
Report To: Education & Communities Committee **Date:** 10 March 2015

Report By: Head of Safer & Inclusive Communities **Report No:** EDUCOM/23/15/DH

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Subject: Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016: Update

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of a specific item within the LHS Action Plan: the creation of a “one-stop-shop” for housing, which was requested by Committee at its meeting on 20 January 2015. This report also provides updates on the policy of promoting wheelchair housing and on Inverclyde Council’s approach to the Scottish Government regarding the extension of the lifespan of the LHS from a five-year to an eight-year strategy.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy is a five-year strategy designed to show how Inverclyde Council will provide its housing-related services up to 2016, and how it will co-ordinate the provision of housing and related services by other agencies. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, places a requirement on Inverclyde Council as Strategic Housing Authority to prepare this strategy.
- 2.2 The Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016 was adopted by Council in 2011. The LHS sets out five strategic outcomes, some of which will be achieved by 2016 whilst others will take longer. To help deliver these outcomes 76 policies were devised for implementation through the LHS Action Plan. These policies are being rolled out in six-month blocks, with Blocks 1–6 currently being implemented.
- 2.3 As requested by Committee in January, further information is provided in this report on the development of a “one-stop shop”, which is being progressed by Inverclyde CHCP in collaboration with locally-based RSLs. For reference, updates are also provided on the policy promoting wheelchair housing, which now has a lead agency and the Scottish Government is actively considering Inverclyde Council’s proposal to extend the lifespan of the current LHS by three years to 2019 to bring planning and housing strategies into alignment.

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3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report, and notes that a further report on the proposed extension of the LHS timescale will be provided in May 2015.

John Arthur
Head of Safer & Inclusive Communities

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The LHS sets out five broad strategic outcomes that partners will work towards achieving in Inverclyde up to 2016. These are:
1. Inverclyde residents have access to a range of suitable housing options
 2. Inverclyde residents are able to make best use of their housing
 3. Inverclyde residents can enjoy their neighbourhoods
 4. Inverclyde residents receive appropriate support when they experience changes to their housing needs
 5. Inverclyde residents take responsibility for their housing and communities
- 4.2 At the appropriate points under these five outcomes, the LHS acts as Inverclyde Council's formal plan for: homelessness, housing support (formerly Supporting People), alleviating fuel poverty, and the improvement of conditions in the private housing sector, together with other housing and housing-related issues that support and complement the delivery of the LHS strategic outcomes.

5.0 ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR HOUSING

- 5.1 Policy 1 of the LHS is that "Partners open a central one-stop-shop providing housing access and advice services . . ." As part of this work, the Homelessness Service provided by Inverclyde CHCP and the majority of locally-based housing associations set up a multi-agency service for people looking for social housing in Inverclyde. This service provided applicants with access to housing available from Oak Tree, Cloch, Larkfield and Link Housing Associations together with access to Homelessness Services where appropriate. This multi-agency service reduced the time and effort required by applicants seeking housing and it improved the partnership working of the agencies involved.
- 5.2 The development of a "one-stop shop" has faced two significant barriers: firstly, the largest social housing provider in Inverclyde – River Clyde Homes – was unable to join the service, and secondly no suitable, permanent base of operations for the "one-stop shop" has been found. Oak Tree Housing Association was able to provide temporary use of its own offices to accommodate "one-stop-shop" however this reduced the space available to their own staff and impacted on their own tenants. On 31 July 2014, the temporary arrangement came to an end, and no multi-agency service has been provided since that date.
- 5.3 Since December 2014, the CHCP and the RSLs previously involved have been in discussions with a view to restarting the "one-stop shop". The CHCP is currently pursuing an option to develop the "one-stop shop" within its premises. The timescale for this is the end of May 2015 which is needed to enable the work required to ensure the premises can meet the demands of such a facility, and to work with RSLs regarding their input, including any resource implications and to agree protocols for the operation of the "one-stop shop". As before, it is intended that Homelessness Services will be available together with access to housing information and advice from the local RSLs. Committee will be provided with a further update on progress at its meeting in May 2015.

6.0 WHEELCHAIR AND LIFETIME HOMES

- 6.1 Policy 2.6 of the LHS aims to "Promote the development of wheelchair homes and Lifetime homes across all tenures in Inverclyde." The previous report to Committee in January 2015 advised that the Strategic Housing Team in Safer and Inclusive Communities had not been able to secure a lead agency to implement this policy. It has subsequently been confirmed that the Planning Policy and Property Team within the Regeneration & Planning service will jointly lead on the implementation of this policy with the Strategic Housing Team. Progress on implementing this policy will be reported to Committee in future LHS Monitoring Reports.

7.0 CONSULTATION ON EXTENDING THE LIFESPAN OF THE LHS

- 7.1 In the report considered by Committee at its January meeting, Safer and Inclusive Communities advised that it had approached the Scottish Government with a proposal to extend the lifespan of the current LHS until 2019. The intention was to seek Committee approval for this extension at its meeting in March 2015. The Scottish Government is actively considering this proposal but no formal response has been provided to date.
- 7.2 Following informal discussions, Safer and Inclusive Communities submitted the proposal to the Scottish Government on 23 December 2014 including a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind the proposed extension of the LHS timescale. On 29 January 2015, the Scottish Government requested more information as to how Inverclyde Council will keep the LHS under review if it were to be extended. Safer and Inclusive Communities returned a detailed explanation of the current review procedures and how they will continue in the future. It is anticipated that a response will be received from the Scottish Government in time to allow a report to be presented to Committee at its meeting in May 2015.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial Implications - One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-

Financial Implications - Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if applicable)	Other Comments
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-

8.2 Human Resources:

All housing strategy work is undertaken within existing service and organisational personnel arrangements.

8.3 Legal:

By preparing and implementing the Local Housing Strategy, Inverclyde Council is meeting the statutory requirements of section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

8.4 Equalities:

An equalities impact assessment was undertaken during the preparation of the LHS, to ensure that the policies it contains will not unreasonably have a negative impact on minority groups. Policies are now being implemented in line with the results of this assessment.

8.5 Repopulation:

None.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1
- Inverclyde Local Housing Strategy 2011–2016, report to Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee, 25 October 2011.

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