Inverclyde LHS Conference Outcomes

# **LHS Development Conference Background**

Inverclyde Council are preparing a new Local Housing Strategy which requires to be submitted to Scottish Ministers in 2023. To build the new strategy, Inverclyde Council must identify and assess local priorities for action that should guide housing activity, partnership and investment over the next five years.

The proposed outcomes for the 2023-2028 Local Housing Strategy based on a review of the main housing issues facing Inverclyde are as follows:

People in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities

People in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home

People in Inverclyde are supported to live independently and well at home

People in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon efficient and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty

The LHS Guidance published by the Scottish Government in 2019 stresses the importance of early and meaningful stakeholder engagement in setting local housing priorities:

“Early engagement with key partners and stakeholders is key to identifying priorities and agreeing, through a range of options, how to deal with the priorities identified.”

The new Inverclyde LHS is informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment produced by the Glasgow City Region Housing Market Partnership and, is in the process of being signed off as robust and credible by the Scottish Government. The Council therefore has developed significant housing system insight to inform consultation with LHS partners and stakeholders around the main issues the LHS should tackle over the next 5 years.

As part of the engagement process, an LHS Development Conference was held on Tuesday 29th November 2022. To encourage and enable widespread participation, the conference was held digitally via Microsoft Teams. To ensure that all stakeholders were in a strong position to engage in informed discussion on local priorities, a series of interactive briefing materials were issued on the main housing issues in Inverclyde prior to the Conference event.

Over 60 partners and stakeholders attended the event, including representatives from public, private, third and community sectors. A full delegate list of partners and their representative organisations, is detailed in Appendix A.

The objectives of the LHS Conference were to prompt thinking and aid debate on:

The LHS vision for a ‘well functioning housing system’ in Inverclyde

The main housing issues the LHS should tackle in the next 5 years

The ideas, options, and innovation we should consider to guide action, investment & partnership

The one single action that should be prioritized to address the housing challenges in

Inverclyde

To meet these objectives, the following programme was designed to deliver a mix of interactive activities, briefings and focus group sessions to stimulate debate and encourage participation. The agenda and nature of each conference activity is set out follows:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Timing | Activity | Nature of Activity |
| 10.00 – 10.10 | Introduction & Welcome | Councillor Michael McCormack, Convener Environment & Regeneration Committee |
| 10.10 – 10.30 | What should the LHS deliver?  What do we need the LHS to do?  What does good look like? | Briefing Session |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | How does the housing system work in Inverclyde? | Interactive Quiz |
| 11.00 – 11.20 | What’s the problem we’re trying to solve?  LHS main issues  Early engagement outcomes | Briefing session |
| 11.20 – 11.30 | Screen Break |  |
| 11.30 – 12.30 | Setting the LHS Vision:  How should homes and communities in Inverclyde look and feel in the future? | Interactive Activity 1 |
| 12.30 – 13.00 | Lunch |  |
| 13.00 – 14.00 | Breakout Session Round 1:  Local Housing Priorities - What are our strategic options? | Breakout Ideation Session: Subject Matter Experts |
| 14.00 – 14.15 | Screen break |  |
| 14.15 – 15.15 | Breakout Session Round 2:  Local Housing Priorities - What are our strategic options? | Breakout Ideation Session: Subject Matter Experts |
| 15.15 – 15.20 | Closing thoughts – 1 key action | Interactive Activity 2 |
| 15.20 – 15.30 | Close of event | Stakeholder voting session |
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This briefing paper summarises the outcomes of the Inverclyde LHS Conference across the various interactive activities and voting sessions.

The presentation material delivered during the event can be accessed at Appendix B.

# **Testing Knowledge & Perceptions: The Inverclyde Housing System**

Following a brief introductory session, stakeholders were invited to take part in an interactive activity using a digital voting app, which was used to facilitate an ‘ask the audience’ style session with instantaneous results available.

The voting session tested stakeholders’ knowledge and perceptions of the housing system in Inverclyde. Stakeholders were presented with a statement relating to the operation of the local housing system and were asked whether they thought it to be true or false. The statements presented are outlined in the Table 2.1 below, together with the correct answer (i.e. true or false) and the proportion of LHS stakeholders who answered the question accurately.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **The Housing System in Inverclyde: Interactive Quiz Questions** | **True or False** | **% answered correctly** |
| 1 | The population of Inverclyde and Scotland as a whole will experience a decline over the next 20 years | TRUE | 90% |
| 2 | The working age population is projected to increase in the next 10 years | FALSE | 82% |
| 3 | Just over half of households in Inverclyde live in owner occupied housing | TRUE | 79% |
| 4 | House prices have grown by 17% overall across Inverclyde over the last five years | TRUE | 91% |
| 5 | Demand for affordable housing outweighs available supply at a 2:1 ratio | FALSE | 24% |
| 6 | There are just under 300 affordable homes which are classified as 'unlettable' as a result of condition or no expressed demand | TRUE | 52% |
| 7 | The average length of stay that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation is 30 weeks | FALSE | 38% |
| 8 | 23% of homeless applicants in Inverclyde have at least one identified support need | FALSE | 25% |
| 9 | Around 40 lets per annum are made to households who require a wheelchair adapted property | TRUE | 48% |
| 10 | There were over 1,000 households waiting for property adaptations to make their homes more suitable in the social rented sector at the end of 2021/22 | FALSE | 20% |
| 11 | Almost 66% of homes in Inverclyde are in disrepair | TRUE | 27% |
| 12 | More than half of Inverclyde homes have an Energy Property Certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower | FALSE | 11% |

**Table 2.1: Interactive housing system quiz: Stakeholder results**

Table 2.1 highlights that stakeholders have a general awareness and understanding of key housing system drivers in Inverclyde including demographic change, the housing tenure profile, and house price inflation. In contrast, many stakeholders were surprised by the extent of disrepair, poor energy efficiency ratings, demand for affordable housing, and the nature of homelessness.

Identifying and prioritising the key housing system issues that require local intervention is the foundation of developing a forward looking and outcome focused Local Housing Strategy. Given the gaps in stakeholder knowledge identified, it is important that the LHS development process informs and engages delivery partners on key housing issues. To this end, the remaining conference sessions and activities focused on presenting the evidence and enabling informed dialogue on potential housing system priorities.

This included an interactive activity focused on setting a vision for the new Inverclyde LHS.

# **Setting the Local Housing Strategy Vision**

In 2020, to publish the first national housing strategy (Housing to 2040), the Scottish Government hosted a national conversation to develop a future housing vision so that ‘everyone in Scotland has a home that is warm, affordable, accessible and fits their needs’. The goal of Housing 2040 is to create a housing system that is dynamic and resilient enough to respond to future change and to enable Scotland to face key challenges like the country’s ageing population and climate emergency. Housing to 2040 sets out a housing vision which is ambitious and aspirational. Achieving the 2040 vision requires a well-functioning housing system, high quality sustainable homes, homes that meet people’s need and sustainable communities. All local authorities in Scotland should demonstrate how their actions will support and contribute to achieving these outcomes through their Local Housing Strategy.

The principles which underpin how Scotland will achieve this vision were shared with LHS stakeholders during an initial discussion which focused on elements that may be important in building a vision for the new Inverclyde LHS.

Furthermore, to establish what a ‘well-functioning housing system’ might look like in an Inverclyde context, local residents and communities were invited to participate in a short online survey prior to the LHS conference. The survey was open across a 10-week period from September to November 2022 and was made available in a range of formats. In total, 475 responses were provided by residents and community representatives.

Stakeholders were asked to rank a range of characteristics in terms of their importance to the local housing system. The graphic below outlines the five most important housing system characteristics defined by Inverclyde residents:

Ranked characteristics:
Energy Efficiency 86%; Affordability 74%; Sufficiency 70%; Suitability 70%; Independent Living 65%

‘Energy efficiency’ emerged as the characteristic with the greatest popular support, followed closely by housing affordability; with over three quarters of residents ranking this as these characteristics as top priorities. ‘Sufficiency’, ‘suitability’ and ‘independent living’ rank as the remaining characteristics in the top five.

After sharing these consultation outcomes, LHS stakeholders were split into three groups to consider each housing characteristic in more detail, with the aim of defining a draft vision for the new Local Housing Strategy. Each group was asked to reflect on the list of housing system characteristics considered by residents and rank them in order of importance to complete the following sentence:

"Everyone in Inverclyde has access to a home which is XXX, XXX, and XXX”

From this statement, stakeholders in each group were asked to draft an initial LHS vision.

