

**South Lakeland District Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**16 August 2019**

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**Portfolio:** Housing and Innovation Portfolio

**Report from:** Cllr Jonathan Brook

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The development and implementation of the Council Plan and Local Plan housing objectives.

The Council Plan objectives in relation to improved customer engagement and communication

Working in partnership to improve the standard, availability and affordability of housing in the District to meet local needs, championing these issues at national, regional and sub-regional level.

Looking at innovative ways of working.

To support the Leader of the Council and to deputise in his/her absence.

**Policies, Plans and Strategies**

- Council Plan
- Local Plan (including Development Management Policies)
- Housing Strategy and Policy (including Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy)
- IT/Information/E Government Strategy

**Key Areas**

- Council Planning
- Customer Connect Programme (Strategy)
- Development Management and Building Control
- Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention
- IT Services
- Strategic Housing and delivery (including Housing Enabling and Housing Grants)

## **Council Planning**

The Council Plan 2019 has been designed to set out the council's vision and direction which is supported by the strategies in place. We aim to deliver the Council Plan by:

- Working across boundaries to deliver sustainable communities
- Creating balanced communities
- Reducing inequalities so no one is left behind
- Encouraging a sustainable environment and an inclusive economy

Each quarter the council will report on the performance in relation to the council plan targets, of which quarter one has been included as part of this agenda.

The review for the 2020/21 plan will involve discussion with key stakeholders, a reflection of key strategic documents, emphasis of the digital transformation and how the transition will support the way we interact and deliver services for our customers, whilst focusing on the alignment of the medium term financial plan against the priorities. The Cabinet and Leadership team will be meeting in early September to begin the review process.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be asked to consider a draft 2020/21 Council Plan later in the year.

## **Customer Connect Programme (Strategy)**

The implementation of the Customer Connect Programme has been ongoing since September 2016 and is divided into three main elements; Digital, People and Place. The people element is now being led by the Customer, Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder and the Places element is being led by the Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder.

A successful briefing session for all councillors took place in June 2019, which 15 Councillors attended to receive a full update on the each element of the programme.

Since the most recent portfolio update reported at Council in July 2019 the digital platform is continuing to develop and focus on the below areas. The digital work streams are still underway to develop and deliver the digital platform:

1. Digital Enablement, comprising:
  - a. Online Customer Account and Enterprise Solution Design for customer records
  - b. Development of the digital solution for Revenues and Benefits and the integration of it with the Online Account
  - c. Integration of the 'my account' (online customer account) with the digital revenues and benefits system for Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefits and Landlord functionality.
  - d. Integration of the 'my account' with the GIS system to automatically display information about a residents property and what's happening nearby such as planning applications
2. Integration with the corporate Document Management system

- a. This will allow the existing corporate document management system to function as part of the digital platform and allow existing key functionality to continue.
3. Implementation of the Corporate GIS Platform and data improvement work
  - a. The new approach to GIS data, store once and use as required. Existing systems are being replaced and data is being corrected and consolidated.
4. Integration with the Payment System to allow payments to be taken as part of an application for services
5. Interactive Dashboards and reporting
  - a. This will bring the data that we store in the council systems, to life. Allowing it to be viewed in different ways primarily through a graphical interface.
6. Building a new Building Control System within the Digital Platform
7. Building a new Planning System within the Digital Platform
8. Building a new Land Charges system within the Digital Platform
9. Data migration preparation for the new systems
  - a. The data from existing systems needs to be migrated into the new systems that we're building, to facilitate this we need to ensure the existing data is in the correct format.
10. Service Redesign and Digital Platform configuration
  - a. This is where we start to build the configuration of new processes within the digital platform, based upon the work performed collaboratively between Service Redesign and Digital.
  - b. Existing systems (that aren't being replaced yet) will continue to be used, but may need to be configured slightly differently as well as being accessed by different members of staff.

### **Development Management and Building Control**

As identified in the Quarter one performance monitoring report, 83% of major planning applications were responded to within the 13 week target period in 2018/19. This has increased from 77% in 2017/18 and is significantly higher than the government target of 60%. 75% of all minor applications were responded to within the 8 week period which is also higher than the 65% government target.

