



SOCIAL WORK AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2012 - 2017: UPDATE

1 Recommendations

Social Work and Housing Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Comment on and acknowledge the progress update of the Local Housing Strategy from April 2012 – March 2013.**
- 1.2 Receive annual progress reports regarding the Local Housing Strategy.**

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 The draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for Aberdeenshire went to public consultation from 9 July 2012 until 31 August 2012. Responses to the consultation exercise were used to inform the final Local Housing Strategy 2012 - 2017, which was submitted to the Scottish Government in December 2012. It underwent a Peer Review by other local authorities; the resultant feedback was extremely positive.
- 2.2 Aberdeenshire Council received a letter from Scottish Government, dated the 24 April 2013, commending the Council on the work undertaken to produce the Local Housing Strategy and confirmed the overall quality of the Strategy. The Peer Review Panel acknowledged the strong outcome based approach to the LHS and welcomed the use of separate appendices to set out clearly, using indicators and targets, how the outcomes will be measured.
- 2.3 The panel was impressed that the LHS showed a very good understanding of the wider policy agenda (including private rented sector, particular needs groups etc) and a commitment to help towards progress in meeting the national policy targets, acknowledged that the LHS contained a succinct analysis of homelessness and welcomed the focus on the Housing Options approach to prevention and the support provided to homeless households.
- 2.4 The panel agreed that the LHS showed a good understanding of fuel poverty in the area, including the extent and main causes of fuel poverty, the groups most at risk and the links to the energy efficiency agenda. It also agreed that there is good analysis on the extent of fuel poverty and recognition of those groups most at risk of falling into fuel poverty
- 2.5 The final Local Housing Strategy 2012 - 2017 was reported to and approved at the Social Work Housing Committee on the 6 June 2013.
- 2.6 There are 9 Strategic Outcomes and 34 key actions in the Local Housing Strategy. Appendix 1 outlines progress for each of the strategic outcomes and key actions.

2.7 In summary:

- 193 new affordable homes built with 96 delivered by the Council itself.
- The number of households placed in bed & breakfast has reduced by 25%.
- 3,497 private sector households assisted with energy efficiency measures.
- 438 households assisted with improving elements related to below tolerable standard.
- 95% of Council stock now has loft insulation to the current standard.
- 230 major adaptations were fitted to private houses and 229 to Council houses.
- Language line is assisting with translation for Council customers
- One new proposed stop over site is being considered.
- 79% of council housing has achieved SHQS and on target to achieve 100%.
- 71% of tenants are at least satisfied with the service they receive.
- There has been a 25% increase in the number of locations with some form of tenant representation.

2.8 Local Housing Strategy Performance Indicators are currently being input in to the 'Covalent' system. Future updates will be in that format.

2.9 A newsletter, providing detail on the LHS progress, will be available on Arcadia, the Website and on Members Ward Pages allowing an opportunity for the wider community to comment.

3. Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the Local Housing Strategy 2012 – 2017 on 15 May 2013 and was approved at the Social Work and Housing Committee on 6 June 2013. A further EIA will be carried out at the annual review of the Local Housing Strategy.

3.2 There are no staffing or financial implications.

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Director of Housing and Social Work

Report prepared by Janelle Clark, Housing Manager and Liz Hamilton, Strategic Housing Officer,
DE 15 August 2013
28 August 2013

APPENDIX 1

LHS Key Actions update April 2013

3.1.1 Access to Housing

Strategic Outcome: People will have access to an increased supply of quality affordable housing.

Key Actions

1.	Increase the supply of social rented housing.
2.	Deliver intermediate tenure options for rent and for sale.
3.	Assess and implement new funding models.

Progress to Date

- Aberdeenshire Council continues to work with strategic partners to maximise all available funding streams and resources in order that 60% of new affordable housing will be aimed at the social rented sector.
- The remaining 40% of new affordable housing will be aimed at intermediate tenures, including shared ownership, shared equity, low cost home ownership and mid market for rent.
- Work is ongoing to reduce the number of households in housing need by 20 per year.
- Consultation is ongoing to retain stock by applying Pressured Area Designation to specific areas with identified housing need and including house types.
- An Empty Houses initiative to bring empty properties back into use is currently being worked up.
- New build completions 2012/2013
Total = 183
Social Rent = 96
 - (17 of which are for particular needs)
 - 80 were provided by Aberdeenshire Council
 - 6 by Castlehill Housing Association
 - 10 by Grampian Housing AssociationAcquisitions for rent = 3 (one of which is for particular needs)
Mid Market rental = 8
Low Cost Home Ownership (First time buyers) = 22
Low Cost Home Ownership = 40
Shared Ownership = 14
- Properties purchased from the open housing market
2011/2012 = 1
2012/2013 = 3

3.1.2 Homelessness

Strategic Outcome: To empower homeless people to transform their lives by:

- People at risk will receive timely and clear information and support.
- All unintentional homeless will have access to good quality settled accommodation.

