
LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY (LHS) 2017-22 YEAR 4 PROGRESS

Report by Executive Director Corporate Improvement and Economy

Executive Committee

8th June 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement of the Annual Progress Report which sets out achievements in the delivery of year four 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 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. Year four has seen some challenges as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, however, work during 2020/21 included the delivery of 107 affordable homes, the submission of an ambitious Strategic Housing Investment Plan (2021-2026) underpinned by up to £163m of investment, implementing the second year of the Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency Strategy, delivering the Warm and Wells Borders project and 41 major adaptations being completed in the private sector are just some of the achievements and progress made 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. 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 2020-21 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 4 SUMMARY

- 4.1 The Scottish Government allocated £16.975m Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding to assist the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders in 2020/21. Unfortunately, both nationally and locally, the impact of Covid-19 has adversely impacted on the delivery of planned projects in a range of ways, most notably through construction sites being closed for extended periods and delays to site starts. This resulted in a £2.855m underspend against the Scottish Government's funding allocation.
- 4.2 Funding in 2020/21 has supported the delivery of 94 new build affordable homes, 9 assisted purchases through Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme and 4 individual purchases by Waverley Housing Association; a total of 107 affordable homes. As was anticipated for 2020/21 period, this has fallen short of our annual 128 unit target. However, despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19, as of 31st March 2021, there were 449 affordable homes (18 sites) under construction, 33 homes (3 sites) at the pre-site start stage and 176 homes (4 sites) at planning and pre-application stages. The current SHIP identifies 1,125 affordable homes for anticipated completion from 2021-2026.
- 4.3 Scottish Borders Council were awarded £1.34m in Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme funding. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the programme's delivery, despite this it was still possible to install 100 of the planned 278 energy efficiency measures supporting over 75 households. £550,000 of the £1.34m grant allocation was drawn down over that period. For the 2020/21 programme (expected to complete in December 2021) Scottish Borders Council have been allocated over £1.7m, a record allocation for the Scottish Borders. This will support over 250 measures; result in over £900,000 in lifetime financial savings and save over 700 tonnes of carbon. 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 second 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. As we enter the second year of the project it has delivered significant savings and benefits for those most at risk and in fuel poverty. Over 300 households have been supported with benefits and energy savings of £300,000 having been realised.

- 4.4 Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSPP) members have been on the front line 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. To achieve this 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.
- 4.5 During 2020/2021 767 households approached the Council's Homelessness Team for advice and/ or assistance and 90% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation. 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.
- 4.6 Over 5,000 Private Landlords are now registered within the Scottish Borders, with almost 8,000 private 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. 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 safety checks that should be completed and how to undertake viewings. Some enforcement actions have also been suspended during this time.
- 4.7 In 2020/21, under the Scheme of Assistance, £173,221 was spent on 41 completed major adaptations and £50,201 on 264 small adaptations and repairs. Covid-19 impacted upon delivery of major adaptations and numbers were down by almost 50% as a result of the period spent in lockdown and the difficulty in visiting properties, particularly where vulnerable residents were shielding for long periods of time. Progress in the delivery of the Missing Shares scheme has also been impacted by Covid-19 therefore the CARS programme and the associated Missing Shares pilot have now been extended.
- 4.8 Following the delivery of the finalised report "A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders" in January 2020, work has continued to engage stakeholders. It is intended that the action plan will now be delivered and integrated with the Local Housing Strategy 2017-22 actions through the LHS monitoring and reporting processes.
- 4.9 The final report identified a wide range of issues and challenges that will need to be addressed at national as well as at a local level by Scottish Borders Council and partner agencies. Informed by the report the Executive Committee agreed, in November 2020, to set an annual Wheelchair

Accessible Housing target of 20 homes with proposed delivery being divided into 15 by Registered Social Landlords with the balance provided by the private sector. This target is reflected in Scottish Borders Council's current Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021/26. During 2020/21, 2 new build homes were completed to wheelchair accessible housing standards. These were delivered by Trust Housing Association at the new Extra Care Housing development at Longfield Crescent in Duns, which delivered 52 specialist housing places overall.

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 Sustainable Development Goals

It is considered that implementation of the Local Housing Strategy contributes positively to goals 1, 3, 7, 8 10, 11 and 13. The strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing investment and service delivery in the Scottish Borders. The plan prioritises the delivery of, and access to, affordable housing; prioritises action to address climate change and contributes to reducing inequalities and tackling poverty.

5.5 Climate Change

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 and action to improve house condition.

5.6 Data Protection Impact Statement

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

5.7 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.

5.8 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 & 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
Improvement and Economy

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Donna Bogdanovic	Principal Officer, Housing Strategy, Policy & Development
Lindsey Renwick	Housing Strategy Development Officer 01896 662 797

Background Papers: APPENDIX 1: LHS Annual Progress Report 2020/2021
APPENDIX 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix 2017-22 – Year 4

Previous Minute Reference: 9th February 2021 – 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.

Contact us at housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk or tel:01896 661392