by Eildon in partnership with SBC, delivers, it also highlights the massive potential for low cost/high impact expansion of this model (including innovative		• We will include reference to the ASHP and spend in the key indicators section list at 1.4. • We will note the offer to expand out the "one stop shop" opportunity within the LHS Action Plan and have included an action to work with C&R to undertake a strategic review of the service.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Page 473	new approaches on issues like dementia and use of technology) that we strongly believe we should focus on in the next few years. It should also be noted that we have offered to expand out the 'one stop shop' opportunity on adaptations to the other RSLs operating in the Borders and we hope to progress these discussions shortly. • Whilst we acknowledge that the Borders is currently behind and has much more to do with respect to TEC deployment and the benefits this accrues, especially to rural areas, we do think this section underestimates the current use of TEC in supported housing services. • We think it would be wiser to be more circumspect with respect to the specifics of the proposed care villages given the current negotiations and operating environment. • Whilst there has been substantial progress against major aspects of the 'Older Peoples' strategy such as the Extra Care Housing Program, we need to acknowledge that progress across other areas is still an issue e.g., those supported developments recognised as not being fit for purpose. **Delivery** • With respect to resources, we would encourage a rewording of the term 'private sector borrowing' when referencing RSL financial contributions to newbuild provision. The reality is that this is majority borrowing (from a range of sources) that RSLs undertake in order to invest in future social infrastructure to deliver against this strategy – the term private sector is potentially misleading.		• We have add detail on the current use of TEC including telecare and an additional monitoring PI. • We will revisit the section on care villages and update wording. • We will add detail on the progress required across other areas within the "Older Peoples" strategy within the LHS and Action Plan. • We will update the wording used, instead of "private sector borrowing" we will use "RSL borrowing".

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
	• We would suggest the Bridge Homes acquisition by Eildon (supported by SG grant) should be referenced as an innovative measure with respect to the narrative set out at the top of page 89.		• We will add in this reference to the Bridge Homes acquisition.
Survey responses Page 474	• We could focus more explicitly on the link between housing and the economy. Emphasising the need to provide an adequate supply of housing to bring people in to meet employment demand and encourage economic growth.	Survey	• We will update Strategic Outcome 1 to make specific reference to the economy. "Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all, helping our economy to thrive." • We have updated references to the economy in the foreword and throughout the LHS we have sought to emphasise links to the economy.
	• What does "affordable housing" mean specifically?		As per above we have added a definition of affordable housing to the LHS.
	• Questions around relationship between MATHLR and HST.		This is fully explained in Appendix 4.
	• Questions about annual wheelchair accessible housing figure and SHIP potential wheelchair accessible homes figure, how these relate to each other and the housing supply target.		The target of 20 annual wheelchair accessible houses in the LHS is the same target in the SHIP. This is set against the housing supply target of 353 homes, meaning the wheelchair accessible homes proportion of the full annual target is 5.7%. The 20 homes for affordable wheelchair homes target is split into 15 affordable houses and 5 market housing.
	• Perceived under delivery of all tenure new homes and overestimation of future delivery by the Housing Land Audit.		The Housing Supply Target exceeds the HNDA figure, while the 10 year proposed MATHLR is a higher figure. These are robust figures that have been set using a methodology in line with Scottish Government Guidance. The MATHLR was updated to reflect local specific factors. The figures will be kept under review. This is a target not a cap. SBC is currently slightly behind in the Housing Land Audit process, with the most recent Housing Land Audit (HLA) being the audit for 2021. Some of the comments raised have been addressed as part of the Housing Hearing for the Proposed Local Development Plan (May 2023). The programming of sites within the HLA continues to be a reasonable expression of what can be developed within the given time periods and there is a significant degree of uncertainty beyond years 2 and 3. Moving forward, in light of NPF4, the Scottish Government is reviewing the HLA process and Guidance.
	• There is a need to consider the available services and transport links when setting the targets for housing delivery. This is regarded as a constraining factor affecting communities when services and infrastructure struggle to		The LHS will be delivered in the context of relevant transport and infrastructure plans and close collaboration with partners to ensure sustainable communities. Specific actions in the LHS include:

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Page 475	accommodate new residents in addition to the existing residents.		• Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places • Support the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements) • Support the development and implementation of Place Plans
	Major barriers preventing delivery of Strategic Outcome 1 are: • Budget and resource constraints • Available land for private development • Supply of willing developers • Construction costs • Cost of buying/renting vs income levels • Net zero service infrastructure • Supply chain • Complexities of mixed tenures • Developer desire to build on greenfield sites • Developer preference to build at the expensive end of the market • Second home and holiday lets proliferating in some communities		These issues will be considered in the main LHS and action plan.
	Major barriers preventing delivery of Strategic Outcome 2 are: • Transport infrastructure • Budgets • Workforce • NIMBYism and opposition to local traveller sites • For wheelchair and smaller homes, the costs can be disproportionate and the flexibility of the grant regime to support this will be essential if targets are to be met • Retrofitting adaptations can be costly and restrictive – moving towards more pro-active programmes of investment in current homes could mitigate this		These issues will be considered in the main LHS and action plan.

Response	Comments/ Key Points	Submitted via	How the response has been considered
Page 476	• Stigma around complex needs or negative perceptions can result in significant community resistance to delivering housing solutions • Fuel poverty for older people		
	Major barriers preventing delivery of Strategic Outcome 3 are: • Budgets • Quality of existing housing stock • Skills/capacity for retrofit • Supply chain • Lack of clarity between different targets e.g. EESSH2, Heat in Buildings Strategy and Net Zero		More clarity and detail on carbon reduction targets will be provided in the upcoming Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy when it is published and as it develops. This Strategy will outline an approach which takes into account every building in the Scottish Borders, with two main aims: - To decarbonise energy - The electrification of heat When SBC has more information on minimum energy efficiency standards this will be communicated and made available. Scottish Government has been asked for clarity on what the objective of achieving "net-zero" specifically entails. Other issues will be considered in the main LHS and action plan.
	Major barriers preventing delivery of Strategic Outcome 4 are: • Budgets • Capacity in the sector (people)		These issues will be considered in the main LHS and action plan.
	Major barriers preventing delivery of Strategic Outcome 5 are: • Budgets • Lack of suitable housing		These issues will be considered in the main LHS and action plan.
	• There is a need to focus on existing buildings to retrofit rather than just delivering new build homes.		This is addressed within the LHS with references to retrofit objectives throughout.
	• Request for SBC to regulate (through building control and planning) all new builds to ensure they incorporate green energy and are adequately insulated. Redefine minimum standards.		SBC regulates all new builds through building standards and planning processes to ensure national standards are adhered to. This ensures new buildings are energy efficient regarding their heating, ventilation, lighting, etc. All approvals for new builds in future will have to meet minimum energy efficiency standards as introduced by Scottish Government's Heat in building strategy.

4.   PEER REVIEW

The draft LHS was shared with Scottish Government officials in the More Homes division and Policy Teams, in addition to another local authority in May 2023 to go through the peer review process. The feedback recognised the strengths of the draft LHS and noted some areas for consideration. A summary of the feedback is provided below.

Areas of Strength
- Requirements, Essential Links and Outcomes:
  The LHS provides a good summary of progress against outcomes, building on achievements from the LHS 2017-2022. It also provides good evidence of consultation and engagement and the development of outcomes, with the process clearly described. We particularly welcome the rural proofing exercise that has been carried out as part of the development of the LHS.

- Equalities & Engagement and Consultation:
  The Consultation and Engagement undertaken by Scottish Borders Council in the development of its LHS is to be commended. There has clearly been strong engagement with communities through a range of communication methods, which has helped to inform LHS priorities and outcomes. The Consultation and Engagement Report which provides an overview of the consultation and its findings is welcomed.

- Housing Delivery:
  The LHS demonstrates good recognition and understanding of the specific issues in delivering housing in the rural parts of Scottish Borders. The LHS also identifies strong links with the South of Scotland Enterprise and its role in promoting construction capacity, skills and supporting innovative solutions to increase housing supply. We also welcome that the LHS recognises the role of community-led housing in the area and the role that South of Scotland Community Housing plays in supporting communities to deliver more homes, and we would encourage the Council to consider how it plans to work collaboratively with South of Scotland Community Housing to support the delivery of community-led housing to meet the needs of communities.

- Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change:
  The LHS clearly and comprehensively identifies the extent of and trends in fuel poverty, and the related challenges in eliminating fuel poverty within specific housing stock. It also clearly sets out a wide range of actions both past and present, to assist fuel poor households.

Areas for Consideration
- Preventing and Addressing Homelessness:
  While recognising the positive approaches the Council is taking on prevention, we would suggest there should be a link to the Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter (ARC) in the homeless section, to recognise how RSL performance is measured against tenants and other customer expectations. While there is reference to Housing Options, we suggest the Council's "Housing Options Approach" is more explicitly stated.

- House Condition:
  While recognising that Scottish Borders Council is a stock transfer authority, consideration could be given to more detail on how – as the Strategic Housing Authority – Scottish Borders Council ensures the Scottish Housing Quality Standard is met amongst its partner RSLs who have housing stock in the Scottish Borders geographic area.

- Housing, Health and Social Care Integration:
  Consideration could be given to greater clarity being provided in the LHS on how the Council is collaborating with the Integration Authority to deliver outcomes, and which support services have been delegated to the Integration Authority.

5. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Within the consultation period, respondents had the opportunity to answer 19 questions by completing an online survey via Citizen Space, or alternatively sending completed forms and/or feedback via email or by post. The questions were focused on sense-checking the key priorities of the draft LHS. Answers were requested in the following formats:

- Yes/no/don't know or no opinion
- Ranking agreement with and importance of specific aspects of the LHS
- Open-ended comments sections

A copy of the questions is provided below.

LHS 2023-2028: Consultation Questions

Housing Supply Target 2023-28

Based on the SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment, Scottish Borders Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 sets a Housing Supply Target to deliver 353 homes per annum 141 (40%) of these are to be affordable.

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed housing supply target?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/No opinion

Please share any comments on the proposed housing supply target:

The Vision

"Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community"

The LHS vision needs to help us reach our ambition for housing in the Scottish Borders over the next five years.

2. Is the vision clear?

Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the vision?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/No opinion

Please share any comments on the vision:

LHS Strategic Outcomes

The Scottish Borders Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 sets out five Outcomes. We want to find out how these matter to you. Please tell us how important these are to you.

4. How important or otherwise, would you say each of the LHS Outcomes are to you?

	Very Important	Fairly Important	Not Very Important	Not Important at all	Don't know/ no opinion
Strategic Outcome 1: Deliver more homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all					
Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing					
Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy					
Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.					
Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible					

5. Do the LHS outcomes reflect the main housing problems that need to be tackled in the Scottish Borders?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/No opinion

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Please share any comments:

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6.   Are there any other emerging outcomes that are missing? Please specify

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LHS Key Actions for Delivery

Strategic Outcome 1: Deliver more homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all

Key Actions for Delivery:
• **Increase the supply of affordable housing**
• **Deliver alternative tenure housing to meet a broad range of needs**
• **Increase construction capacity and skills to support delivery of more homes**
• **Implement revised planning policy and practice to ensure it is directive in shaping existing and new places**
• **Supporting the delivery of housing regeneration in communities (including town centres and rural settlements)**
• **Support the development and implementation of Place Plans**
• **Reduce the number of empty homes**

7.   Are the key actions proposed for LHS Strategic Outcome 1 the right ones?

        Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

If you have some suggestions for key actions, please specify:

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8.   Are there any major barriers that will stop us delivering LHS Strategic Outcome 1 actions? Please Specify

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Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing

Key Actions for Delivery:
- **Work in partnership to deliver more accessible homes across tenures**
- **Increase the supply of wheelchair housing**
- **Provide information, advice and assistance on housing options and adaptations to meet particular needs across tenures**
- **Review the Scheme of Assistance ensuring the new Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations is reflected**
- **Strengthen joint working with partners in HSCP, NHS, RSLs and others to deliver appropriate housing solutions for individuals with complex needs**
- **Strengthen joint working to support key worker and employer led housing opportunities**
- **Identify land and funding opportunities to more effectively meet the needs of the Gypsy and Gypsy Traveller community**

9.   Are the key actions proposed for LHS Strategic Outcome 2 the right ones?

    Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

If you have some suggestions for key actions, please specify:

10.   Are there any major barriers that will stop us delivering LHS Strategic Outcome 2 actions? Please Specify

Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy

Key Actions for Delivery:
- **Work with partners to improve energy efficiency across all tenures**
- **Develop the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy for the Scottish Borders**
- **Implement a public engagement strategy for heat in buildings**
- **Work with partners to develop the skills needed to deliver energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems**
- **Explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home**
- **Adapt and retrofit existing homes to improve their energy efficiency**

11.   Are the key actions proposed for LHS Strategic Outcome 3 the right ones?

    Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

If you have some suggestions for key actions, please specify:

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12. Are there any major barriers that will stop us delivering LHS Strategic Outcome 3 actions? Please

[ ]

Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.

Key Actions for Delivery:
- **Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/ energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate or explore funding options.**
- **Provide supporting and assistance to owners and landlords to meet existing and future house condition standards in private housing.**
- **Review the Scheme of Assistance**
- **Developing a Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Housing Strategy which supports a partnership approach**
- **Review the Missing Share pilot**

13. Are the key actions proposed for LHS Strategic Outcome 4 the right ones?

Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

If you have some suggestions for key actions, please specify:

[ ]

14. Are there any major barriers that will stop us delivering LHS Strategic Outcome 4 actions? Please

[ ]

Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible

Key Actions for Delivery:
- **Continue to Implement Rapid Rehousing**
- **Improve access to housing for homeless or potentially homeless households across all tenures**
- **People who experience homelessness reach a settled housing outcome as quickly as possible**
- **Ensure homeless households can access the right support at the right time
  All partners actively contribute to preventing homelessness**

15. Are the actions proposed for LHS Strategic Outcome 5 the right ones?

Yes   No   don't know/ No opinion

If you have some suggestions for key actions, please specify:

[ ]

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16. Are there any major barriers that will stop us delivering LHS Strategic Outcome 5 actions? Please

17. Are there any specific key actions or actions which you feel will help to support the delivery of the LHS vision and strategic outcomes? Please specify

18. What key action or actions do you think you or your group / organisation can take to contribute towards meeting Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy vision and outcomes?

Any Other Comments

19. Do you have any additional comments about the Draft Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 that you would like to share:

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Scottish Borders
Housing Supply Target
2023 - 2028

CONTENT

2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Housing Supply Target (HST) has been set by Scottish Borders Council (SBC). This is the translation of the Housing Need Estimates set out in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA) to Housing Supply Targets (HSTs) and consideration of the Adopted NPF4 which sets out the minimum all-tenure housing land requirement (MATHLR) for all Local Authorities. The Housing Supply Targets have been agreed by various departments at SBC (including Housing and Planning) and other key partners. They are robust, supported by evidence and have been set using a methodology designed to be compliant with Scottish Planning Policy and related guidance. Based on the outcome of HNDA3 and aligning with NPF4 it is estimated that the HST for the Scottish Borders for 2023-2028 will be 370 per annum. The Housing Supply Target, figures from HNDA3 and the MATHLR are below:

Summary of setting HST methods (per annum)			
	Proposed HST 2023-2028	HNDA3 (Strong Growth Scenario)	10 YEAR PROPOSED MATHLR (-30% Flexibility)
Affordable	141	151	-
Market	229	184	-
Combined	370	335	370

The principle policy and guidance context for setting HSTs is provided by:
- HNDA Managers Guide (2020)
- Scottish Government's Local Housing Strategy Guidance (2019)
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- The new National Planning Framework 4 (adopted on the 13th February 2023)

The third Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the South East Scotland area achieved robust and credible status from Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) on Thursday 28th July 2022. The purpose of the HNDA is to estimate the future number of additional housing units to meet existing and future housing need and demand by housing market area, based on a range of scenarios rather than precise estimates. This includes analysis of demographic, affordability and wider economic trends which are key drivers of local housing markets, helping partners to understand housing market dynamics and make evidence-based choices on meeting housing need and demand. The HNDA3 Project Team agreed six main scenarios (plus a bespoke scenario for Midlothian), providing a range of options for growth. The preferred scenario for the Scottish Borders was identified and agreed as **Scenario 3: Strong Growth**. This scenario reflects a positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/ moderately high house price and rental growth.

The initial default estimate for establishing the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) to be included within NPF4 was an underestimation of market demand as well as the affordable need for the Scottish Borders. Therefore, Scottish Borders Council worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government, taking an evidence based approach to form a locally adjusted estimate which took into consideration; past completion rates, the outcome of HNDA3, estimates of homelessness, hidden households and the policy drivers for the region. The initial default estimate for the Scottish Borders was 1,750, the Proposed MATHLR contained within the Adopted NPF4 is 4,800 which is now the finalised MATHLR.

The HST takes the HNDA as its starting point but considers the policy and practical considerations to reach a view on the level of housing that can actually be delivered over a defined period, which for LHS purposes is 2023-2028. The HST covers all tenures and sets out the expected broad split between market and affordable housing.

The HNDA Managers Guide (2020) and the LHS Guidance (2019) identify several factors that may have an impact on the pace and scale of housing delivery which should be considered when setting the HST. In setting the affordable HSTs Scottish Borders Council, considered the following factors:

- Economic factors which may impact on demand and supply

SBC agree that the strong growth scenario from HNDA3 is more reflective of the vision and aspirations for growing the economy in the region. There are a number of key policy drivers that reflect the strong growth scenario, these include:

- o The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland approach
- o South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- o The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP)
- o South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy
- o The Convention of the South of Scotland Forum
- o South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy
- o Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal
- o Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal

- Capacity within the construction sector

Following the 2008 financial crash the Scottish Borders lost a number of SME construction businesses, and locally-owned house builders in the region and local housing providers have flagged concerns about the availability of construction capacity and competition to tender for projects. The legacy of Covid, impacts of Brexit, the war in Ukraine with subsequent inflationary pressures all impact on housing delivery, particularly in a rural location such as the Scottish Borders. Many of these issues have yet to be resolved, and longer lead in times or reduced delivery is possible in the shorter-medium term.

- Delivery of market and affordable housing at the local level

The overall completion rate within the Scottish Borders has been much lower than before the global financial crash in 2008. This demonstrates that notwithstanding the large number of allocations within the established housing land supply, there remains a relatively weak market and low completion rates in recent years in the private sector (as evidenced in the Scottish Government's Private sector starts and completions data). As part of the process of setting the HST Scottish Borders Council have considered the level of affordable housing contribution which is likely to be deliverable in the current economic climate, as part of a viable housing development.

- Availability of resources

In June 2022 Scottish Government confirmed Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant allocation of £16.0m in 2022/23 and assumptions of £15.954m in 2023/24, £16.010m in 2024/25 and £16.275m in 2025/26. A Resource Planning Assumption of £16.275m has been made for 2026/27. The Council and its partners are optimistic that through effective partnership collaboration, resources allocated can be fully spent to deliver the projects set out in the SHIP 2024-29.

- Recent development level

There has been a decline in private sector completions since 2007/08, officers at SBC are working closely with the South of Scotland Enterprise, Convention of the South of Scotland, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and Edinburgh and the South East Scotland City Region Deal to identify the barriers and opportunities to unlock the potential for more housing developments in the region.

- Planned demolitions

There are currently no plans by any RSLs in the area to demolish any stock during the lifetime of the new LHS 2023-2028. There are no planned demolitions in housing stock over the next five years in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028.

- Planned new and replacement housing or housing brought back into effective use

SBC now has a dedicated Empty Homes Officer working to actively engage with owners of Empty Homes across the Scottish Borders and as of April 2022 SBC launched the Empty Homes Grant. In the summer of 2022, South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) recruited a Community-Led Housing Co-Ordinator to support community organisations bring empty homes back into use as community led housing.

1.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to describe the Council's approach to setting housing supply targets in the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028. Essentially this is the translation of the Housing Need Estimates set out in the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 (HNDA) to Housing Supply Targets (HSTs). This paper takes into consideration the Adopted NPF4 which sets out the minimum all-tenure housing land requirement (MATHLR) for all Local Authorities. It should be noted that the MATHLR figures were informed by HDNA3 for the South East Scotland area. The accompanying 'Housing Land Requirement Explanatory Report Addendum' to NPF4 sets out the finalised MATHLR figures and the reasoning for these.

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the key policies and guidance for the Housing Supply Target and Housing Land Requirement. Extracts of all related policies and guidance are set out in Section 7.
- Section 3 provides a summary of the outputs from HNDA3. The HNDA provides the factual evidence on which a HST(s) is based and is used as a starting point from which the HST will be set.
- Section 4 provides a summary of the Adopted National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 which needs to incorporate in setting targets for new homes.
- Section 5 sets out the agreed methodology for identifying Housing Supply Targets and identifying the factors that may have an impact on the pace and scale of housing delivery.
- Section 6 summaries the agreed proposed targets.
- Section 7 provides an overview of the background and supporting papers that have helped to set the Housing Supply Target.

2. INTRODUCTION

The principle policy and guidance context for setting HSTs is provided by:

- HNDA Managers Guide (2020), Section 12 "Beyond the HNDA – Housing Supply Targets" which outlines that setting the Housing Supply Target is not part of the HNDA process, but it is the next stage of the housing planning process. The guidance identifies the factors which may have a material impact on the pace and scale of housing delivery and which should be considered when setting the Housing Supply Target.

- Scottish Government's Local Housing Strategy Guidance (2019) highlights that the HST should be split into market and affordable and expressed at both local authority and functional housing market area level. The guidance also states that the Local Housing Strategy must include:

  "*A summary of the level and type of housing to be delivered over the period of the LHS together with an explanation around how the Housing Supply Target (split into market and affordable) has been determined and a web link or copy of any background paper explaining how it has been identified*".

- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 sets out that the National Planning Framework (NPF) has elevated the status of NPF as part of the statutory Development Plan. As part of this the Act states that the NPF would incorporate setting targets for new homes.

- The new National Planning Framework 4 (adopted on the 13th February 2023) sets out a 10 year Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each Local Authority. The MATHLR is the minimum amount of land, by reference to the number of housing units, that is to be provided by each planning authority in Scotland for a 10 year period. The MATHLR is expected to be exceeded in each Local Development Plan's Housing Land Requirement, to achieve an ambitious and plan-led approach.

The Council fed into the process of establishing the MATHLR, which is included within the Adopted NPF4, working with the Scottish Government and responding to the letter from the Chief Planner dated 23rd February 2021.

The HNDA provides the factual evidence on which a HST(s) is based. While it is expected that there is a clear alignment between the HNDA and the HST the two are not the same and are therefore not expected to match.