The Council is continuing to work continue to improve service performance through the Customer Connect Project to ensure major, minor and other applications are being determined

in a timely manner. This will be supported by the new IT infrastructure which is currently being developed in partnership with Eden District Council.

As previously reported at the Council meeting on 23 July, the data cleansing activity for Building Control is now complete and significant progress has been made in the planning data cleanse.

The planning income target was lower than the projected income in 2018/19, however the performance measures show that the planning income for the start of 2019/20 is slightly above target.

## **Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention**

Since 2012/13 the number of homelessness presentations have increased from 380 to 605 2018/19. The Council has introduced a target measure of the number of homelessness households living in temporary accommodation will be no more than 20 at a time. In the most recent figures reported in quarter one this figure was 21, however this is caused by the legislative changes implemented through the Homelessness Reduction Act. In order to support the reduction of the homelessness households living in temporary accommodation, the Council has introduced the Homelessness Strategy 2019/2024 which identifies four key priorities:

- Homeless prevention
- Increasing the supply of settled accommodation
- Ensuring appropriate support is available
- Tackling complex needs

The council is working towards achieving the strategy's actions:

- Working with private rented sector to secure accommodation for people in housing need/at risk of homelessness;
- Bringing empty homes back into use by implementing the Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan;
- Working with public sector bodies and churches to identify any potential sites that could be used for affordable or supported housing;
- Using housing renovation grants to enable potential new schemes suitable for tenants with specific needs;
- Working with providers to enable a shared housing scheme in South Lakeland for young people;
- Working with housing associations to develop new affordable homes with the help of low-cost loans.

In this first quarter for 2019/20 153 people accessed the homelessness service provided by the Council. This has reduced from 160 in 2018/19 quarter four, however the Council has committed £461,000 which will be used specifically to create new temporary accommodation for families in Grange over sands and Kendal to support those accessing the service.

In quarter one 2019/20 the number of empty homes within South Lakeland has reduced to 980 from 1037 in 2012. The Council is continuing to enable the reduction of empty homes by 20% by 2025 through targeted interventions.

## **Strategic Housing and delivery (including Housing Enabling and Housing Grants)**

Since 2014 to 31 March 2019 the council has supported the delivery of 464 homes to rent and 121 affordable homes to buy. These figures show the Council is on target to deliver 1,000 affordable homes to rent by 2025.

Working with partners such as Highways England, Cumbria LEP and Housing Developers the development of the Cross-a-moor roundabout is on track. Highways England are continuing to work up a design and land assembly.

Barrow Borough Council is leading on the Private Sector Stock Condition survey which is being carried out using a new methodology by the Building Research Establishment. Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council, SLDC have jointly commissioned this survey.

The £2.36 million Community Housing Fund designed to help tackle the problem of high levels of second home ownership is broken down into two available grants.

- CLH Capacity Building Grant
- CLH Scheme Grant

The fund can be used to enable the delivery of new community-led housing schemes. Schemes supported by this funding are currently underway in Helsington, Ulverston, Levens and Gatesfield.

As you will be aware the Local Plan is now complete following the adoption of Development Management policies and the Arnside and Silverdale AONB plan. These new policies implemented include requirements for accessible and adaptable housing, flood risk, broadband connectivity, green infrastructure and biodiversity.

The governance arrangements for CIL are now well advanced and the council is expecting expressions of interest for the first tranche of projects imminently.

The Council is continuing to collaborate with the County Council on a Kendal Major Infrastructure Study to examine the scope for major transport infrastructure, means of funding and the future development strategy relationship.

## **IT Services**

The IT service is continuing to focus on the delivery of Customer Connect through the preparation of the Enterprise Digital Platform to support single customer records and online accounts. Internal testing of the platform has been undertaken and all key components of the technology map are in place.

The service is also undertaking a great deal of work to enhance the data organisation stores and processes.

The IT is continuing to work closely with Street Scene to support the implementation of new in-cab technology. This software will provide a range of functions to create a more streamline process which supports the Customer Connect Project and enhances customer service.