Stakeholders were also asked to consider the contribution the Local Housing Strategy should make to the strategic ambitions for Inverclyde set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The overarching vision ‘Nurturing Inverclyde: Getting it right for every child, citizen and community’, will be delivered through achievement of three local priorities, as follows:

*1) Inverclyde’s population will be stable and sustainable with an appropriate balance of socio-economic groups that is conducive to local economic prosperity and longer term population growth*

*2) There will be low levels of poverty and deprivation and the gap in income and health between the richest and poorest members of our communities will be reduced*

*3) Inverclyde’s environment, culture and heritage will be protected and enhanced to create a better place for all Inverclyde residents and an attractive place in which to live, work and visit.*

Using this material, stakeholders were asked to finish the following sentence as an alternative LHS vision:

“The housing system in Inverclyde makes a strong contribution to… XXXX by delivering XXXX”

Each group was asked to select their preferred LHS vision statement by:

*1) Choosing between their draft housing system vision statement OR housing contribution statement*

*2) Combining elements of both to produce a reworded vision statement which sets out how homes and communities should look and feel in Inverclyde in the future.*

The outcomes of each Group discussion and final vision statements are detailed below:

## **Group 1: Draft LHS Vision**

Having reviewed the various materials presented including the Housing to 2040 vision, LHS resident survey outcomes and the strategic ambitions for Inverclyde set out in the LOIP; Group 1 agreed that the new LHS vision should:

• focus on the delivery of ‘better homes’ as opposed to the ‘more homes’ focus in the national housing strategy. In Inverclyde, priorities need to focus on improving housing quality and offering a range a house types and sizes in the right locations to meet housing need. This includes providing more low rise housing and less flatted options

• delivering a better range of housing tenures (including private and intermediate housing) in every community across Inverclyde

• encourage investment in more homes but in the right place. Delivering better homes will involve supporting sustainable communities and great places

• prioritise not just homes that meet housing need but homes that meet housing aspirations. Key to addressing depopulation in Inverclyde will be the delivery of a housing offer that attracts and retains households

• improve housing affordability across Inverclyde as key driver of tackling poverty and deprivation in the area

• focus on improving housing quality in every housing tenure and community, proactively tackling disrepair, empty homes and community safety.

In considering the contribution that housing can make to achieving the strategic ambitions for the people of Inverclyde, stakeholders also agreed that the LHS should:

• provide the catalyst for major physical regeneration projects which improve the sustainability of communities

• support economic growth by creating a housing offer which attracts working age people to the area and connects them to job opportunities

• promote community wealth building as the driver for tackling inequality, improving connectivity to services, creating prosperity and tackling poverty

• make a strong contribution to health and wellbeing aligned to housing and neighbourhood quality

• elevate housing as a community planning and economic development priority in Inverclyde.

Building on this discussion and debate, Group 1 formed the following 2 potential options as draft visions for the new Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy:

"EVERYONE IN INVERCLYDE HAS ACCESS TO A QUALITY HOME IN EXCELLENT CONDITION WHICH IS AFFORDABLE, SUITABLE FOR THEIR NEEDS AND IN THE PLACE THEY WISH TO LIVE”

“THE HOUSING SYSTEM IN INVERCLYDE MAKES A STRONG CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH, TACKLING INEQUALITY AND CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES BY INVESTING IN A RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS THAT PEOPLE ASPIRE TO”

Group 1 participants unanimously preferred Option 1, agreeing that it offered an easily understandable and succinct ambition for housing in Inverclyde. The group were satisfied that the use of the term ‘everyone’ delivered an inclusive vision which would tackle the needs of the groups most disadvantaged from accessing good quality housing. The vision rightly prioirtises housing affordability, condition and place with the term ‘suitable for their needs’ reflecting a range of ambitions including housing accessibility, health and wellbeing.

## **Group 2: Draft LHS Vision**

Having reviewed the various materials presented including the Housing to 2040 vision, LHS resident survey outcomes and the strategic ambitions for Inverclyde set out in the LOIP; Group 2 agreed that the new LHS vision should:

* address housing affordability and energy efficiency pressures as a key driver in tackling deprivation
* ensure connectivity of places and services
* improve the range of housing options on offer for households living or wanting to move to Inverclyde
* ensure households with particular needs receive the support they require to live independently and well at home including continuing to deliver good performance in relation to aids and adaptations
* address outstanding maintenance and poor housing condition to improve the quality of homes available in Inverclyde
* address mismatches in the supply and demand for social housing including by area, property size and type.

In considering the contribution that housing can make to achieving the strategic ambitions for the people of Inverclyde, stakeholders also agreed that the LHS should:

* continue investment in affordable and energy efficient housing that will assist with alleviating poverty and fuel poverty
* consider the development of core and cluster models of housing to maximise efficiency for the HSCP and provide access to services and social opportunities that reduce isolation and improve health and wellbeing
* work in partnership across the public sector to improve transport networks and promote Inverclyde so that it can become established as a place that offers good employment opportunities, good amenities and is an attractive commuter option
* maximise opportunities to retrofit homes to meet required energy efficiency and quality standards
* retain heritage and locally significant buildings by investing and retrofitting them to provide modern, affordable and effective housing solutions.

Building on this discussion and debate, Group 2 formed the following 2 potential options as draft visions for the new Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy:

"EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO LIVE IN INVERCLYDE HAS ACCESS TO A HOME WHICH IS AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND PROMOTES HEALTH AND WELLBEING"

“HOUSING IN INVERCLYDE MAKES A STRONG CONTRIBUTION TO REDUCING INEQUALITIES, ENHANCING THE LOCAL HERITAGE AND IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE AREA”

Unfortunately Group 2 discussions did not conclude a preferred option. However, discussions clearly indicate that the draft LHS Vision should focus on reducing inequalities, improving housing quality, enabling access to housing and enhancing place.

## **Group 3: Draft LHS Vision**

Having reviewed the various materials presented including the Housing to 2040 vision, LHS resident survey outcomes and the strategic ambitions for Inverclyde set out in the LOIP; Group 3 agreed that the new LHS vision should:

• reflect a commitment to collaborative working as a crucial element of successful LHS delivery (the collaborative approach taken to co-produce a revised LHS was viewed as a positive step forward)

• avoid the use of the term ‘sustainable’ as this can have varying interpretations

• have regard for quality housing given the evidence of poor housing condition and the need to tackle the scale of homes that are no longer fit for purpose

• reflect the needs of the community by having a strong community focus and voice

• be ambitious but also realistic, recognising that partners might have more of an ‘enabling role’ and less of a ‘supporting role’ given increased demand in public services and the bleak fiscal outlook

• recognise the importance of placemaking which is pivotal for Inverclyde given the ambition to repopulate the area

• emphasise housing affordability and be mindful of the many external and volatile influences that drive poverty such as the low wage economy, rental values, fuel prices, food inflation and interest rates. Affordability is an issue for housing providers given the material impact on business plans of increasing interest and inflation rates as well as the possibility of rent controls

• recognise the current and increasing demand from an ageing population and the need to have different models to enable independent living.

In considering the contribution that housing can make to achieving the strategic ambitions for the people of Inverclyde, stakeholders also agreed that the LHS should:

• recognise the strong contribution housing can make to other local strategies and ambitions, particularly health and wellbeing but also the economy

• focus on the many strengths Inverclyde has to offer including people and place, harnessing this to make the area a place of choice. Inverclyde’s location and proximity to Glasgow can offer an affordable housing solution especially for homeworkers

• target wellbeing as depopulation is driven by the low mortality rates in the area as well as economic challenges

• avoid the use of the word system, while this suggests working together it is perhaps too institutional.

Building on this discussion and debate, Group 3 formed the following 2 potential options as draft visions for the new Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy:

"EVERYONE IN INVERCLYDE HAS ACCESS TO A HOME WHICH IS SUITABLE FOR THEIR NEEDS, IMPROVES WELLBEING AND OFFERS A THRIVING, CONNECTED AND RESILIENT COMMUNITY, IN A LOCATION THEY WANT TO LIVE "

“HOUSING MAKES A STRONG CONTRIBUTION TO MAKING INVERCLYDE A PLACE OF CHOICE, BY DELIVERING QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HOMES, A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND A CULTURE OF WELLBEING”

Group 3 participants unanimously preferred Option 2 as it captures the importance of place, wellbeing, quality and affordability, all key priorities that emerged from the group’s discussion. Option 2 also recognises that housing has a part to play in contributing to the successes and ambitions of the area. The phrase ‘place of choice’ was viewed as a strong statement building on the assets that Inverclyde has to offer, which could be instrumental in repopulating the area.

