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## **LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-22(23) SIX YEAR SUMMARY REPORT**

**Report by Director – Infrastructure and Environment**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**13 June 2023**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks endorsement of the Annual Progress Report which sets out achievements and progress in the delivery of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-22(23) (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(23).
- 1.3 The Council and its partners have made good progress since the LHS was formally approved in September 2017. Year six has seen some challenges as a result of the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the Cost of Living Crisis, however, activity during 2022/23 included the delivery of 146 affordable homes, the submission of an ambitious Strategic Housing Investment Plan, delivery of 220 energy efficiency measures underpinned by £1.8m in investment, delivering the Warm and Well Borders project, initiating development of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, progress related to empty homes, progress in delivery of the Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plan and 68 major adaptations completed in the private sector.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **2.1 I recommend that the Executive 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.
- 3.2 A progress report covering the six years of the current LHS is appended at Appendix 1. A detailed monitoring and evaluation matrix has been developed to track the delivery of the strategic actions in year 6 (2022/23) and is appended at Appendix 2. The annual reports for each year of the LHS and the associated monitoring tools can be viewed [here](#).

### **4 LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-22(23) – SIX YEAR SUMMARY**

- 4.1 The Scottish Government allocated £93.102m Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding to assist the delivery of affordable housing within the Scottish Borders over six years, 2017/18 – 2022/23.
- 4.2 Funding over the past six years has supported the delivery of 782 new build affordable homes, 103 assisted purchases through Scottish Government's Open Market Shared Equity Scheme, 138 individual purchases by RSLs and 14 new affordable homes through the Rural Housing Grant; a total of 1,046 affordable homes. The six year annual average of homes being secured or developed for affordable housing is 174. Excluding purchases the average new build completions over the six year period is 130 per annum, exceeding our annual 128 unit target. The current SHIP identifies the potential to deliver 1,320 affordable homes over the period 2023-2028. Scottish Government confirmed the following AHSP Allocations to Scottish Borders - £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. Based on a grant contribution of £100k per unit and a £16m annual allocation it is anticipated there is funding available to support up to 160 new affordable homes per year, or 800 over the 5 year period of the SHIP.
- 4.3 Bridge homes was a Limited Liability partnership established in 2014 by Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Futures Trust to provide affordable housing for mid-market rental through implementation of the NHT LA Variant programme. Over the course of the development phase in 2017/18 and 2018/19 Bridge Homes was able to deliver 54 affordable homes throughout the Scottish Borders. In March 2022 the Council disposed of all 54 homes owned by the LLP to Eildon Housing Association. This enabled the tenants to remain living in their current homes and secured all the homes in the affordable rented sector in perpetuity. Subsequent new tenancies are on the basis of social rented housing.
- 4.4 The third South East Scotland Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA3) for the period 2022-27 was prepared throughout 2020 and 2021 on behalf of the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and Scottish Borders Councils. HNDA3 for the South East Scotland area achieved robust and credible status from CHMA on Thursday 28th July

2022. This Assessment informs the setting of the Housing Supply Target for the Borders, identified in the proposed Local Housing Strategy 2023-28 as 353 new homes per year, of which 141 should be affordable housing.

- 4.5 The Empty Homes Officer was recruited in August 2021 and has an active case load of 182 empty homes. The Officer has been making connections with owners, neighbours and communities being affected by empty homes. 2022 also saw the launch of an Empty Homes Grant Scheme. The Grant Scheme has been well received and with 18 applications for a variety of empty homes across the borders, 14 of which will become affordable rental homes. In the first year of dedicated resource being applied to empty homes, we have seen 18 empty homes being brought back into use through direct officer activity. The Empty Homes Officer was also nominated for the SEHP Rising Star Award at the Scottish Empty Homes Conference 2023.
- 4.6 Over the period of 2017/18 to 2022/23 the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme has successfully delivered over £9.22m of investment in energy efficient measures and renewable technologies for households in the Scottish Borders. Outputs show that from April 2017 to March 2023, 1,870 measures were installed across the Scottish Borders, supporting over 1,553 households. Estimated annual fuel bill savings as a result of this activity are £333k with an estimated reduction in carbon of 1,560 tonnes. The programme was significantly impacted by the pandemic in 2020/21. For the 2023/24 programme Scottish Borders Council have been allocated £1.82m.
- 4.7 The Borders Home Energy Forum was established in 2017/18 and continues to ensure that a strategic, multi-agency approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty, improve energy efficiency and improve health and well-being in the Scottish Borders, particularly for the most vulnerable households. The Forum was designed to align with climate change and fuel poverty targets and actively seeks to collaboratively address these important issues.
- 4.8 The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy was developed in 2018 and covered a three year period. SBC's ongoing support and activity in relation to affordable warmth and energy efficiency will continue to be prioritised through the Local Housing Strategy, as a statutory requirement. This will be further supported by development and then delivery of a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy towards the end of December 2023.
- 4.9 Scottish Borders Council secured two years of funding in 2019/20, worth £551,000, from National Grid's Warm Homes Fund to deliver the "Warm and Well Borders" project. The project was delivered through a partnership between Scottish Borders Council, Changeworks, three local Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Energy Scotland, health and social care teams and community health organisations. The scheme was able to support 771 households and secured benefits and savings of £1.2 million for households across the region up to March 2022. The scheme was extended for a further 24 months and in 2022/23 the project has engaged 398 households with 198 cases resolved with a positive outcome and secured benefits and savings of £1.36 million for households across the region.
- 4.10 In 2018/19, the new Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHSP) was established. The key focus of the partnership is