The HNDA gives a statistical estimate of how much additional housing would be required to meet all future housing need and demand, whereas the HST gives an estimate of how much additional housing can actually be delivered. The HST will take the HNDA as its starting point, but will consider policy and practical considerations to reach a view on the level of housing that can actually be delivered over a defined period. The HST is a policy interpretation of the HNDA, setting out the Council's view on the number of homes which will be over the periods of the Local Housing Strategy, taking into account wider economic, social and environmental factors, issues of capacity, resources and deliverability and other important requirements. The target should be reasonable, should properly reflect the HNDA estimate of housing demand in the market sector and should be supported by compelling evidence.

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3. HOUSING NEED AND DEMAND ASSESSMENT (HNDA) 3

Local authorities are required through legislation to develop a HNDA on a five-yearly cycle, providing an evidence base for housing policy decisions in Local Housing Strategies and land allocation decisions in Development Plans.

The production of Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs) are overseen by the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) which considers whether the HNDA is 'robust and credible'.

The third Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the South East Scotland area achieved robust and credible status from CHMA on Thursday 28th July 2022. HNDA3 provides the evidence base for policy decisions in Local Housing Strategies and land allocation decisions in Local Development Plans for the local authorities in South East Scotland (City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council, Fife Council and Scottish Borders Council) subject to subsequent agreement of housing supply targets.

The purpose of the HNDA is to estimate the future number of additional housing units to meet existing and future housing need and demand by housing market area, based on a range of scenarios rather than precise estimates. This includes analysis of demographic, affordability and wider economic trends which are key drivers of local housing markets, helping partners to understand housing market dynamics and make evidence-based choices on meeting housing need and demand. A section of HNDA3 also provides contextual information on a range of specialist housing requirements, helping inform targets for wheelchair and other accessible forms of housing.

The HNDA3 Project Team agreed six main scenarios (plus a bespoke scenario for Midlothian), providing a range of options for growth:

- **Scenario 1:** HNDA Tool - default position.

- **Scenario 2**: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need – an additional scenario was produced to test the HNDA Tool default position but replacing the default existing need calculation with the local authority-generated existing need figures.

- **Scenario 2a**: HNDA Tool with LA Existing Need / Midlothian Modelling - requested by Midlothian Council based on Scenario 2 but with a 10-year backlog clearance for Midlothian only.

- **Scenario 3**: Strong Growth -reflecting a very positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/moderately high house price and rental growth across all local authorities.

- **Scenario 4**: Steady Growth – providing moderate real terms income growth, principal household projections, 'creeping' equality, moderate/trend house price and rental growth. The outputs of this scenario most closely reflect past trends.

- **Scenario 5**: Slow Growth - low inward migration reflecting below real terms income growth, greater inequality, moderately low / low house price and rental growth.

- **Scenario 6**: Stalled Growth - delay in recovery from Covid-19 pandemic to 2024 followed by moderate real terms income growth, principal projection, 'creeping' equality, and moderate/trend house price and rental growth.

Apart from the HNDA Tool default scenario, the existing need calculation was replaced by a local authority generated existing need figure, the view being that the default figures under-estimate the increasing levels of homelessness arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and other specialist housing requirements.

The HNDA3 scenarios were processed through the HNDA Tool providing housing estimates for each local authority and South East Scotland as a whole. The 20-year results are:

Table 1: 20 year HNDA3 outputs							
	City of Edinburgh	East Lothian	Fife (W&C)	Midlothian	Scottish Borders	West Lothian	South East Scotland
Scenario 1 HNDA Tool Default	41,120	9,145	6,374	12,309	**2,805**	13,427	85,180
Scenario 2 HNDA Tool Default with LA Existing Need	44,279	9,506	7,443	12,493	**3,078**	14,232	91,481
Scenario 2a Midlothian Modelling	-	-	-	13,016	**-**	-	-
Scenario 3 Strong Growth	52,475	10,128	9,288	13,636	**3,825**	15,312	104,797
Scenario 4 Steady Growth	44,257	9,512	7,459	12,936	**3,089**	14,229	91,481
Scenario 5 Slow Growth	36,204	8,808	5,541	12,261	**2,374**	13,088	78,277
Scenario 6 Stalled Growth	44,435	9,507	7,551	12,953	**3,113**	14,284	91,843

The preferred scenario for the Scottish Borders was identified and agreed as **Scenario 3: Strong Growth**. This scenario reflects a positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/ moderately high house price and rental growth.

While the current economic outlook is uncertain, Scottish Borders Housing and Planning colleagues agreed that the strong growth scenario is more reflective of the vision and aspirations for growing the economy in the region. There are a number of key policies drivers that support the strong growth scenario. The recent work on the Adopted National Planning Framework (NPF4) also supports this decision making. Below is brief list of the key policy drivers that have impacted SBC's preferred alignment with the HNDA3 Strong Growth Scenario.

- The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland approach
- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- The South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP)
- South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy
- The Convention of the South of Scotland Forum
- South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy
- Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal
- Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal

Table 2 provides information on the outputs for the Scottish Borders based on the strong growth scenario.

Table 2: HNDA3 strong growth scenario outputs Scottish Borders						
	2021 - 2025	2026 - 2030	2031 - 2035	2036 - 2040	20 Yr Total	20 Yr p.a.
Social rent	115	17	18	18	839	42
Below market	35	17	18	16	436	22
PRS	97	49	54	50	1,251	63
Buyers	87	50	60	63	1,301	65
Total p.a.	335	134	150	147	3,827	191
Affordable p.a.	151	34	36	34	1,275	64
Market p.a.	184	99	114	113	2,551	128

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4. NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF) 4

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a long term spatial plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable inclusive growth. Specifically, NPF4 will set out a spatial expression of Scottish Government's economic strategy and infrastructure investment plans through to 2050. Critically, it must also take account of the urgent and accelerating threats of climate change, and biodiversity and ecosystems loss.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 was passed by the Scottish Parliament in June 2019 and will determine the future structure of the modernised planning system. The act sets out that the National Planning Framework (NPF) has elevated the status of NPF as part of the statutory Development Plan. As part of this the Act states that the NPF would incorporate setting targets for new homes.

A proposed methodology for calculating the amount of housing land that should be allocated as a default minimum requirement in Local Development Plans was issued to Local Authorities for comment. The Council fed into the process of establishing the Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR), to be included within the adopted NPF4, working with the Scottish Government and responding to the letter from the Chief Planner dated 23rd February 2021.

Advice to Local Authorities was that consideration of the estimates should be informed by local input and evidence, and the estimates should factor in policy ambitions to support growth in local housing provision. Consideration was also given to relevant national drivers. The guidance advised that this local input should factor in policy initiatives and ambitions to support growth in housing provision and delivery. Consideration was also given to any alternative assumptions on the household formation projections, existing housing need, flexibility allowance, and account levels of housing completions achieved.

Figure 2: Inputs for Calculating the MATHLR
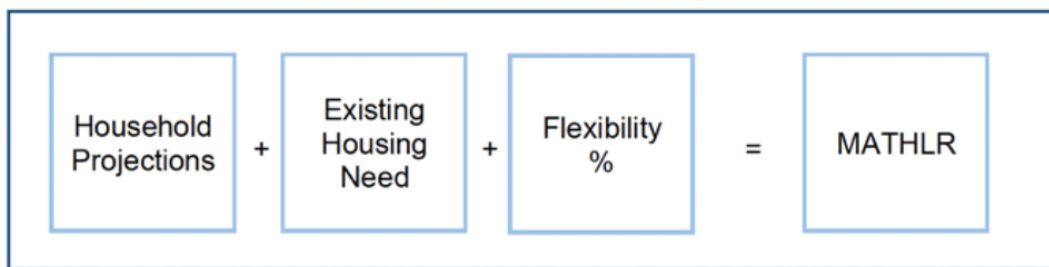
The methodology is similar to the starting point of the HNDA methodology, using household projections from the National Records of Scotland and a count of existing need from government statistics. A flexibility allowance of 30% for rural areas is added to set the minimum default figure for NPF for a 10-year period. In responding to the proposals on the minimum housing land requirement, the Council felt that a higher minimum figure was appropriate as it was not considered that the initial default estimate adequately accounted for the required delivery of affordable housing as a factor affecting the amount of land needed. Neither did it take into account the numerous policy drivers which seek to attract people to live and work within the region, help boost the economy and meet the required rise in the number of households. It was considered that the initial default estimate conflicted with national and regional policy aspirations for the Scottish Borders, including investment in the South of Scotland.

As evidence suggested, the initial default estimate was an underestimation of market demand as well as the affordable need for the Scottish Borders. Therefore, Scottish Borders Council worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government, taking an evidence based approach to form a locally adjusted estimate which took into consideration; past completion rates, the outcome of HNDA3, estimates of homelessness, hidden households and the policy drivers for the region.

Table 3 below sets out the finalised MATHLR, contained within NPF4, for Scottish Borders as (4,800); existing need (350); households (3,300) and additional flexibility (1,105). Scottish Borders Council have agreed that the figures are the minimum amount of land to be identified within LDP's and that this covers all tenures.

Table 3: Adopted NPF4: Proposed MATHLR for Scottish Borders Council																	
Local City Region & National Park Authority	Initial Default Estimate	Locally Adjusted Estimate	Proposed MATHLR	Completions (2010-19)	Initial Default Estimate				Local Adjusted Estimate				Finalised MATHLR			
					Existing Need	Households	Flexibility %	Flexibility Amount	Existing Need	Households	Flexibility %	Flexibility Amount	Existing Need	Households	Flexibility %	Flexibility Amount
City of Edinburgh	27,550	36,900	41,300	16,654	2,150	19,900	25	5,500	4,150	25,350	25	7,375	6,300	24,100	25	7,347
East Lothian	6,050	6,400	6,400	5,124	500	4,350	25	1,200	750	4,350	25	1,275	860	4,350	25	1,300
Fife (Central & South)	4,200	5,650	5,650	9,613	600	2,750	25	850	1,750	2,750	25	1,125	1,700	2,750	25	1,110
Midlothian	8,050	8,050	8,050	6,271	500	5,950	25	1,600	500	5,950	25	1,613	1,100	5,950	25	1,788
West Lothian	8,850	9,600	9,600	6,568	600	6,500	25	1,750	1,200	6,500	25	1,925	1,400	6,500	25	1,986
Scottish Borders	1,750	4,400	4,800	3,512	100	1,250	30	400	100	3,300	30	1,020	350	3,300	30	1,105
Edinburgh City Region	56,450	71,001	75,800	47,742	4,450	40,700		11,300	8,450	48,200		14,333	11,710	46,950		14,637

5.   SETTING THE HOUSING SUPPLY TARGET IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

The current HST identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 was set in 2016. The target was informed by the outputs of SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment2 (HNDA2) which was undertaken in 2013/14 and assessed as robust and credible by Scottish Government in 2015. The LHS 2017-22 identified the target as 348 new homes per year. This comprised of:

- 128 affordable homes per annum; and
- 220 market homes per annum

The affordable housing supply targets were ambitious, but achieved due to the Council and its RSL partners responding proactively and creatively to opportunities to increase the housing supply in the Borders over the last five years.

As described in the introduction, the HST will take the HNDA as its starting point but will consider policy and practical considerations to reach a view on the level of housing that can actually be delivered over a defined period, which for LHS purposes is 2023-2028. The HST should cover all tenures and set out the expected broad split between market and affordable housing.

The HNDA Managers Guide (2020) and the LHS Guidance (2019) identify the following factors that may have an impact on the pace and scale of housing delivery and should be considered when setting the HST:

- economic factors which may impact on demand and supply
- capacity within the construction sector
- the potential inter-dependency between delivery of market and affordable housing at the local level
- availability of resources likely pace and scale of delivery based on completion rates
- recent development levels
- planned demolitions
- planned new and replacement housing or housing brought back into effective use

Strategic and Economic Factors

The Scottish Borders comprises 4,732 square kilometres, and is home to 115,270 people, making it the 6th largest and 7th most sparsely populated council area in Scotland (at 24 people per square km). Using the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2016, the Scottish Borders is characterised as a rural area, having only 5 settlements with a population in excess of 5,000.

The rural nature of the Scottish Borders is one of our biggest assets, with the quality of our natural environment and landscape being key drivers behind people choosing to live and work in the area. Yet, the area suffers from a significant out-migration of young people and shrinking workforce – between 2008 and 2018, the percentage of 16 to 64 years olds fell by 4%, and the proportion of the population defined as "working age" decreased from 63% in 2007 to 59% in 2018. By contrast, the number of older people continues to grow with the number of over 65's having grown by 25% over the same period; worsening the region's dependency ratio which at 69.21 is significantly higher than the Scottish level of 55.71 (2018).

Between 2008 and 2018 the number of households in the Scottish Borders increased by 5.8% from 51,436 to 54,413. While the population is expected to increase across the Borders by 1.7% and the number of households by 7% it is set to be an ageing population, with increasing numbers of smaller households. The numbers of one adult households and two adult households in particular are growing, while the number of larger households is set to decline. Single person households are projected to increase by 14%.

Gross Value Added (GVA) in the Scottish Borders for 2018 was £1.6 billion or £13,604 per head of population, the 2nd lowest of the 21 NUTS3 (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) areas in Scotland. Weekly wages for full-time workers are significantly below the national median of £542.9 (2018). The median weekly wage for all full-time workers in the Scottish Borders was £462.7, making it 31st out of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities.

The degree of inequality in rural areas like the Scottish Borders can be overlooked: with the sparsely populated nature of our region obscuring the extent of deprivation. Although SIMD is urban focused it does show that the Borders has areas of particular challenge: 6% of SIMD data-zones in the Borders are in the 20% most deprived data-zones in Scotland (typically concentrated in the larger towns), while almost a quarter of the Borders data-zones are part of the 40% most deprived in Scotland.

The HNDA3 considered recent trends and factors that will impact on the future economy and housing market. Within the HNDA Tool factors such as income growth and distribution, house prices and affordability of different tenures have been taken into consideration as have the possible scenarios for these in future years. Scenario 3 (strong growth), which is the preferred scenario, recognises a very positive outlook with movement towards high real terms income growth, high inward migration, greater equality, high/ moderately high house prices and rental growth. SBC agree that the strong growth scenario is more reflective of the vision and aspirations for growing the economy in the region. There are a number of key policy drivers that reflect the strong growth scenario. As these have already been taken into consideration, this should not have a negative or positive impact on demand and supply in the context of the Housing Supply Targets.

Strategy for Growing the Economy

The establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise and a Team South of Scotland approach

Set against these challenges, the Scottish Borders has real economic strengths and opportunities. It has particular strengths in food and drink production, manufacturing and tourism and cultural services, while its size and outlook enable strong public sector partnerships and strategic links with its nearest neighbours in Scotland and in the north of England in areas like tourism, energy, digital connectivity and natural capital. The region's physical geography means it is particularly well placed to benefit from national transition to a net zero economy both in respect of renewable energy production and carbon storage, and from the development of future farming, and land management practice following the UK's departure from the EU. An active further and higher education sector provides a strong base from which to develop the skilled workers of the future.

The unique opportunities and challenges facing the south were key drivers for the creation of **South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)** which assumed its legal responsibilities across the Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Council areas (which make up the South of Scotland) on 1 April 2020**.** The overarching aims of SOSE are to drive inclusive growth and ensure the South of Scotland benefits from a new approach that supports a diverse and resilient economy, sustains and grows communities, and harnesses the potential of people and resources.

Led by the two councils and the SOSE, partners have recently established **the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership (REP),** which brings together stakeholders, including the wider public sector and representatives from business, higher and further education and the third sector. The REP's key purpose is shaping regional agenda for the South of Scotland and a future **Regional Economic Strategy (RES)**. The RES will set out agreed goals for all partners to work towards, providing the direction needed to enable national and local agencies to align and coordinate their efforts, in direct response to the needs of the area, to create jobs and to pursue a Just Transition through investment-led sustainable, green growth.

The Regional Economic Strategy has recognised the centrality of tackling housing challenges to future economic success and sets out a range of relevant and interlinked activities. The following housing-related actions in the RES Delivery Plan form part of a prioritised programme of work:

- Action 2 (H) Promote flexible working practices through housing and planning policies, to support the concept of 'live here work anywhere'.

- Action 6 (E) Advocate and lobby to create the right conditions for investment in new and existing housing within the region, to boost the number of new homes delivered to better align with economic and social needs and ambition.

At the same time, **the Convention of the South of Scotland,** a forum composed of all public sector partners, and Scottish Government, seeks to ensure effective public sector partnership working and delivery, assessing and planning for existing and future challenges, and driving inclusive growth and regional priorities.

The two South of Scotland local authorities have developed an **Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy** (IRSS) seeking to align spatial strategy with a number of initiatives and strategies including the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal and Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Strategic Transport Projects Review and the emerging Regional Economic Strategy.

With a focus on ways to make the area more attractive to investors, visitors and those who may wish to come and live here, the **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal** (BIG Deal) brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the inclusive economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland-England border.

Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Deal comprising the local authority authorities of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders, together with regional universities, colleges and the private sector, is a mechanism for accelerating growth by pulling in significant government investment.

Lowood in Tweedbank is the only strategic housing site identified in both the Borders Railway Corridor and the South East Scotland City Region Deal that is situated within the Scottish Borders. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and [Design Guide](#) (DG) was agreed by Council in June 2021. This guidance will steer future work to agree a master plan for development, help assemble infrastructure investment and implement phasing packages.

Scottish Government: Remote, Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan

The Remote Rural & Island Action Plan will support rural and island housing policy and investment commitments by working to remove key barriers to housing delivery. While the Action Plan will be rooted in the actions, principles and vision of Housing to 2040, its development and implementation presents a new and vital opportunity for all organisations to channel their efforts, work effectively, and collaboratively to deliver more and better housing in remote, rural and island areas.

Capacity within the Construction Sector

Although completions have been increasing in recent years, they are still less than half of the number pre the 2008 financial crash. The fall in the number of completions has historically not necessarily been related to capacity but rather due to the lack of confidence of the financial institutions and others to lend money for mortgages and to builders and other businesses involved in housing. It is also due to the lack of job security during the recession which meant borrowers didn't have a stable credit footing. Additionally post

financial crash the Scottish Borers lost a number of SME construction businesses and locally-owned house builders in the region and local housing providers have flagged concerns about the availability of construction capacity and competition to tender for projects. It can also be difficult to find developers to take on small housing schemes in remote areas – larger developments in towns are more commercially attractive – so there is also arguably a degree of market failure.

While this situation has been improving in recent years, completion figures are a long way from pre-recession levels. Figure 3 shows completions by tenure between 2002/03 - 2021/22 and highlights that completions started to fall after 2007-08 as the economic downturn commenced. This low rate of completions then persisted, reflecting the difficult economic market at the time. The number of private sector completions fell until 2017-2018 but these have been increasing since then. Since 2009-2010 the number of social rented new builds has been increasing due to RSLs building in the area and also the Council in 2012/2013 starting their own new build programme for Mid-Market rent.

The legacy of Covid, impacts of Brexit, the war in Ukraine with subsequent inflationary pressures all impact on housing delivery, particularly in a rural location such as the Scottish Borders. The cost of construction materials and components are still 44.0% higher than pre-COVID-19 levels and these elevated costs could remain for as long as energy prices stay high and sterling is undervalued. There are also challenges with ongoing skills shortage which contributes to increasing labour costs, for example The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' Building Cost Information Service suggests labour costs may increase by up to 8.1% in 2024.

Figure 3: Private and Social New Build Housing in the Scottish Borders

Source: Scottish Government Housing Statistics, Jan 2023
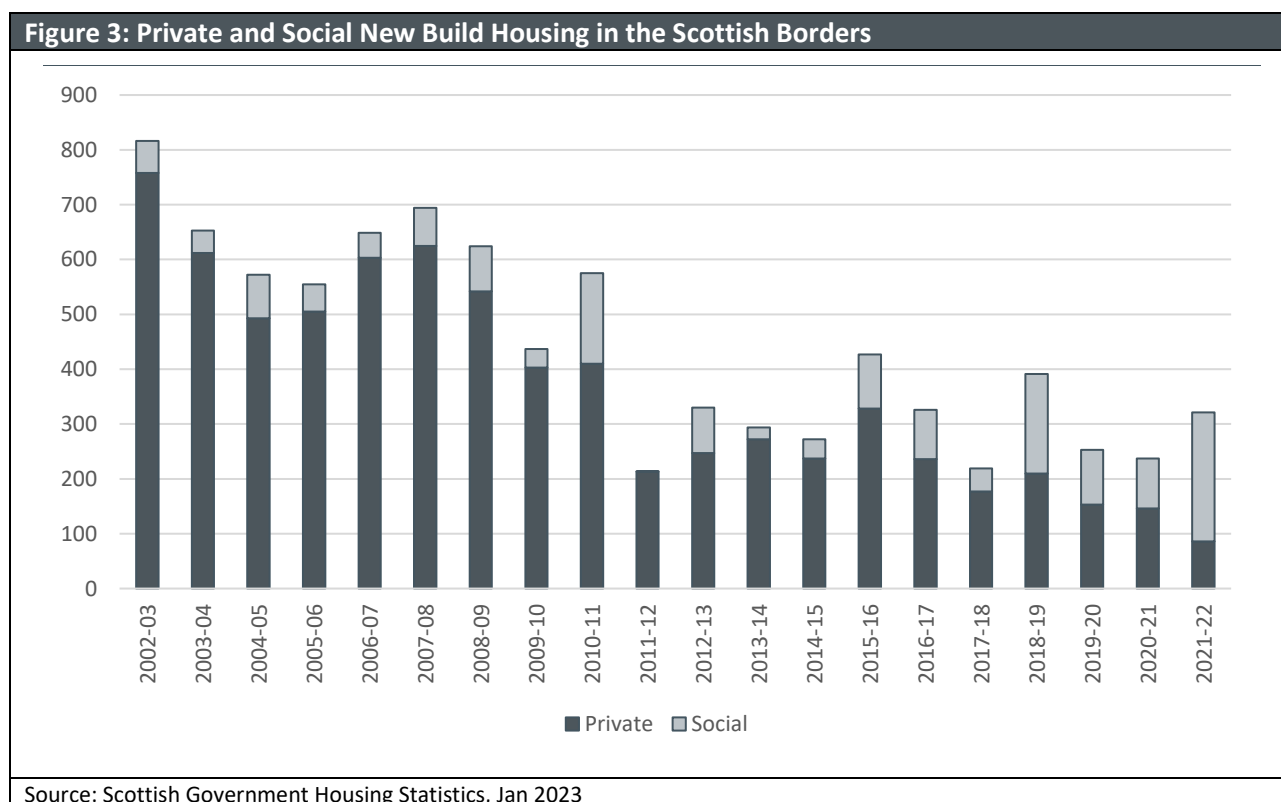
More recently the impact of factors such as Brexit, Covid, material shortages, increasing tender costs and construction price inflation, current cost of living crisis and labour shortages have contributed to delays in, or viability of, new housing development. Many of these issues have yet to be resolved, and longer lead in times or reduced delivery is possible in the shorter-medium term.