# **Local Housing Strategy Main Issues: Focus Group Sessions**

Prior to the LHS Development Conference, stakeholders were pre-allocated workshop sessions (based on their expertise and preferences) focusing on the main housing issues in Inverclyde. Four main issues have been identified from analysis of the Inverclyde housing system, which are proposed as strategic outcomes in new LHS, namely:

People in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities

People in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home

People in Inverclyde are supported to live independently and well at home

People in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon efficient and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty

In preparation for the conference, stakeholders received briefing papers which presented housing system evidence on the main housing issues under consideration. These briefing papers also posed a series of discussion questions that stakeholders were asked to consider prior to attending the LHS Development Conference.

Each focus group commenced with an overview of the headlines associated with each main issue, presented by an Arneil Johnston facilitator. Participants then engaged in a structured discussion around the following questions:

• Is this a main housing issue and should it be a strategic priority for the LHS?

• What are the challenges we face in tackling this issue?

• What’s been proven to work and what are our priorities for action?

The first part of the focus group sought to answer the first two questions through discussion and debate. Following this, stakeholders were asked to consider the final question. To achieve this, each participant was asked to suggest one action point that could deliver a major and positive contribution to tackling the main housing issue in question.

The four sections below outline the outputs from each focus group session detailing the range of options and ideas generated to tackle the proposed outcomes for the new Inverclyde LHS.

## **People in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities**

Analysis of housing system evidence, local priorities and a review of the current policy and investment opportunities, suggest that ‘people in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities’ should be a strategic priority within the new LHS.

As preparations begin for the development of the new Inverclyde LHS, it is important that partners and stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss whether this main issue should be a strategic housing priority over the next five years. To consult and engage stakeholders, two focus groups on this issue were held during the LHS Development Conference, with the outcomes of both groups detailed in the sections below.

### **4.1.1. Is this a main housing issue, and does it continue to be a priority for the LHS?**

Stakeholders in both focus groups unanimously agreed that, yes, ‘people in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities’ should be an outcome of the new Local Housing Strategy for Inverclyde and that housing regeneration and placemaking should be priorities for delivery.

Stakeholders suggested a number of key drivers which make prioritising this LHS outcome so important, including a need for the LHS to:

• respond proactively to changing demographics including the reality of a rapidly ageing population

• prioritise the provision of suitable housing for everyone who wants to live and work in Inverclyde, with a particular focus on economically active households

• support the ambition for Inverclyde to enjoy the benefits of inclusive economic growth

• prioritise the development of more accessible, adaptable and wheelchair homes to meet the needs of households with health and disability issues

• consider the importance of financial inclusion and tenancy sustainment in developing and maintaining connected communities

• help create vibrant communities that consider not just the provision of homes but also the provision of places for people to meet, live and work and make connections

• provide a range of house types that meet people’s needs at each stage of their lives

• address issues associated with older and low demand housing and stock that is difficult to let

• address the issues associated with funding the modernisation of existing stock as well as building new stock.

### **4.1.2. What are the challenges we face in tackling this issue?**

The main challenges associated with prioritising housing regeneration and placemaking activity were discussed in two rounds of focus group sessions.

Stakeholders agreed that the Scottish Government’s policy focus which provides greater funding support for new build housing than investment in modernising existing stock was a problem for Inverclyde. This is not to say that there is no need for new build – it was recognised that there was a need to develop more wheelchair, accessible and adaptable homes to meet the needs of households with health and disability issues. But there was recognition that greater funding is required to modernise and transform existing stock. Stakeholders also acknowledged the perception that new build housing is ‘better’ than existing stock, is a contributory factor in placing low demand stock at further risk.

“There is an implicit assumption in government policy that every area needs more homes. In Inverclyde our priority is to provide better homes rather than more homes. Moving away from government policy being driven by targets would be welcome for us”

“There is a clear perception that new build is better than existing stock. We need to invest in existing stock to ensure that it is of a comparable quality to new stock”

To maximise opportunities to engage partners and funders in transforming existing homes and communities in the most holistic way, partners agreed that regeneration master-planning must be a priority in Inverclyde. It was agreed that as well as housing investment in low demand stock; placemaking, environmental improvements and community development activity will be key components in building a set of regeneration masterplans. This process will require bringing together housing developers, planners, economic development agencies, the Scottish Government, other public bodies and local employers to develop area based strategies with development opportunities for housing, business and industrial uses, as well as improvements in active travel and public spaces. These masterplans will offer a blueprint to bid for the resources needed to transform homes and communities in a coordinated way.

There was a very encouraging collegiate culture across stakeholders with a clear recognition that collaboration had worked in the past and should be nurtured and developed. Also, encouragingly, there was a complete absence of complacency, with stakeholders recognising that existing strengths must be developed as a catalyst for placing housing at the centre of regeneration strategies to transform Inverclyde’s communities.

“We are good at partnership working but there is definitely scope to do better, the pace of change can be too slow.”

“We are good at consultation in the initial stages, but we perhaps need to do better to ensure that we follow through with delivery on the results of consultation.”

“The quality of housing stock has been vastly improved in the last 30 years and that gives me hope that we can make a real difference over the next 5 years. We need clear focused actions and priorities, and we need to recognize that we can’t do everything”

Stakeholders agreed that mixed tenure should not always be seen as a problem, in fact mixed tenure can be an aid to developing diverse and sustainable communities. However engaging owners in mixed tenure investment projects has been problematic in trying to advance regeneration as there are often issues in persuading private owners to contribute their share of funding. And there was recognition that right to buy had impacted upon the ability of social landlords to provide choice to tenants and potential tenants.

“In the most popular estates most of the houses have been sold under right to buy”

There was recognition that government funding for buybacks had been helpful but concern that conditions placed on the buyback scheme limited its usefulness. The acquisition strategy has worked well but is very small scale, being limited to 40 acquisitions per year. Funding conditions on this are very restrictive and a liberalisation of these would be helpful. The requirement for properties to be in (or close to) a condition to be re-let immediately was seen as particularly problematic.

There was a clear understanding among all stakeholders of the difficulties in attracting private developers even where suitable sites are available. Some stakeholders described a perceived “stigma” due to historic issues associated with deprivation. However, from the developers’ perspective it was much simpler than that. Their problem was that in terms of economics, it was difficult to identify projects that had the necessary rate of return. It was suggested that the removal of the requirement to provide 25% social housing might unlock some private development projects. When McTaggart & Mickel were developing in Kilmacolm, useful discussions had been held with developers such as to how they might best contribute to the achievement of the objectives in the Local Housing Strategy over and above the delivery of affordable housing.

Stakeholders agreed that there was a lack of so called “intermediate tenures” such as mid-market rent. This was a big problem for those who cannot afford private ownership but who do not qualify for social rent. It was noted that the Scottish Futures Trust have an interest in developing a diverse range of tenures and might be worth talking to on this subject. Also, the Scottish National Investment Bank may be able to provide funding that may help to get a marginal intermediate housing development over the line.

A large proportion of the existing social housing stock is low demand, and some stock is difficult to let. Stakeholders reported public perception and anecdotal evidence that in recent times too many flats had been built and not enough houses. It was agreed that there was a need for more larger houses to have been built to meet the needs of local communities

“It’s maybe time to start thinking outside the box, for example by knocking some flats together to create the larger homes that people are looking for.

Stakeholders raised issues related to transport services and the need to ensure that new communities were connected and adequately served by public transport.

“We found it difficult to engage bus companies in discussions about how they might provide services to new communities.”

There was widespread recognition that the entire Net Zero agenda had slipped down the priority list because of other more immediate economic pressures. Despite this, stakeholders understood the importance of this agenda and were concerned at the uncertainties surrounding investment, standards and the funding that will be available. There was recognition that this uncertainty might delay necessary investment in existing stock as part of wider housing-led regeneration processes.

The relatively small size of the Inverclyde area is helpful for fostering effective partnerships and is very helpful in building good relationships. Places like Branchton and Bow Farm have been successfully developed because of the understanding of the importance of placemaking in regeneration activity and the ability of diverse stakeholders to recognize the common good and to work towards it.

“It’s important that our communities walk alongside us on the whole journey, people live in communities, they don’t live in services”

“We can build houses but that doesn’t always solve the problem. We need to make sure that the community is supported with appropriate community facilities”

Good work has been done on financial inclusion and tenancy sustainment to ensure that people in Inverclyde have been able to access available funding support to tackle poverty. Also, the provision of expert advice to householders on energy efficiency and practical matters such as how to make the best use of heating systems has been well received.

