

**ANGUS COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 25 FEBRUARY 2020**

INFORMATION REPORT – LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-22

ABSTRACT

This report provides information to members on the mid-term position of the Angus Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-22.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Supporting a number of strategic priorities, the LHS 2017-22 set out how the Council and partners will achieve the vision to 'create places people are proud to call home'.
- 1.2 Three strategic outcomes support this vision which are:
1. Increase the supply of good quality, affordable housing across all tenures.
 2. People can access a range of housing options and related services to meet their needs.
 3. Improve stock condition across all tenures, ensuring we tackle fuel poverty and energy efficiency and contribute toward climate change targets.
- 1.3 The outcomes to be achieved are supported by an action plan which clearly articulates when they will be delivered, by whom and how progress will be monitored. The action plan is monitored through Pentana, the Council's corporate performance monitoring and risk assessment software.
- 1.4 LHS Implementation Groups were established for each of the three strategic outcomes, meeting bi-annually to discuss and monitor progress of the action plan and respond where necessary to any changes within the housing landscape. Group progress is reported to the Housing Management Team, providing summary of the last quarter's activity.
- 1.5 Now at the mid-term position within the five year strategy, we can appraise the overall impact and assess what more can be done to ensure we achieve our strategic aims.

2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 There have been some notable achievements and we have responded well to changes in national policy, but we have also identified areas requiring further work to help accomplish our aims.

Notable Achievements - Outcome 1

- On target to deliver 120 new affordable homes per annum
- Profiles of housing need and demand have been published to help inform developers of local housing needs, ensuring we get the right size and type of housing in the right places
- Increasing the supply of housing to meet the needs of older and disabled people (27 particular needs, and 14 wheelchair units since 2017/18)
- Designated delivery of affordable home ownership models, shared equity and discounted sale
- Bringing empty homes back into use and developing new initiatives to assist empty home owners (51 properties brought back into use over 2 years through Council intervention)
- Helped increase the supply of housing in rural areas, focusing developments in designated rural service centres and supporting applications via the Government's Rural Housing Fund
- Supporting a thriving private rented sector (2% annual growth) to ensure the homes on offer are of good quality and affordable

- 2.2 Outputs have been positive, at times surpassing set targets, but a number of areas remain a priority over the coming months. We aim to ensure that 20% of all new affordable homes are for particular needs and 50% of those are to wheelchair standard. This local policy was adopted in late 2017 and whilst results are encouraging we may not achieve annual targets until 2022 because many of the developments in the early years were agreed before the target was set. Furthermore, since we introduced the target the Scottish Government

subsequently made it a requirement for all Local Authorities and therefore we are well placed to fulfil the national requirements, particularly as we work with partners to ensure we improve output. We will also continue to explore further provision of affordable home ownership models. Our ongoing work with the private rented sector aims to increase supply and improve the sector across the board. Initiatives such as the Empty Homes Grant Fund help improve the links between the sector and policy areas such as reducing empty homes and increasing housing options for people experiencing homelessness.

Notable Achievements – Outcome 2

- Developed the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) which is currently being implemented
- Revised allocation policy agreed, including move to online services in line with digital Angus (the online housing application and Choice Based Lettings system is expected to go live April 2020)
- Developed a rent deposit scheme, expected to go live in early 2020
- Work ongoing to review housing support outcomes
- Completed analysis of supported housing models to inform future requirements for older people living in Angus
- Improved working with Health & Social Care partners to help identify need and provide housing solutions for older and disabled people
- Work ongoing to fundamentally review the delivery of adaptations service in conjunction with the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership.

- 2.3 We have taken significant steps to improving access to housing and related services. Responding to national policy, the implementation of our RRTP will tackle homelessness and complement our efforts to improve our Housing Options service. It will ensure we offer a streamlined service and identify the necessary support for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Implementation of the RRTP and improving the delivery of adaptations remains a priority over the remainder of this LHS.

Notable Achievements – Outcome 3

- Developed a Below Tolerable Standard Strategy, setting out how we will gather local data and encourage people to improve their homes
- Continuing to improve the energy efficiency of Council stock, ensuring we meet EESSH by December 2020, and ensuring all Council new builds meet the 'greener standard'
- Provided a range of information and advice materials aimed at improving the condition of private sector homes
- Implementing data collection and awareness raising of new minimum EPC standards to be introduced in the private rented sector from April 2020
- Continue to administer our HEEPS programme, using our £2.5m allocation to assist over 600 households over 2017-19
- Exploring funding opportunities to access additional (Eco) funding for private sector households, aimed at improving energy efficiency, house conditions and reducing fuel poverty
- Continued to promote the Home Energy Scotland advice service, increasing the number of Angus residents seeking advice and assistance (4700 referrals, up 1200 on previous year) – leading to an increase in financial health checks and energy switches

- 2.4 A lot of the actions completed under Outcome 3 aim to reduce fuel poverty and improve house conditions through various awareness raising channels. However, Fuel Poverty rates have remained steady (33%) and are above the national average. We await clarification of the new definition and publication of new data to be able to more accurately map fuel poverty in Angus so that we can target resources more effectively. We are also leading by example with working towards higher energy efficiency standards in our own stock, helping mitigate fuel poverty for our tenants. Supporting landlords to achieve new minimum standards in private sector housing will prove challenging, however it also represents an opportunity to link in with existing work and explore new avenues to help Angus residents.

- 2.5 On the whole, good progress is being made and we continue to closely monitor performance any significant policy changes that may impact our work.

Contact for further information:

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