

South Lakeland District Council
Council
17 December 2019

Portfolio: Housing and Innovation Portfolio

Report from: Cllr Jonathan Brook

The development and implementation of the Council Plan.

The Council Plan objectives in relation to improved customer engagement and communication
Implementing of the Local Plan housing objectives.

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 review for the 2020 Council Plan has been undertaken which involved 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 met in early September to review the process.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a draft 2020 Council Plan in October 2019 where they suggested to incorporate enabling sustainable transport.

The 2020 Council Plan is being considered at this Council meeting. The aim of the plan is to set out the Council's vision and priorities whilst closely linking to the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Council Plan has been designed to provide strategic direction for policies, underpins the authorities influencing activity with Central Government and partners and enables councils activity to be focused on strategic objectives.

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 each element of the programme.

Since the most recent portfolio update the digital platform is continuing to develop and the digital work streams are still underway to develop and deliver the digital platform, becoming available in 2020.

The development of online forms for missed bins, bulky waste, request for replacement equipment and compliments, comments and complaints is near completion with customer testing taking place.

Development Management and Building Control

Significant progress has been made moving through our enforcement enquiries that are live having reduced from 300 in November 2018 to 169 active cases as of 26/11/2019. This demonstrates an increased efficiency for dealing with enforcement issues that arise.

Quarter 3 performance for major planning application within time was 100% and 92% for minor and householder application dealt with within time. This represents a significant improvement from historic performance.

Planning income is projected to be on target for the financial year.

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Since 2012/13 the number of homelessness presentations have increased from 380 to 605 in 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. The highest number of households in Temporary Accommodation at any one time was 22 which was in quarter 2.

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 the second quarter of 2019/20 107 people accessed the homelessness service provided by the Council. This has reduced from 153 in the first quarter.

The Council is continuing with its plan to create new temporary accommodation in Grange over Sands and Kendal to support those accessing the service.

A County wide bid for funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to tackle rough sleeping was successful, with South Lakeland receiving funding for:

- A part time Private Rented Sector Officer who is identifying landlords and properties that could offer sustainable move on accommodation for rough sleepers, those at risk of rough sleeper or as move on from the Hostel.
- A part time Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator who will be looking at levels and causes of rough sleeping and developing positive pathways for referrals into other services as well as developing a strategic approach through the development of a County wide Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- A part time Support Work who will support residents in maintaining their tenancies.
- All of these posts show a commitment to working in partnership with others across the County. The Private Rented Sector Officer also works part time in Eden DC in the same

role, the Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator whilst a County wide post will primarily be looking at the distinct issues faced in South Lakeland and Barrow, and the hours for the Support Worker post have been increased by Impact Housing who is employing on behalf of the Authority.

The Council is continuing to enable the reduction of empty homes by 20% by 2025 through targeted interventions. In quarter two 2019/20 the number of empty homes had reduced to 951 from 1037 in 2012.

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. Since 2014 to 31 March 2019 the Council has supported the delivery of 468 homes to rent and 128 affordable homes to buy. These figures show that the Council is on target to deliver 1000 affordable homes to rent by 2025.

The Council supports the delivery of extra care housing and a new 104 unit scheme has now started on site in Oxenholme by Housing 21. This includes provision of 29 affordable rented units and 43 shared ownership units.

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 Windermere.

The Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Local Plan which was adopted in March has received the Royal Town Planning Institute Award for Planning Excellence, ahead of the Manchester Northern Gateway, Windermere Jetty, Preston Bus Station and the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan.

A project plan has been completed for delivery of the new local plan. The plan will now cover the period up to 2040 and will be adopted in 2023. Early engagement is proposed early in the spring with the publication of a draft plan in 2021.

The governance arrangements for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) are now well advanced and the council is expecting expressions of interest for the first tranche of projects. A total of £655,000 is now available to support strategic projects and £117,000 has been paid to Parish and Town Council to support local projects.

Cumbria County Council (CCC) have now completed the Kendal major infrastructure study. The Kendal Northern Relief Road has been identified as a potential improvement in the Transport for the North – Strategic Transport Plan and Cumbria County Council are seeking funding to prepare an outline business case.

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. We are moving forward to prepare the systems to support a launch sometime in the new year, we are working to configure the platform to support new processes in line with the Minimum Viable Product definition, this effectively is the minimum requirements which need to be met before a launch of the new services can take place. Consultants from Ignite and other Internal Business Analysts are part of the team working with staff from the Shared ICT Service on this.

There is other work being done to develop the technology and data to support the requirements of Customer Connect, this work includes:

- Data Cleansing of Geographical Information to support more efficient ways of working across the council where GIS data is used
- A new data management system has been produced to support a much improved operation specifically for Waste Collection and StreetScene. This will also facilitate enhanced information being presented to customers in relation to bin and recycling collection dates
- Procurement has started to procure a new Planning, Building Control and Land Charges System. It will also cover other areas such as Street Naming and numbering, Planning Policy and Community Infrastructure Levy
- We have installed a new telephone call handling system to support new ways of dealing with phone calls from customers, final design requirements are being considered before this is made live.
- We are continuing to make progress with the implementation of the Revenues and Benefits system, Capita have made enhancements to the way their system operates to help this. There is much more to do but we are making progress.

All of the above is being done for both Eden and SLDC

Outside of the Customer Connect programme, the Shared ICT Service has to maintain a full Business as Usual operation for both SLDC and Eden, this work includes the following:

- Upgrading of all laptops to windows 10, replacing windows 7 which goes end of life in Jan 2020
- Upgrading some of our older Servers from Windows 2008 which goes end of life in Jan 2020

- Upgrading our older Database systems from SQL 2008 which went end of life earlier in 2019
- Upgrading of the SLDC Cash receipting/Payment system has been completed
- We are in the process of replacing the technology in the Data Centres of both Eden and SLDC, this will improve performance by replacing aging equipment. This is part of the rolling IT replacement programme.