Stakeholders noted that housing associations had successfully used their positions as community anchors to reach out beyond their own tenants to include all of the people within their community in their events. Also housing associations had taken a tenant centred view and responded to needs of individual tenants for example by providing white goods where required to address furniture poverty and promote tenancy sustainment.

Analysis of this stakeholder evidence, concludes that the main challenges associated with prioritising housing regeneration and placemaking are as follows:

Community development

Inclusive placemaking

Refocus affordable housing delivery

Regenerate existing homes and communities

Encouraging commercial development

### **4.1.3. What’s been proven to work and what are our priorities for action?**

Informed by focus group discussions, each participant was invited to identify a priority for action, investment or partnership that would be instrumental in tackling this LHS outcome. Five key themes emerged within the action points suggested including:

• developing area-based housing-led regeneration masterplans and partnerships

• encouraging market developers to invest in house building and placemaking

• engaging the Scottish Government and public bodies to support regeneration

• placemaking and inclusive community engagement

• investing in community development and wider role activities.

The results were as follows:

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| **People in Inverclyde live in quality homes in connected communities: Strategic Priorities for Action** |
| Objective 1: Develop area-based housing-led regeneration masterplans and partnerships |
| 1. Commission a series of feasibility studies which bring partners together to appraise options for mixed use development including housing, business, industrial; as well as investment in public realm and active travel |
| 1. Place housing regeneration at the centre of the Inverclyde Alliance repopulation strategy by aligning housing investment, economic development, placemaking and active transport priorities in a suite of area-based regeneration masterplans |
| 1. Develop partnership and investment structures to deliver the Eastern Gateway masterplan, through strong engagement with local housing providers |
| 1. Engage housing partners in strategic site assembly, encouraging housing investment strategies which enhance the range of house types and tenures in Inverclyde |
| Objective 2: Encouraging market developers to invest in house building and placemaking |
| 1. Deliver an engagement programme targeting housing developers aligned to strategic land assembly and master planning opportunities |
| 1. Look creatively at Planning Regulations to explore opportunities to encourage and facilitate private development |
| 1. Engage with private developers regarding the obstacles to commercial household building in Inverclyde and coproduce solutions |
| Objective 3: Engaging the Scottish Government and public bodies to support regeneration |
| 1. Encourage RSLs to coordinate and seek joint funding opportunities for housing regeneration proposals as part of the SHIP process |
| 1. Engage the Scottish Government in a review of the SHIP aligned to RSL regeneration priorities and proposals, with a view to increasing funding for investment in existing stock |
| 1. Focus SHIP investment on the delivery of accessible, adaptable and wheelchair homes to meet the needs of households with health and disability issues |
| 1. Work with the Scottish Futures Trust to explore funding opportunities and subsidy mechanisms for a more diverse range of affordable tenures such as mid-market rent |
| 1. Work with the Scottish National Investment Bank to explore funding mechanisms to support mixed tenure regeneration and investment projects |
| Objective 4: Placemaking and inclusive community engagement |
| 1. Proactively pursue a locality-based approach to placemaking where communities work to design housing and place solutions linked to specific local needs |
| 1. Support the preparation of community-led Place Plans to reflect the aspirations of local communities to shape their neighbourhoods |
| 1. Ensure place based approaches are the heart of partnerships to improve land assembly and development planning in collaboration with landowners, developers, funders, local communities and businesses |
| 1. Improve connectivity of communities by encouraging investment in physical, social, digital and sustainable transport infrastructure |
| 1. Look to broaden the scope of placemaking partnerships to include public transport providers and local employers |
| Objective 5: Invest in community development and wider role activities |
| 1. Improve community engagement and empowerment to improve community safety and reduce neighbourhood stigma as part of a housing-led approach to regeneration |
| 1. Consider ways to maintain and expand the wider role activities of social landlords in placemaking and regeneration masterplans |
| 1. Improve the alignment of financial inclusion services and RSL wider role activities to tackle poverty, financial hardship and improve wellbeing |

## **People in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home**

Analysis of housing system evidence, local priorities and a review of the current policy and investment opportunities, suggest that ‘people in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home’ should be a strategic priority within the new LHS and that improving housing options, choice and affordability should be delivery priorities.

As preparations begin for the development of the new Inverclyde LHS, it is important that partners and stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss whether this main issue should be a strategic housing priority over the next five years. To consult and engage stakeholders, two focus groups on this issue were held during the LHS Development Conference, with the outcomes of both groups detailed in the sections below.

### **4.2.1. Is this a main housing issue, and does it continue to be a priority for the LHS?**

Stakeholders in both focus groups unanimously agreed that, yes, ‘people in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home’ should be a strategic priority within the new Local Housing Strategy. All stakeholders agreed that ‘it’s hard to argue that this issue is not a priority’ given the compelling evidence presented.

Furthermore, stakeholders suggested a number of key drivers which make prioritising this LHS outcome so important, including a need for the LHS to:

• proactively tackle housing affordability, which is exacerbated in Inverclyde by poor household incomes and high levels of deprivation. It was acknowledged that there is a key link between the Local Housing Strategy and the Child Poverty Action Plan that needs to be a catalyst for maximising household incomes and supporting people into work through employability services

• improve housing sustainment beyond affordability issues, which will depend on a more collaborative approach which aligns housing support services to housing options. Enhanced partnership working to meet the housing and underlying needs of households in Inverclyde is central to a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and should be a priority. This approach will benefit those at most risk of homelessness including those liberated from prison and other institutional settings

• extend housing choice beyond the limited and often poor quality housing options on offer across many communities in Inverclyde. We need to explore how new housing delivery models could expand housing options aligned to new housing support models.

### **4.2.2. What are the challenges we face in tackling this issue?**

The main challenges associated with improving housing options, choice and affordability were discussed in two rounds of focus group sessions.

Stakeholders in both groups acknowledged that improving housing options and choice in Inverclyde would involve encouraging, enabling and attracting private developers to invest in new build housing development. Stakeholders agreed that if this LHS is to make a positive contribution to strengthening the Inverclyde economy and meeting the needs of a growing working age population, the housing system must be better equipped to meet aspirations for home ownership. It was agreed that there is limited developer appetite to build in Inverclyde as a result of below average housing market values, perceptions of low demand, complex topography and poor environmental quality in some neighbourhoods. It was acknowledged that in many ways, Inverclyde is a ‘great place to live’ and has strong commuting potential given its proximity to Glasgow and good public transport links. Building on this, we need to create and target a range of developer incentives to stimulate market interest, whilst marketing the benefits of living in Inverclyde:

“We need to challenge perceptions about Inverclyde – that’s it’s a place of deprivation and poverty and promote all that it has to offer. We need to find ways to make Inverclyde more attractive as a commuter destination and attract private investment in new homes and neighbourhoods”

“The topography of Inverclyde is very challenging and can increase development costs. Developers then can’t recover these costs as sale values in Inverclyde are lower than average, hence the lack of market appetite to build. We need to be more creative in how we engage developer interest, possibly looking at infrastructure or land incentives”

“We should consider opportunities like the Partnership Fund for Regeneration to build incentives which might subsidise development costs. We also need to engage in strategic land assembly and marketing what we have to offer through developer engagement events”.

Stakeholders also acknowledged investment in new build housing alone would not be a successful long term strategy to build the private housing market in the area. Many Inverclyde communities also need investment in placemaking and community safety as part of a wider housing-led regeneration masterplan.

Over and above this, there is a need to enhance the range of housing options on offer in Inverclyde, improving tenure diversity and in particular, creating better housing choices for working households. This is complex given the structure of the Inverclyde economy and the often precarious housing status of local workers, including those engaged in the ‘gig economy’ on a temporary or freelance basis, and those on zero hours contracts. These arrangements limit the housing options available, including access to lending for mortgage finance or credit references for private renting. Tackling this will require a range of solutions including improving the quality and appeal of low demand housing, as well as creating more sustainable employment opportunities. Again, housing led regeneration, which seeks to connect homes to jobs and promotes employability services and skills development, should be a priority from an economic development perspective.

Stakeholders were in agreement that ‘social housing cannot meet every need’ particularly in the context of a needs based allocation system. On this basis, we need to be clear on the client groups who would most benefit from social housing and create a better range of options for those excluded from the sector. This could include the full range of intermediate housing tenures, including mid-market rent and low cost home ownership models.

“Mid-market rent could be a really good option for those who can’t access the housing market and also don’t have priority for social housing. We need to test how this model could work in Inverclyde and better understand demand for it.”

“We need a better range of options – low cost home ownership grants, improvement for sale grants, mid-market rent models to develop a wider and more effective range of housing options, particularly for those in work.”

“We should also engage with investors to gauge if we can strengthen the private rented sector and if there would be interest in testing build to rent models. This could include developing a social lettings model with local RSLs”.

As well as creating opportunities for a new range of housing options in Inverclyde, making better use of existing homes should be a significant LHS priority. This strategy should include efforts to improve the operation of the private rented sector and its ability to meet housing need. It was acknowledged that most private landlords in Inverclyde only hold one property in their portfolio and in the context of current economic pressures (i.e. rising interest rates) could be experiencing real pressures to manage and maintain their homes. To avoid PRS rent inflation in an already unaffordable sector, and to improve the quality of existing PRS homes; private landlords need support. On this basis, access to grant funding to invest in repairs, energy efficiency works, and health & safety compliance should be considered by the LHS.

Stakeholders were also very supportive of enhancing investment in bringing empty property back into use, both to expand the range of housing options locally but also to improve the quality of homes in the PRS (as well as supporting environmental improvements and placemaking). In parallel, stakeholders expressed a strong desire for prioritising the expansion of the RSL acquisition programme as a key mechanism to increase investment in affordable housing, improve neighbourhood quality and extend tenure diversity.

“The LHS should be explicit that we need to expand the RSL acquisition programme – both in extending the budget available but also in achieving greater flexibility in how we apply the criteria. The pilot activity has worked – it’s now time to upscale”.

Making better use of existing homes will also involve achieving a better match of households to homes in the social housing sector. This could involve housing incentives to reduce under-occupation as well reviewing allocation policy frameworks to encourage movement across the social housing stock.

As well as improving housing options and choice, stakeholders acknowledged the need for a more proactive approach to preventing homelessness in Inverclyde. All stakeholders acknowledged that early, proactive housing advice and assistance was key to preventing homelessness and that all front-line services who interact with households at risk of housing crisis were responsible for prevention activity.

It was agreed that partners in Inverclyde should be engaged in the development of a housing options advice model, building on the work already taken forward by RSLs, but aligned to best practice principles of:

• person-centred, comprehensive needs assessment

• customer empowerment to explore all available housing options

• housing support to meet both the housing and underlying needs of those at risk

• collaboration across partner agencies to take a case management approach to preventing crisis

• consistent needs assessment, referral pathways, advice tools, training and staff development.

It was agreed that the implementation of the new homelessness prevention duty offers a great opportunity to kick-start partner engagement, encourage collaboration and focus investment in service design.

“We need to work in partnership to deliver a personalised housing options model to all households at risk of homelessness. This should include joint information and referrals systems, advice tools and training. Too often, households at risk are just signposted to the homeless service even when there is an opportunity for front line services to do more prevention work ‘up-stream’”

“We need to create a culture where everyone feels responsible for homelessness prevention, set a standard for housing advice and monitor the approach we're collectively taking”

“We need better leadership in driving housing options advice and a better range of options in the toolkit. We need to join this up and create a case management approach to meeting complex needs. This means we need all partners around the table committed to new ways of working”.

In the context of the current cost of living crisis, it was acknowledged that there needs to be strong alignment and collaboration between the homeless team, RSLs and financial inclusion services in order to prevent housing crisis as a result of financial hardship.

“We need to join up what we're doing and consider proactive and assertive outreach for those at risk of housing crisis”

“We need to target support to maximise financial capability, employability and income maximisation. This will offer short term gains in addressing hardship but much longer term gains in tackling poverty”

“We need to think out of the box. The furnished tenancies pilot is about addressing furniture poverty. This could be a key aspect of improving housing sustainment for those at risk”.

Stakeholders also agreed that a key aspect of a proactive and inclusive housing options model was the delivery of wrap around, person centred support services. To get this right we need to have a range of support options on offer from low level housing support up to the development of a Housing First model in Inverclyde. To ensure that support options can address the underlying risks to housing sustainment, mental health, addictions and criminal justice teams need to be firmly embedded within the Inverclyde housing options model.

“Wrap around support is essential to enabling households with housing support needs to sustain settled housing. Housing providers, homelessness services, health and social care services need to collaborate”

“Housing support should be framed from a mental health and addiction perspective in Inverclyde. The Resource Allocation Group is struggling to access the support services we need. We need RRTP support workers commissioned by the HSCP, enabling people to engage and much better collaboration across housing, health and social care teams”.

Analysis of this stakeholder evidence, concludes that the main challenges associated with improving housing options, choice and affordability are as follows:

Support to enable housing sustainment

Proactive housing options prevention model

Making better use of existing housing stock

Attracting housing developers

Deliver a wider range of housing options

### **4.2.3. What’s been proven to work and what are our priorities for action?**

Informed by focus group discussions, each participant was invited to identify a priority for action, investment or partnership that would be instrumental in tackling this LHS outcome. Five key themes emerged within the action points suggested including:

• encouraging commercial interest in house building and placemaking

• extending the range of housing options and tenures available in Inverclyde

• delivering better homes by maximising the impact of existing housing

• proactively preventing homelessness using a housing options model of information, advice and assistance

• targeting housing support services which maximise housing sustainment

The results were as follows:

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| --- |
| People in Inverclyde find it easier to access and sustain a home: Strategic Priorities for Action |
| Objective 1: Encourage commercial interest in house building and placemaking |
| 1. Promote and market Inverclyde as a great place to live aligned to economic development and community planning initiatives |
| 1. Create opportunities to subsidise infrastructure investment and build costs via the Partnership Fund for Regeneration as part of a developer engagement programme |
| 1. Ensure place based approaches are the heart of partnerships to improve land assembly and development planning in collaboration with developers, funders and local communities |
| Objective 2: Extend the range of housing options and tenures available in Inverclyde |
| 1. Increase the range of affordable housing options in Inverclyde including shared equity, low cost home ownership and mid-market rent options |
| 1. Develop new housing supply models (e.g. low cost home ownership or shared equity models) specifically targeted to working age households in Inverclyde |
| 1. Test market appetite/development feasibility of Build to Rent models that could deliver a range of housing options across Inverclyde |
| 1. Deliver proactive community engagement programmes to better understanding the range of housing options needed in each community |
| Objective 3: Deliver better homes by maximising the impact of existing housing |
| 1. Develop a range of options that achieve a better match of households to homes for example, mutual exchange, incentives, buy backs and local lettings initiatives |
| 1. Prioritise targeted investment in the Inverclyde Empty Homes Service in areas where local housing pressure is evidenced |
| 1. Extend the RSL Acquisition Scheme by enhancing the budget and relaxing the criteria |
| 1. Target grant assistance and support to private landlords encouraging investment in repair, energy efficiency and health & safety improvements |
| Objective 4: Proactively prevent homelessness using a housing options model of information, advice and assistance |
| 1. Improve communication/referral pathways into housing options services for Council services and external agencies who may identify households at risk of homelessness |
| 1. Develop a collaborative housing options model in Inverclyde based on consistent advice, needs assessment, referrals and case management tools engaging all front line service engaging with people at risk of homelessness |
| 1. Improve housing options pathways for households at risk of homelessness, ensuring settled housing is provided with appropriate housing support |
| 1. Work with partners across housing, mental health, addiction and community justice teams to support delivery of the new statutory 'Prevent Duty' to identify and prevent homelessness |
| 1. Support frontline staff to deliver advice on the full range of Housing Options available in Inverclyde by providing access to training via the Housing Options Training Toolkit |
| 1. Achieve better engagement and collaboration between financial inclusion, RSLs and homeless teams to enable early engagement and prevent housing crisis |
| 1. Establish a practitioner group to discuss and share best practice on delivering housing options and affordability advice services |
| Objective 5: Target housing support services which maximise housing sustainment |
| 1. Pilot and develop a Housing First model in Inverclyde for households experiencing multiple and severe disadvantage |
| 1. Adopt an early intervention approach for clients with multiple/complex needs at risk of tenancy failure to assess alternative housing options/support services to enable independent living |
| 1. Deliver 'wraparound’ housing support model across housing, mental health, addictions and criminal justice services for homeless people with complex needs and help them sustain their home. |
| 1. Develop capacity to deliver low-level housing support services which prevent homelessness and enable tenancy sustainment |
| 1. Transform the temporary accommodation model in Inverclyde to provide more community based tenancies with support and decommission the Inverclyde Centre |
| 1. Coordinate activity across housing, employability and financial inclusion services to reduce poverty and tackle financial hardship including access to welfare benefits advice, furniture, income maximisation opportunities |

## **People in Inverclyde are supported to live independently and well at home**

Analysis of housing system evidence, local priorities and a review of the current policy and investment opportunities, suggest that ‘people in Inverclyde are supported to live indepently and well at home’ should be a strategic priority within the new LHS and that delivering preventative housing solutions should be a delivery priority.

As preparations begin for the development of the new Inverclyde LHS, it is important that partners and stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss whether this main issue should be a strategic housing priority over the next five years. To consult and engage stakeholders, two focus groups on this issue were held during the LHS Development Conference, with the outcomes of both groups detailed in the sections below.

### **4.3.1. Is this a main housing issue, and does it continue to be a priority for the LHS?**

Stakeholders in both focus groups unanimously agreed that, yes, ‘people in Inverclyde are supported to live indepently and well at home’ should be a strategic priority within the new Local Housing Strategy for Inverclyde. Stakeholders suggested a number of key drivers which make prioritising this LHS outcome so important, including a need for the LHS to:

• address the lack of housing choices for people who need accessible housing, particularly for those currently living in unsuitable housing

• continue to investigate and develop the use of assistive technology within homes, to maximise independence and make best use of available resources to support Inverclyde’s ageing population

• find a range of creative solutions which support people to live well and independently at home for longer in the community they prefer.

### **4.3.2. What are the challenges we face in tackling this issue?**

The main challenges associated with enabling independent living through ‘preventative housing solutions’ were discussed in two rounds of focus group sessions.

One of the first discussion points raised focused on the typography of Inverclyde and how this not only makes it difficult to build accessible accommodation, but has an impact on the ability of local households to remain in their existing homes. Despite being able to carry out aids and adaptations to a property, it’s physical location could be on a hill which makes it difficult for the household to access community amenities and essential services. Furthermore, some stakeholders suggested that the infrastructure is not in place to enable people with particular housing needs to live in Inverclyde with too much reliance on accessing services out with the area, which is made more difficult by limited access to public transport.

“Most of Inverclyde is on a cliff, this makes it very difficult to build accessible homes”

“There are infrastructure problems with enabling people to stay at home, this is because there isn’t public transport routes around the authority. Some people need to go out with Inverclyde for appointments. It can be expensive and prohibitive to do it and this can stop people being able to live at home independently”

Alongside typography, stock condition was considered a key challenge, particularly where adaptations are required in properties that are currently deemed to be in poor condition or where adaptations would be difficult to install due to the property type. Aligned to these concerns, discussions also shifted to making the best use of housing stock. In some cases, moving to a more suitable home would be better for the current household and could free up a home capable of meeting the needs of another household.

“Sometimes there is too much onus on people staying in their own homes - we need to create more movement. People should be encouraged to move out of houses that are too big for them. We are constantly seeing people needing larger family homes in social rented sector as they can’t afford to buy. We need to make it attractive for people to downsize.”

Workshop participants confirmed that whilst there are good working relationships at a local level which contribute to successful outcomes for individual households, there is recognition that collaboration also needs to be more focused and better coordinated. There is a need for partners to make improvements in information sharing and case management to improve multi-agency working in meeting particular housing needs.

“The Specialist Housing Review has been under development and will provide some guidance for partners going forward but we haven’t considered data sharing in it.”

Participants indicated that there is limited data sharing across housing, health and care partners which can cause operational challenges. For example, there is currently limited information on adapted stock and how this is used when properties become available to let.

Improving data sharing has been discussed previously in the context of service planning and commissioning but hasn’t been taken forward. Both groups agreed that having robust profiling information on current and future need for specialist housing Inverclyde, as well as existing provision, would be beneficial to enabling the planning and commissioning of support services, newbuild and regeneration programmes.

“It would be good to have one central register of adapted properties and what the adaptations were, however, it would be difficult to do and keep up to date. It would be good to know where investment has been made and to make use of this in the future”

There are also challenges around provision of support services for households requiring care packages to enable them to leave hospital or institutional settings. Stakeholders felt that better collaborative working at an early stage to identify households, their needs and how these are to be resourced; could improve customer journeys and service effectiveness. There were concerns raised around ability of providers to deliver services as a result of the national staffing crisis within the care sector, and agreement over the need to look at alternative service delivery options.

“There is a national crisis, and it is likely to continue for the next ten years. We need to look at modern technology and look less at traditional ways of care, learning from countries like Scandanavia”

Both groups discussed the opportunities in relation to technology enabled care (TEC). Discussions concluded that TEC opportunities were not being maximised in Inverclyde.

“Technology enabled care has been about long enough, we need to investigate its full potential much further.”

There is a limited supply of wheelchair accessible properties in the social housing sector in Inverclyde, which is exacerbated by low turnover and by waiting list pressure. Participants also agreed there is a need to increase wheelchair housing provision across all housing tenures. A new wheelchair provision policy has been introduced in the Local Development Plan, however, there is a need for a robust evidence base to demonstrate where and what the current need and future need will be.

“Over 50% of households are owner occupiers, we need to have greater influence around building accessible accommodation in every tenure”

There was consensus across both groups that future newbuild should target known need for accessible housing where possible. This will require significantly improved information sharing to ensure all agencies are aware of developments in pipeline, as well as the need profile in each locality, so that newbuild sites can be informed at planning stage. There was also some discussion about planning for the ageing population and considering if future newbuild should cater specifically for the needs of this client group in order to develop homes that are fit for purpose both now and in the future.

“Should we not be building what is required, and if we are building new homes, should we build for an ageing population which would free up family homes?”

It was recognised that achieving an effective multi-agency approach and a culture of collective responsibility to early intervention, is a challenge partners will face given the ageing population. Both groups recognised that there are many opportunities for public sector workers and wider partners to identify early signs that a household may require assistance to enable them to live independently and well at home. Developing processes and procedures that enable referrals to relevant partners at an earlier stage to avoid crisis will be important in delivering this approach.

“We need to be able to identify aids and adaptation and other support requirements sooner. We have to be able to make use of all of us who go into peoples’ homes being able to make referrals at an early stage if they see something.”

Participants on the whole were concerned about the ageing population and the increasing demands this will place on aids and adaptations budgets alongside the rising costs of materials and labour to carry them out. Both groups indicated that the current condition of existing housing often makes it difficult to retrofit solutions.

“There are rising costs and the current condition of existing stock is poor. It isn’t easy to adapt properties to suit needs of households. We can do retrofit solutions but sometimes the footprint of the building isn’t suitable. What do we do then? Build? What happens to the old stock?”

There was some discussion around provision of adaptations in homes that could reasonably be foreseen as not going to meet a households needs in the near future. It was felt that a common sense approach was needed when approving adaptations, as a household’s future needs should be taken into account.

“We regularly get requests for wet-rooms from households who live one floor up, we need to take a common sense approach as the need can change very quickly. If someone needs a wet-room it is likely living one floor up won’t be sustainable long term”.

With improved information and knowledge around current and future requirements, Registered Social Landlords and the Private Sector Housing Team would be able to make better informed judgments on the scale of investment required in property adaptions. At the moment funding applications are based on three to five year trends, however, with an ageing population the previous trend data is likely to under-estimate future requirements. Understanding the impact of demographic change and being able to evidence this to enhance the funding received, will be important element of meeting particular housing needs within the new Local Housing Strategy.

“Funding applications are based on the previous year, and we generally get 50% of what we ask for. We can’t look into the future and know what demand is going to be. The budget has never changed in Inverclyde, but it looks like now there will be a push for this. We need to know how this can be championed and what can be done.”