Key Actions

1.	To make best use of the Corporate Planning framework in order to address the root causes of homelessness through an integrated approach with all relevant services in order to prevent homelessness.
2.	The implementation of a specific prevention service.
3.	To work in partnership with NHS Grampian to identify, address and remove any barriers to accessing health and wellbeing services.

Progress to Date

- Implementation of the Homelessness Prevention Team in September 2012 with the aim of reducing homelessness presentations.
- Options and Homeless Event held in May 2013 improved integration between services in relation to homelessness prevention, promoted corporate buy in and shared ownership of Housing Options and Homelessness prevention across Aberdeenshire as well as providing the Options and Homeless Prevention Team with a firm platform on which to build future service development upon. There were various workshops at the event facilitated by stakeholders and partners including a health Inequalities workshop facilitated by the Public Health Coordinator with the lead for homelessness.
- In 2012/13 homeless presentations have reduced to 1409 despite the predicated increase due to abolition of priority need, which is directly linked to the introduction of the Homelessness Prevention Team
- The number of individuals being placed in B&B has reduced by 25% and for those placed in B&B the length of stay has reduced by 20%. As a result of this a significant reduction in spend has been achieved resulting in savings for the council.
- Better access to appropriate mental health services / substance misuse services is being promoted for those threatened with or those experiencing homelessness, by developing the role of the Care Manager for substance misuse /homelessness to provide a holistic approach to complex cases.

- Local health initiatives and other health related services available within our communities are being promoted within the homelessness WebPages on Aberdeenshire Council's website and within key service areas.
- Raised awareness within the Public Health Team of issues around homelessness through members of the Public Health Team shadowing Prevention, Support and Homelessness teams - June 2013
- Development of appropriate information sharing links between housing and health professionals through the provision of quarterly reports on specific homelessness stats to target key health and well being projects. This includes the provision of Keep Well Checks for homeless people and those vulnerable to homelessness above the age of 35 - target number of checks met for 2012/2013

3.1.3 Private Sector Housing

Strategic Outcome: Private Sector Housing will be improved by addressing critical disrepair and enhancing energy efficiency.

Key Actions

1.	Improve the energy efficiency of private sector houses.
2.	Provide information, advice and practical support through Scheme of Assistance.
3.	Improve houses to ensure elements of Below the Tolerable Standard (BTS) housing are addressed.
4.	Develop funding mechanisms to allow homeowners who do not have access to funding for repairs and maintenance to their homes.
5.	Improve the management standards in the private rented sector, engage with more landlords and provide support to tenants.

Progress to Date

- The energy efficiency of 3,497 private sector houses was improved through the Universal Home Insulation Scheme.
- The Scheme of Assistance implementation is ongoing and is being delivered by the Aberdeenshire Care & Repair Project until September 2013. Homeowners are provided with information, advice and practical assistance through the Scheme of Assistance to help them repair, maintain or improve their homes. 1,077 households were provided information and advice and 316 households were provided practical assistance.
- Leaflets to help homeowners carry out repairs and maintenance have been produced on:
Short Guide to Scheme of Assistance; Damp & Condensation; Home Safety; Gas Safety; Electrical Safety; Lead Pipes; Roofs, Gutters & Chimneys.

These leaflets have been distributed throughout the council and Care & Repair.

- 438 households were assisted to improve elements of BTS housing.
- An Equity Loans Policy has been produced and is being implemented.
- Private rented sector landlords and letting agents are given the opportunity to attend training courses to help improve their management standard. A minimum of 10 courses are provided per year.
- Regular e-mails are sent to landlords providing information on legislative changes.
- A newsletter is to be issued to private tenants in autumn 2013 detailing their rights since the recent legislative changes have taken place.

3.1.4 Fuel Poverty

Strategic Outcome: To aim to eradicate Fuel Poverty for all properties as far as is reasonably practicable by 2016. Fuel poverty will be decreased by 5% each year across all tenures.

Key Actions

1.	To improve the energy efficiency of housing across Aberdeenshire
2.	To assist households to maximise their income each year.
3.	To reduce fuel costs for households across Aberdeenshire

Progress to Date

- All residents in Aberdeenshire have been offered free loft and cavity wall insulation installation through the Universal Home Insulation Scheme (UHIS), an initiative delivered by Aberdeenshire Council in conjunction with SCARF (Save Cash and Reduce Fuel) and the Scottish Government. The Universal Home Insulation Scheme has installed 415 full loft insulation, 2,648 loft top ups and 434 cavity wall insulation to owner occupiers and private sector tenants across Aberdeenshire.
- During 2009 - 2013, 2,879 of Aberdeenshire Council's housing stock had a new heating system installed; 1,789 properties have had external doors have been fitted; 804 properties had new windows installed and 248 properties had external wall insulation installed. These improvements should make the cost to heat the properties less and will help retain the heat longer.
- Over the last four years, 95% of Aberdeenshire Council's suitable stock has had loft insulation up to a minimum of 300mm installed.
- 664 council properties have had cavity wall insulation measures installed.

- Income maximisation information continues to be provided by Aberdeenshire Council, Pensions Service, SCARF and Care & Repair. 704 income maximisation referrals and 1029 social tariff referrals were taken by SCARF. Welfare Rights Officers assisted 302 households which generated an additional £474,394.24 income, averaging £130.91 per month.
- SCARF/AEEAP are undertaking a fuel cost campaign to encourage eligible households to apply for Social Tariffs from their supplier. Continuing to promote the take up of energy efficiency measures will help reduce fuel costs in the long term.

3.1.5 Housing for Particular Needs

Strategic Outcome: People with a particular need will have access to appropriate affordable housing and support to allow them to sustain and improve their health to live as independently as possible.

Key Actions

1.	Ensure a minimum of 15% of new build affordable homes are developed each year and existing stock is reconfigured for those with a particular need.
2.	Provide equipment and adaptations in order to reduce the number of households with an unmet particular housing need in the private and public sectors each year.
3.	Identify current and future housing support needs and harmonise housing support services across Aberdeenshire.

Progress to Date

- Housing Needs and Demand Assessment for 11/12 confirmed as being robust and credible.
- Older People Joint Commissioning Strategy Housing Contribution Statement confirmed as being robust and credible.
- Dementia design standards embedded with new build particular needs specification and standards.
- Improved monitoring of waiting times for major adaptations.
- Number of LA and RSL affordable housing units built for people with a particular need increased to 18 in 2012/13, 32% of total properties developed. (6 units were built in 2011/12)
- Number of Very Sheltered Housing units increased to 165 (2012/13) from 125 in 2011/12.
- Number of major adaptations increased across all tenures;

2012/13 – 230 major adaptations carried out in private sector properties

2012/13 – 229 major adaptations carried out in LA properties

2012/13 – 250? stage 3 major adaptations carried out in RSL properties

3.1.6 Minority Ethnic Communities

Strategic Outcome: Minority Ethnic Communities including Gypsies/ Travellers will have access to appropriate land, housing and support, encouraging social integration.

Key Actions

1.	Identify the barriers to meeting the housing needs of the minority ethnic community, including migrant workers.
2.	Encourage all members of the community to report prejudice incidents.
3.	Provision of one well maintained stopover site every 2 years that meets the needs of the Gypsy/Traveller community and manage stopover and established sites effectively.

Progress to Date

- The Minority Ethnic Outreach Worker regularly sets up surgeries in places of employment and community facilities.
- Language line has proved very beneficial for overcoming initial language barriers between the minority ethnic people and housing staff. Interpreters are invaluable for more in-depth discussions with clients.
- The Minority Ethnic Outreach Worker has relieved pressure on front-line housing staff by dealing with cases which are 'time rich' due to language barriers.
- Officers in Aberdeenshire Council are currently considering a proposal to develop a disused area of land at Aikey Brae, Old Deer, as a Gypsy/Traveller stopover site. The proposal is to develop the site to accommodate 14 pitches with the provision of water, refuse facilities and portable toilets.

3.1.7 Asset Management

Strategic Outcome: Council Housing will be of high quality, energy efficient, healthy, safe and secure.