Housing Land Audit

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) undertakes an annual Housing Land Audit (HLA), to identify and monitor the established and effective housing land supply, to meet the requirement for monitoring housing land. The annual base date for the Scottish Borders HLA is 31st March. The two key functions of the HLA are;

- To demonstrate the availability of sufficient effective land to meet the requirement for a continuous five-year supply; and
- To provide a snapshot of the amount of land available for the construction of housing at any particular time.

An estimate of the timescale for delivery of housing projects has been continually difficult due to the downturn in the housing market. The programming of sites within the audit continues to be a reasonable expression of what can be developed within the given time periods and there is a significant degree of uncertainty beyond years 2 to 3. A large number of sites were subject to delays and stalling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, since early 2020. As a result, it is acknowledged that this will have impacts upon the programming of sites going forward. This has been taken into consideration in the programming. Scottish Borders Council are also aware of the economic position regarding the lack of finance and the availability of mortgage finance for buyers. It should be noted that in recent years there are very few house builders developing sites within the Scottish Borders. The above demonstrated the direct impact upon rural areas including the Scottish Borders as a result of the current economic climate and the COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

The audit methodology is constantly being updated and improved to ensure the programming is as accurate as possible. COVID-19 implications have added uncertainties to the housebuilding process. Local/national developers and land owners with an interest in sites included within the audit have been contacted to obtain their input into the programming process and to identify any relevant constraints. Where this information has been received, it has been incorporated into the audit report.

The most recent Finalised Housing Land Audit (HLA) is 2021 and demonstrates that there are 8,715 units in the established housing land supply within the Scottish Borders. 3,538 units are classed as effective (Years 1-5) and 1,967 units are potentially effective (Years 6-7). This demonstrates that the Scottish Borders has a vast amount of land available for housing development, which includes a range of sites within all housing market areas. Furthermore, the established housing land supply also includes windfall sites, which account for approximately 20% of the supply. There are 570 windfall sites included within HLA, which is not uncommon for a rural Local Authority given the number of single houses and steading conversion developments.

Delivery of Market and Affordable Housing

Table 4 below provides information on affordable and market completions over the past eight years. Over the past eight years the number of market completions has been as high as 87% but in recent years has been around 60-68%.

Table 4: Affordable and Market Completions 2021/23 – 2020/21									
	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21
No. of affordable homes (new supply)	83	38	49	84	75	87	130	114	94
% of affordable homes (new supply)	27%	13%	18%	49%	30%	39%	38%	35%	32%
No. of market completions	223	250	223	189	175	135	215	210	204
% of market completions	73%	87%	82%	51%	70%	61%	62%	65%	68%
Total completions	306	288	272	373	250	222	345	324	298

The highest level of completions annually is within the Central Housing Market Area (HMA), where most of the larger settlements are located. Very low levels of completions are recorded in the Southern HMA, this is due to the rural nature of the HMA with only one main settlement which attracts a low level of development.

The overall completion rate within the Scottish Borders has been much lower than before the global financial crash, with many of the sites under construction within the Borders delivered at a much slower rate or stalled due to lack of developer interest/mortgage finance. This demonstrates that notwithstanding the large number of allocations within the established housing land supply, there remains a relatively weak market and low completion rates in recent years.

Delivery of affordable housing is largely determined by availability of funding. The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) 2024-2029 sets out the delivery plan for new affordable homes. As part of the process of setting the HST Scottish Borders Council have considered the level of affordable housing contribution which is likely to be deliverable in the current economic climate, as part of a viable housing development.

The current affordable housing policy was updated and revised in 2015. The Council considers all residential developments of 2 or more house units, including windfall development and conversions, as potentially contributing to meeting affordable housing need. The level of affordable housing required as a contribution within a market site should generally be no more than 25% of the total number of houses. The guidance requires that all sites of 17 units and above be considered for on-site provision of affordable housing. Developers are expected to work in partnership with the Council and Registered Social Landlords in the delivery of this policy.

Provision through the policy as applied to recent and new sites, together with the on-going new build programmes of the RSLs identified in the SHIP 2024-29 should make a significant contribution to improving access to affordable housing in the area.

Availability of resources

The Programme for Government makes clear Scottish Government are committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 of which at least 70% will be available for social rent and 10% will be in remote, rural and island communities. National targets for affordable housing have increased substantially to 50,000 affordable homes over the course of the current Parliament. This new commitment brings increased resources and a renewed emphasis on innovative funding mechanisms, designed to support continued growth in affordable housing delivery.

The Council and its partners have welcomed the significant increase in Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding and the opportunities presented through increasing affordable housing delivery to contribute towards successive Scottish Parliament affordable housing targets, in the face of considerable tender price inflation issues. There was a keen interest across the housing sector in the outcomes and recommendations of the Affordable Housing Supply Programme Investment Benchmarks Working Group, and the subsequent announcement of new grant benchmarks by Scottish Government in October 2021 were generally welcomed across the affordable housing sector.

Available resources will have a significant impact on the delivery of social sector housing as it is based on the Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA) and Affordable Housing Supply Programmes. In June 2022 Scottish Government confirmed Affordable Housing Supply Programme grant allocation of £16.0m in 2022/23 and assumptions of £15.954m in 2023/24, £16.010m in 2024/25 and £16.275m in 2025/26. A Resource Planning Assumption of £16.275m has been made for 2026/27.

The Council and its partners are optimistic that through effective partnership collaboration, resources allocated can be fully spent to deliver the projects set out in the SHIP 2024-29. Projects have been identified which could potentially be accelerated in order to manage slippage in the programme, and potentially attract and spend additional grant in the event that infrastructure issues and other challenges can be resolved. Given the challenges of the necessary lead-in timescale for project delivery, individual project proposals are normally prioritised accordingly and a best realistic estimate provided for year of completion. Notwithstanding the projects identified, work continues to identify new potential development opportunities and these will explored and be brought forward when feasible and with regard to available resources.

Table 5: Projects in SHIP 2024-29		
Year	No. of Potential Affordable Homes	RPA
Year 1 2024-2025	144	£16.010
Year 2 2025-2026	156	£16.275
Year 3 2026-2027	152	£16.275m
Year 4 2027-2028	340	n/a
Year 5 2028-2029	330	n/a
5 year average	224	

The average benchmark grant per unit in the Borders is £96k per unit. The above figure is a minimum funding assumption, nevertheless, it suggests that achieving an average output of 224 units annually over the five year period of the SHIP 2024-2029 would be highly challenging and ambitious, and would certainly require significant additional funding.

Recent development levels

Annual private sector completions in the Scottish Borders have dropped since the start of the economic downturn in 2007/08. The decline reflects depressed market activity since 2007/08 and a reduction in household and developer confidence in the future housing market. In order to help the Council understand private sector confidence and capacity, officers are working closely with the South of Scotland Enterprise, Convention of the South of Scotland, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and Edinburgh and the South East Scotland City Region Deal to identify the barriers and opportunities to unlock the potential for more housing developments in the region.

Planned demolitions

Housing Supply Targets are net figures, not gross. They are annual or period totals of the number of additional homes that are to be added to the existing supply. If there are planned or expected housing demolitions, then the number of homes demolished are subtracted from the number of new homes added to the supply to calculate the net additional completions. A housing proposal which demolishes 100 homes and then rebuilds 100 homes would contribute a net zero to the Housing Supply Target.

There are currently no plans by any RSLs in the area to demolish any stock during the lifetime of the new LHS 2023-2028. There are no planned demolitions in housing stock over the next five years in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2023-2028.

Planned new and Replacement Housing

Since 2015/16, there have been 150 RSL purchases of existing housing stock and going forward, there are 50 planned open market purchases planned in the SHIP 2024-2029 by SBHA.

SBC now has a dedicated Empty Homes Officer working to actively engage with owners of Empty Homes across the Scottish Borders. Since starting in post, in August 2021, the Empty Homes Officer has an active case load of 110 empty homes, and has been making connections with owners, neighbours and

communities being affected by empty homes. As of April 2022, SBC have launched the Empty Homes Grant. SBC are able to provide support to owners wishing to bring their empty homes back into use, with a grant scheme. This is a discretionary scheme and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

South of Scotland Community Housing

South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) provides long-term support to community organisations relative to the planning and delivery of community-led housing. SOSCH get involved with a community at the very start of a housing conversation, providing support all the way through to delivery and beyond. This work is inclusive of Housing Needs and Demand Assessment, project development (including business planning and funding packages), delivery and housing management.

In the summer of 2022, SOSCH recruited a Community-Led Housing Co-Ordinator for South East Scotland. A key part of the role is to support community organisations bring empty homes back into use as community led housing.

The work of the South of Scotland Communities Housing Trust is vital in rural areas and community-led housing regeneration is important in the South of Scotland.

6.   PROPOSED HOUSING SUPPLY TARGETS

Table 6 below summaries the split between affordable and market housing completions from a range of sources. This shows the spilt from the previous Housing Supply Target, the HNDA and previous completions. The split from the previous Housing Supply Target was 128 affordable and 220 market = 348 in total per annum. This is a split of 37% for affordable 63% market.

On average the split ranges from 31% to 45% affordable to 55% to 69% market. An average of the different methods concludes an average of 38-40% for affordable and 60-62% for market – for the purposes of setting the Housing Supply Target for 2023-2028, option 1 is the preferred option.

Table 6: Affordable and Market Split	Affordable	Market
1. Current LHS target	37%	63%
2. HNDA (2021-2025)	45%	55%
3. Historical Data (average 2012/13 – 2019/20)	31%	69%
4. Historical Data (average 2015/16-2019/20 5 year period)	38%	62%
Option 1 - Average of first 3 data sets	38%	62%
Option 2 - Average of data sets 1,2 & 4	40%	60%

Table 7 below provides a summary of the proposed Housing Supply Target and how this compares to the current target, the strong growth scenario in HNDA3, MATHLR and average completions over 5 years and 10 years.

Table 7 illustrates that the overall housing target exceeds the HNDA estimate of requirements for housing, and also exceeds recent completion rates. It is assumed that approaches such as shared equity delivered within the market supply will go some way to responding to address the unmet need for affordable housing. The affordable housing supply targets are ambitious and if they are to be achieved, the council and its partners must respond proactively and creatively to the opportunities to increase the housing supply.

Table 7: Summary of setting HST methods						
Housing Completions	Proposed HST 2023-2028	HNDA3 (Strong Growth Scenario) per annum)	10 YEAR PROPOSED MATHLR (-30% Flexibility) per annum	Av completions 2016/17 2020/21	Av completions 2010/11- 2020/21	Current HST 2017-22
Affordable	141	151	-	100	106	128
Market	229	184	-	187	217	220
Combined	370	335	370	287	297**	348
**Based on 2012/13 to 2020/21						

There are many uncertainties around the financial viability of development in the Borders at present which seem likely to continue for the foreseeable future. While the HST needs to reflect the current aspirations of growing a strong economy in the Scottish Borders it must also reflect what can realistically be delivered.

7. BACKGROUND MATERIALS & SUPPORTING PAPERS

Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3

Revised Draft National Planning Framework

HNDA Managers Guide (2020)

Local Housing Strategy Guidance (2019)

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

Housing Land Requirement Explanatory Report Addendum (NPF4)

Affordable Housing Policy

Letter from the Chief Planner

Feedback (see section 57 Annex B)

Local Housing Strategy 2017-22

Announcement of new grant benchmarks

SHIP 2024-2028

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1   Details of the Proposal

A. Title of Proposal:	Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
B. What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice
C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)	The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act makes it a statutory requirement for all Scottish local authorities to prepare and submit a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) to Scottish Ministers. The LHS sets the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand in the Scottish Borders and informs future investment in housing and related services across the Scottish Borders. The LHS is regularly reviewed and updated every five years. The LHS is Scottish Borders Council's primary strategic document on housing. The new Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out how Scottish Borders Council and its partners plan to address the housing and housing related opportunities and challenges over the five year period 2023 – 2028. This new plan will build on the significant progress made on the issues identified in the current LHS 2017-2022 and will address newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS Guidance, Housing to 2040 and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Vision for the LHS 2023-2028 is: "Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community". To deliver this vision successfully and contribute to the six outcomes in the Scottish Borders Council Plan, as well as the Scottish Government's National Outcomes, National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Housing to 2040; the following 5 LHS outcomes have been defined: • Strategic Outcome 1: More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive. • Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing.

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	• Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy. • Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage. • Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.
D. Service Area: Department:	Infrastructure & Environment Housing Strategy
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Donna Bogdanovic – Lead Officer (Head of Housing Strategy and Development) Lindsey Renwick – Principal Officer - Housing Strategy, Policy and Development
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	While Scottish Borders Council has statutory responsibility for the development of the strategy, its implementation is dependent on partnership working with a whole range of external organisations. Key partners include housing associations (RSLs), housing developers, private and voluntary sector service providers including information and advice providers, Care and Repair, housing support providers, estate agents, letting agents and private landlords. Through the development of the LHS a group has been established to oversee the development. Members of this group include: • Officers in the Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Team • Homelessness Team Manager and Officers • Planning • RSLs • Health and Social Care • Social Work • Community Safety Team • Place Making Team • Locality Team leaders The Borders Housing Alliance is overseeing the development of the LHS, this group includes senior officers at SBC and chief executives of the four local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	22nd October 2021 27th February 2023 26th October 2022 27th September 2023

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Section 2   Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

Yes
If yes, - please state here: The LHS is not a standalone strategy, it links to a number of other inter-agency strategies, policies and planning structures, including: • Registered Social Landlord Business Plans and Strategies • Community Planning Partnership • Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Plan • Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support Needs 2018-28 • Housing Needs and Aspirations of Borders Young People Study • Scottish Borders Local Development Plan • Local Outcome Improvement Plan • Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 • SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 • Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019 – 2014 • Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023 • Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy 2019-2023

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Section 3   Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:	
Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010? *(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter "No" and go to Section 3.2.)*	
Equality Duty	**Reasoning:**
A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*	Yes. The implementation of the LHS will have an impact on the whole population of the Scottish Borders as everyone needs a home
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? *(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)*	Yes. The development and implementation of the LHS and the action plan will identify and promote equality of opportunity
C. Foster good relations? *(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)*	Yes. The implementation of the LHS is dependent on partnership working and requires engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Through implementation there is also the potential to engage further and to build new relationships

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3.2 **Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal?**
(You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)

Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.

	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping		✓		The LHS is inclusive to all individuals regardless of age. Supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of the communities should provide a range of choice of housing for families, which in turn should benefit the health and well-being of children, young people and older people. There are a number of actions set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to tackle youth homelessness and to support young people to sustain their tenancies. The Scottish Borders has an aging population with the projected growth of people over 75 is expected to increase by 30% over the period 2018-2028. This means older people are a key group identified in the LHS under strategic outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing. The Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing, Care and Support 2018-2028 continues to be one of the main strategies for delivery housing services for older people with key links to the new LHS. It identifies actions which should help meet the housing needs of older people. This will require effective joint working with Health and Social Care, NHS Borders, RSLs and other private and voluntary sector organisations.
Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring		✓		The LHS is inclusive to all individuals regardless of disability. There are numerous plans linked to the LHS that focus on disability. • The SESplan Housing Need and Demand Assessment 3 identify the need for specialist housing and a specific section of work was carried out on specialist housing provision • Housing Contribution Statement – sets out how work by the council's housing department as well as RSLs will contribute to the delivery of the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan. • Wheelchair Housing Study 2020 – identified a wheelchair housing target of 20 wheelchair accessible new build properties per annum • Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024-2029
Gender Reassignment/ Gender Identity anybody whose gender identity or gender expression is		✓		There is no impact on gender in new housing supply and investment in existing housing. The LHS improves access to housing for all and so there is likely to be a positive impact. This will be monitored throughout the life of the LHS.

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different to the sex assigned to them at birth				Access to social rented housing by gender is recorded by RSLs and is monitored by the SHR. The Council has no enforcement powers over RSL access and housing management policies. The Council delivers the homelessness service and records access and outcomes by gender – the strategy includes an assessment of the incidence of homelessness by male/female, but as yet no needs assessment has been undertaken by transgender/transsexual people. Private sector services and housing support services delivered by the Council record applications and outcomes by gender including transgender and transsexual people. However, there is scope to record this information at the Homeless assessment stage, prior to referral to support services and this has been identified.
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership		✓		The LHS is fully inclusive to all people who are married or in a civil partnership). The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to **maternity** leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, **protection** against **maternity** discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),		✓		The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services. The Homelessness Service has specific working procedures in place for expectant mothers and those with children.
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)		✓		The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services. Access to social housing is recorded by the RSLs and monitored through the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Homelessness Service records ethnicity through data collection systems. All information and advice is available in alternative formats or translated upon request as is Council policy. There is limited data available on some ethnic groups and to quantify the level and type of housing required to meet specific housing needs. There needs to be better understanding of these groups and a need to strengthening the evidence base to measure the housing need and demand of particular groups and/ or for specialist housing provision.

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				The LHS provides information the Resettlement Programme which has seen an increase in the demand for housing in the Scottish Borders. There will be some actions in the LHS to reflect this. During the early engagement part of the LHS it was identified that some work needed to be carried out to identify the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy Traveller community in the Scottish Borders. This exercise included a desk base study on the available data and a number of engagement events (including face to face surveys and an online survey). This information has been used to inform the LHS
Religion or Belief: different beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief)		✓		The LHS is fully inclusive to all religions and beliefs (including non-belief). The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.
Sex women and men (girls and boys)		✓		The LHS is fully inclusive to all irrespective of a person's identity. The LHS aims to increase the supply of housing across all tenures which will benefit all genders. Women-headed households are likely to earn less over the duration of their lifetimes and are often the main predominant carers of children and vulnerable adults. The LHS includes measures for the provision of housing for those on a range of incomes and needs. There is also a difference between men and women in relation to homelessness and domestic abuse, which is often a reason for women applying as homeless. This experience is further exacerbated as the woman experiencing abuse is often forced to leave their home, rather than the male perpetrator. On average 64 women presented as homeless following incidences of domestic abuse each year in the Scottish Borders (over a ten year period). In 2021/2022, 43 women presented as homeless due to domestic abuse within the household. The LHS improves access to housing and support services for all and there is likely to be a positive impact on these groups through its implementation. Outcomes on specific equality groups will be monitored throughout delivery of the LHS and associated services.
Sexual Orientation, e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual		✓		The LHS is fully inclusive to all irrespective of a person's sexual orientation. The LHS improves access to housing and support services for all and there is likely to be a positive impact on these groups through its implementation. Outcomes on specific equality groups will be monitored throughout delivery of the LHS and associated services.

3.3 Fairer Scotland Duty

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?
Yes

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.		✔		Delivering affordable housing Fuel poverty work Empty homes/ properties grant Disabled adaptations
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies		✔		Delivering affordable housing Fuel poverty and energy efficiency measures through ESS:ABS
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport)		✔		Delivering affordable housing in the community (including rural areas) Links with work on young people study Key workers survey and summary report Empty homes work Town centre links
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income		✔		-
Looked after and accommodated children and young people		✔		Work on young people's study Homelessness links – Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)
Carers paid and unpaid including family members		✔		Specialist housing and particular needs section of the LHS Housings Contribution in the Draft Health and Social Care Strategic Framework

Homelessness		✔		Strategic Outcome in the LHS
Addictions and substance use		✔		Work on specialist housing Homelessness - RRTP Housing Support
Those involved within the criminal justice system		✔		Homelessness - RRTP Housing Support

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty *(Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only)*

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.
This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?
Yes

If "Yes", please complete below

Covenant Duty	How this has been considered and any specific provision made:
The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;	The LHS aims to increase the supply of housing, and improve access to housing and support services for all. This includes former armed forces personnel and their families and ensures they have the option to access housing to suit their needs.
The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;	Through increasing the supply of housing it is more likely that any applications to rent or bids to purchase properties will be successful. This includes applications from people who have served, or are serving in the armed forced. Additionally, homelessness applications made by people who have served in the armed forces will have a greater likelihood of securing a home if more properties are available, which is one of the priority outcomes of the LHS.

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The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.	The LHS sets the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand in the Scottish Borders and informs future investment in housing and related services across the Scottish Borders. Key partners, including RSL's, are responsible for implementing the strategy across the authority area. RSL's and other partners have specific provisions in place for those who have served in the armed forces which includes treating their applications for housing with the appropriate level of priority.

Section 4   Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered "No" to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment
If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

Signed by Lead Officer:	Lindsey Renwick and Donna Bogdanovic
Designation:	Principal Officer – Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Head of Housing Strategy and Development
Date:	03/03/2023 27/09/2023
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

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Stage 2 Evidence Gathering and Consultation

A. Title of Proposal:	Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
B. Service Area: **Department:**	Infrastructure & Environment Housing Strategy
C. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Donna Bogdanovic – Lead Officer (Head of Housing Strategy and Development) Lindsey Renwick – Principal Officer - Housing Strategy, Policy and Development
D. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	While Scottish Borders Council has statutory responsibility for the development of the strategy, its implementation is dependent on partnership working with a whole range of external organisations. Key partners include housing associations (RSLs), housing developers, private and voluntary sector service providers including information and advice providers, Care and Repair, housing support providers, estate agents, letting agents and private landlords. Through the development of the LHS a group has been established to oversee the development. Members of this group include: • Officers in the Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Team • Homelessness Team Manager and Officers • Planning • RSLs • Health and Social Care • Social Work • Community Safety Team • Place Making Team • Locality Team leaders The Borders Housing Alliance is overseeing the development of the LHS, this group includes senior officers at SBC and chief executives of the four local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
E. Date(s) IIA completed:	22nd October 2021 27th February 2023 26th October 2022 27th September 2023

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Section 1   Data and Information

A. What evidence has been used to inform this proposal?

(Information can include, for example, surveys, databases, focus groups, in-depth interviews, pilot projects, reviews of complaints made, user feedback, academic publications and consultants' reports).

> National and local data sources
>
> National and local legislation and policy review
>
> Stage Two of the development of the LHS was Early Engagement and Evidence Gathering. This included:
>
> - Preparation of detailed Supporting Data analysis on issues that affect the region
> - Alignment with other relevant strategies and policies
> - Implement the engagement and consultation plan
> - Prepare Housing Issues Reports which outlines the key issues and challenges
>
> A full evidence report forms part of the appendices for the LHS – this includes all the data that has been used to information the LHS. Appendix 2: LHS 2023-2028 Evidence Paper

B. Describe any gaps in the available evidence, then record this within the improvement plan together with all of the actions you are taking in relation to this
(e.g. new research, further analysis, and when this is planned)

> Through engagement and the development of the LHS evidence a number of gaps in information have been resolved, for example:
>
> - Young People and Wheelchair Study – work commissioned prior to the LHS but has been used to identify housing need in these groups and actions to take forward
> - Gyspy Travellers – work with consultants was under taken in the summer of 2022 and forms part of the LHS
> - Key workers – a short survey was circulated to partners to identity if there was any evidence that housing is a barrier to recruiting key workers. This has been included in the LHS

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Section 2   Consultation and Involvement

A. Which groups are involved in this process and describe their involvement

Early engagement survey – September – November 2021. An online survey that was open to everyone in the Scottish Borders.

Meetings with officers within SBC and some RSL tenancy engagement work at the start of the LHS development process

Early engagement from August – October 2022. This included a resident and stakeholder survey. There were 3 resident workshops and 4 stakeholder workshops.

Gypsy traveller Engagement and Needs Study

Private Landlord Survey – an online survey sent to approximately 3,800 private landlords operating in the Scottish Borders

Key worker survey

All information on the engagement and the findings can be found as appendix 3 of the LHS 2023-2028.

B. Describe any planned involvement saying when this will take place and who is responsible for managing the process

Formal consultation – A three month consultation from 2nd May 2023 – 21st July 2023.

Peer review – The draft LHS was submitted to Scottish Government for peer review. Feedback was received on 10th August 2023

All the engagement activity, feedback and how the feedback has been used to impact the draft LH can be found in appendix 4 of the LHS 2023-2028

C. Describe the results of any involvement and how you have taken this into account.

A full report on the engagement and consultation is part of the LHS appendices – appendix 3 and appendix 4

There is a full table of feedback and how this has helped inform the final LHS 2023-2028.

D. Describe any events held and views obtained (if applicable). Add or remove as needed.

Section A describes the key surveys, meetings, studies and workshops which were undertaken to gather views. A description of the engagement is described in Appendix 3 which also includes all key findings and comments.

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Stage 3 Summary and Next Steps

Section 1   Summary
Summarise what you have learned then develop this further.
(Describe the conclusion(s) you have reached from the evidence, and state where the information can be found.)

Please consider the following:
What have you learned from the evidence you have and the involvement undertaken? Does the initial assessment remain valid? What new (if any) impacts have become evident?
Is the proposal not to proceed because of a disproportionate impact on equality or Fairer Scotland characteristics?

All evidence and engagement has been used to inform the final LHS. this is outlined in appendix 4 of the LHS which provides a detail analysis of the feedback and how the feedback has been used to inform the final LHS 2023-2028.

A. Please indicate if the proposal will proceed

Yes, please see below section 3 for next steps

Section 2   Sign Off

Signed by Lead Officer:	Lindsey Renwick and Donna Bogdanovic
Designation:	Principal Officer – Housing Strategy, Policy and Development Head of Housing Strategy and Development
Date:	03/03/2023 27/09/2023
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

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Section 3   Monitoring and Review (complete if relevant, remove if not)

B.   State how the implementation and impact of the proposal will be monitored, including implementation of any amendments? For example what type of monitoring will there be? How frequent?

An Outcomes and Action Plan will be published alongside the LHS (Appendix 1). This outlines strategic outcomes and specific actions for implementation of the strategy.
A LHS Monitoring Tool will be produced annually to monitor the outcomes and actions, which will monitor progress and status of actions.
Annual update reports for LHS progress are also developed and published to summarise progress against the LHS. These updates will go to Executive Committee for approval each year, these reports are also submitted to Scottish Government

C.   What are the practical arrangements for monitoring? For example who will put this in place? When will it start?

The Housing Strategy Team will develop both the Monitoring Tools and Annual update reports. These are produced annually following the end of the financial year within the period of the LHS 2023-28, with the first reports being produced during the start of financial year 2024/25.

D.   When is the proposal due for review?

2028

E.   Who is responsible for ensuring that this happens?

The Housing Strategy Team.

F.   Please indicate if you have developed an Action Plan to take forward any remaining actions

Yes – Appendix 1 of the LHS Appendices for the full Outcomes and Action Plan.

Revised February 2023

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Appendix 7: LHS 2023-2028 Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs)

CRWIA Stage 1 (Screening - key questions)

1. Name the policy, and describe its overall aims.

Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028

The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act makes it a statutory requirement for all Scottish local authorities to prepare and submit a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) to Scottish Ministers. The LHS sets the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand in the Scottish Borders and informs future investment in housing and related services across the Scottish Borders. The LHS is regularly reviewed and updated every five years.

The LHS is Scottish Borders Council's primary strategic document on housing. The new Local Housing Strategy (LHS) will set out how Scottish Borders Council and its partners plan to address the housing and housing related opportunities and challenges over the five year period 2023 – 2028. This new plan will build on the significant progress made on the issues identified in the current LHS 2017-2022 and will address newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS Guidance, Housing to 2040 and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The LHS sets out the vision for housing in the Scottish Borders that "Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community". There are five strategic outcomes that will help to achieve this vision, these are:

1. More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive.
2. People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing.
3. Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy.
4. Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage.
5. Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.

There are numerous strategies and plans that sit under the LHS which feed into the strategy, these include; Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), Housing Supply Strategy 2018-2028, Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024 and the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy 2019-2023.

2. What aspects of the policy/measure will affect children and young people up to the age of 18?

The LHS is inclusive to all individuals regardless of age. Supply of new affordable housing that meets the needs of the communities should provide a range of choice of housing for families, which in turn should benefit the health and well-being of children and young people. There are a number of actions set out in the RRTP to tackle youth homelessness and to support young people to sustain their tenancies.

The Young Peoples Housing Needs and Aspirations: Scottish Borders 5 Year Action Plan identified four priorities and outcomes to help young people meet their housing needs and aspirations:

- Priority 1: A holistic strategic approach for jobs, housing and transport
  Outcome 1: Community planning partners take a holistic and strategic approach to the skills and employment, housing and transport needs of young people in the Scottish Borders
- Priority 2: Increasing housing choice and options

Outcome 2: Young people are able to access a range of different housing options which enable continued skills development and access to employment in the Scottish Borders

- Priority 3: Meeting the needs of vulnerable young people
Outcome 3: Young people are able to access a range of housing information, advice and support to enable independent living
- Priority 4: Monitoring and review of the Action Plan
Outcome 4: The housing needs of young people are understood and services implemented in the context of a wider Local Housing Strategy and the Integrated Children and Young People's Plan

Specific parts of the LHS that we expect to affect young people and children include:

- Affordable housing supply
- Placemaking
- Rural housing
- Homelessness
- Private and social rented sector
- Support for home ownership
- Energy efficiency and heat decarbonisations
- Housing quality and standards, including accessibility

We will also undertake an annual review of the LHS action plan. This will include setting out the progress we are making and identifying where changes might be needed to correct our course. As part of this, we will consider the outcomes of impact assessments.

3. What likely impact – direct or indirect – will the policy/measure have on children and young people?

The LHS seeks to have a positive indirect impact on eradicating child poverty, fuel poverty, homelessness including youth homelessness, and improving children and young people's health and wellbeing.

We recognise that affordable housing helps to tackle child poverty, with cost of living, including housing costs being a key driver of child poverty. The LHS's commitment to continue to deliver good quality, affordable homes will continue to make an impact on child poverty levels. In addition, warm, healthy, safe and non-overcrowded homes and positive neighbourhoods play an important role in improving children's and young people's health and wellbeing, providing a healthy start and contributing to their social and physical development. Good homes with room for children to play, learn and study can contribute to educational attainment.

While we anticipate positive indirect impacts of the LHS on children and young people, these will be considered in detail as the specific policies within the LHS are developed and implemented over the next five years.

4. Which groups of children and young people will be affected?

As mentioned above, the LHS will affect the lives of people of all ages, sexes and backgrounds living in the Scottish Borders (and in the future) and across all housing tenures. This will include children and young people up to the age of 18. We recognise, however, that there will be certain groups of children and young people who may be most influenced by the indirect impact of the LHS. These include, but are not limited to, the following groups:

- Children and young people living in poverty, including fuel poverty;
- Children and young people with protected characteristics, or living in a household which include adult(s) with protected characteristics;
- Children and young people who live in a household with a survivor of Domestic abuse;
- Children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness;
- Care experienced children and young people;

- Households with a disabled parent or child;
- Children in rural areas.

5. Will this require a CRWIA?

No.

The Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 provides the overarching strategy for housing in the Scottish Borders. It provides the strategic framework for housing over the next five years with strategic outcomes and strategic actions that will help to achieve the vision of the LHS. The LHS will be monitored regularly and an annual update on the action plan and progress report will be submitted to Scottish Government and Council.

While some direct and indirect impacts of the LHS have been identified and considered, our view is that these should be further explored at a point when specific policies and / or legal provisions outlined in the LHS are developed to ensure a comprehensive assessment of their impact on children's rights and wellbeing.

CRWIA Declaration	
Tick relevant section, and complete the form	
CRWIA required	**CRWIA not required**
	Not Required

Authorisation	
Policy lead	**Date**
Lindsey Renwick	10th November 2022
Donna Bogdanovic	27th September 2023
Deputy Director or equivalent *Name, title, division (or equivalent)*	**Date**

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Appendix 8: LHS 2023-2028 Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

Introduction

Carrying out a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA) will help you to consider the impact of your policy***** on people. Using this workbook, alongside the HIIA: Answers to frequently asked questions guide, will help you to work through the process and strengthen your policy's contribution towards health equity.

The workshop is a core element of the HIIA and, together with a group of key stakeholders, you will work through six questions to identify any impacts your policy will have on: different population groups; health inequalities; and people's human rights. Policies do not impact on people in the same way – impact assessment is a way to consider how people will be affected differently. It will also help you to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty by considering those groups who are protected under the Duty (information about the Duty is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/PublicEqualityDuties). During the workshop, the facilitator or lead for the impact assessment will take you through the process and outline the next steps.

The six questions in the workshop are:

1	Who will be affected by this policy?
2	How will the policy impact on people?
3	How will the policy impact on the causes of health inequalities?
4	How will the policy impact on people's human rights?
5	Will there be any cumulative impacts as a result of the relationship between this policy and others?
6	What sources of evidence have informed your impact assessment?

*The word 'policy' represents any option, procedure, practice, strategy or proposal being assessed.

You should identify impacts as positive or negative, remembering that some policies may have no impacts for a population group.

Positive impact: would demonstrate the benefit the policy could have for a population group: how it advances equality, fosters good relations, contributes to tackling health inequalities or upholds human rights.
Negative impact: would mean that a population group is at risk of being disadvantaged by the policy, there is a risk of breaching the human rights of people or the requirements of the Equality Duty, or that there is a risk of widening health inequalities.
No impact: If you find that the policy will have no impacts for some groups, you do not need to record this information.

Question 1: Who will be affected by this policy?

Example: Keep this brief, such as 'Children aged 5–12 years'. There is no need to explore subgroups yet, just provide an indication of how well-defined the target group is at this stage.

The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act makes it a statutory requirement for all Scottish local authorities to prepare and submit a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) to Scottish Ministers. The LHS sets the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand in the Scottish Borders and informs future investment in housing and related services across the Scottish Borders. The LHS is regularly reviewed and updated every five years.

The LHS is Scottish Borders Council's primary strategic document on housing. The new Local Housing Strategy (LHS) will set out how Scottish Borders Council and its partners plan to address the housing and housing related opportunities and challenges over the five-year period 2023 – 2028. This new plan will build on the significant progress made on the issues identified in the current LHS 2017-2022 and will address newly arising housing matters particularly in response to the publication of new LHS Guidance, Housing to 2040 and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Local Housing Strategy will affect everyone who lives in the Scottish Borders.

Question 2: How will the policy impact on people?

When thinking about how the policy might impact on people, think about it in terms of the right for **everyone** to achieve the highest possible standard of health. The Right to Health includes both the right to healthcare and the right to a range of factors that can help us lead a healthy life (the determinants of health). Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental to this right. The Right to Health has four related concepts: goods, facilities and services should be available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality. When thinking about how the policy might impact on people, their human rights and the factors that help people to lead healthy lives, consider and discuss:

- Is the policy **available** to different population groups?
- Is the policy **accessible**, (e.g., in terms of physical access, communication needs, transport needs, health literacy, childcare needs, knowledge and confidence)?
- Is the policy **acceptable** to different population groups (e.g., is it sensitive to age, culture and sex)?
- Is the policy of good **quality**, enabling it to have its desired effects and support the above?

Apply these questions to each population group in the following table. Try to identify any factors which can contribute to poorer experiences of health and any potential positive or negative impacts of the policy. Think about people, not characteristics, such as how the policy impact on the right to health of a disabled older man with low literacy who lives in a deprived area.

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
Age: older people; middle years; early years; children and young people.	Broadly, the proposed LHS was found to have a positive impact on people of all ages and the biggest risk factor was the prospect of it not being delivered. • **Children**: The major positive impact identified is the link between housing costs and child poverty. The delivery of more affordable housing is identified as an important contributing factor but investment in all housing, made either by landlords or owners, which reduce energy costs is also considered important. Addressing fuel poverty and quality of housing are important drivers in children's overall health and wellbeing including physical health and educational attainment. Looking beyond the home the importance of "Place" and access to amenities for children is important. • **Young People:** The Young People's Housing Needs Study (ages 16-25) identified young people as a group with a higher than average level of Homelessness applications. Whilst increasing the supply of homes is considered to be a positive there are factors beyond our control such as welfare reform, mortgage rates, deposit requirements, lower wages etc which are worsening housing choices for this group. Homelessness can be linked to poor health and wellbeing and prevention is vitally important, particularly for young people who may be vulnerable. • **Older Adults:** Due to the changes in health, lifestyle and income which are often associated with, and experienced by, this age group there are a number of areas this strategy could impact upon. Older people, particularly if retired, spend more time in the home which can mean increased fuel bills resulting in households experiencing fuel poverty. Cold homes have been shown to have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. Households reducing their fuel bills through energy efficiency measures was identified as important but there were a number of challenges to be tackled including how to encourage and support older owner occupiers who are often asset rich, but cash poor to invest in their homes. This highlighted a need to help owner occupiers of all ages and private landlords become knowledgeable about how to improve the energy efficiency of their home. This also applies to registered social landlord tenants for whom there is a need to balance investing in homes with rental increases so as to not place people in poverty due to increases in their housing costs to pay for the investment.	• Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan • Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan • Implement the Older Persons Housing Care and Support Strategic Plan • Independent Living - helping people to stay in their own home has been shown to have positive implications for health and wellbeing. • Extra Care Housing Delivery Framework • Deliver the Care village programme	Care Village Programme	Scottish Borders Council • Continue to deliver disabled Adaptations through the Scheme of Assistance • Implement the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Strategic Outcome 3 of the new LHS • Delivering EES:ABS • Continue to deliver advice on maintenance and repair through the SoA and enhance this through updating the website and engaging with a range of stakeholders. • Ongoing collaboration through the Borders Home Energy forum. • Care and Repair contract renewed for further three years. Consider enhancements through the C&R service, including delivery of energy efficiency improvements and advice.

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
Disability: physical impairments; learning disability; sensory impairment; mental health conditions; long-term medical conditions.	Broadly it was felt that the strategy would have a positive impact on people with disabilities. • Newly built homes which can have features such as level access and wider doors "designed in" were identified as important. • The supply and availability of appropriate affordable homes was identified as important because often those with physical impairments have higher costs of living e.g., transportation and access to affordable housing was considered a means to reduce household costs. • All homes regardless of tenure should be future proofed and adaptable to changing household requirements e.g., respond to short and long term changes in ability or medical conditions. • Thinking more broadly about mental health and wellbeing, quality homes in attractive and safe areas are an important factor in supporting mental health and wellbeing. • It is also important to think about different group's experiences of our places, for example those who use wheelchairs or scooters and the potential for conflict when walking is encouraged as part of climate change ambitions and therefore the need to take an inclusive approach which takes consideration of those using other modes of travel e.g., wheelchairs, scooters. • The LHS should have a positive impact upon people with these characteristics.	• Deliver the Physical Disability Strategy • Implement the recommendations of the Wheelchair Accessible Housing report "a place to live". • Monitor delivery of the Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target and engage with private developers to ensure these are delivered across all tenures and not just the SRS. • Deliver Housing for particular needs through the SHIP. • Encourage Housing for Varying needs standard in new builds through the SHIP and LHS. • Continue to deliver adaptations through the Scheme of Assistance and respond to the updated Guidance published by SG in January 2023. • Ensure ongoing Capital allocation for disabled adaptations funding. • Care and Repair service supported, and contract renewed.
Gender Reassignment: people undergoing gender reassignment	The LHS improves access to housing for all and so there is likely to be a positive impact. There is no impact on gender in new housing supply and investment in existing housing. This will be monitored throughout the life of the LHS. • Access to social rented housing by gender is recorded by RSLs and is monitored by the SHR. The Council has no enforcement powers over RSL access and housing management policies. • The Council delivers the homelessness service and records access and outcomes by gender, this includes an assessment of the incidence of homelessness by male/female, but as yet no needs assessment has been undertaken for transgender/transsexual people. Private sector services and housing support services	• Seek to engage with people undergoing gender re-assignment through the LHS consultation process.

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
	delivered by the Council record applications and outcomes by gender including transgender and transsexual people. However, there is scope to record this information at the Homeless assessment stage, prior to referral to support services and this has been identified.	
Marriage & Civil Partnership: people who are married, unmarried or in a civil partnership.	The LHS is fully inclusive to all people who are married or in a civil partnership. The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing in addition to support services for all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services. However, there were a couple of areas which highlight that marital status can impact upon housing options. Our homeless statistics demonstrate that single adults and lone parents account for significant share of presentations suggesting that to some extent being in a couple can be protective from financial shocks which impact upon access to housing.	• Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
Pregnancy and Maternity: women before and after childbirth; breastfeeding.	The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the lifespan of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services. Quality homes are important for people of all ages but can particularly impact upon young children and their parents, who often spend more time in the home. It is therefore important that our homes are high quality regardless of tenure or type. The Homelessness Service has specific working procedures in place for expectant mothers and those with children. Parents post childbirth can be vulnerable and therefore it is important the housing service work with other service areas to support them.	
Race and ethnicity: minority ethnic people; non-English speakers; gypsies/travellers; migrant workers.	Information on people of different nationalities and ethnic origins are included in the strategy. Access to social housing is recorded by the RSLs and monitored through the Scottish Social Housing Charter.	• Progress identification of an authorised site for Gypsy/Traveller pitch provision.

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
	The Homelessness Service records ethnicity through data collection systems. All information and advice is available in alternative formats or translated upon request as is Council policy. During the development of the LHS, consultants were commissioned to carry out a needs assessment on gypsy travellers. There is a lack of evidence across local authorities on the health and care needs of Gypsy/Travellers throughout Scotland and how they access services. Due to their transient lifestyle, it can be difficult to access health services which can lead to poorer health outcomes for the GT community. The work as part of the LHS has led to more focused actions to support GT who stay or visit the Borders. Therefore, the LHS will have a positive impact on the GT community.	
Religion and belief: people with different religions or beliefs, or none.	The LHS is fully inclusive to all religions and beliefs (including non-belief). The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing in addition to support services for all. Development of places and communities are important to allow access to amenities such as religious buildings. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the lifespan of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.	
Sex: men; women; experience of gender-based violence.	The LHS improves access to housing and support services for all and there is likely to be a positive impact on these groups through its implementation. • During the previous LHS, the Homelessness Service worked (and continue to work) in partnership with RSLs and the Safer Communities Team to implement a unified domestic abuse policy. Providing a consistent, co-ordinated and responsive approach by Borders housing providers to addressing the housing needs of women and men who suffer domestic abuse. • It is vitally important that should someone need or wish to leave a relationship, particularly an abusive one, that there is support and housing there to enable them to do so. Our Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support service is available to help anyone experiencing domestic abuse.	

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
Sexual orientation: lesbian; gay; bisexual; heterosexual.	The LHS is fully inclusive to all irrespective of a person's sexual orientation. The LHS improves access to housing and support services for all and there is likely to be a positive impact on these groups through its implementation.	• Seek to engage with the LBGT community through the LHS consultation process.
Looked after (incl. accommodated) children and young people	Whilst increasing the supply of homes is considered to be a positive for looked after children and young people, there are factors beyond our control such as welfare reform, mortgage rates, deposit requirements, lower wages etc which are worsening housing choices for young people (including looked after young people). Homelessness can be linked to poor health and wellbeing and prevention is vitally important, particularly for young people who may be vulnerable.	• Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan.
Carers: paid/unpaid, family members.	Carers may spend more time in the home if the person they are caring for lives at home. The temperature of the home may vary and may be impacted by fuel poverty. Cold homes have been shown to have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. Households reducing their fuel bills through energy efficiency measures was identified as important but there were a number of challenges to be tackled including how to encourage and support older owner occupiers who are often asset rich, but cash poor to invest in their homes. This highlighted a need to help owner occupiers of all ages and private landlords become knowledgeable about how to improve the energy efficiency of their home. Carers who are unpaid may have a reduced income due to their caring responsibilities. The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on people on low incomes due to the increased availability of affordable housing. This seeks to ensure housing is affordable to rent/purchase and is affordable to heat, thus contributing to the wellbeing and health of occupants.	• Carers	Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk) • Implement the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Strategic Outcome 3 of the new LHS • Delivering EES:ABS. • Develop and implement the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy. • Ongoing review of LHS Outcomes and monitoring, specifically Outcomes 1-4.
Homelessness: people on the street; staying temporarily with friends/family; in hostels, B&Bs.	Whilst increasing the supply of homes is considered to be a positive there are factors beyond our control such as welfare reform, mortgage rates, deposit requirements, lower wages etc which are worsening housing choices for people. Homelessness can be linked to poor health and wellbeing and prevention is vitally important.	• Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan • Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan • Continue to provide Homelessness Service

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
Involvement in the criminal justice system: offenders in prison/on probation, ex-offenders.	The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. People leaving prison are at a higher risk of homelessness, and SBC's Homelessness Service is the interface point for people with no fixed address.	• Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
Addictions and substance misuse	People suffering from addiction and substance misuse are at a higher risk of homelessness. SBC's Homelessness Service is the interface point for people with no fixed address.	• Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan
Staff: full/part time; voluntary; delivering/accessing services.	The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. It is not anticipated that the LHS will have potential impacts on the health of staff, aside from the potential positive impact on people on lower incomes (part time, voluntary) due to the increased availability of housing and access to support services. This contributes to the wellbeing and health of staff on relatively lower incomes.	• Ongoing review of LHS Outcome 1.
Low income	The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on people on low incomes due to the increased availability of affordable housing. This seeks to ensure housing is affordable to rent/purchase and is affordable to heat, thus contributing to the wellbeing and health of occupants.	• Develop and implement the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy. • Ongoing review of LHS Outcomes and monitoring, specifically Outcome 1.
Low literacy / Health Literacy includes poor understanding of health and health services (health literacy) as well as poor written language skills.	All information and advice from the Homelessness Service is available in alternative formats or translated upon request as is Council policy. Information from RSL's (including the home application process) is available in a range of languages, large print and audio format on request.	
Living in deprived areas	The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on people on low incomes due to the increased availability of affordable housing. This seeks to ensure housing is affordable to rent/purchase and is affordable to heat, thus contributing to the wellbeing and health of occupants.	• Home Energy Efficiency Programme, and other health and wellbeing initiatives are targeted in SIMD areas, or areas identified to be in fuel poverty.

