

# Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Agenda  
Item:

**A.5**

Meeting Date: 31 March 2016  
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing  
Key Decision: No  
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes  
Public / Private: Public

Title: HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE  
Report of: The Director of Economic Development  
Report Number: ED 14/16

**Purpose / Summary:** This report provides an update on the progress of the Housing Strategy, as well as identifying current challenges to delivery. The Action Plan is included at *Appendix 1*, relating to strategic, operational, and project work delivered between 2012 and 2016, including performance data.

**Recommendations:** that Members of the Panel consider the updated Action Plan and provide relevant feedback and guidance.

## Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Overview and Scrutiny:	N/A
Council:	N/A

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Housing Strategy Requirements**

The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement on Council's to have a Housing Strategy, although Local Authorities can still maintain a Strategy if they so wish. Current and pipeline Strategic Housing documents are:-

- The Homelessness Strategy – an inter-agency strategy for Carlisle and District (2015);
- The Housing Delivery Action Plan is currently being jointly developed by the Housing and Planning teams;
- A Private Sector Housing Strategy is proposed for 2017;
- The Cumbria Housing Statement is due to be signed off imminently. The Statement has been prepared by the Cumbria Housing Group and represents a combined vision for the Cumbrian Local Authorities, replacing the Cumbria Housing Strategy (2011-15).

## **2. Action Plan Progress**

The Action Plan provides updates on the progress in respect of the three priority areas:-

1. Balancing the Housing Market
2. Decent and Healthy Homes
3. Supporting Vulnerable People.

The more significant policy elements are summarised below (additional detail is provided in the attached Action Plan).

### **2.1 Balancing the Housing Market**

Key milestones include:-

- Demonstration Project – students from Carlisle College will receive training and learn new skills developing 40 new homes for affordable rent on a Council owned site at Beverley Rise, Harraby. Riverside were appointed as the preferred Housing delivery partner in March 2016 following a major tendering exercise.
- Affordable development on Council owned sites – 58 new homes for affordable rent (a mix of houses and bungalows) were completed by Riverside over two sites at Raffles in early 2015.

- The 'Cumbria Choice' choice based lettings scheme (the allocation policy of all 6 Cumbrian District Councils and the 8 largest Housing Associations) was reviewed and updated in 2013 and is due to be updated again in 2016 following the latest review. This ensures the policy is kept up to date with the most recent legislation.
- Low Cost Home Ownership policy adopted by Council in July 2015 – the Housing team now manages the initial sales and re-sales of over 300 'Discounted Sale' properties. The new policy gives priority to those households with a greater priority for a particular type of housing (e.g. families for larger properties and households including an elderly or disabled persons for bungalows or ground-floor accommodation).
- The Council's Housing team has worked closely with Impact Housing Association; Cumbria County Council; the Homes and Communities Agency; and Brampton and Beyond Community Trust to help facilitate the delivery of the new Extra Care scheme at the Irthing Centre, Brampton. The new development will open in summer 2016, providing 38 apartments to help older residents (and some younger disabled people) to live independently within a supported environment.

## **2.2 Decent and Healthy Homes**

Significant achievements include:-

- Improved standards in the private rented sector – a range of initiatives have been introduced, including the updated Landlord Accreditation Scheme, which was reviewed jointly with the other Districts and the National Landlord's Association.
- Empty properties – 54 properties were brought back into use for an affordable rent using approximately £250,000 of external grant funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The Council's Empty Property Officer received a commendation in the Empty Property Practitioner of the Year event in May 2015.
- Reducing anti-social behaviour – a number of successful partnerships have been established, including a funding award from the Police and Crime Commissioner to develop the Countywide Keep Safe/ Sanctuary scheme.
- A significant range of measures had been introduced to reduce fuel poverty, including:-
  - 589 lofts insulated;
  - 103 solid walls insulated;
  - 457 boilers replaced.
- Disabled Facilities Grants – a number of initiatives have been developed, including the introduction of a procurement framework to enable the Council to deliver better services despite reduced funding.
- Gypsy and Traveller provision – a countywide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was completed in 2013, which has influenced site provision within the Council's emerging Local Plan. The

number of permanent pitches doubled between the previous GTAA in 2008 and 2013.