Analysis of this stakeholder evidence, concludes that the main challenges associated with ‘enabling independent living through preventative housing solutions’ in Inverclyde are as follows:

Making the best use of existing stock

Sustainable solutions for particular needs

Data sharing & joint planning to future delivery

Investment in aids and adaptations

Making best use of technology enabled care

### **4.3.3. What’s been proven to work and what are our priorities for action?**

Informed by focus group discussions, participants were invited to identify priorities for action, investment or partnership that would be instrumental in tackling the main issues. Five key themes emerged within the action points suggested including:

• improving the housing options of households with particular needs who live or want to live in Inverclyde

• tackling the mismatch between supply and demand in social rented sector for households with particular needs

• developing and improving partnership working with Health and Social Care to deliver sustainable and suitable models of housing for households with particular needs

• maximising the use of aids and adaptations alongside technology enabled care to enable households to live well and at home for longer

• ensuring strategic leadership and responsibility in relation to information sharing and new initiatives to inform service delivery and development. This includes monitoring trends and identifying demands to ensure sufficient funding and investment to meet requirements

The results were as follows:

|  |
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| People in Inverclyde are supported to live independently and well at home: Strategic Priorities for Action |
| Objective 1: Improve housing options for households with particular needs who live or want to live in Inverclyde |
| 1. Enable the setting of realistic and deliverable wheelchair and accessible housing targets across all tenures |
| 1. Understand the scale and extent of mismatch between supply and demand of social housing across property sizes, types and locations for households with particular needs |
| 1. Consider feasibility of designating older persons housing within existing mainstream stock such as multi-storey blocks |
| 1. Continue to develop and improve training and learning opportunities across partners in relation to home care services and housing options |
| 1. Consider test for change opportunities in relation to innovative housing support models |
| 1. Investigate opportunities for dementia friendly design features in retrofitting existing stock and in the specification of newbuild |
| Objective 2: Tackle the mismatch between supply and demand in social rented housing for households with particular needs |
| 1. Continue to develop the acquisition programme to address gaps in accessible or adapted housing provision for households with particular needs |
| 1. Consider, develop and implement initiatives and quality housing alternatives to encourage downsizing in households who are under-occupying their homes |
| 1. Investigate the feasibility of re-provisioning general needs housing to accessible housing through SHIP investment projects and assess the potential for core and cluster models for key client groups |
| 1. Develop pilots for housing design models that meet the changing needs of an ageing population |
| Objective 3: Develop and improve partnership working across housing, health and social care partners to deliver sustainable options for households with particular housing needs |
| 1. Develop support planning and care management arrangements across housing, health and social are partners to jointly identify solutions to meet the housing needs of key client groups |
| 1. Build on the existing success from the ‘Wellbeing at Home Developments’ and consider the feasibility of rolling this out further |
| 1. Develop and improve information sharing protocols on pipeline need for specialist housing to ensure early planning and commissioning across housing, health and care partners |
| 1. Invest in joint training to enable staff across housing, health and care services to identify risks to independence at home at an early stage, enabling onward referral and early intervention |
| 1. Examine the role of core and cluster models for mixed client groups to ensure best use of the limited resources available |
| 1. Improve referral pathways and joint working for households identified as at risk |
| Objective 4: Maximise the use of aids and adaptations alongside technology enabled care to enable households to live well and at home for longer |
| 1. Consider the development of self-service portals for households who require low level aids and adaptations |
| 1. Project future investment requirements in property adaptations and improve estimates for funding applications through enhanced information sharing |
| 1. Improve promotion of the Care and Repair Service in Inverclyde to improve access to advice and assistance on property adaptations for all households across Inverclyde |
| 1. Maximise the use of assistive technology to enable people with particular housing needs to live independently and well at home |
| 1. Develop a joined-up approach to commissioning optimum telecare and telehealth solutions across housing, health and social care partners |
| 1. Understand outcomes from current projects in relation to wearable tech and make best use of results to inform future service development and provision |
| 1. Complete roll out of new technology and systems within sheltered housing complexes |
| Objective 5: Ensure strategic leadership in relation to information sharing and new initiatives that to inform service delivery and development |
| 1. Ensure strategic leads identified within Council and HSCP take Local Housing Strategy Actions forward including development, implementation and monitoring |
| 1. Understand current and future funding requirements as a result of an ageing population and households with particular needs |
| 1. Ensure Registered Social Landlords are aligned and committed to contributing to delivery of Housing Contribution Statement and Local Housing Strategy actions |

## **People in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon friendly and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty**

Analysis of housing system evidence, local priorities and a review of the current policy and investment opportunities, suggest that ‘people in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon friendly and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty’ should be a strategic priority within the new LHS and that improving housing condition, energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty should be delivery priorities.

As preparations begin for the development of the new Inverclyde LHS, it is important that partners and stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss whether this main issue should be a strategic housing priority over the next five years. To consult and engage stakeholders, two focus groups on this issue were held during the LHS Development Conference, with the outcomes of both groups detailed in the sections below.

### **4.4.1. Is this a main housing issue, and does it continue to be a priority for the LHS?**

Stakeholders in both focus groups unanimously agreed that, yes, ‘people in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon friendly and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty’ should be a strategic priority within the new Local Housing Strategy for Inverclyde.

Stakeholders suggested a number of key drivers which make prioritising this LHS outcome so important, including a need for the LHS to:

* take cognisance of the prevailing cost of living and energy crises and the need for investment in energy efficiency a shared priority for landlords, owners and tenants alike
* target investment in existing homes given that almost half of Inverclyde’s CO2 emissions are estimated to come from the domestic sector
* reflect that Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to develop a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) by the end of 2023 that sets out their plans to decarbonise heat in buildings and improve energy efficiency across their area. A further key objective is to eliminate poor energy efficiency as a driver for fuel poverty
* evidence intended actions to improve energy efficiency and house condition against national targets and an increasing focus on this area from both a Scottish Government perspective but also the Scottish Housing Regulator
* tackle the issues that prevent investment in mixed tenure blocks given the volume of these in Inverclyde and look to ways to support the dominant owner occupied sector
* place house condition above energy efficiency in the priorities by adopting a fabric first approach
* have a focus on dampness given the current high profile attached to houses with these issues and the serious health consequences.

### **4.4.2. What are the challenges we face in tackling this issue?**

The main challenges associated with improving housing condition, energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty were discussed in two rounds of focus group sessions.

Challenging targets for energy efficiency and net zero and uncertainly on changes to these measures and timescales, was viewed as a major challenge by both groups. The Scottish Government’s interim guidance on EESSH2 published in October 2022 has placed a hiatus on the programme to a large extent, and stakeholders questioned the relevance of EPC ratings as an effective indicator.

*“The EPC rating is fundamentally flawed. A property with an EPC A rating could still mean higher fuel costs. There is not one benchmark to establish how effective solutions are for different archetypes.”*

The high costs associated with meeting the national energy and net zero targets and timescales was discussed at length, with stakeholders questioning the levels of expenditure that would make investment unviable and where costs would outweigh benefits.

*“We need to be realistic about costs associated with meeting these targets, as they could outweigh the benefits. We need to ask ourselves is EPC C good enough?”*

A further challenge in relation to EESSH2 was discussed in that many properties will be unable to achieve targets given the prohibitive costs and intrusive works that would be needed to ensure compliance. Stakeholders then asked what happens with these properties?

*“We estimate we can only get around 60% of our properties to the EESSH2 standard, so what happens to the ones that aren’t financially viable? This target comes at a great cost, and it won’t help all homes and householders.”*

Stakeholders also discussed the challenges associated with finding the right solutions to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in domestic homes. The group felt there is not yet reliable enough data on what emerging solutions can offer, in order to make substantial investment decisions. There was recognition that the status of many trailblazing projects was still very much at a test and learn state. This means that landlords and owners are reluctant to make investment decisions until there is clear evidence on what solutions and technology will work best to improve thermal efficiency.

*“Technology is not there yet - high costs and lack of evidence on what solutions work best, is therefore cost prohibitive. We are still very much at a test and learn stage - we have lots of theory but still don’t know what solutions work best for each property archetype. So it feels too risky to make investment decisions at this specific point in time.”*

*“We need to pause spending plans until we know which solutions have longevity – cavity wall insulation was a previous solution but now we are told it is all about external wall insulation. We moved people onto gas boilers in the past but not sure these will be around for that much longer.”*

As well as lack of knowledge on the most effective and sustainable solutions, stakeholders also felt that residents lacked knowledge on how to make the most of their homes to ensure ventilation and heating are optimised to reduce costs but also to avoid property issues becoming health issues.

*“People don’t necessarily know how to properly use the property [components] and don’t understand the impact that it could have on their health if they don’t ventilate and heat the home.”*

Financial pressures on landlords and owners was another concern for the groups. Given the cost of living crisis, owners are even less likely to have funds available to invest in property maintenance that could reduce energy consumption and decarbonise their home. Likewise, landlords are faced with competing and unprecedented pressures to limit rent increases and meet increased operating costs as a result of higher inflation and interest rates.

*“Landlords and owners will be looking at what gives them the biggest bang for their buck now more than ever, and that is if they even have the funds.”*

The timing of investment programmes was also discussed as there is a reluctance to invest in the short term in case there is the possibility of funding becoming available in the future.