Population groups and factors contributing to poorer health	Potential Impacts and explanation why	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
		• Ongoing review of LHS Outcomes and monitoring.
Living in remote, rural and island locations	It is envisaged that the LHS will have a positive effect on people living in the Scottish Borders, the majority of which live in a rural location. Impacts linked to health include improvements in health, fuel poverty levels and availability of affordable housing in a variety of tenures. There will be more developments in more rural locations and in less accessible rural locations.	• Rurality is a common theme throughout the LHS and is address throughout. • Appendix 11 – Rural Proofing Exercise has been undertaken and will be considered going forwards.
Discrimination/stigma	The LHS seeks to deliver improvements to all residents in the Scottish Borders, including particular groups (people leaving prison; young care leavers; women experiencing domestic abuse etc). This also includes Gypsy Travellers and show people. It is not anticipated that the LHS will worsen any existing stigma and discrimination. RSL's have allocation policies in place which seek to ensure people with the highest housing need are provided with homes.	• Progress identification of an authorised site for Gypsy/Traveller pitch provision.
Refugees and asylum seekers	The LHS seeks to ensure that everyone has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community. This is true for refugees and asylum seekers, and SBC is participating in resettlement programmes led by the Home Office to ensure refugees have access to suitable homes in places where they can work and live. This is anticipated to have a positive health impact on these groups.	• Ukrainian Displaced Persons • Refugees resettlement programmes

To comply with the general equality duty of the Equality Act 2010 when conducting impact assessment, you must demonstrate 'due regard' for the need to:

• eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
• advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it;
• foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

This means that you must identify, record and eliminate (through appropriate policy changes) any impacts that could amount to unlawful discrimination under the act. Wherever possible you should also try to identify, record and enhance any impacts that enable the policy to advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

Question 3: How will the policy impact on the causes of health inequalities?

The wider environmental and social conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age are shaped by the distribution of power, money and resources. These conditions can lead to health inequalities. While considering how your policy will impact on people and their right to health, it is also important to think about how it may impact on the causes of health inequalities (see the table below). Further information on the causes of health inequalities can be found in NHS Health Scotland's Health Inequalities Policy Review. Not all policies will be able to act or impact on these causes, but it will be useful to reflect on whether yours will. Think about any opportunity this policy might offer to reduce inequalities and also try to identify any ways in which it might inadvertently increase inequalities (you may find the prompts in Appendix 1 helpful). You may have discussed some of these issues when considering question 2.

Will the policy impact on?	Potential impacts and any particular groups affected	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
Income, employment and work • Availability and accessibility of work, paid/ unpaid employment, wage levels, job security. • Tax and benefits structures • Cost/price controls: housing, fuel, energy, food, clothes, alcohol, tobacco • Working conditions	Key workers More affordable housing Helping those in fuel poverty which includes information and advice on benefits. Young People Single People	Continue to progress discussions and pathfinder projects seeking to address the issue of providing adequate accommodation for key workers. Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan Implement the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Strategic Outcome 3 of the new LHS. Continue to deliver EES:ABS. Ongoing collaboration through the Borders Home Energy forum.
The physical environment and local opportunities • Availability and accessibility of housing, transport, healthy food, leisure activities, green spaces • Air quality and housing/living conditions, exposure to pollutants • Safety of neighbourhoods, exposure to crime. • Transmission of infection • Tobacco, alcohol and substance use	More affordable housing Place making and making communities feel safer	Continue to work with the community and partners to put Place at the heart of our work, ensuring safer and more sustainable communities.
Education and learning • Availability and accessibility to quality education, affordability of further education • Early years development, readiness for school, literacy and numeracy levels, qualifications	Provide good quality homes so children and young people have access to home that helps with their development and education	Continue to implement actions from LHS Action Plan.

Access to services	Place making	Continue to work with the community and
• Availability of health and social care services, transport, housing, education, cultural and leisure services • Ability to afford, access and navigate these services • Quality of services provided and received	Sustainable communities Access to affordable housing	partners to put Place at the heart of our work, ensuring safer and more sustainable communities.
Social, cultural and interpersonal • Social status • Social norms and attitudes • Tackling discrimination • Community environment • Fostering good relations • Democratic engagement and representation • Resilience and coping mechanisms	Young people Single People Gypsy Travellers Show people People leaving prison Young care leavers People experiencing domestic abuse	Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan Continue to provide Homelessness Service Progress identification of an authorised site for Gypsy/Traveller pitch provision.

Question 4: How will the policy impact on people's human rights?

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms which everyone is entitled to in order to live with dignity. They can be classified as **absolute**, **limited** or **qualified**. Absolute rights must not be restricted in any way. Other rights can be limited or restricted in certain circumstances where there is a need to take into account the rights of other individuals or wider society. Not all policies will be able to demonstrate an impact against human rights, but it will be useful to consider if yours will. Think about the potential impacts you have identified and consider whether these could help fulfil or breach legal obligations under the Human Rights Act. Can you think of any actions that might promote positive impacts or mitigate negative impacts? The following table includes rights that may be particularly relevant to health and social care policies.

Articles	Potential impacts and any particular groups affected	Recommendations to reduce or enhance such impacts
The right to life (Absolute right) • Access to basic necessities such as adequate nutrition, clean and safe drinking water. • Suicide. • Risk to life of/from others. • Duties to protect life from risks by self/others. • End of life questions. • Duties of prevention, protection and remedy, including investigation of unexpected death.	Housing is a human right – having access to a good quality affordable home.	Implement the LHS and Action Plan.

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The right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman or degrading way (absolute right) • Should not cause: fear; humiliation; intense physical or mental suffering; or anguish. • Prevention of ill-treatment, protection and rehabilitation of survivors of ill-treatment. • Duties of prevention, protection and remedy, including investigation of reasonably substantiated allegations of serious ill-treatment. • Dignified living conditions.	Tenants in the private sector have rights to good quality rented homes.	Ensure the following are met, where possible: Repairing Standard Scottish Housing Quality Standards Tolerable Standards
The right to liberty (limited right) • Right not to be deprived of liberty in an arbitrary fashion. • Detention under mental health law. • Review of continued justification of detention. • Informing reasons for detention.	Not applicable	
The right to a fair trial (limited right) • When a person's civil rights, obligations or a criminal charge against a person comes to be decided upon. • Staff disciplinary proceedings. • Malpractice. • Right to be heard. • Procedural fairness. • Effective participation in proceedings that determine rights such as employment, damages/ compensation.	Not applicable	
The right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence (qualified right) • Family life, including outwith blood and formalised relationships. • Privacy. • Personal choices, relationships.	Affordable housing Energy efficiency Sustainable community	Continue to deliver energy efficiency programmes.

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• Physical and moral integrity (e.g. freedom from non-consensual treatment, harassment or abuse). • Participation in community life. • Participation in decision-making. • Access to personal information. • Respect for someone's home. • Clean and healthy environment. • Legal capacity in decision-making. • Accessible information and communication e.g. phone calls, letters, faxes, emails.		
The right to freedom of thought, belief and religion (qualified right) • Conduct central to beliefs (such as worship, appropriate diet, dress).	Not applicable	
The right to freedom of expression (qualified right) • To hold opinions. • To express opinions, receive/impart information and ideas without interference by a public authority.	Not applicable	
The right not to be discriminated against • All of the rights and freedoms contained in the Human Rights Act must be protected and applied without discrimination. • Discrimination takes place when someone is treated in a different way compared with someone else in a similar situation. • Indirect discrimination happens when someone is treated in the same way as others that does not take into account that person's different situation. • An action or decision will only be considered discriminatory if the distinction in treatment cannot be reasonably and objectively justified.	Young people Single People Gypsy Travellers Show people People leaving prison Young care leavers People experiencing domestic abuse	Implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Implement the Young Persons Housing Action Plan Continue to provide Homelessness Service Progress identification of an authorised site for Gypsy/Traveller pitch provision.
Any other rights relevant to this policy e.g. • Convention on the Rights of the Child	No further rights identified	

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• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		

Question 5: Will there be any cumulative impacts as a result of the relationship between this policy and others?

Consider the potential for a build-up of negative impacts on population groups as a result of this policy being combined with other policies, e.g. relocation of services at the same time as changes to public transport networks.

There are no negative impacts that will result from this policy.

Question 6: What sources of evidence have informed your impact assessment?

Formal sources of evidence to consider include population data and statistics, consultation findings and other research. However, your professional or personal experience and knowledge of individuals and communities (and the potential impact of a policy on them) is equally as valuable. Further information can be found in the planning a workshop section. http://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/planning-resources-hiia-scoping-workshop What evidence have you used to support your impact assessment thinking? Have you identified any areas where more evidence is needed or where there are gaps in your current knowledge to inform the assessment?

Evidence type	Evidence available	Gaps in evidence
Population data E.g. demographic profile, service uptake.	Aging population Increase in smaller households	N/A
Consultation and involvement findings E.g. any engagement with service users, local community, particular groups.	Wide range of engagement have been carried out (LIST)	N/A
Research E.g. good practice guidelines, service evaluations, literature reviews.	Followed LHS guidance. Collated a wide range of evidence and policies (both nationally and locally) to inform the LHS	N/A

| **Participant knowledge** E.g. experiences of working with different population groups, experiences of different policies. | Part of the LHS – includes work on all ages groups and people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. It's important the LHS is informed by different policies but it also impacts on other policies being developed | N/A |

Summary of discussion

The Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the population of the Scottish Borders. The LHS delivers a positive impact on people and their right to health, the causes of health inequalities, and people's human rights. The Public Sector Equality Duty has been considered and actions have been identified to ensure impacts are positive and all opportunities to improve health outcomes are pursued. There are no data gaps that have been identified.

The discussions and recommendations from this HIIA will form part of the evidence to inform the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028.

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Appendix 9: LHS 2023-2028 Equalities Statement

1.   Introduction

Housing issues affect all residents in the Borders. The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028 recognises there are certain groups who:

- are less able to access good quality, appropriate housing that meets their needs
- may struggle to sustain a successful tenancy

The LHS focusses on how to increase the general supply of housing and also how to help those groups unable to meet their needs by targeting resources and services to create more affordable homes, make the best use of the stock available and intervene before crisis.

The LHS aims to have a positive impact on households/individuals from protected characteristic groups, especially those who may have particular issues accessing and maintaining tenancies/homes.
The aim of the LHS is to ensure that everyone living in the Borders has access to a warm, safe, affordable and energy efficient home that meets their needs, in a sustainable community. The LHS sets out a five year framework to achieve this vision by delivering the 5 LHS outcomes:

1. Strategic Outcome 1: Deliver more homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive
2. Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing
3. Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy
4. Strategic Outcome 4: Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage
5. Strategic Outcome 5: Homelessness is prevented wherever possible and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible

The provision of warm, safe, affordable and accessible housing that meets people's needs helps to tackle inequality and advances equality for those with protected characteristics. In particular, the LHS seeks to understand and respond to the housing experiences and needs of different groups.

Housing has a vital role to play in tackling child and fuel poverty; preventing homelessness; strengthening communities; helping stem rural depopulation; improving health and wellbeing; addressing the climate

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emergency; and promoting inclusive growth. Tackling inequality is at the heart of each of the strategic aims. Delivery of the LHS will improve outcomes for those with protected characteristics and in doing so will contribute fully to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and National Outcomes and UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 5) sets out what we know about equality and inequality in the housing system and has been used to inform the development of the LHS, the strategic outcomes and proposed actions. Individual impact assessments will be progressed for the individual policies or projects set out in the strategy as they are developed and to inform their implementation. In additional to the full Integrated Impact Assessment additional screening on the LHS was undertaken, including:

- A Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (Appendix 7)
- Consideration of the Fairer Scotland Duty (outlined in this statement)
- Consideration of Human Rights (outlined in this statement)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (Appendix 10)
- Rural Proofing Exercise (Appendix 11); and
- Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 8)

This Equalities Statement summarises this cumulative activity and explores each in more detail. During the LHS development process it was acknowledge that there were some gaps in evidence relating to housing. To address some of the known evidence gaps SBC carried out consultation and housing needs analysis with the Gypsy and Traveller Community, which has subsequently informed the LHS.

Additionally specific work was undertaken to understand the housing needs and experience of young people, as well as those with physical disabilities, particularly those who may require wheelchair accessible housing. The evidence from this research and bespoke consultation has also informed the development of the LHS.

We have worked, and will continue to work, with key stakeholders across housing and equality to review available evidence. This will help us identify gaps in evidence to prioritise future research on a range of needs and experiences. This will improve our evidence base and support the identification of further policy action to address any findings, and as such the evidence base will continue to be reviewed and monitored as we deliver the LHS.

It should also be noted that, while evidence has been gathered on people with protected characteristics, people who are socio-economically disadvantaged and children and young people, we recognise that people and their experiences do not fit neatly within a single protected characteristic or group. Every adult, child and family across the Borders will be likely to display a combination of different protected characteristics, socio-economic backgrounds, health inequalities and household incomes. There will also be differences across the Borders due to the rural nature of the area. The intersectionality of protected characteristics and the wide range of household circumstances that influence the opportunities and barriers people face in relation to housing, including their lived experience of poverty, inequality and/or discrimination means it is important to review and consider the impact assessment holistically, rather than individually.

2.   Integrated Impact Assessment

The Integrated Impact Assessment seeks to address and mitigate any negative which are identified. The IIA sets out the equality evidence which has informed the development of the LHS across the range of protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010. This evidence gathering exercise brings together what we know about how housing can impact on protected characteristics and identifies any gaps

in our knowledge, providing an important source of material to inform our future policy development and research work. This section therefore concentrates on identifying the particular issues different groups are more likely to experience.

Age
The Borders faces a number of demographic challenges, one of which is an ageing population. This is identified in the Evidence paper (Appendix 2), as well as featuring extensively during early consultation. Strategic Outcome 2: **People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing** is expected to address these challenges and considers:

- the role of health and social care in relation to housing;
- the importance of involvement of older people at the centre of decision-making;
- Prompt and adequately funded home adaptations;
- use of technology to improve accessibility;
- flexible housing options for older people with varying needs;
- access to advice on housing options for older people;
- shortage of accessible (in particular wheelchair accessible) housing in relation to both old and new housing stock; and
- support for independent living and support for people wishing to downsize.

Older people might be more likely to experience a range of housing disadvantages. A large number of older people and people with disabilities live in mainstream homes and want to continue to do so, but these properties may or may not meet their current needs. Projections for the future suggest the challenge will only increase without action, with projected increases in the number of people aged 75 and over putting much greater demand on housing and health and social care services to help people to live independently at home. In addition the Scottish House Condition Survey highlights that older people are more likely to live in less energy efficient homes and more likely to experience fuel poverty.

Children and young people also face particular housing challenges
Child poverty and housing are inextricably linked and evidence shows there is a relationship between expensive, poor quality housing and offending; mental health issues; educational attainment; excess winter deaths; and child and fuel poverty. Affordability of homes; rising rents; the roll out of Universal Credit resulting in the increase of rent arrears; and access to secure and reliable employment were also highlighted as factors impacting on child poverty levels.

Almost a quarter of households assessed as homeless in the Borders are young adults aged 16-24 (149 households). We are also aware that young people, especially those leaving care, may be more likely to be hidden from services and therefore from official records because they are "sofa surfing" or living in other informal, unstable circumstances.

Drawing on available evidence, young people are also amongst the group of people that are anticipated to be hardest hit financially as a result of the impact of Covid-19. The combination of the insecurity of their employment (as seen during the pandemic) and their financial vulnerability suggest that young people might be limited when it comes to their housing choices and this might also impact on their ability to take on and maintain tenancies.

Care experienced children and young people, and those leaving care, are more likely to face particular challenges. These include mental health issues; poor education outcomes and lower educational attainment; housing and homelessness issues and a lower likelihood of achieving a positive destination when they leave care. Follow The Money, one of the final reports published by the Independent Care Review in February 2020, highlights that care experienced people are likely to have more than double the chance of experiencing homelessness compared to their non-care-experienced peers, mainly before the age of 30. They are also over one and a half times more likely to experience severe multiple disadvantages,

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including homelessness, substance use mental health issues and offending. The report also suggests that care experienced people are over three times more likely not to have a job by the age of 26, and when they do, they earn incomes which are 27% lower on average than their non-care experienced peers. Drawing out from the evidence highlighted above, the lower incomes and poorer employment prospects experienced by care experienced people might impact on their ability to access mainstream housing and might also limit their housing choices overall.

The LHS recognises the challenges outlined above for both older and younger generations and the anticipated demographic changes. The strategic outcomes put focus on ensuring that everyone lives in warm, safe, affordable and accessible home that meets people's needs and the role of housing in tackling child poverty. Work to continue to deliver affordable homes and ensure the quality of the housing stock across the Borders are key areas of work which will seek to reduce child poverty levels in Scotland. The LHS sets out specific actions which will help to address the challenges faced by these groups.

Disability

According to the 2018 Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) report on housing issues affecting disabled people, Scotland's disabled population faces considerable housing challenges. Appropriate and accessible housing is the cornerstone of independent living and can transform people's lives for better, yet many disabled people across Scotland live in homes that do not meet their needs. In 2019 Scottish Borders Council commissioned consultations to assess the housing needs of people with a physical disability in the Borders, engage with our Physical Disability Strategy Group and help develop a wheelchair accessible housing target. In January 2020 the finalised report was published "A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders" The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges which will need to be addressed at national as well as at a local level by Scottish Borders Council and partner agencies. Stakeholder feedback also focused on the importance of alternative housing models and support to downsize; greater use of technology to support independent living and improved connections for strategic planning across housing, health and social care and transport. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of independent living and adaptations being a catalyst in enabling people to remain in their own home for longer and maintain their independence.

The costs of inaccessible housing can be far-reaching and inextricably linked and include impacts on independent living, increased need for social care, more reliance on carers and family members, accidents and avoidable hospital admissions. Available evidence however suggests that housing that meets people's requirements will save on health and social care costs in the future, as well as considerably lowering the cost of adaptations when they are needed.

The LHS, as well as the H&SCP Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, seeks to ensure that the housing inequalities affecting disabled people are recognised and mitigated. **Strategic Outcome 2: People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing** identifies some of the challenges and actions which will be prioritised to help ensure the housing needs of this group are met. Additionally, the total number of potential affordable homes in the SHIP 2023-28 is 1,320, of these 295 are particular needs units and (22%) and 169 (13%) are wheelchair accessible houses.

Gender Reassignment Trans/Transgender Identity

People in the process of gender reassignment can face discrimination in local communities. Providing more, and better quality housing will benefit all communities in the Borders, irrespective of their gender, which will be positive for this group. There is currently limited evidence available on the Gender Reassignment Protected Characteristic in the Borders. While the available evidence is limited various sources and organisations provide insight into the issues people within this group can experience throughout their lives, and depicts the disadvantages they face in relation to both their identity and housing situation.

The focus on equality and human rights in this statement and throughout the LHS will ensure that housing and housing-related policy development over the course of the next 5 years will consider and aim to

understand and tackle any specific disadvantages people with this protected characteristic may experience. Currently no suggestions or views with regards to the Gender Reassignment protected characteristic were raised during the LHS pre-consultation and engagement process. The LHS can work towards linking with community organisations that seek to support people undergoing gender reassignment, and towards reducing prejudice and stigma in the community.

Marriage and Civil Partnership
The evidence available for the Marriage and Civil Partnership Protected Characteristic is relatively limited and no recommendations or views with regards to the Marriage and Civil Partnership protected characteristic were suggested by stakeholders taking part in the consultation process to date. Outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.

Providing more, and better quality housing will benefit all communities in the Borders, irrespective of their relationship status. It's possible that same-sex couples may be discriminated against in the private rented sector and in some local communities, however there is no evidence available to support this and the LHS will work towards supporting all residents regardless of their marital status to access support and services, which can help to reduce discrimination.

Pregnancy and Maternity
The LHS seeks to support families, and this includes support during paternity and maternity and supports this group by seeking to give children the best start in life through a safe, warm and affordable home. The relationship between housing and poor health outcomes, including during pregnancy, is well established, and the birth of a new baby can result in those close to the poverty line falling below it. Pregnancy also brings a period of sudden increased financial pressure, increasing the risk of child poverty.
Young mothers are a specifically vulnerable group within this Protected Characteristic. Risk factors around lower employment and educational levels mean the prevalence of low income can be higher for young mothers, with a high proportion of that income coming from various social security entitlements. This might also impact on housing options for young mothers which, as a result, are likely to be restricted. They may face challenges around housing affordability and sustaining tenancies.

The LHS focuses on ensuring that everyone lives in warm, safe, affordable and accessible housing that meets people's need and is within sustainable communities. As the LHS is taken forward over the next five years SBC will continue to ensure that any disadvantages in relation to housing access and opportunity faced by people during pregnancy and maternity are addressed. The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all and so there is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services. The Homelessness Service, for example, has specific working procedures in place for expectant mothers and those with children.

Race Groups
Race Groups including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers) are another of the protected characteristics. The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.

Access to social housing is recorded by the RSLs and monitored through the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Homelessness Service records ethnicity through data collection systems. All information and advice is available in alternative formats or translated upon request as is Council policy.

There is limited data available on some ethnic groups and to quantify the level and type of housing required to meet specific housing needs. There needs to be better understanding of these groups and a need to

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strengthening the evidence base to measure the housing need and demand of particular groups and/ or for specialist housing provision. This will be monitored through the delivery of the strategy. Early engagement work identified a specific evidence gap in relation to the housing needs and requirements of the Gypsy Traveller community in the Scottish Borders. This was addressed through a specific piece of work and the information has been used to inform the LHS.

Housing to 2040 acknowledges the need to address the particular housing challenges faced by minority ethnic communities. To help address this the Scottish Government committed to Include specific consideration of the needs of this group in their review of the adaptations system and to take forward further research work with people from minority ethnic groups to better understand and address the barriers they face to accessing social housing.

The LHS provides information the Resettlement Programme which has led to an increase in the demand for housing in the Scottish Borders and there are narrative and actions outlined in the LHS to support meeting these needs more effectively.