the implementation of the Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plan (RRTP). The partnership have been on the front line and worked closely throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness continued to receive the services and support they required when restrictions were in place.

- 4.11 Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP has been led by the BHHSP and has included consultation with key partners including the Borders Housing Alliance and the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Planning Group. Implementation of the RRTP commenced in March 2019 (2019/20), and included the development of projects to be launched from late 2020 onwards. A Rapid Rehousing Development Officer was appointed in January 2020 and has played a key role in the implementation of the RRTP and achieving the aims and objectives of the plan. Responding to the Covid 19 pandemic did impact significantly on delivery of actions within the RRTP during that period, however a revised RRTP is now being developed with refreshed outcomes and action plan. A temporary Private Rented Sector Development officer has also recently been appointed and will take up post in April 2023. The officer will embed homelessness prevention principles into the private rented sector by taking forward the private sector elements of Rapid Rehousing Transition plan.
- 4.12 Scottish Borders Housing Association, Waverley Housing and Cyrenians launched the Scottish Borders Housing First pilot in October 2021 which was funded to run for two years and aimed to provide housing and support to 30 households over the period. To the 31st of March 2023, 10 Housing First tenancies had commenced, making a significant contribution to helping to keep vulnerable people safe.
- 4.13 As of January 2023 there were 4,637 approved landlords, and 7,367 approved rental properties in the Scottish Borders. 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 number of landlord forums and training events have been held over the past six years in partnership with Landlord Accreditation Scotland.
- 4.14 In 2019 the Council agreed to pilot a Missing Shares Scheme in the Scottish Borders, initially targeting the Hawick Conservation Area over a two year period. 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 until 2025. Currently the pilot is aligned principally to support the activities of CARS. If non-participation in CARS is experienced the threat of missing shares, including associated cost and the additional disincentive of missing out on grants, has meant that provision of a share has remained untested. However as an incentive to act missing shares remains an important mechanism. Currently there is one 'live' case where a missing share seems likely, supporting a priority tenement containing 5 'flats' within Hawick town centre.
- 4.15 2023 will see the introduction of the [shared repairs app](#) across the Borders area and the establishment of the trusted trader scheme. In addition proposals to roll out the missing shares pilot to other priority areas will be brought to Executive Committee for consideration and approval.

- 4.16 Most people want to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and the majority of older people that need care and support receive this in their own homes, enabled through home care, adaptations and equipment. Investment in adaptations, advice and information for older people and their families supports this. The Care and Repair service provides home adaptations, small repairs, handyperson service, falls assessments and information and advice to enable older and disabled people across all housing tenures to remain in their own homes. The Care and Repair service works in close partnership with the HSCP to provide all adaptations commissioned by health, social care and referrals made directly from households and enables the same high standards in adaptations to be delivered across all the localities. Over the past 6 years, £1.257m has been spent on private sector major adaptations under the Scheme of Assistance, supporting 366 households. RSLs have spent £2.334m over the period on 593 adaptations across their stock. Care & Repair have project managed 1,967 minor adaptations and repairs, and 403 major adaptations over the six year period of the last LHS. There have been 22,572 visits by a handyperson.
- 4.17 In 2019 the Young People’s Housing Needs Plan was developed with significant engagement and input from young people and stakeholders across the region. The study, and associated plan, helped developed a range of policy and practical responses, with commitment from a range of partners. These will enable young people to make more successful and sustainable transitions into their own housing. Work has been ongoing on a number of these actions and this work will be carried forward into the LHS 2023-2028.
- 4.18 In January 2020 the report “A space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders” was completed. Informed by the report the Executive Committee subsequently agreed, in November 2020, that the Council would 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 2023/28. In 202/21, 2 wheelchair accessible homes were built, 48 in 2021/22 and 6 in 2022/23, an average of 18 per year since the target was set.

## **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 Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), 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 have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### Approved by

**Name - John Curry**

**Job Title - Director – Infrastructure and Environment**

### Author(s)

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**Background Papers:** APPENDIX 1: LHS Six Year Annual Progress Report 2017/18 – 2022/23

APPENDIX 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix 2017-22 – Year 6

**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](mailto:Housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk)