

South Lakeland District Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Friday, 04 February 2022
Housing Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio: Cllr Helen Chaffey

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.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- South Lakeland Local Plan
- Housing Strategy and Policy (including Choice Based Lettings Allocation Policy)

Key Areas

- Development Management and Building Control
- Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention
- Strategic Housing and delivery (including Housing Enabling and Housing Grants)

Local Plan

The Council Plan seeks to ensure that a new local plan is in place by 2023 to replace most of the current suite of documents with a single plan. These include the Core Strategy, Land Allocations and Development Management policies. The Council has taken a major step forward with the completion of a wide-ranging issues and options consultation for the new plan. A wide range of consultees and stakeholders were engaged on all aspects of the plan including the approach to climate change, development strategy and allocations.

For most of the consultation period, it was not possible to run face-to-face consultation events. Innovative use was made of a virtual exhibition on line. The situation was reviewed in late summer and the consultation period extended to allow for a series of face-to-face consultation events in Kendal, Ulverston, Grange, Kirkby Lonsdale and Milnthorpe

The consultation ran until the end of October. The results are currently being processed. The outcome of the consultation will inform the preparation of a draft plan, which is expected in summer 2022.

Development Management and Building Control

Development management and building control are using all efforts to deliver services within statutory timescales at a very challenging time in terms of both high caseloads (driven by the

pandemic) and recruitment challenges, which are effecting the planning profession nationally.

Contractual negotiations have completed and project management support is now in place to begin the implementation of the new DEF IT system to replace Fast Suite and will take a 12-month period to implement, this is being done jointly with Eden District Council.

We continue to prioritise enforcement cases on a priority basis determined by impact on the communities and have some additional temporary resource to support in this area of work, in addition to our new permanent fulltime enforcement officer who started in November

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

The Council 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 average number of households in Temporary Accommodation at any one time was 23, which was in Quarter 1 in 2020/21 following additional placements under Cold Weather Provision, in Q2 the number had reduced to 21. The current occupancy rate in temporary accommodation is 20 households.

In order to support the reduction of the homelessness households living in temporary accommodation, the Council 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

South Lakeland have been successful over the last six months in securing additional funding to support the work being carried out to provide advice and assistance to those most vulnerable in our communities. These additional grants include £20,000 to work with Offenders to prevent homelessness on release from custody, £35,000 direct from the county council to work with victims of domestic abuse and support the additional new burdens of the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021. We were also awarded an uplift of £60,000 in Q1 to aid the work being done to provide additional accommodation units and support the prevention model. This money has been vital in ensuring the additional 6 flats at Crag View can continue to be used for those individuals with low support needs and no duty owed to them under the HRA, but are homeless. The support staff funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative provide targeted support and advocacy to these individuals to ensure successful move on to accommodation with a real focus on employment, training and volunteering opportunities.

Demand on the service has been increasing throughout the year in comparison with previous data. There has been a 30% increase in contacts to the service, which has resulted in a 26% increase in HRA applications being taken. As lockdown restrictions have been lifted more households are facing homelessness for a variety of reasons including affordability, loss of private rented and family breakdowns (both non-violent and violent). With this increase in demand, the pressure on the use and length of time in temporary accommodation has also increased.

Impact Housing Association (part of the Riverside Group) are providing a shared housing scheme for young people, which was one of the Strategy's actions. Further work is continuing:

- 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 actions within the Housing Strategy;
- Working with public sector bodies and churches to identify any potential sites that could be used for affordable and supported housing;
- Using housing renovation grant scheme properties to enable potential new schemes suitable for tenants with specific needs;
- Working with housing associations to develop new affordable homes;

Over the winter period, December to March, Cold Weather Provision will once again be in place with the Rough Sleeper Coordinator taking the lead in ensuring robust and assertive assessments and engagement takes place with anyone who may claim to be sleeping rough. As part of these conversations, the ability to reconnect individuals to their areas where safe to do so will be an integral part, along with identifying positive opportunities for engagement. The reintroduction of a task and target approach will align services to tackle rough sleeping and aim to eradicate it in line with the Government's vision.

The Homelessness team are continuing to create better working partnerships to ensure appropriate health support is available for those in temporary accommodation and to develop a more effective hospital discharge pathway. Alongside this is the development of complex case meeting through what is currently the police led hubs to ensure all individuals facing barriers are receiving support from appropriate agencies, removing duplicity and seeking to find sustainable outcomes for all.

The Council continues to bring a minimum of 70 long-term empty homes back into use each year. Since 2015 to Q2 2021/22, the Council has brought 482 empty homes back into use throughout the District.

The Council has committed to a pledge for 16 individuals under the Resettlement Scheme for Refugees, with this latest Scheme targeting the Afghan interpreters and their families. There has been wide support in the local communities and the Council has been working with the Resettlement Team at Cumbria County Council who led on the Scheme, along with Registered Providers to assist in the identification of suitable accommodation. One family arrived in South Lakeland in the summer, and a further family arrived very recently in South Lakeland, and both are settling well. Two local community groups have been set up to help support refugee families so that they can access services and integrate into the community.

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

At Q2 2021/22, the Council had supported 546 affordable homes to rent since 2014. Affordable Housing delivery in the last two years has been affected by Covid. However, there is a significant pipeline of active schemes across the District and it is still a reasonable expectation that the target 1000 affordable homes to rent by 2025 will be met. There have been 184 affordable homes to buy provided since 2014 to Q2 2021/22.

The Council has supported the delivery of extra care housing and a new 104-unit scheme is underway at a site in Oxenholme by Housing 21 and due for completion summer 2022. This includes provision of 29 affordable rented units and 43 shared ownership units.

A Private Sector Stock Condition survey has been completed using a new methodology by the Building Research Establishment. This research will help determine the best use of resources to tackle housing standards issues in the private sector as well how to target

homes with poor energy efficiency standards using the Local Authority Delivery scheme for green homes grants.

The £2.36 million Community Housing Fund was designed to support community provision of affordable homes. SLDC were awarded the funding to help address the impacts of high levels of second home ownership. The funding was broken down into two available grants.

- CLH Capacity Building Grant
- CLH Scheme Grant

The fund is being used to enable the delivery of new community-led housing schemes through new build, re-use of existing buildings and bringing empty homes back into use. In December 2020, the Council approved a grant scheme of £350,000 and an infrastructure grant of £368,244 to the Levens Community Project (LCP). Work has now commenced at Levens to deliver new homes as part of the scheme. The Council also approved a grant of £185,318 for a co-housing scheme at Holme Farm, work is now underway, and a grant of £136,825 has been approved for a scheme at Cragfoot, Grasmere for Lakeland Housing Trust, which is near to completion, and grant agreements have been entered into for each of these projects.

The Council provided £30,000 for South Lakes Housing for an energy efficient affordable housing scheme at Parkside Road in Kendal. These units offer energy efficiency savings for occupants, which reduce fuel poverty whilst providing much-needed affordable homes to rent.

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	N/A	N/A

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	N/A
Communications Team	N/A
Leader	N/A
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	12/01/2022
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	04/02/2022
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	N/A