Religion or Belief
Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (eg Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

There is relatively limited evidence available for the Religion or Belief Protected Characteristic and stakeholders in the engagement process did not provide any suggestions, views or recommendations on the Religion or Belief Protected Characteristic during the early engagement exercises. The LHS is however fully inclusive to all religions and beliefs (including non-belief). The LHS improves the range and supply of affordable housing and access to housing and support services to all. There is likely to be a positive impact on these groups, and outcomes will be monitored through the life span of the LHS and through the delivery of specific housing and support services.

Sex – Gender Identity: women and men (girls and boys) and those who self-identify their gender
The LHS aims to increase the supply of housing across all tenures which will benefit all genders. Women-headed households are likely to earn less over the duration of their lifetimes and are often the main predominant carers of children and vulnerable adults. The LHS includes measures for the provision of housing for those on a range of incomes and needs.

There is also a difference between men and women in relation to homelessness and domestic abuse, which is often a reason for women applying as homeless. This experience is further exacerbated as the woman experiencing abuse is often forced to leave their home, rather than the male perpetrator. On average 64 women presented as homeless following incidences of domestic abuse each year in the Scottish Borders (over a ten year period). In 2021/2022, 43 women presented as homeless due to domestic abuse within the household.

'Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse' is the report of a Scottish Government working group in December 2020 highlighting six areas which, acted on together, could significantly reduce domestic abuse related homelessness.

The BHHSP is committed to carrying out a review to 'Improving the Housing Outcomes for Women and Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse', this work was initiated in 2021 and then delayed due to Covid related and other impacts and is currently being rebooted.

Sexual Orientation e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual
Providing more and better quality housing will benefit all communities in the Borders, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

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The available evidence highlights that people with the Sexual Orientation Protected Characteristic face a range of inequalities across a number of areas and settings including, but not limited to, employment, healthcare, education, housing and homelessness. Stonewall Scotland's report highlighted that LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), intersex, and asexual (or allies)) people are vulnerable to and at increased risk of homelessness, highlighting that almost one in five LGBTQIA people (18%) have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. SBC's Homelessness Service does not collect information at this point but it is currently being considered how this can be built into the current system.

As we take forward delivery of the LHS 2023-2028 we will seek to ensure that the housing disadvantages this group faces are acknowledged, recognised and addressed. Housing to 2040 also sets out specific actions which will support this, including:

- Developing homelessness prevention legislation to ensure public bodies across Scotland have responsibilities for preventing homelessness (due in the forthcoming Housing Bill 2023);
- Embedding homelessness prevention pathways for particular groups at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping; and
- A new Housing Bill which strengthens tenants' rights and improve the rights of victims of domestic abuse.

Human Rights

In Scotland, civil and political rights are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998 and provisions in the Scotland Act 1998. These rights come from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The Scottish Government has committed to introducing a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland. This Bill will incorporate 4 more major United Nations human rights treaties. These treaties are:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The Bill will also include the right to a healthy environment, as well as rights for older people and LGBTQIA people.

In recognition of the right to 'an adequate standard of living, which includes housing' (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11), and the right to 'respect for private and family life' (European Convention on Human Rights, Article 8), anyone assessed as being homeless is legally entitled to temporary accommodation.

Anyone assessed by local authorities as being homeless unintentionally is entitled to settled accommodation (and possibly to housing support too). We have developed a person-centred 'housing options' approach, which looks at the range of issues that may help to prevent homelessness. This approach has been promoted through five regional local authority-led hubs across Scotland.

3.   **Fairer Scotland Duty**

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

The Duty seeks to tackle socio-economic disadvantage and reduce the inequalities that are associated with being disadvantaged. This is a complex, multidimensional problem, closely related to poverty. Having less access to resources can mean that individuals fare worse on outcomes including health, housing, education or opportunities to work or train, and these negative outcomes can reinforce each other. Adversity in childhood can have life-long impacts, and growing up in poverty is associated with poorer educational attainment, employment prospects and health inequalities.

Therefore it is crucial that SBC considers the impact that decisions have on socio-economic disadvantage and the inequality of outcome that both adults and children may experience as a result. The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services. As such, the Fairer Scotland Duty has been fully considered as art of integrated impact assessment undertaken on the LHS 2023-2028.

The outcomes put equality at the heart, seeking to achieve these benefits and outcomes for everyone in the Borders. The LHS will also make an important contribution to other key national and local plans and priorities.

- Affordable housing helps to tackle poverty and inequality. Increasing the supply of affordable and social rented homes and tackling any unreasonably high rents in the private rented sector will continue to make an impact on child poverty levels.
- Safe and warm homes and good neighbourhoods improve physical and mental health and wellbeing and helps build strong communities. Making sure homes add to and create great places will help to improve social cohesion, enable and contribute to community wealth building and unlock social capital across the region.
- High quality homes and neighbourhoods improve children's wellbeing and development. Improving the quality of homes across all tenures will make an important contribution to ensuring people can live well in their homes and children have the space indoors and outdoors that they need to thrive.
- Housing creates and supports jobs and drives inclusive economic growth and social benefits. Housing's unique place at the heart of thriving communities means that investment in housing, and all the indirect effects that flow from that, can contribute to community wealth and social renewal.

The LHS will be delivered over the period 2023-2028 with regular monitoring of progress and assessment of impact, with updates and reviews undertaken as needed.

The Fairer Duty is part of the IIA and can be found as **Appendix 6a and 6b.**

4.   **A Child Rights' and Wellbeing Impact Assessment**

Stage 1 of the Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) Screening was completed for this LHS which indicated that the LHS will have a positive indirect impact on children and young people, specifically those:

- Children and young people living in poverty, including fuel poverty;
- Children and young people with protected characteristics, or living in a household which include adult(s) with protected characteristics;
- Children and young people who live in a household with a survivor of Domestic abuse;
- Children and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness;
- Care experienced children and young people;
- Households with a disabled parent or child;

- Children in rural areas.

The LHS seeks to have a positive indirect impact on eradicating child poverty, fuel poverty, homelessness (including youth homelessness), and improving children and young people's health and wellbeing. It is recognised that affordable housing helps to tackle child poverty, with cost of living, including housing costs being a key driver of child poverty.

Strategic Outcome 1: Deliver more homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive; alongside an ambitious housing supply target (including 40% affordable housing); and Strategic Outcome 3: Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy; will, in particular, continue to make an impact on child poverty levels. In addition, warm, healthy, safe and non-overcrowded homes and positive neighbourhoods play an important role in improving children's and young people's health and wellbeing, providing a healthy start and contributing to their social and physical development. Good homes with room for children to play, learn and study can contribute to educational attainment.

While we anticipate positive indirect impacts of the LHS on children and young people, these will be considered in detail as the specific policies within the LHS are developed and implemented and monitored over the next five years.

A full copy of the CRWIA can be found as **Appendix 7.**

5. Rural Proofing Exercise

As part of the LHS development a Rural Proofing exercise was undertaken. The full checklist can be viewed at Appendix 6. This helps us consider any challenges presented by rural circumstances and recognise the distinct needs of rural communities. There is clear recognition in the LHS of the role that housing plays in reversing depopulation and in creating more sustainable communities, and in the need to take a holistic approach including improving accessibility, broadband, infrastructure, renewable energy technology, transport and investment. Some challenges the LHS considers in relation to rurality include:

- Short-term lets, second homes and empty homes contributing to a constrained supply of housing;
- High development costs and lack of skilled labour and local supply chains, and the need to be more energy efficient and sustainable in the way we build;
- Community sustainability; and
- Fuel poverty, poor energy efficiency and housing stock in poorer condition.

Responding to these concerns and issues has been central to the development of the LHS vision and strategic outcomes, ensuring that the LHS and associated action plan takes the needs of rural communities fully into account.

A full copy of the Rural Proofing exercise can be found as Appendix **11.**

6. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

Housing and health outcomes are inextricably linked. Whilst undertaking a full Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (HIIA) is not a legal requirement, we have engaged with stakeholders, including the Public Health Team in the Borders to help ensure that health and health inequalities dimensions are considered as

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part of the development of the LHS and to gather important evidence to support ongoing policy development.

[Public Health Priorities for Scotland](#), jointly published by the Scottish Government and COSLA in 2018, places good quality, accessible and affordable housing as one of the key factors for progressing these priorities. The LHS recognises that good quality affordable homes in sustainable communities leads to reduced poverty and inequality, better health outcomes, improved educational attainment and more cohesive communities. The LHS sets out actions that will benefit people's health and wellbeing, through improving access to affordable housing choices, tackling homelessness, improving housing quality and energy efficiency and supporting independent living.

The First stage of the HIIA has been undertaken and can be reviewed at Appendix X. Work to further develop the HIIA will be undertaken during the formal LHS consultation period and will be a further opportunity to review the potential health impacts of the LHS 2023-2028 with housing being a key driver of health outcomes. A full report outlining the findings, and any recommendations which have subsequently influenced the finalising of the LHS, will be prepared and published with the final LHS documents.

A full copy of the HIIA can found as **Appendix 8.**

PRE-SCREENING NOTIFICATION

SEA PRE-SCREENING DOCUMENT

Responsible Authority:	Scottish Borders Council
Title of the plan:	Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy 2023-28
What prompted the plan: (e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)	The Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act makes it a statutory requirement for all Scottish local authorities to prepare and submit a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) to Scottish Ministers. The LHS should assess the nature and condition of the housing stock, the needs of persons in the area for housing, the demand for, and availability of housing and the needs of persons in the area with special needs. The LHS should be regularly reviewed and updated every five years.
Plan subject: (e.g. transport)	Housing
Brief summary of the plan: (Including the area or location to which the plan related)	The LHS is Scottish Borders Council's primary strategic document on housing. It sets out the vision for housing in the Scottish Borders that "Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community". There are five strategic outcomes that will help to achieve this vision, these are: 1. More homes in well designed, sustainable communities that increase opportunity for all and support our economy to thrive. 2. People have access to homes which promote independence, health and wellbeing. 3. Improved energy efficiency of homes and a reduction in fuel poverty while supporting a Just Transition to Net Zero through decarbonising domestic heating and energy. 4. Communities are regenerated through improving the quality and condition of housing and the built heritage. 5. Homelessness is prevented wherever possible, and a range of housing options are provided so people can secure a suitable and sustainable housing outcome as quickly as possible.

Brief summary of the likely environmental consequences: (including whether it has been determined that the plan is likely to have no or minimum effects, either directly or indirectly)	The LHS will provide strategic direction on tackling housing issues, including affordable supply and placemaking, energy efficiency, climate change, fuel poverty, house condition, homelessness and specialist housing and independent living. The LHS will provide a framework for investment in new affordable housing, through the annual preparation of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP); though the land available for development will be allocated through the Local Development Plan. Any negative effects arising from new supply will be assessed through the relevant environmental assessments of these development plans. The LHS will also provide a framework for projects related to the improvement of existing housing which could have a positive impact on reducing carbon emissions and fuel poverty, also providing a positive impact on the environment. The LHS is a high level strategic plan and any new projects that arise from the strategy will be environmentally assessed where appropriate. On this basis Scottish Borders Council has determined the Local Housing Strategy is exempt from a full Strategic Environmental Assessment as there will be no significant environmental impacts.
Contact details:	Donna Bogdanovic, Lead Officer (Head of Housing Strategy & Development) Scottish Borders Council HQ Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA 01835 825 144 Donna.Bogdanovic@scotborders.gov.uk
Date of opinion:	1st March 2023

When completed send to: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or to SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2H (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

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Appendix 11: LHS 2023-2028 Rural Proofing Checklist

Consider all the questions below. Will your initiative encounter the challenges presented by rural circumstances? Some potential solutions are indicated to help you consider appropriate adjustments.

Name of policy/ strategy: Scottish Borders Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028
Date checklist completed: 23rd February 2023 and 28th September 2023
Completed by: Housing Strategy, Policy, and Development

Steps to take.

1. Ensure you are clear about the objectives of the proposed policy, its intended impacts, or outcomes (including which areas, groups or organisations should benefit) and the means of delivery.
2. Run through each question in the checklist, identifying where the proposed policy is likely to have a different impact in rural areas.
3. Where there is uncertainty or a potentially different (worse) impact, this should be investigated further (and included in the overall assessment of the costs and benefits of the policy).
4. Where the impact in rural areas will be significantly different, explore policy options to produce the desired outcomes in rural areas or avoid/ reduce any undesirable impacts. This exercise may also highlight opportunities to maximise positive impacts in rural areas.
5. Feed the results of your appraisal, including solutions, into the decision-making process and ensure a record is kept, to be included in your department's annual proofing report.

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
1. Will the LHS 2018-23 have a negative affect on the availability or delivery of services for people living in rural areas?		✓	**Summary of likely impacts**: It is envisaged that the LHS will have a positive effect. There will be a wide range of positive outcomes through the implementation of the LHS for rural communities, including improvements in health, fuel poverty levels and availability of affordable housing in a variety of tenures. There will be more developments in more rural locations and in less accessible rural locations. **Summary of adjustments made**: **Other Comments:**

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
2. Will access to the service be restricted for people living in rural areas?		✓	Not applicable.

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
3. Will the cost of delivery be higher in rural areas (where customers are more widely dispersed or it is hard to be cost-effective)? If yes, how will this extra cost be met or lessened?	✓		**Summary of likely impacts**: In respect to delivery of new market or affordable housing units there are increased building and management costs due to housing being located near to rural populations. However by sustaining rural communities, costs related to other services provided by public sector may/ will reduce.
			Summary of adjustments made:
			Other Comments: Rural solutions: allow for higher unit delivery costs when calculating costs (e.g. a 'sparsity' factor) or when specifying cost-efficiency criteria; encourage joint provision to reduce costs.

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
4. Will the LHS have a negative affect on the availability of affordable housing in rural areas?		✓	**Summary of likely impacts**: Outcomes of LHS will have a positive impact in directing investment toward providing affordable rural housing completions. In addition, the strategic objectives in improving the range, accessibility and affordability of housing in the private rented sector and other intermediate sectors will have a positive impact. Addressing empty housing stock in rural areas will also contribute to the positive impact.
			Summary of adjustments made: Within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan which supports the LHS a rural weighting has been developed in the Project Priority Assessment Matrix to ensure that rural projects are not disadvantaged.
			Other Comments: Rural solutions: consider provision of alternative affordable rural housing solutions.

Scottish Borders Council Rural Proofing Checklist, LHS, 2023

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
5. Will the LHS be delivered by the private sector, or through a public-private partnership or local institution that may limit provision in rural areas?		✓	**Summary of likely impacts**: The LHS will be delivered through Scottish Borders Councils and partners. The private sector has a role to play through the provision of land through Section 75's and carrying out development but will not limit provision of affordable housing in rural areas.
			Summary of adjustments made:
			Other Comments: Some aspects of the LHS may have to be delivered through public/private partnerships – particularly as we explore new funding models for delivery given current economic circumstances. However, this will not limit provision in rural areas.

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
6. Does the LHS rely on infrastructure for delivery (e.g. mobile phone coverage, broadband ICT, main roads, utilities) that may be limited in rural areas?	✓		**Summary of likely impacts**: Delivery of new housing units could be impacted as a result of infrastructure restraints which can affect development opportunities and timings of delivery.
			Summary of adjustments made: Utility companies were consulted on the LHS and are engaged in the SHIP process through regular meetings to identify project utility requirements availability to ensure deliverability. Infrastructure constraints are considered in the Deliverability criteria in the SHIP assessments.
			Other Comments:

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
7. Will the LHS have a negative impact on rural businesses, or land-based businesses, (including the self-employed) and therefore, on rural economies and environments?		✓	**Summary of likely impacts**: It is likely that the LHS would have a positive impact as it helps sustain rural communities. In addition, energy efficiency priorities will also have positive environmental impacts.
			Summary of adjustments made:
			Other Comments:

Scottish Borders Council Rural Proofing Checklist, LHS, 2023

RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
8. What will be the impact of the policy on employment in rural areas?			**Summary of likely impacts**: The LHS should have a positive impact on employment in rural areas, creating rural jobs and opportunities for rural businesses. The LHS provides affordable housing for people on low incomes ensuring community sustainability and retaining social networks particularly in a low wage economy of Borders. Providing more hosing in rural areas will allow people to move and stay in the area and access employment locally.
			Summary of adjustments made:
			Other Comments:
RURAL ISSUE	YES	NO	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
9. Is the LHS to be targeted at disadvantaged people? If yes, how will it target rural disadvantage, which is not usually concentrated in neighbourhoods?	✓		**Summary of likely impacts**: The vision for the LHS is "Everyone in the Scottish Borders has access to a home that meets their needs and is part of a sustainable community". There are specific actions on disadvantaged people and the issues faced in rural parts of the Scottish Borders.
			Summary of adjustments made: Within the Strategic Housing Investment Plan which supports the LHS a rural weighting has been developed in the Project Priority Assessment Matrix to ensure that rural projects are not disadvantaged.
			Other Comments: Helps to sustain communities and rebuild social networks.
RURAL ISSUE	Yes	No	POTENTIAL IMPACT/ ADJUSTMENT
10. Will the LHS take into account the different size and needs of smaller rural schools and other service facilities?	✓		**Summary of likely impacts**: The LHS aligns with other plans and policies.
			Summary of adjustments made:
			Other Comments:

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Scottish Borders Council Rural Proofing Checklist, LHS, 2023

GRASS MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Report by Director - Infrastructure & Environment

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   **The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on grass management undertaken within the Parks & Environment Service, outlining the current situation and proposed next steps.**

1.2   Grass Management Services are provided by Parks & Environment as part of a suite of amenity services. Further to changes made in 2018, and following the appointment of a new Service Manager, Officers have been reviewing performance and the wider policy context to inform a future approach to grass management, reflective of resources, community feedback and the Council Plan.

1.3   Based on findings, this report outlines some steps being taken including a proposed revised model of operation, designed to address deficiencies with the current model, to be piloted during 2024/25.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

    (a) notes the findings of the Grass Management performance review.
    (b) approves a Pilot Study, testing out a revised model of operation, to be piloted in 2024.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   Grass Management services are provided by Parks & Environment as part of a suite of amenity services, including:
- Weed management
- Tree and shrub management
- Street cleansing
- Play park inspection and maintenance
- Public toilet provision
- Greenspace management
- Bereavement services and cemetery management

3.2   The following is a breakdown of the grass maintained by the Parks & Environment section:

Amenity Grass maintenance	424ha
High Amenity Grass maintenance	3.2ha
Biodiversity/Low Amenity Grass maintenance	28ha

3.3   Through the 2018 Financial Plan, it was agreed to implement changes to grass cutting and greenspace management to deliver savings, which included;
- Removal of bedding plant provision
- Moving from a 10 to a 20 working day grass cutting cycle on general amenity areas
- Creation of Biodiversity areas

3.4   The grass cutting frequencies deployed since then are as follows;

Category	Frequency	Rationale
Biodiversity areas	1-3 cuts per year	Allowing these areas to establish as longer grass to support local pollinators and wildlife, contributing to our duties around supporting local biodiversity.
General amenity areas	Every 20 working days	Extend the gap between cuts to achieve efficiencies within the service while achieving a consistent standard across the board.
High amenity areas	Every 10 working days	Ensure pitches, war memorials and key civic spaces are maintained in a way that is reflective of their recreational or civic value.

3.5   In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, grass management services were significantly reduced while staff were redeployed to assist in the Council's statutory duties. Monitoring of performance and outputs since then has been undertaken, looking at route performance, enquiries/complaints received and engaging with staff.

Executive Committee – 14 November 2023

3.6 This year saw exceptional growth early in the season, due to climatic conditions. Customer enquiries relating to grass management also rose sharply during this time.

3.7 The Council is also required to respond to statutory duties, including Biodiversity Duties (Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004), Climate Change Duties (Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and Participatory Budgeting (Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2005).

4   GRASSCUTTING PERFORMANCE: OPERATIONS AND CHALLENGES

4.1 Grass management is delivered by operational squads deployed across all five Localities. Squads operate from depots in Galashiels, Hawick, Peebles, Duns and Kelso, with three satellite depots at Eyemouth, Coldstream and Jedburgh and an operational base at Newcastleton. Each squad undertakes grass management activities following a set operational route.

4.2 As outlined above, since 2018 the 20 working day frequency has been applied to all general amenity areas including play parks, schools, cemeteries, village greens, care homes and other amenity open spaces. As a 'one size fits all' approach this has generated challenges in some areas;

- Grass growth over 20 working days can be particularly long in certain locations/under certain climatic conditions.
- This can be exacerbated where squads fall behind on their routes due to machinery breakdown or staff shortages (see below), meaning the time between cuts becomes longer than 20 working days.
- The amount of arisings when it is cut can be very difficult to manage - they should be mulched and dispersed but, when grass has reached a certain length, they can clump and don't get mulched properly. This can result in additional work to remove arisings which are deemed significant enough to require lifting, taking more staff time. This year there were a number of enquiries regarding the visual impact of arisings left lying in cemeteries and staff made return visits to remove arisings.

4.3 Performance data indicates that, across the board, the majority of cut cycles are delivering on or around the 20 working day frequency:

General Amenity Squads		Working Days between Start Dates
Locality	**Squad**	**Average/Cut**
Berwickshire	Coldstream	20.00
	Duns	18.75
	Eyemouth	19.25
Cheviot	Jedburgh & Landward	20.25
	Kelso & Landward	20.75
Eildon	Galashiels & Tweedbank	23.00
	Melrose & A68	28.00
	Selkirk & A7	25.50

Teviot & Liddesdale	Hawick	25.00
	Hawick Landward	25.75
	Newcastleton	16.50
Tweeddale	Peebles	20.75
	West & East	19.50
Average (excl. Newcastleton)		**22.25**

However, some areas (shown in amber) are averaging a slightly longer frequency than the 20 working day target. Below summarises some of the challenges around this.

4.4 Fluctuating sickness absence and ageing workforce – over the 12 months to the end of March 2023 absence levels within Parks & Environment ranged from 5.74% to 9.78%. Managing staff cover to maintain business continuity presents an additional pressure. For example, in Teviot & Liddesdale (and separately in Eildon) there were multiple sickness absences within the same time period during the summer months. This resulted directly in routes being delayed at peak growth time and staff being deployed from other depots to provide cover. Cover is also needed on occasion to support statutory frontline services such as Burials and Waste.

4.5 Fleet - the service has experienced issues around aging fleet, compounded by delays on repairs from the workshop services. Additionally, lead-in times on new fleet and availability of hired fleet impacts on service delivery. Lack of vehicle availability can affect staff morale. Investment in new machinery this year has gone some way to address this going forward.

4.6 Climatic conditions – with the changes in climate, we are seeing more unpredictable growth; warmer, wetter summers, fluctuating temperatures and unexpected weather patterns affect grass growth. In 2023 we experienced a wet and mild early growing season, resulting in rapid grass growth.

4.7 Customer feedback - the number of enquiries relating to grass management rose sharply in 2023 with increases in Eildon, Cheviot and Berwickshire in particular. The nature of enquiries received appears to have changed over this period (this may be due to changes in recording methods):

Grass management category calls by locality
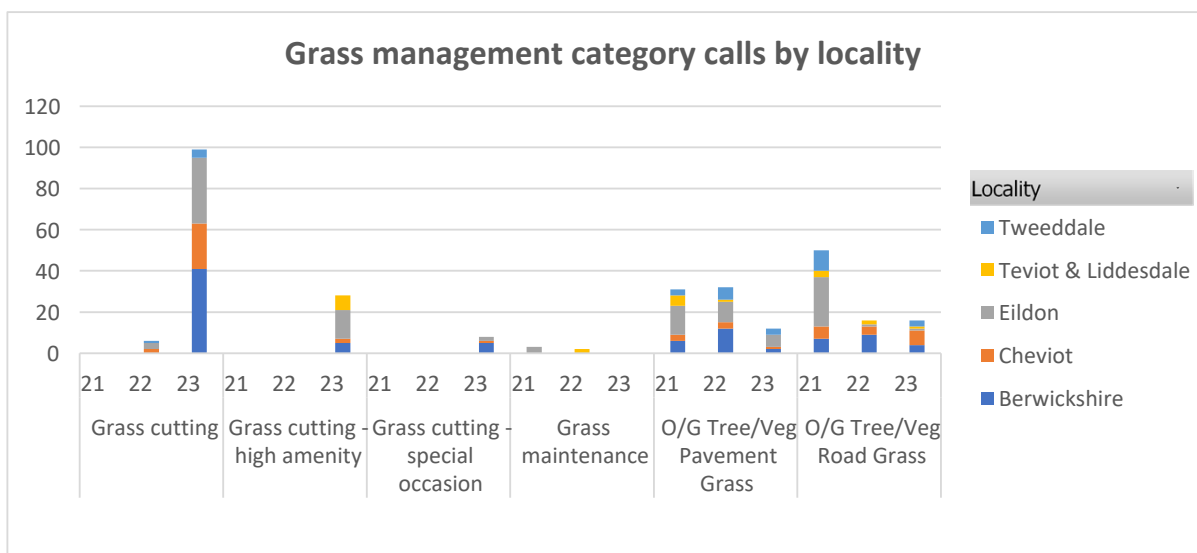
4.8 According to records, there were 17 official complaints relating to grass cutting undertaken by SBC Parks & Environment since October 2022.

5 POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 In reviewing our Grass Management operations, a wider appraisal of the policy context is critical in considering future service design.

5.2 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 obliges local authorities to 'promote and facilitate' public participation in their decisions and activities, including the allocation of resources through Participatory Budgeting (PB). This is a way for residents to have a direct say in how to spend part of a public budget. Officers have considered opportunities to undertake Participatory Budgeting in planning a review of Grass Management.

5.3 The Council sets out in the Climate Change Route Map, under the Nature Based Solutions theme, commitments to a Greenspace Management Review:

"Greenspace Management Review		
Route Map Action	Description	Desired outcome
NR1	Review of greenspace maintenance operations to identify opportunities for a) increasing biodiversity and support pollinators and b) reducing carbon emissions, c) reviewing weedkilling operations, recognising the value of our greenspaces to local community resilience and wellbeing.	• Less intensive grasscutting in specific areas where appropriate. • Increased areas of pollinator-friendly longer grass/meadow grass habitat. • Increased wildflower habitat. • Trialling alternative approaches to weed control.

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5.4 Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of iodiversity. Government funding, such as the Naturescot Nature Restoration Fund, are targeted to supporting Local Government investment in nature restoration. The Scottish Government Scottish Biodiversity Strategy outlines the commitment to protect at least 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (30x30 Target). The 2021 and 2022 Programme for Government committed to the deployment of Nature Networks. These two are key components in increasing ecological connectivity and restoration of nature more widely, helping to deliver the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

There is close alignment and support of other area-based commitments to nature restoration including the Nature Restoration Fund. Similarly, there is a growing movement towards making space for nature in burial grounds, as explored in a recent APSE report. Organisations such as Caring for God's Acre set out best practice in Burial Grounds management, https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/ .

6 PROPOSED GRASS MANAGEMENT REVIEW

6.1 As outlined above, within current service provision there are constraints and challenges within the Service regarding capacity and resources, as well as unpredictable climatic conditions. At the same time, customer feedback indicates that community satisfaction has dropped. There are also increasing requirements for Local Authorities to deliver networks for nature and support local pollinators.

6.2 It is, therefore, proposed to develop a revised model of operation designed to address deficiencies with the current model with the aim of improving outcomes for communities, for staff and for nature/biodiversity. It is proposed to undertake a Pilot where we review resource deployment to ensure our preparedness to manage local priority sites, particularly during peak growth occurrences, depending on climatic conditions.

6.3 The objective is to use local knowledge - empowering staff and working with communities - to build on the 'Biodiversity sites' already established and trial relaxed cutting regimes where appropriate. By reducing the frequency of cuts in these sites, it is anticipated this will enable squads to deploy additional cuts in agreed priority sites, at key times of the year, where required. This builds in flexibility to the routine cyclical works, enabled by focussing resources on these key areas. The naturalised sites would still receive 1-2 cuts per year and would need to be monitored to manage weed control.

6.4 Through the pilot the aim is to work with both operational staff and communities to:
- Identify sites that are suitable for a relaxed cutting regime, to offset any additional cuts required elsewhere, and conversely;
- Identify key general amenity sites that are local priorities to deploy any additional cuts where required.

6.5 The key principles we propose to explore through the trial are outlined below:
- Active cemeteries are priorities.
- Community priority sites identified within a route will be monitored and targeted where required for additional cuts in response to growth conditions.
- Opportunities to offset this with a relaxed grasscutting regime for biodiversity, across general amenity areas and less active/inactive cemetery grounds, will be trialled.

6.6 This pilot will test a more flexible approach within the cycle of 20 working days to general amenity areas, providing a balanced approach to service delivery to meet local needs and priorities, while delivering biodiversity benefits.

6.7 By trialling this approach through a Pilot, we can build intelligence around engagement and delivery, monitor outcomes, and phase in changes where appropriate.

7 NEXT STEPS

7.1 In order to trial this approach, it is proposed to undertake a Pilot across three operational routes in different localities. The suggested routes are as follows:

- Berwickshire - Duns/Chirnside/Westruther route
- Eildon - Galashiels/Tweedbank route
- Teviot & Liddesdale - Hawick landward route.

7.2 Officers propose to engage with relevant operational squads, building on their local knowledge to review opportunities within their route to recalibrate cutting regimes. As well as designing deliverable outcomes, this approach seeks to build consensus and buy-in on agreed service standards and outcomes.

7.3 Following this, engagement with relevant community councils and other stakeholders will be undertaken, to agree priorities for service delivery.

7.4 Once agreed, new route designs will be prepared in advance of the 2024 growing season.

7.5 Communication and awareness raising is critical to encourage community buy-in. Signage will be deployed at naturalised sites and a communications plan will be prepared. Feedback will be sought during the Pilot.

7.6 The performance and outcomes of the Pilot will be monitored throughout 2024 and a further update brought back to members.

7.7 If agreed, it is proposed that the Pilot would be undertaken as follows:

October/November 2023	Staff engagement on three trial routes.
November 2023 – January 2024	Community engagement with relevant stakeholders.
February – March 2024	Design new routes/sites as agreed.
March – September 2024	Delivery, recording outcomes and community feedback.
November 2024	Report back to members, considering outcomes and next steps.

7.8 An additional strand of work will consider opportunities for communities to get involved in their local area, building on the great work carried out across communities, as celebrated at the Greener Gateway Community Awards. We will encourage biodiversity and work with local communities to assist where possible in community efforts to deliver planting displays with flower varieties that support pollinators.

7.9 Stakeholder involvement - as part of harmonisation of standards across the service, we are keen to explore opportunities with other Community Planning Partners, such as RSL's, to see where we can align services, or service standards, to improve outcomes for communities.

7.10 A further consideration in proposing this Pilot is the Digital Transformation agenda. As the Service strives to become more data-driven, the role of digital technology will be critical. Future digitisation could present opportunities for improved collaboration of staff and communities in inputting and accessing data on local services and opportunities and providing a more responsive service.

8 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 **Financial**
There are no costs attached to the proposed operational review set out in this briefing paper.

8.2 **Risk and Mitigations**
The proposals contained here are designed to enhance outcomes for communities by making resource available to target agreed priority sites, such as play parks and key community spaces. In making changes to service provision around grass management, there is a risk that one user group, such as rural congregations, could be disadvantaged by reducing grass cutting in one area. However, working with communities in agreeing these priorities will mitigate against this.

8.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

A Stage 1 IIA has been completed and will be published. No negative impacts have been identified as a result of the pilot being proposed in this Report.

8.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**
The recommendations contained in this report would support the UN Sustainable Development Goal number 15, "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss" in that areas identified with communities will be considered for increasing and improving local biodiversity benefits.

8.5 **Climate Change**
The Climate Change assessment checklist has been completed, and identified positive impacts on 4) local opportunities for health and wellbeing, recreation, and 5) enhancing local plant species and natural habitats. The LBAP actions includes protection and enhancement of habitats and species from revised greenspace management, including appropriate mowing regimes. The proposal will contribute to those aims. Additionally the proposals support 6) Adaptation, in that reduce cutting of grass areas improves potential to survive drought conditions.

8.6 **Rural Proofing**
No rural proofing impacts have been identified

8.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**
There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

8.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**
There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation, as a result of these proposals.

9 **CONSULTATION**

9.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and no comments received.

Approved by

| **Name** | **Title** |
| **John Curry** | **Director – Infrastructure & Environment** |

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Carol Cooke	Parks & Environment Manager

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Carol Cooke can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Carol.Cooke@scotborders.gov.uk

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1   Details of the Proposal

A. Title of Proposal:	Grass Management review
B. What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice ☐ A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice **X**
C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)	<u>Background</u> In 2018 it was agreed to implement changes to grass cutting and greenspace management to deliver savings, which included the removal of bedding plant provision, creation of Biodiversity areas and moving from a 10 to a 20 working day grass cutting cycle on general amenity areas. The 20 day frequency has been applied to all general amenity areas including play parks, schools, cemeteries, village greens, care homes and other amenity open spaces. As a one size fits all approach this has generated challenges, the main ones being; climatic conditions can affect grass growth, staff shortages, fleet issues/machinery breakdown and the clearing of long arisings. The number of customer enquiries relating to grass management rose sharply in 2023. <u>Proposal</u>

Revised February 2023

	In response to the challenges experienced, whilst also fulfilling our statutory duties, it is proposed to undertake a Pilot across three operational routes in different localities. • Berwickshire - Duns/Chirnside/Westruther route • Eildon - Galashiels/Tweedbank route • Teviot & Liddesdale - Hawick landward route. Using local knowledge and working with both staff and the local communities sites will be identified which will build on the 'Biodiversity sites' already established and trial relaxed cutting regimes, where appropriate. Community priority areas will also be identified which require additional cuts. By reducing the frequency of cuts across some sites it is anticipated this will enable squads to deploy additional cuts in the agreed priority sites, at key times of the year, where required. This builds in flexibility to the routine cyclical works, enabled by focussing resources on these key areas. Naturalised sites would still receive 1-2 cuts per year and would need to be monitored to manage weed control. The pilot will also test a more flexible approach within the cycle of 20 working days to general amenity areas, providing a balanced approach to service delivery to meet local needs and priorities, while delivering biodiversity benefits. By trialling this approach, we can build intelligence around engagement and delivery, monitor outcomes, and phase in changes where appropriate. Next steps • Engagement with the operational squads, building on their local knowledge to review opportunities within their route to recalibrate cutting regimes. As well as designing deliverable outcomes this

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	approach seeks to build consensus and buy-in on agreed service standards and outcomes. • Following this, engagement with relevant community councils and other stakeholders will be undertaken, to agree priorities for service delivery. • Once agreed, new route designs will be prepared in advance of the 2024 growing season. • Signage will be deployed at naturalised sites, and a comms plan will be prepared. • Feedback will be sought from both staff and communities. The performance and outcomes of these pilots will be monitored throughout 2024, and a further update brought back to members. • Opportunities for community and stakeholder involvement and support will also be explored eg biodiversity areas and harmonisation of service standards to improve outcomes for communities.
D. Service Area: Department:	Parks and Environment
E. Lead Officer: (Name and job title)	Carol Cooke, Parks & Environment Manager
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Stuart Young, Greenspace Manager Amy Alcorn, Greenspace Programme Officer Neil Pringle, Operations Manager Foreman and staff in Berwickshire, Eildon and Teviot localities.
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	31 October 2023

Section 2 Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

No *(please delete as applicable)*
If yes, - please state here:

Section 3 Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:

Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010?
(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter "No" and go to Section 3.2.)

Equality Duty	Reasoning:
A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*	No
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? *(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)*	No
C. Foster good relations? *(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)*	No

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3.2	**Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)**

Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.

	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping		x		General amenity areas including play parks, schools, cemeteries, village greens, care homes and other amenity open spaces which are identified as priority community spaces will be maintained to an agreed standard, encouraging all members of the community to access and use the space. The increase of biodiversity areas and areas whereby the cutting regime can be more relaxed will create more spaces to support local pollinators and wildlife and increase areas of pollinator-friendly longer grass/meadow grass habitat.
Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring		x		General amenity areas including play parks, schools, cemeteries, village greens, care homes and other amenity open spaces which are identified as priority community spaces will be maintained to an agreed standard, encouraging all members of the community to access and use the space. The increase of biodiversity areas and areas whereby the cutting regime can be more relaxed will create more spaces to support local pollinators and wildlife and

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	x			increase areas of pollinator-friendly longer grass/meadow grass habitat.
Gender Reassignment/ Gender Identity anybody whose gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth	x			
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	x			
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to **maternity** leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, **protection** against **maternity** discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	x			
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)	x			
Religion or Belief: different beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief)	x			
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	x			
Sexual Orientation, e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	x			

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3.3   Fairer Scotland Duty

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?

No

If No go to Section 4

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	**Positive Impact**	**Negative Impact**	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.				
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies				

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Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport)				
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income				
Looked after and accommodated children and young people				
Carers paid and unpaid including family members				
Homelessness				
Addictions and substance use				
Those involved within the criminal justice system				

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty *(Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only)*

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.
This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?
No

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If "Yes", please complete below	
Covenant Duty	**How this has been considered and any specific provision made:**
The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;	
The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;	
The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.	

Section 4 Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered "No" to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

No (please delete as applicable)

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

Revised February 2023

No negative impacts have been identified as a result of the pilot being undertaken for the spring/summer of 2024. The pilot aim is not to change agreed policy but to empower both staff and communities to agree a more flexible approach to grass management which reflects local priority and need. Consultation will be undertaken with both staff and local communities at the end of the 2024 growing season to discuss and agree which changes could be made on an ongoing basis, therefore a full Impact Assessment is not required.

Signed by Lead Officer:	**Carol Cooke**
Designation:	**Service Manager**
Date:	
Counter Signature Director:	**John Curry**
Date:	

Revised February 2023

HEADSTONE SAFETY

Report by Director - Infrastructure & Environment

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

14 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   **The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Headstone Safety, as agreed at Council in March, reporting findings from the Headstone Reinstatement Pilot Study that was undertaken at Lennel Cemetery. It also sets out proposed options and a recommendation in considering next steps.**

1.2   A report to Council in March on Headstone Safety included a range of proposals aimed at improving outcomes for communities in the future management of Headstone Safety;

- **Proposal 1: New Headstone Safety Policy** - encompassing the development of a Monumental Masons Registration Scheme, a Transfer of Rights Scheme, a programme of strip foundation installations and a refresh of standards for future headstone testing programmes

- **Proposal 2: Communications Refresh** – including an overhaul of communications to members, communities and social media around Headstone safety works aimed at raising awareness and education

- **Proposal 3 – Headstone Reinstatement Pilot Study** – to trial the re-erection of any headstones that have been laid flat by Scottish Borders Council, enabling further analysis of risk, resource and cost implications.

1.3   It was agreed to bring a subsequent update back to members on Proposal 3, which is the focus of this paper. The purpose of this is to inform members on the findings, to enable subsequent decision making.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

   (a) notes the findings of the Headstone Reinstatement Pilot.
   (b) approves the implementation of option 5, set out in section 7 of the report, as a preferred option as part of the 24/25 financial planning process.
   (c) agrees to the preparation of a new Headstone Safety Policy.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Scottish Borders Council manages 155 cemeteries and burial grounds across the region, of which 146 fall under a programme of routine headstone safety inspection involving 46,435 headstones. Lairholders, as memorial owners, are responsible for the maintenance and repair of their headstones and memorials. Scottish Borders Council as a Burial Authority has legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that cemeteries are maintained in a safe condition. Burial Authorities have a permanent responsibility for a programme of headstone safety, inspecting and making safe headstones in line with legislation and national guidance.

3.2 As part of these statutory safety works, Scottish Borders Council undertakes a cyclical programme of safety inspections and making safe headstones. This involves making safe by either socketing, laying flat or cordoning off any headstone that fails the safety inspection and that requires to be immediately made safe. The decision around the method of making safe any headstone is based on individual assessment of each headstone by our trained Officers. Headstones are only laid flat where it is deemed essential to immediate public safety and there are no alternative methods of making safe. The following table illustrates the status of the programme to date;

Headstone Safety Inspection Programme 2018-2023			
No. headstones under inspection	46,435		
No. tested to date	38,827	No. laid flat to date	1861 (4.9% of total)
No. outstanding	7,608	No. remaining estimated to be laid flat	1149
		Total estimated laid flat:	**3010***
*6.6% of total - this number appears disproportionately high; this is due to the nature/ condition of the outstanding headstones			

3.3 In response to a complaint received at Lennel Cemetery, Coldstream, regarding the practice of laying headstones flat, Scottish Borders Council agreed to undertake a Pilot Study at Lennel Cemetery whereby any such headstones would be re-erected by the local authority. The aim of the study, referred to as the Headstone Reinstatement Pilot Study, was to enable further analysis of the risk, resource and cost implications of carrying out works to re-erect any headstones that have been, or will require to be, laid flat by Scottish Borders Council in order to be made safe as part of the Local Authority's duties as Burial Authority.

3.4 Work in cemeteries and around memorials is an emotive issue and all staff seek to work in a sensitive matter at all times. All the measures being

discussed in this paper seek to improve support for memorial owners, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for communities.

4   HEADSTONE REINSTATEMENT PILOT

4.1   In considering any future works to re-erect headstones that have been made safe by laying flat, it was identified that further analysis was required of the risk, resource and cost implications to the Burial Authority (Scottish Borders Council) of carrying out this work. This was the aim of the Pilot.

4.2   The Pilot commenced at Lennel Cemetery on 8th May 2023 and took place over an 8 week period, completing on 30th June 2023. Each headstone that had been laid flat by Scottish Borders Council was revisited and assessed on their suitability for re-erection. A 28 day notice period preceded the reinstatement works, and communications were issued to the local community, Members and stakeholders such as the local congregation. Signage was installed during the 28 day notice period, throughout and after the trial.

4.3   In Lennel Cemetery, 52 headstones were assessed as being suitable to be re-erected. Within the cemetery there were seven headstones that had already been re-erected privately by memorial owners using independent monumental masons, as has been done across the region. Two of the headstones which were re-erected required specialist core drilling works which had to be outsourced.

4.4   The process involved laying of concrete foundations in preparation for re-erecting the headstones; this was left to cure for 28 days. Once cured, the headstone was revisited and re-erected. This involved drilling and pinning the headstone and base into the new foundation.

4.5   The pilot was managed and recorded on site using handheld devices, with the aim of streamlining the data management processes. There were some remote connectivity challenges but this provided useful intelligence in developing our digital systems.

5   OUTCOMES

5.1   Using the data collated during the Pilot we have been able to estimate the wider cost, resource and risk implications of any potential wholesale reinstatement of headstones across cemeteries and burial grounds.

5.2   Staff time, materials, fuel and one-off costs were recorded throughout the Pilot. In total 405 hours of operational staff time were recorded against the Pilot (this excludes IT, business support and management time).

5.3   Some additional costs/potential costs were incurred – for example, two headstones required specialist core drilling works which cost £560. Three memorial owners in Lennel approached the Council seeking reimbursement for private restoration, at a total cost of £1128. They were advised of the status of the Pilot and that any such decision around retrospective compensation would be subject to further consideration.

5.4 Retrospective compensation is likely to be a factor across the region, where memorial owners who have already paid for private reinstatement works may seek reimbursement for these costs following any policy shift.

5.5 During the pilot no complaints were received. Some enquiries were received around other headstones in the cemetery which had been made safe by socketing, or had fallen flat naturally. Both of these were not within the scope of the Pilot.

5.6 Based on the Pilot data, we ran basic calculations on the staff time deployed. Projecting this forward, and factoring in the other statutory activities undertaken by Bereavement Services, we estimate that, for SBC to provide Headstone Reinstatement works across the region, this could be delivered over a 5 year programme.

5.7 A wholesale reinstatement programme delivered in-house by SBC would require adequate resourcing with recurring revenue budget, equipment, and staff time across this programme.

6 RISK LIABILITY AND STATUTORY DUTY

6.1 While the Council is considering our approach to Headstone Safety, our aim is to continue to ensure public safety while improving outcomes for communities in ways that are both compassionate and sustainable. The guidance around Headstone safety is complex and the Council strives to balance public safety with public interest, within the resources available. This paper recognises that we can do more to support communities and seeks to find a sustainable solution.

6.2 **Roles and responsibilities** - Headstones are private property and Lairholders, as memorial owners, are by law responsible for maintenance and repair. Burial Authorities have a legal responsibility for public safety. That is, Burial Authorities are required to take measures to protect public safety through works to make the headstones safe, while following government guidance. This acknowledges that all parties have a role to play and, in undertaking works to private properties without prior agreement, Burial Authorities begin to act beyond their statutory role.

6.3 **Liability in perpetuity** - when a Burial Authority undertakes non-statutory works to private property there is an increased burden of risk and liability, in perpetuity, to the Authority for any structures they have (re)erected.

6.4 **Financial risk** - there are financial risks of the Council undertaking non-statutory work to re-erect headstones. A recent statement from the Scottish Government advises that "We do not intend to require burial authorities to repair, conserve and restore headstones and memorials, beyond making them safe" as it was acknowledged that this would cause Burial Authorities to "incur a significant financial outlay… which they may not be able to viably fund". At this time, we currently have a pressure to make significant permanent savings within the Service.

