
WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOMES DELIVERY 2020-2021.

Report by the Executive Director – Corporate Improvement and Economy.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

18 May 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an annual update of the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes delivered against the Council target for the period 2020/2021.**
- 1.2 Revised Scottish Government Guidance required Councils to set all tenure wheelchair accessible homes targets. On 17 November 2020, the Executive Committee agreed an annual target of 20 homes. During 2020-2021, Registered Social Landlords delivered 2 wheelchair accessible homes, and the private sector delivered none.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) Notes the contents of this report.**
 - (b) Agrees that the Chief Planning & Housing Officer convene a meeting with RSLs and private builders to explore what the barriers are to building more wheelchair accessible homes and what measures could be employed to encourage their provision, and**
 - (c) Agrees that the Chief Planning & Housing Officer consider what additional technical guidance would be helpful to the encouragement and delivery of more wheelchair accessible homes.**

3 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT.

- 3.1 Over the last 5 years there has been increasing policy interest in the provision of affordable and adaptable homes for household which contain a wheelchair user. In 2016 the Scottish Government launched "A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Delivery Plan 2016-21". In 2018 the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's 18-month enquiry in homes for disabled people, concluded that that the chronic shortage of accessible homes was a breach of disabled people's rights and was a hidden housing crisis. Most recently Scottish Government has issued Guidance in March and August 2019 which requires Councils to set targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures. Councils have a close working relationship with Registered Social Landlord sector through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan [SHIP] processes. The Executive Committee agreed the current SHIP 2021-2026 on 17th November 2020, which contains proposals for delivery of a number of wheelchair accessible homes. However, on the other hand, Scottish Councils have expressed their concerns regarding their ability to set and enforce such targets for the private sector.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 17 November 2020, the Council's Executive Committee agreed 20 wheelchair homes as annual target, with Registered Social Landlords [RSLs] to deliver 15 of these. The Executive also agreed that an annual update report be brought to this Committee to report on progress delivery. The same Executive Committee meeting also approved the Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2020- 2026 which set out proposed prioritised affordable homes projects which will almost exclusively be delivered by Registered Social Landlords [RSLs].

4 WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING DELIVERY 2020-2021

- 4.1 During the period 2020-2021, Trust Housing Association delivered 2 wheelchair standard homes included within the Extra Care Housing development at Todlaw Duns. No wheelchair standard homes were delivered by the private sector. Delivery of new homes typically has a 3 to 4 year lead in time from design to completion. Therefore it is anticipated that it will take a corresponding time from when the Council set the above target, for new supply wheelchair accessible homes to be produced in addition to those currently being developed. Covid related factors have delayed construction work and delayed previously planned site starts dates during 2020-2021. RSLs have demonstrated their support and willingness to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible homes through the Affordable Housing programme , and it is envisaged that RSL funding bids to the Community Renewal Fund may potentially also contribute to boosting delivery of new homes. Therefore it is envisaged that increased numbers of wheelchair accessible homes will be delivered by RSLs in future years. However effort will have to be made to encourage delivery of wheelchair accessible homes from the private house builders. Officers will consider the Council arranging a potential seminar event in order to seek to engage this sector.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendation in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

This report is for noting, and no specific concerns have been identified which require to be addressed.

5.3 **Integrated Impact Assessments**

- (a) In line with both Council policy and legislative requirement, the SHIP 2021-2026 has been subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment. This Assessment identified any no concerns about the way the delivery of the SHIP is likely to adversely impact on any of the equalities groupings. It is considered that the setting of an annual Wheelchair Accessible Homes target will provide further stimulus toward increasing the supply of such homes throughout Scottish Borders.
- (b) Homes produced by RSLs will be allocated according to their individual allocations policy and procedures. As a consequence of being an RSL, they are subject to the weight of Statutory scrutiny via external Regulation and Inspection by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

- (a) In accordance with Section 7 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 pre-screening assessment of the SHIP 2021-2026 was undertaken using the criteria specified in Schedule 2 of the Act. The pre-screening assessments identified no or minimal effects in relation to the environment hence the SHIP is exempt from SEA requirements under Section 7 (1) of the Act.
- (b) By seeking to provide more new affordable homes including wheelchair accessible homes, the SHIP will promote sustainable communities and help to address many of the housing supply challenges identified in the Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022.
- (c) There are no adverse economic or social effects resulting from SHIP delivery, and potential environmental effects from provision of wheelchair accessible and other new build homes will be addressed through the Planning Process and National policies and standards, and will be consistent with meeting the housing requirements and standards as set out by Scottish Government.
- (d) The objectives of the SHIP are consistent with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and 13 Climate Action. Specifically the SHIP responds to the ambition of SDG 11 by promoting access to adequate, safe and affordable homes by ensuring integrated inclusive and sustainable settlements and by strengthening regional development planning. With respect to SDG 13, development will be at least consistent with Scottish Building Standards and the national objective of net zero greenhouse gases by 2045.

5.5 **Climate Change**

- (a) It is considered that there are no direct effects on the Council's carbon emissions arising from the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes.
- (b) New Build homes will have a general effect on the region's carbon footprint however these are addressed within the Council's Planning and Building Standards processes, and will be consistent with meeting the housing requirements and current applicable standards as set out by the Scottish Government.
- (c) It is anticipated that RSL affordable homes proposed in the SHIP 2021-2026 will be built to meet Scottish Government's "Silver Standard". In the event that this cannot be reached, new homes will be built to comply with current Scottish Building Standards, thereby seeking to

maximise the opportunity for energy efficiency and reduction of fuel poverty.

- (d) It should be noted that at its meeting of 25 September 2020, the Council committed to setting a target as soon as possible for achieving a reduction in the Council's carbon emissions which is at least consistent with the Scottish Government target of net zero by 2045, and the intermediate targets set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. The Council's Planning and Building Standards will reflect and implement the developing national and local public policy positions and requirements.

5.6 Rural Proofing

- (a) Rural proofing applies to all areas of Scottish Borders classified by Scottish Government as 'remote rural' or 'accessible rural'. This applies to all areas of Scottish Borders outwith the towns of Galashiels/Tweedbank, Hawick, Peebles, Innerleithen, Selkirk, Eyemouth, Jedburgh and Kelso.
- (b) The SHIP project working group carried out a Rural Proofing exercise in August 2020 as part of the preparation of the SHIP 2021/26. It was considered that the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes will have a positive effect by increasing the supply of affordable homes across Scottish Borders.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the recommendation set out in this report.

5.8 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 and Regulatory Services, Monitoring Officer, Chief Legal Officer, Chief Officer Audit and Risk, Service Director Human Resources and Communications, Clerk to the Council, and Corporate Communications have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated in the final report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson

Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy

Signature

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Background Papers: SHIP 2021-26 Document Executive Committee 17th November 2020.

Previous Minute Reference: Wheelchair accessible housing target report by the Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy to the Executive Committee 17th November 2020.

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

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