
LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY (LHS) 2017-22 YEAR 3 PROGRESS

Report by Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy

Executive Committee

9th February 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement of the Annual Progress Report which sets out what has been achieved in the delivery of year three of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-22 (Appendix 1) and approval to submit this to the Scottish Government More Homes Division.**
- 1.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy, supported by an assessment of housing need and demand. This strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing investment and service delivery in the Scottish Borders for 2017-22 and is informed and developed through extensive research and consultation with partners and the wider community. The LHS was approved by Scottish Borders Council and submitted to the Scottish Government in September 2017.
- 1.3 The Council and its partners have made good progress since the LHS was formally approved. Work in 2019/20 includes the delivery of 141 affordable homes, the submission of a very ambitious Strategic Housing Investment Plan (2020-2025) underpinned by up to £158m of investment, implementing the first year of the Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency Strategy, developing the Warm and Wells Borders project, initiating the pilot of the Missing Shares Scheme in Hawick, undertaking a study on wheelchair accessible housing in the Borders and 82 major adaptations being completed, are just some of the achievements over the year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Committee:-**
 - (a) Notes the progress made in delivering on the strategic actions as set out in the appended Annual Progress Report and Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix**
 - (b) Approve submission of the Annual progress Report and Matrix to the Scottish Government More Homes division.**

3 LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The LHS sets out the strategic direction for housing investment and service delivery in the Scottish Borders for 2017-22 and was approved by Scottish Borders Council and submitted to the Scottish Government in September 2017.
- 3.2 As a statutory housing authority the main focus in the delivery of the LHS is ensuring that the Council meets its statutory duties regarding access to, and the provision of, affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness. An annual progress report for 2019-20 is appended at Appendix 1. A detailed monitoring and evaluation matrix has been developed to track the delivery of the strategic actions and is appended at Appendix 2.

4 LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-22 – YEAR 3 ACHIEVEMENTS

- 4.1 The Scottish Government increased its Affordable Housing Investment Programme funding allocation to Scottish Borders to £16m. An additional £3.377m was then made available via slippage from other Council areas, therefore the total annual grant spend increased to a record £19.375m. This has supported the delivery of 141 affordable homes in 2019/20, exceeding our annual 128 unit target. There were also 14 assisted purchases through Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme. Unfortunately due to the adverse impact of the Covid pandemic it is anticipated that annual affordable housing completions in 2020-2021 will be reduced to around 122 new homes. This will fall slightly short of the LHS annual target of 128 homes. The current SHIP identifies 1,125 affordable homes for anticipated completion from 2021-2026.
- 4.2 £1.34 million has been invested in energy efficiency measures for private homes across the region and now includes an Air Source Heat Pump installation scheme. The RSL's have continued to make good progress towards the Energy efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) and the Borders Home Energy Forum celebrated its first year of operation. SBC also secured two years of funding to the amount of £551,000 from National Grid's Warm Homes Fund to deliver the "Warm and Well Borders" project. These activities are supporting a reduction in fuel poverty across the area.
- 4.3 During 2019/2012 928 households approached the Council's Homelessness Team for advice and/ or assistance. 91% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation. The remaining 9% may have returned to previous accommodation or moved in with friends/ relatives. 100% of clients are now provided with housing options advice and the level of repeat homelessness remains low. The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership continues to operate with a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

- 4.4 Over 5,000 Private Landlords are now registered within the Scottish Borders, with over 8,000 rental properties. The Private Sector Liaison and Enforcement Officer continues to work with landlords to help improve management and property standards, and to support landlords and tenants through recent legislative changes. A fully booked Landlord forum was held in October 2019, as well as several training events throughout the year. Further forums and training events are being planned for future dates.
- 4.5 In 2019/20, under Scheme of Assistance, £439,345 was spent on 82 completed major adaptations and £81,946 on 400 small adaptations and repairs. A Missing Shares Scheme will also be piloted in Hawick to help the private home owners with common repairs issues.
- 4.6 Newhaven Research Scotland Ltd were commissioned to undertake an assessment of the requirements and need for wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders. This examined the current profile of wheelchair users, the current housing stock suitable for wheelchair users, the challenges wheelchair users face and the current and potential shortfalls in the provision of wheelchair accessible homes. The work involved a multi-method approach and a wide range of engagement with wheelchair users and professional stakeholders. The finalised assessment and the proposed targets were approved by the Executive Committee on the 17th November 2020.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

- (a) There is no direct financial implication contained in the report. However delivery of the LHS is dependent on SBC's continuous provision of core services, financial resource allocations from Scottish Government, the continuing support from the affordable housing budget (Second Homes/ Council Tax) and resources arising from the affordable housing policy, partner agencies and private individuals.
- (b) Where any specific actions are considered as having a resource implication for the Council Officers would bring back proposals for consideration by the Executive Committee as they arise over the period of the strategy.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) Delivery of the LHS aims and objectives 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.
- (b) A Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEA) Screening Report was undertaken when the LHS was developed. This concluded that a full SEA would not be required for the LHS as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects. Any potential environmental effects from any specific proposals or plans which may relate to the LHS will be individually considered and addressed through the planning process and full SEAs in due course.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

- (a) A full Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the current LHS (2017-2022). Equalities forms an integral part of the LHS process and is part of the LHS guidance.
- (b) A full Integrated Impact Assessment will be embedded in the development process of the new Local Housing Strategy.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

It is considered that there are no direct economic, social or environmental effects arising from the report recommendations.

5.5 Carbon Management

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

5.6 Rural Proofing

The LHS 2017-22 has been rural proofed and it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from implementation. There is likely to be a wide range of positive outcomes for rural communities, including improvements in health, fuel poverty levels and availability of affordable housing in a variety of tenures.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

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

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 *The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.*

Approved by

Rob Dickson
Executive Director Corporate
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Signature

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Background Papers: APPENDIX 1: LHS Annual Progress Report 2019/2020
APPENDIX 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix 2017-22 – Year 3

Previous Minute Reference: 20 August 2019 – Executive Committee

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.

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