## **2.3 Supporting Vulnerable People**

- The updated Homelessness Strategy was adopted by the Council and key local stakeholders in 2015. The same year the Peer Review for Gold Standard confirmed Carlisle's Homelessness Services as among the top 5% nationally.
- The new family hostel at Water Street opened in July 2013, providing 10 flexible family units of accommodation. The scheme won an award for community engagement activities at the Northern Housing Consortium's Northern Screen Awards in November 2014.
- The 'Community Neighbours' scheme has helped to improve access to services for vulnerable people from hard to reach groups – 65 partnerships are currently in place with volunteers managed through the Community Neighbours coordinator.
- A multi-agency Welfare Reform Board has been established, helping vulnerable people adjust to the impact of welfare reform.
- The lease and management agreement with the YMCA to manage frontline services at Cumbria Gateway was terminated by the YMCA in late 2015. However, there is currently significant interest from the third sector in taking over the lease of the building.

## **2.5 Emerging Government Policy**

**2.5.1** Balancing the Housing Market: the Government is committed to developing more housing, but in respect of affordable housing, the emphasis is now solely on home ownership, with new or re-branded initiatives including Starter Homes; Shared Ownership; the extension of Right to Buy to Housing Association stock; Rent to Purchase; as well as the extension of the Help to Buy programme, funded by a tax on buy-to-lets and second homes.. Although new initiatives to help people onto the housing ladder are to be welcomed, there is no more funding for affordable or social rented homes. This is problematic as 70% of the 295 households per annum identified as being in need of affordable housing in Carlisle's most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) from September 2014 required affordable rented homes.

**2.5.2** Decent and Healthy Homes: the Government have announced that there will be no further grants to bring Empty Properties back into use, and due to changes to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Green Deal it is difficult to access funding for local households on low incomes to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty through delivery of affordable warmth schemes. The way that government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is disseminated is also changing. In the June 2013 Spending Review the government announced a pooled budget intended to enable the National Health Service and local authorities to jointly commission health and social care services. From 2015-16 DFG funding is un-ring fenced and part of the Better Care Fund, paid to Cumbria County Council, while the

districts retain statutory responsibility for delivering DFGs. In future, Carlisle and District may be expected to evidence the level of funding we require.

### **3. CONSULTATION**

- 3.1** A wide range of stakeholders have been consulted on a number of key elements of the Housing Strategy, including the Homelessness Strategy, Cumbria Choice (choice based lettings scheme) and the Council's Low Cost Home Ownership policy. The Council continues to engage with partners through Cumbria Housing Group, Carlisle Partnership, the Homelessness Strategy implementation Group and the Welfare Reform Board.

### **4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1** The Action Plan details the progress of the Housing Strategy since 2012, and Members of the Panel are requested to provide relevant feedback and guidance.

### **5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 5.1** "Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life."

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#### **Appendices**

**attached to report:**    ***Appendix 1: Housing Strategy Action Plan Achievements and Outcomes 2012-16***

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- **None**

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's -**

**Community Engagement –**

**Economic Development –**

**Governance –**

**Local Environment –**

**Resources –**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Housing Strategy Action Plan Achievements & Outcomes 2012-16**