*“When is the right time to invest? Will funding be available in the future that isn’t available just now? We don’t want to jump too early and miss out.”*

Issues relating to mixed tenure blocks was viewed as another significant challenge in improving housing quality and achieving net zero in Inverclyde. This is even more of an issue in this area given the higher percentage of flats and the dominance of owner occupation. While funding is available to support owners, including those in mixed tenure blocks, stakeholders felt the funding criteria is too restrictive, to subject to change and that funding levels haven’t kept abreast of construction price inflation. The prospect of tackling high costs and intrusive works on owners’ homes is daunting and many will lack the knowledge and skills to navigate what needs to happen and how to seek the right solutions and funding options.

*“Mixed tenure is a real issue, and it is preventing [social] landlords taking actions. The funding system is too restrictive, is everchanging and grant funding doesn’t match the costs to owners especially with the current inflationary pressures.”*

*“In my experience it isn’t that owners are unwilling to invest in their property but there is a lack of knowledge on how to tackle scheme issues – it just isn’t a job for amateurs, so owners need to be guided and supported.”*

Stakeholders were concerned that many of the challenges to achieve net zero needed leadership at the highest level of government as they were too great to be dealt with locally if there was any prospect of meeting the targets. Collaborative working across Inverclyde partners also needed to improve to so there is more of a joined up and unified approach if there is any chance in meeting targets for the area.

*“The LHS needs to have an element of Scottish Government asks or lobbying to raise the concerns we have in meeting targets and the challenges we face. We need one joined up approach and we need unity in how we do it across partners in the area so we have the best chance of meeting targets.”*

The stock transfer issue was a challenge unique to Inverclyde that was raised by both groups. There is concern that there are disincentives built into the system that restricts an LSVT RSL raising much needed funds for housing investment by selling off unviable or surplus assets. Environmental maintenance issues are also both costly and problematic, particularly where the RSL is the minority owner (or has no units at all) but still has a responsibility to maintain common areas as a result of the transfer agreement.

*“The local MSP is inundated with issues regarding the stock transfer. There are limitations on what RCH has to maintain and they cannot take action to sell given limitation of 2006 agreement. We have major maintenance issues where RCH doesn't have any housing stock. The stock transfer agreement - well it’s a mess!”*

Analysis of this stakeholder evidence, concludes that the main challenges associated with improving housing condition, energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty are as follows:

Lack of knowledge of workable solutions

Mixed tenure investment

Funding constraints and cost pressures

Restrictive stock transfer agreement

Challenging energy & net zero targets

### **4.4.3. What’s been proven to work and what are our priorities for action?**

Informed by focus group discussions, each participant was invited to identify a priority for action, investment or partnership that would be instrumental in tackling this LHS outcome. Five key themes emerged within the action points suggested including:

• improving collaborative working across national and local government and housing providers

• improving insight to target investment in property condition

• maximising funding opportunities to assist landlords and owners

• adopting a regeneration approach to tackle issues with mixed tenure

• improving information and advice to homeowners and tenants

The results were as follows:

|  |
| --- |
| People in Inverclyde live in good quality, carbon friendly and energy efficient homes which reduce fuel poverty: Strategic Priorities for Action |
| Objective 1: Improve collaborative working across local and national government levels and RSL partners |
| 1. Develop collaborative long term investment plans across RSL partners to enhance programme management arrangements and knowledge sharing |
| 1. Undertake inclusive community/tenant engagement to determine household priorities for investment in energy efficiency and property maintenance |
| 1. Lobby the Scottish Government to advance plans for multi-year funding for HEEPS/ABS to enable the coordination of longer term investment plans |
| 1. Harness the work of the Cost of Living working groups to maximise funding and target energy efficiency measures to the most fuel poor households |
| 1. Adopt a collaborative approach to district heating systems so this is scalable, and benefits are maximised across the Inverclyde housing sector |
| 1. Establish information sharing protocols to test and coordinate energy investment solutions for the full range of property archetypes across Inverclyde |
| 1. Work collaboratively to co-produce the Inverclyde Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy in partnership with RSLs, Inverclyde Council, energy companies and the Scottish Government |
| 1. Work collaboratively to develop a fabric first approach to investment to secure best value in achieving net zero across the housing sector |
| 1. Adopt data sharing protocols across a range of stakeholders to identify households in greatest fuel poverty so action can be targeted to those most in need |
| Objective 2: Improve insight to target investment in property condition |
| 1. Undertake integrated asset management reviews of social housing stock to ensure investment is targeted at best value options and consider selective demolition proposals to tackle failing or low demand housing |
| 1. Encourage RSLs to develop sustainability policies by combining stock condition and energy efficiency survey information and have a single data source for investment planning and prioritisation |
| 1. Encourage landlords gather insight into the volume of damp properties across Inverclyde and prepare action plans to proactively address this issue, mitigating negative impacts on health and wellbeing |
| Objective 3: Maximise funding opportunities to assist landlords and owners |
| 1. Use the outcomes of the private sector stock condition survey to investment and enforcement activity via the Scheme of Assistance |
| 1. Target support under the Scheme of Assistance to owners of Below Tolerable Standard stock or those who cannot afford the cost of essential repairs |
| 1. Promote property acquisition scheme to support home owners in negative equity to fund home improvements/mixed tenure regeneration programmes |
| 1. Harness the work of the Cost of Living working groups to maximise and target funding opportunities towards vulnerable homeowners to fund and organise improvements |
| Objective 4: Adopt a regeneration approach to tackle issues with mixed tenure |
| 1. Proactively engage all landlords, tenants and owners in regeneration master-planning and placemaking processes maximising access to funding and investment support |
| 1. Explore the merits of a virtual tenement app (e.g. Novoville) to make it easier for residents living in shared properties to carry our repairs |
| 1. Revisit the stock transfer agreement and assess if barriers that are disabling investment and housing-led regeneration activity can be removed |
| 1. Expand remit of Under One Roof to cover energy efficiency works |
| Objective 5: Improve information and advice to homeowners |
| 1. Improving energy efficiency of homes across all tenures through targeted Delivery of Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland |
| 1. Improve enforcement processes to improve housing quality and energy efficiency in the private rented sector |
| 1. Proactively target fuel poverty advice to households experiencing financial hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis |
| 1. Provide holistic advice and assistance to owners/tenants to undertake house condition/ energy improvement/home safety works and co-ordinate funding options |
| 1. Promote the Care and Repair service more widely and assess if there is potential to expand its scope to include energy efficiency works |
| 1. Raise awareness of technologies and innovative solutions that homeowners can adopt to improve the quality and energy efficiency of their homes |

# **Main issues: Refining Ideas and Options**

The focus groups on LHS strategic priorities were designed to enable stakeholders to define potential policy interventions to address each main issue. The ideas generated will now be used as the basis of developing a range of policy options which should form the basis of LHS actions. To achieve this, a further round of consultation activities will be held to assess and refine the ideas and options identified. Further engagement workshops will be held to assess the ideas for action and intervention defined by LHS stakeholders under each main issue by:

1) eliminating options that should not be taken forward

2) providing further definition to ideas using SMART principles

3) identifying gaps which should be addressed through further option definition.

The refined policy interventions will form the basis of LHS actions under each LHS Outcome as the draft LHS framework builds through consultation and engagement. These actions will be subject to option appraisal to finalise the 2023-28 LHS Action Plan.

## **Improving the Inverclyde Housing System: One Key Action**

In closing the conference, stakeholders were asked to reflect on all the evidence shared, discussions held, and ideas generated to define the one single action that would have a positive and lasting impact on the operation of the Inverclyde housing system. Key themes included improving housing quality, placemaking and housing choice. The outcomes of this final exercise are as follows:

Make housing investment a public health issue by recognising the health and wellbeing issues in Inverclyde, and the positive impact that housing can play

Prioritise the development of more accessible, adaptable and wheelchair homes to meet the needs of households with health and disability issues

Work with partners and utilising grant assistance from the Scottish Government to address the house condition and energy efficiency of existing stock, across tenure

Elevate housing and regeneration as a community planning policy priority for Inverclyde

Extend housing choice beyond the limited and often poor quality housing options on offer across many communities in Inverclyde

Build on the already good practice & established work with Housing options and financial inclusion partnership

Create vibrant communities that consider not just the provision of homes but also the provision of places for people to meet, live and work and make connections

Enhance the range of housing options on offer in Inverclyde, improving tenure diversity and in particular, creating better housing choices for working households

Place house condition above energy efficiency in the priorities by adopting a fabric first approach

## **Next Steps**

Having drafted a vision for the Local Housing Strategy and identified policy interventions to tackle the main issues facing Inverclyde’s housing system; the Council’s next priority will be to review Conference outcomes with subject matter experts to further validate and add value to these outputs in the next round of LHS development.