6.5 **Benchmarking** – Officers issued an information request to other Local Authorities. 72% of Authorities who replied do not routinely reinstate headstones. Of those that do, most deliver this activity utilising external

contractors for some, or all, of the activity. This could be based on risk, resources and specialist skills needed. Where they do reinstate headstones, 30% of Authorities who replied seek to recover the costs of doing so.

7   REINSTATEMENT OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.1   Informed by the Pilot, and further benchmarking and risk analysis, Officers have considered 5 possible options for delivering future Headstone Safety and Reinstatement measures, which are set out below;

Option	Summary
1	**Provide Headstone Reinstatement:** Consider options for prioritising revenue funding to provide in-house Headstone Reinstatement works across the Scottish Borders.
2	**Outsource Headstone Reinstatement:** Explore provision of Headstone Reinstatement works via independent contractor, supported by adequate revenue funding.
3	**Provide via a cost-recovery business model**: provide discretionary reinstatement services for a set fee based on cost data analysis.
4	**Do nothing/revert to Proposals 1 and 2:** Develop Proposals 1 and 2 as outlined previously, and leave lairholders/families to undertake private reinstatements where desired.
5	**Explore a partnership approach with private contractors**: The Council, as facilitator for Headstone reinstatement, supports memorial owners to undertake reinstatement themselves through developing an approach, and some certainty around fee scale(s), in partnership with the local private sector.

7.2   A full analysis of the costs, benefits and risks identified for each has been undertaken and is set out in Appendix 1.

7.3   Upon completing this analysis of the options developed, Option 5 appears to provide the optimal balance between facilitating improved outcomes and managing financial sustainability and risk. In recognising that (even with significant resource pressures) the Local Authority has a role as a stakeholder in this process, we can seek to work in partnership with the private sector to provide a service to memorial owners, ensuring we communicate this timeously during the Headstone Safety Programme.

7.4   This would be developed through undertaking initial engagement with suitably qualified independent monumental masons across the region. Through this engagement we would seek to develop a partnership approach, whereby a fee/fee scale is agreed for any headstone repair works. The Local Authority would then be able to signpost memorial owners to these contractors immediately at the point of making a headstone safe. This gives the memorial owners certainty over next steps and over costs for any repair works, mitigating any unnecessary distress. We will also explore financial support that may be offered where affordability remains a possible barrier (through appropriate revenue budget). By doing so, we would seek

to work more collaboratively with communities and memorial owners, as facilitator for remedial works.

8   NEXT STEPS

8.1   Officers will continue to develop the Headstone Safety Policy, taking into account the development of Proposals 1 and 2 outlined at 1.2 above, considering our:

- Policy approach – developing installation quality standards (through a Monumental Masons Registration Scheme), reviewing future headstone testing thresholds and developing a lairholder transfer of burial rights scheme (supported by digital systems).
- Communications – ensuring these are effective in both raising awareness and education and minimising any distress to our communities around what is a sensitive and emotive issue.

This would be prepared ahead of the 2024/25 financial year.

The current cycle of the Headstone Safety Programme will also be progressed towards completion.

8.2   We are also developing a stream of work seeking to improve standards of cemetery upkeep across the region. We are at the early stages of devising a cemetery audit programme to improve our asset management across the cemetery estate which will consider sunken lairs, general maintenance and any defects detected.

9   IMPLICATIONS

9.1   **Financial**
The financial implications of each option are summarised in appendix 1.

(a)   Should Members approve the recommendation to develop Option 5, the only financial implication will be any potential financial support that the Council may wish to offer through a hardship scheme.

(b)   Option 1 - In-house reinstatement of Headstones with no cost recovery - would require an estimated £143,680 of revenue funding (not including any manpower costs) across the whole 5 year programme, i.e. £28,736 per annum.

(c)   Option 2 - Outsourcing of headstone reinstatement to an independent contractor - would cost significantly more due to labour costs; this would be determined through a tendering exercise, however would be expected to be in the region of double the internal cost estimated at Option 1

(d)   Option 3 - Cost-recovery models of reinstatement - whereby the Council undertake reinstatement works for memorial owners for a fee, would incur minimal costs to cover any potential financial support the Council may wish to offer through a hardship scheme.

> (e) Option 4 – Do nothing/revert to Proposals 1 and 2 – would not incur any costs.
>
> (f) Option 5 - Explore a partnership approach with private contractors – would incur minimal costs, for signage and also for any potential hardship scheme the Council may wish to consider

9.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

The risks associated with the options considered in this paper have been set out in the table at Appendix 1. There are potential financial, reputational and liability risks and mitigations which are explored in the table. The outcomes of the pilot and wider benchmarking have informed this risk appraisal and the recommended approach seeks to deliver a balanced approach to risk management, across these three areas of financial sustainability, community impact and liability.

9.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

Stage 1 and 2 IIAs have been completed and will be published. Potential impacts were identified to groups on the basis of low/no wealth or socioeconomic background, where costs for re-erection may be a barrier. Mitigation has been built in to address this potential impact, through the proposal to consider a possible 'hardship fund' which would directly address any impacts, provided adequate revenue funding is identified to support this with a partnership approach with private contractors, provides the optimal balance between facilitating improved outcomes and managing financial sustainability and risk. In recognising that (even with significant resource pressures) the Local Authority has a role as a stakeholder in this process, we can seek to work in partnership with the private sector to provide a service to memorial owners, ensuring we communicate this timeously during the Headstone Safety Programme.

9.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

Further to undertaking the checklist, the submitted proposal has no impact on these goals.

9.5 **Climate Change**

Further to undertaking the checklist, the submitted proposal has no impact.

9.6 **Rural Proofing**

There are no known impacts on the grounds of rural proofing from the proposals outlined in this paper.

9.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

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

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of these proposals.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name   **Title**
John Curry   **Director – Infrastructure & Environment**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Carol Cooke	Parks & Environment Manager

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference: [insert last Minute reference (if any)]

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Carol Cooke can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Carol.Cooke@scotborders.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1 – OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Risk	Cost
1. Provide Headstone Reinstatement in-house: Consider options for prioritising revenue funding to provide in-house Headstone Reinstatement works across the Scottish Borders.	• All headstones reinstated	• Incurs additional revenue pressure on Service - need to identify funding within financial planning process or consider what we will stop doing. • Liability in perpetuity for the work done to headstones; risk of claims for any accidental damage to private property • Risk of retrospective claims for compensation from privately re-erected headstones • Risk of being unable to deliver outstanding financial plan savings • Risk of being unable to deliver key statutory and community services unless adequately resourced	£28,736 per annum + deployment of existing staff time from other duties (estimated value of staff time is £98,450 per annum)
2. Outsource Headstone Reinstatement: Explore provision of Headstone Reinstatement works via independent contractor, supported by adequate revenue funding	• All headstones reinstated • Current manpower capacity unchanged, service delivery unaffected and opportunities to enhance cemetery management • Risk/Liability covered through independent works under 3rd party warranty	• Incurs additional budgetary pressure on Service to fund external service • Risk of retrospective claims for compensation from privately re-erected headstones • Risk of being unable to deliver outstanding financial plan savings	>£28,736 per annum; depending on outcome of any procurement exercise
3. Provide via a cost-recovery business model: provide discretionary reinstatement services for a set fee	• Memorial owners offered a service: can request the Council to undertake reinstatement works (or can undertake privately); providing a direct resolution.	• Risk of damage to public trust; perception of SBC profiteering from undertaking their statutory duties to make cemeteries safe.	• £minimal

	• Works/liability scaled in proportion to public demand. • Cost neutral; 'pay at the point of use'; risk of historic compensation claims reduced	• Undercutting the private sector; possible relationship damage between SBC and private sector. • Risk of affordability for some; addressed through a concession/hardship scheme • Liability in perpetuity for work done to headstones and ongoing future works.	
4. Enable private memorial owners to undertake Reinstatement: supported by improved communications and contact details through Proposals 1 and 2 as outlined previously, namely; ▪ Proposal 1: New Headstone Safety Policy Monumental Masons Registration Scheme, Transfer of Rights Scheme, strip foundation installations & a refresh of standards for future headstone testing thresholds ▪ Proposal 2: Communications Refresh overhaul of comms to Members & communities aimed at raising awareness and education; including monthly updates to ward Members	• No liability risk • Current manpower capacity sustained, opportunities to enhance cemetery management • The Council can support Memorial owners to arrange reinstatement at their own discretion privately.	• Reputational risk of being perceived as not proactive in this space; could be addressed through better engagement and comms	£ 0

5. Explore a partnership approach with private contractors: through this, the Council would be facilitator for Headstone reinstatement – supporting memorial owners to undertake reinstatement themselves through developing a best value approach with the local private sector. Initial market testing will identify the optimal operating model.	• Council acting as enabler/facilitator – providing a more solutions-focussed approach than currently • Memorial owners offered a service supported by SBC • Cost neutral; 'pay at the point of use'; less risk of compensation claims • Devolved delivery would reduce SBC's risk and liability to in perpetuity for works to private memorials • Improved partnership working with private sector already involved in headstone and monumental masonry installation • Current manpower capacity unchanged, service delivery unaffected and opportunities to enhance cemetery management	• Possible reputational risk of memorial owners being required to pay for works to their headstones/memorials (though not paying SBC) • Risk of affordability for some; addressed through a concession/hardship scheme	£ depending on uptake of any agreed hardship fund - the Council may wish to cover costs for those whom affordability is an issue.

Scottish Borders Council

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Stage 1 Scoping and Assessing for Relevance

Section 1   Details of the Proposal

A. Title of Proposal:	HEADSTONE SAFETY
B. What is it?	A new Policy/Strategy/Practice ☐ A revised Policy/Strategy/Practice √
C. Description of the proposal: (Set out a clear understanding of the purpose of the proposal being developed or reviewed (what are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, including the context within which it will operate)	A report was submitted to Council in March 2023 on Headstone Safety which included a range of proposals aimed at improving outcomes for communities in the future management of Headstone Safety. This proposal follows on from that report to enable subsequent decision making and includes the report of findings from a Headstone Reinstatement Pilot. SBC has legal obligations to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that cemeteries are maintained in a safe condition. SBC also has a permanent responsibility for a programme of headstone safety, inspecting and making safe headstones. As part of the safety works, any headstone that fails the safety inspection and requires to be made safe is either socketed into the ground, laid flat or cordoned off. In response to complaints about laying headstones flat, it was agreed that a Pilot Study be undertaken at Lennel Cemetery, Coldstream, whereby any such stones were re-erected by SBC. The aim of the study was to enable further analysis of the risk, resource and cost implications involved if SBC was to carry out the

works required to re-erect all headstones laid flat in order to have been made safe.

Following the pilot, the findings have been used to carry out an options appraisal process and a preferred option has been proposed for the delivery of headstone safety and reinstatement measures. Staff time, materials, fuel and one-off costs were recorded throughout the Pilot.

The preferred option is to explore a partnership approach with private contractors. The Council, as facilitator for Headstone reinstatement, supports memorial owners to undertake reinstatement themselves through developing an approach, and some certainty around fee scale(s), in partnership with the local private sector.

Upon completing this analysis of the options developed (costs, benefits and risks identified), this option appears to provide the optimal balance between facilitating improved outcomes and managing financial sustainability and risk. In recognising that (even with significant resource pressures) the Local Authority has a role as a stakeholder in this process, we can seek to work in partnership with the private sector to provide a service to memorial owners, ensuring we communicate this timeously during the Headstone Safety Programme.

This would be developed through undertaking initial engagement with suitably qualified independent monumental masons across the region. Through this engagement we would seek to develop a partnership approach, whereby a fee/fee scale is agreed for any headstone repair works. The Local Authority would then be able to signpost memorial owners to these contractors immediately at the point of making a headstone safe. This gives the memorial owners certainty over next steps and over costs for any repair works, mitigating any unnecessary distress. We will also explore financial support that may be offered where affordability remains a possible barrier (through appropriate

2

	revenue budget). By doing so, we would seek to work more collaboratively with communities and memorial owners, as facilitator for remedial works.
D. Service Area: **Department:**	Parks & Environment Assets & Infrastructure
E. Lead Officer: **(**Name and job title)	Carol Cooke Parks & Environment Manager
F. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Diane Munro, Bereavement Officer Stuart Young, Greenspace Manager
G. Date(s) IIA completed:	24 October 2023

Section 2   Will there be any impacts as a result of the relationship between this proposal and other policies?

NO
If yes, - please state here:

Section 3   Legislative Requirements

3.1 Relevance to the Equality Duty:
Do you believe your proposal has any relevance under the Equality Act 2010?

(If you believe that your proposal may have some relevance – however small please indicate yes. If there is no effect, please enter "No" and go to Section 3.2.)	

Equality Duty	Reasoning:
A. Elimination of discrimination (both direct & indirect), victimisation and harassment. *(Will the proposal discriminate? Or help eliminate discrimination?)*	No
B. Promotion of equality of opportunity? *(Will your proposal help or hinder the Council with this)*	No
C. Foster good relations? *(Will your proposal help to foster or encourage good relations between those who have different equality characteristics?)*	No

3.2 Which groups of people do you think will be or potentially could be, impacted by the implementation of this proposal? (You should consider employees, clients, customers / service users, and any other relevant groups)				
Please tick below as appropriate, outlining any potential impacts on the undernoted equality groups this proposal may have and how you know this.				

	Impact			Please explain the potential impacts and how you know this
	No Impact	**Positive Impact**	**Negative Impact**	
Age Older or younger people or a specific age grouping	√			

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Disability e.g. Effects on people with mental, physical, sensory impairment, learning disability, visible/invisible, progressive or recurring	√			
Gender Reassignment/ Gender Identity anybody whose gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex assigned to them at birth	√			
Marriage or Civil Partnership people who are married or in a civil partnership	√			
Pregnancy and Maternity (refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to **maternity** leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, **protection** against **maternity** discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth),	√			
Race Groups: including colour, nationality, ethnic origins, including minorities (e.g. gypsy travellers, refugees, migrants and asylum seekers)	√			
Religion or Belief: different beliefs, customs (including atheists and those with no aligned belief)	√			
Sex women and men (girls and boys)	√			
Sexual Orientation, e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual	√			

3.3   Fairer Scotland Duty

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socioeconomic disadvantage when making <u>strategic</u> decisions.

The duty is set at a strategic level - these are the key, high level decisions that SBC will take. This would normally include strategy documents, decisions about setting priorities, allocating resources and commissioning services.

Is the proposal strategic?

YES

If No go to Section 4

If yes, please indicate any potential impact on the undernoted groups this proposal may have and how you know this:

	Impact			State here how you know this
	No Impact	**Positive Impact**	**Negative Impact**	
Low and/or No Wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.			√	If the proposed recommendation is agreed, there will be a cost for re-erection of headstones which memorial owners would incur and may struggle or be unable to meet.
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	√			

6

	√			
Area Deprivation – where you live (e.g. rural areas), where you work (e.g. accessibility of transport)	√			
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parents' education, employment and income			√	If the proposed recommendation is agreed, there will be a cost for re-erection of headstones which memorial owners would incur and may struggle or be unable to meet.
Looked after and accommodated children and young people	√			
Carers paid and unpaid including family members	√			
Homelessness	√			
Addictions and substance use	√			
Those involved within the criminal justice system	√			

3.4 Armed Forces Covenant Duty *(Education and Housing/ Homelessness proposals only)*

This duty places a legal responsibility on Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to actively consider (give due regard) to the three matters listed below in Education and Housing/ Homelessness matters.
This relates to current and former armed forces personnel (regular or reserve) and their families.

Is the Armed Forces Covenant Duty applicable?

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NO

If "Yes", please complete below

Covenant Duty	How this has been considered and any specific provision made:
The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces;	
The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces;	
The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.	

Section 4   Full Integrated Impact Assessment Required

Select No if you have answered "No" to all of Sections 3.1 – 3.3.

Yes

If yes, please proceed to Stage 2 and complete a full Integrated Impact Assessment

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If a full impact assessment is not required briefly explain why there are no effects and provide justification for the decision.

Signed by Lead Officer:	**Carol Cooke**
Designation:	**Parks and Environment Manager**
Date:	
Counter Signature Director:	**John Curry**
Date:	

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Scottish Borders Council

Stage 2 Evidence Gathering and Consultation

A. Title of Proposal:	HEADSTONE SAFETY
B. Service Area: **Department:**	Parks & Environment Assets & Infrastructure
C. Lead Officer: **(**Name and job title)	Carol Cooke Parks & Environment Manager
D. Other Officers/Partners involved: (List names, job titles and organisations)	Diane Munro, Bereavement Officer Stuart Young, Greenspace Manager
E. Date(s) IIA completed:	24 October 2023

Section 1 Data and Information

A. What evidence has been used to inform this proposal?
(Information can include, for example, surveys, databases, focus groups, in-depth interviews, pilot projects, reviews of complaints made, user feedback, academic publications and consultants' reports).

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A pilot study at Lennel Cemetery, Coldstream commenced on 8th May 2023 and took place over an 8 week period, completing on 30th June 2023. The aim of the pilot was to analyse the risk, resource and cost implications to the Burial Authority (Scottish Borders Council) in re-erecting headstones that have been made safe by laying flat. Each headstone that had been laid flat by Scottish Borders Council was revisited and assessed on their suitability for re-erection. A 28 day notice period preceded the reinstatement works, and communications were issued to the local community, Members and stakeholders such as the local congregation. Signage was installed during the 28 day notice period, throughout and after the trial.

Fifty-two headstones were assessed as being suitable to be re-erected with seven already having been re-erected privately by memorial owners using independent monumental masons, as has been done across the region. Two of the headstones which were re-erected required specialist core drilling works which had to be outsourced.

The process involved laying of concrete foundations in preparation for re-erecting the headstones; this was left to cure for 28 days. Once cured, the headstone was revisited and re-erected. This involved drilling and pinning the headstone and base into the new foundation.

The pilot was managed and recorded on site using handheld devices, with the aim of streamlining the data management processes.   Using the data collated we have been able to estimate the wider cost, resource and risk implications of any potential wholesale reinstatement of headstones across cemeteries and burial grounds. Staff time, materials, fuel and one-off costs were recorded throughout; in total 405 hours of operational staff time were recorded (this excludes IT, business support and management time).

Some additional costs/potential costs were incurred – for example, two headstones required specialist core drilling works which cost £560. Three memorial owners in Lennel approached the Council seeking reimbursement for private restoration, at a total cost of £1128. They were advised of the status of the Pilot and that any such decision around retrospective compensation would be subject to further consideration.

Retrospective compensation is likely to be a factor across the region, where memorial owners who have already paid for private reinstatement works may seek reimbursement for these costs, following any policy shift. Headstones are private property and Lairholders, as memorial owners, are by law responsible for maintenance and repair. Burial Authorities have a legal responsibility for public safety and are required to take measures to protect public safety through works to make the headstones safe, while following government guidance. This acknowledges that all parties have a role to play and, in undertaking works to private properties without prior agreement, Burial Authorities begin to act beyond their statutory role.

Commented [RJ1]: Unsure if this info is necessary to be in the public domain at this stage?

Commented [FE2R1]: Again more detail the better as sets context for the text around cost. It may be that a memorial owner reading this IIA wants to know approximately what kind of costs they might incur, more info seems better for the public.

B. Describe any gaps in the available evidence, then record this within the improvement plan together with all of the actions you are taking in relation to this (e.g. new research, further analysis, and when this is planned)

n/a

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Section 2 Consultation and Involvement

A. Which groups are involved in this process and describe their involvement

Elected members, Coldstream Community Council and the local congregation were provided with updates throughout the pilot.

B. Describe any planned involvement saying when this will take place and who is responsible for managing the process

Should the proposals be approved, the programme of Headstone Safety will involve informing communities in advance of any headstone safety works. The Bereavement Officer will ensure all communications are in place, notifying the relevant groups of any planned testing works through signage, email correspondence and media releases.

C. Describe the results of any involvement and how you have taken this into account.

During the pilot no complaints were received. Some enquiries were received around other headstones in the cemetery which had been made safe by socketing, or had fallen flat naturally. Both of these were not within the scope of the Pilot.

D. Describe any events held and views obtained (if applicable). Add or remove as needed.

Event 1

Date	Venue	Number of People in attendance	Protected Characteristics Represented

Views Expressed	Officer Response

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Stage 3 Summary and Next Steps

Section 1   Summary

Summarise what you have learned then develop this further.
(Describe the conclusion(s) you have reached from the evidence, and state where the information can be found.)

Please consider the following:
What have you learned from the evidence you have, and the involvement undertaken? Does the initial assessment remain valid?
What new (if any) impacts have become evident?
Is the proposal not to proceed because of a disproportionate impact on equality or Fairer Scotland characteristics?

Upon completing the analysis of the options developed, the proposed option appears to provide the optimal balance between facilitating improved outcomes and managing financial sustainability and risk. In recognising that (even with significant resource pressures) the Local Authority has a role as a stakeholder in this process, we can seek to work in partnership with the private sector to provide a service to memorial owners, ensuring we communicate this timeously during the Headstone Safety Programme.

A. **Please indicate if the proposal will proceed**

☒   Yes, please see below section 3 for next steps
☐   No, the proposal will not proceed based on disproportionate impact on equality or Fairer Scotland characteristics

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Section 2   Sign Off

Signed by Lead Officer:	Carol Cooke
Designation:	Parks & Environment Manager
Date:	03/11/23
Counter Signature Director:	
Date:	

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Section 3   Monitoring and Review (complete if relevant, remove if not)

B. State how the implementation and impact of the proposal will be monitored, including implementation of any amendments? For example, what type of monitoring will there be? How frequent?

This would be developed through undertaking initial engagement with suitably qualified independent monumental masons across the region. Through this engagement we would seek to develop a partnership approach, whereby a fee/fee scale is clarified and communicated to memorial owners for any headstone repair works. The Local Authority would then be able to signpost memorial owners to these contractors immediately at the point of making a headstone safe. This gives the memorial owners certainty over next steps and over costs for any repair works, mitigating any unnecessary distress. We will also explore financial support that may be offered where affordability remains a possible barrier (through appropriate revenue budget). By doing so, we would seek to work more collaboratively with communities and memorial owners, as facilitator for remedial works.

C. What are the practical arrangements for monitoring? For example, who will put this in place? When will it start?

Unable to complete until the proposal has been accepted or declined.

D. When is the proposal due for review?

Unable to complete until the proposal has been accepted or declined.

E. Who is responsible for ensuring that this happens?

Unable to complete until the proposal has been accepted or declined.

F. Please indicate if you have developed an Action Plan to take forward any remaining actions

☐   Yes, please see attached on final page
☐x   No, no further actions required

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