

# **AGENDA ITEM NO 7**

**REPORT NO 231/19**

## **ANGUS COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 13 AUGUST 2019**

### **BELOW TOLERABLE STANDARD STRATEGY 2019-24**

### **REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES**

#### **ABSTRACT**

This report seeks approval to publish the Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) Strategy 2019-24.

#### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the BTS Strategy 2019-24 attached at **Appendix 1**.
- (ii) delegates authority to the Service Manager (Housing) for the ongoing review and development of the BTS Strategy, with annual updates in line with the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-22.

#### **2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030:

- An enhanced, protected and enjoyed natural and built environment.
- Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities.
- A reduced carbon footprint.
- Improved physical, mental and emotional and health and well-being.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1. The Tolerable Standard is the basic level of repair a property must meet to make it fit for a person to live in. The basic level of repair is measured against 12 criteria and failure against any of these renders a property BTS. A property that falls below the Tolerable Standard is not acceptable as living accommodation.

3.2. The BTS Strategy has been developed to ensure that Angus Council meets the statutory requirements of Section 10 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 which specifies that local authorities must set out a strategy to address housing that is BTS, ensuring compliance with the duty to improve, close or demolish houses which do not meet the tolerable standard.

3.3. The BTS Strategy will span the period 2019-24 and form part of the wider current LHS 2017-22 which sets out the vision to ‘create places that people are proud to call home’. Underpinning this vision are three strategic outcomes, including:

- the quality and energy efficiency of all housing stock is improved and we contribute towards targets to reduce CO2 emissions in Angus.

3.4. A number of actions have been identified to achieve the strategic outcome, including the development of a BTS Strategy. The aim of the BTS Strategy is to help improve the condition of housing across all tenures by ensuring that all housing in Angus meets or exceeds the Tolerable Standard.

- 3.5 The BTS Strategy will also serve beyond the physical improvements to the built environment and heritage. Housing of poor standard or condition can have an adverse effect on the environment, generating increased carbon emissions and fuel usage which can severely impact a household's financial wellbeing.
- 3.6 Housing that is below the Tolerable Standard constitutes the poorest level of housing, raising concerns about the impact on the health, mental and physical wellbeing of the occupants and the impact on the local community.
- 3.7 By helping reduce the number of BTS properties, there are wider benefits to communities and strategic outcomes across services.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 At present we are reliant on national datasets for recurring measurement of BTS housing in Angus. The Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) demonstrates stock condition performance in Angus and highlights that around 1% (540 homes) of all housing stock is considered to be BTS. However the sample set is small (0.5% of all stock), measurement only relates to occupied stock, and survey figures are estimates of the true prevalence within the local housing stock and will therefore contain some error associated with sampling variability.
- 4.2 The Angus Private Sector Stock Condition Survey (PSSCS) 2016 highlighted BTS housing to be more prevalent in Angus with an estimated 2.3% (1000) of private sector stock below standard. The sample set equated to around 4.5% of all private sector stock.
- 4.3 One of the main issues with these sample sets is the inability to relate the data to specific properties and ascertain the precise reason (which of the 12 criterion) why a property fails the tolerable standard.
- 4.4 At present the Council's Environmental Health service receives referrals for properties considered to be BTS. The data collected is a useful baseline to help gauge the extent and location of BTS properties, however further data relating to the characteristics of the dwellings is required to gain a better understanding of the wider issues. Furthermore, the number of BTS referrals has reduced over recent years which suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the subject.
- 4.5 The clear variances between survey results and the lack of localised data outlines the requirement to implement a BTS Strategy to help identify the true nature of BTS housing in Angus.

#### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The primary aim of the BTS Strategy is to ensure that the condition of all housing in Angus is improved and that it meets or exceeds the Tolerable Standard. However it will also serve as a useful tool to raise awareness of BTS housing and align with the basic premise of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, that owners are primarily responsible for the repairs and maintenance of their own homes.
- 5.2 The Strategy broadly covers:
  - the extent of BTS housing
  - how we will raise awareness of, identify and address BTS housing
  - how we will monitor the evidence to inform and update the Strategy
- 5.3 By outlining these positions it is envisaged that the BTS Strategy will help to improve the condition of housing across all tenures and ultimately help:
  - reduce the number of houses that are below the Tolerable Standard; and
  - prevent more houses from falling below the Tolerable Standard by encouraging homeowners to repair, maintain and improve their homes

- 5.4. Throughout the lifecycle of the Strategy we intend to improve our knowledge and understanding of BTS housing issues in Angus. We envisage that by implementing the Strategy we will:
  - raise awareness of BTS housing
  - allow sufficient time to gather localised data
  - establish comprehensive data relating to BTS housing characteristics
- 5.5. The outcomes are supported by an action plan which clearly articulates the actions required to achieve the outcomes and sets out what we will do, by when, and how progress will be monitored.
- 5.6. Through these achievements we will be able to adopt a more strategic approach to dealing with BTS housing and help inform our next LHS and support a number of strategic priorities for the Council and its partners.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the content of this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:  
Appendix 1 – Below Tolerable Standard Strategy