Key Actions

1.	Provision of high quality housing.
2.	Provision of a flexible, efficient, effective, economic and user focused Housing Repairs Service.
3.	Provision of energy efficient housing.
4.	Provision of high quality council flats and common elements in mixed tenure tenement properties.

Progress to Date

- Increased number of properties meeting the SHQS. The number of properties meeting the SHQS has risen from 73% to 79% and is on schedule to achieve 100% by the April 2015 deadline.
- Improvement in the percentage of gas service completed within last 12 months. The percentage of gas services completed remains consistently high with 99% being completed within 12 months of the previous service.
- Improvement in the number of repairs completed within target. The percentage of repairs completed within target across all priorities continues to exceed 90%.
- Increase in the number of Council flats in mixed tenure blocks meeting SHQS. The service continues to work closely with owners in mixed tenure blocks and has appointed a Common Repairs Officer to aid these discussions to ensure that mixed tenure properties also meet the SHQS by 2015.

3.1.8 Housing Management

Strategic Outcome: A high quality housing management service will be provided, achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and sustainable communities.

Key Actions

1.	Provision of safe housing areas and good quality neighbourhoods where there is a strong sense of community including support to vulnerable and new tenants.
2.	Review house allocation policy to give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need; making best use of available stock.
3.	Affordable rent levels to tenants which will allow the Housing Business Plan to be deliverable and sustainable.
4.	An increased focus on costs to provide a proactive housing management service.
5.	Provision of service delivery based on the Scottish Social Housing Charter performance indicators.

Progress to Date

- In relation to rent arrears control performance indicators Aberdeenshire Council was within the top quartile of the Scottish Housing Best Value Benchmarking performance amongst Scottish Councils in 2011/12 at 3.46% (Arrears as a % of Net Rent Collectable).
- The allocation policy has been reviewed. A new policy was partially implemented in April 2013 and will be fully implemented by October 2013 which includes provisions to alleviate the impact of welfare reform.
- The year end figures for Total Rent Due Collected is 95.4% and 4.05% for the Current Tenant Arrears as a % of net rent due.
- A high percentage of tenants are either satisfied or very satisfied with the level of Housing Service. The Independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2011 indicated that 71% of tenants were satisfied with services they receive and rent/charges made.
- 89% of tenants indicated they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood. (Independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2011), which compared with 85% from the ITSS in 2006.

3.1.9 Tenant Participation

Strategic Outcome: Tenants and other customers are enabled and empowered to become involved, if and when they want, and at a level they feel comfortable with, in decisions about the housing service provided. These opportunities should extend to those who are hard to reach or seldom heard.

Key Actions

1.	Increase the number and geographical distribution of tenants actively involved in tenant participation activities.
2.	Develop means of involving housing applicants in the review and development of Housing Policy.
3.	To have a Sheltered Housing Tenant Forum in place by 2015.
4.	Continue to support cross-landlord cooperation and sharing of resources for tenant participation.

Progress to Date

- There has been a 25% increase in the number of locations with some form of tenant representation, mainly within Sheltered Housing. (25 as at 31 March 2013)
- There has been an increase in the number of tenants involved in groups and as Local Tenant Voices - at 31st March 2013 there were 11 Local Tenant Voices, an increase of 1 (i.e. 10%). However, there has been a slight decline in the total number of tenant and resident groups since 2011, which was in part due to the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining members. Ellon Area Tenant Resident Association has been superseded by two Local Tenant Voices. It is possible to monitor the number of tenant groups, but is difficult to monitor the number of tenants actually involved in the groups.
- Increase in the numbers attending Tenant Events - There was a 25% increase in the number of tenants attending the Autumn Tenant Event in 2012, along with active participation by all attendees. The local Event in Peterhead at end of April 2013, a joint Event along with local Registered Social Landlords, was hugely successful with over 80 attendees, which represented a 100% increase compared to Tenant Events held in Woodhill House. It was a mixture of Aberdeenshire Council tenants and tenants of other social landlords.
- A means of involving housing applicants in the review and development of Housing Policy is still being developed.
- A Sheltered Housing Tenant Forum has been achieved and will be fully functional by end of 2013.
- Supporting cross landlord co-operation and sharing of resources is ongoing and contributed to success of the local Tenant Event in Peterhead on 27 April 2013.