

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Wednesday, 13 July 2022
Housing Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio: Housing Portfolio Holder
Report from: 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)

Development Management and Building Control

Workloads for the development management service remain high but are reducing which in turn is leading to an improvement in the numbers of applications being determined within the statutory period. Funding to continue with support with contract staff should see the situation further improved over the coming months.

Building control continue to operate close to capacity and are maintaining the market share against the improved inspectors. Apprenticeship opportunities are being explored to fill vacant opportunities and protect the future labour supply for the team.

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

The Council introduced a target measure of no more than 20 homeless households living in temporary accommodation at any one time. For the last two years, however, the maximum number of homeless households has exceeded this target, peaking at 39 during Q1 2020/21 following the 'Everyone In' response to Covid before falling back to 21 in Q3 2021/22.

In order to support the reduction of the homelessness households living in temporary accommodation, the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2019/2024 identified four key priorities:

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

Homeless households in temporary accommodation are predominantly split between Council operated provisions, and rooms in bed and breakfast accommodation. The focus on early intervention and homeless prevention, and concentrated efforts to move households on from temporary accommodation efficiently, has driven a reduction in the use of B&B accommodation over the last two years. Across Q1 2020/21 the average daily occupancy for homeless households in temporary accommodation at any one time was 21 but this has been reduced to an average of 19 households for Q4 2021/22. The total number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation at the end of Q4 was 18.

South Lakeland have been successful in securing funding to support the work being carried out to provide advice and assistance to those most vulnerable in our communities. These additional grants £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.

South Lakeland have been successful in securing funding through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) covering 2022/24, which coincides with ongoing work to reassess the best use of the various allocated grants to ensure that the Council continues to deliver effective services across the district. To date, 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 Homeless Reduction Act but are homeless. The support staff funded through the RSI 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 remains high with 695 contacts to the service across Q1-3 2021/22. This includes 322 Prevention Cases closed by the end of Q3 with a 93% of cases resulting in positive outcomes. The lifting of final Covid measures, particularly around notice periods and the moratorium on evictions, has continued to add to demand on the service with more households facing homelessness. With this increase in demand the pressure on the use and length of time in Temporary Accommodation has also increased. The main reasons for homelessness remain the loss of private rented accommodation and family breakdowns (both non-violent and violent).

Cold Weather Provision has once again been in place from the beginning of December 2021 through until the end of February 2022 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 continues to be a priority 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.

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.

The Council continues to bring a minimum of 70 long-term empty homes back into use each year. Since 2015 to Q4 2021/22, the Council has brought 541 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. A Community Sponsorship Group – Kendal Open Doors have been established and will be working with a Registered Provider to support one family in Kendal through the Resettlement Scheme. The Council is working with Cumbria County Council on Homes for Ukraine and South Lakeland is currently providing more hosted placements than other districts in Cumbria. The Government is also requiring local authorities to become asylum dispersal areas which is a mandatory requirement. The Home Office commissions SERCO to procure accommodation, normally through the private rented sector. It is recognised that this is likely to put a strain on the availability of accommodation available to households in the private rented sector.

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

At Q4 2021/22, the Council had supported 566 affordable homes to rent and 202 affordable homes to buy 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 477 affordable homes to rent by 2025 will be met.

The Council has supported the delivery of extra care housing and a new 104-unit scheme is near completion 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.

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 and work is now underway and a grant of £136,825 was provided for a scheme at Cragfoot, Grasmere for Lakeland Housing Trust, which has completed 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.

The Council recently approved a revised Policy for affordable housing grants to Registered Providers and it is expected that grant applications may be made under the revised Policy using monies from preserved Right to Buy receipts. A decision was made by Cabinet in March regarding the purchase of land at Heversham that would enable new energy efficient affordable homes to be provided on the site subject to further work on feasibility and options which will be brought back to Cabinet for approval which will detail the various options available to the Council for delivery of affordable homes which are exemplar in energy efficiency. This is also to make use of preserved Right to Buy receipts following the decision by Council to change the use of these monies from the provision of loans to grants to Registered Providers and the acquisition of land for affordable homes.

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Section 151 Officer	N/A	N/A
Monitoring Officer	N/A	N/A
CMT	01/07/22	01/07/22

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	01/07/22
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	N/A
Council	13/07/22