1. Balancing the Housing Market	Achievements
Deliver a sustainable mix of market and private sector housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable housing completions: 134 delivered in 2014-15 (average 105 p.a. since 2009-10).</li> <li>Total completions: 419 in 2014/15 is best figure for several years, supporting Local Plan delivery aspirations.</li> <li>Extra Care Housing - 38 units due to be completed at the Irthing Centre, Brampton in summer 2016.</li> </ul>
Identify innovative ways of funding and delivering affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overage agreement on public/ private partnership with Lovell to regenerate Raffles estate: long-term partnership to deliver almost 500 properties with over 260 units already delivered and over £19m invested.</li> <li>Demonstration Project – innovative partnership with Carlisle College to deliver affordable homes on Council-owned sites, while simultaneously providing skills to local trainees and apprentices. Riverside confirmed, March 2016, as preferred partner to deliver 40 home development at Beverley Rise.</li> </ul>
Bring forward more land for housing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sites brought forward through the emerging Local Plan meet 5-year land supply target.</li> <li>The Council has provided discounted land to provide affordable housing and Extra Care housing over the last few years – most recently for 58 units for affordable rent completed at Raffles in 2014-15.</li> <li>Proactive engagement with Local Housing Associations to bring forward new sites (joint Housing &amp; Planning events held for Housing Associations in January &amp; September 2015).</li> </ul>

<p>Work closely with communities to address their housing needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with Brampton and Beyond Community Trust on Brampton Irthing Centre Extra Care scheme.</li> <li>• Consultation with a range of stakeholders: including new Local Plan; Low Cost Home Ownership policy; Tenancy Strategy; <i>Cumbria Choice</i> (countywide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme) revised policy.</li> </ul>
<p>Prioritise the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas, housing for older people and family sized housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison with Cumbria Rural Housing Trust (unfortunately due to close March 2016) to support affordable rural schemes and housing initiatives.</li> <li>• The Council's Low Cost Home Ownership policy was updated to prioritise elderly and disabled households for suitable or adaptable ground-floor accommodation and families for larger properties – the new policy was approved by Council in July 2015.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop a strategic approach to the letting and accessing of housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cumbria Choice CBL scheme is a partnership across all six District Councils and the eight largest Housing Associations. This ensures a consistent Allocation Policy across Cumbria and a single application process for customers. The scheme is regularly reviewed to ensure it complies with the latest legislation and good practice. The policy was updated in August 2013 and will be updated again during 2016 following a full consultation.</li> <li>• Tenancy Strategy implemented January 2013.</li> </ul>
<p>Reduce under and over occupation of homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has worked with local Housing Associations to help minimise the impact of the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy ("Bedroom Tax").</li> <li>• Families have been prioritised for larger homes through the Council's Low Cost Home Ownership policy, and properties are advertised to the appropriate size and type of households through Cumbria Choice.</li> </ul>



<b>2. Decent and Healthy Homes</b>	
Improve standards in the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed the Landlord Accreditation Scheme jointly with other Districts, and the National Landlord's Association.</li> <li>• Reviewed private sector enforcement policy to reflect changes in legislation.</li> <li>• Adopted risk based approach to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, reducing red tape and increasing efficiencies.</li> </ul>
Bring empty properties back into use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54 properties returned to use utilising external funding and let at affordable rents – the Council's Empty Property Officer received a commendation at the Empty Property Practitioner of the Year event in May 2015.</li> <li>• Empty Property Conference held at the Civic Centre 4 December 2015, raising awareness of potential sources of funding, attended by landlords, funders, National stakeholders, solicitors, auctions houses, and the Property Guardian Service.</li> </ul>
Work in partnership to reduce antisocial behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot sanctuary scheme through Homelife Carlisle.</li> <li>• Bid for and awarded funding from Esh Foundation to enable Hoarders to improve conditions in their property and reduce the likelihood of crime and anti-social behaviour.</li> <li>• Funding award from the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner to develop Countywide Keep safe/sanctuary scheme.</li> </ul>
Reduce fuel poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 589 lofts insulated;</li> <li>• 103 solid walls insulated;</li> <li>• 457 boilers replaced.</li> <li>• Warm at Home funding utilised by Homelife to carry out draught proofing and boiler repairs</li> </ul>

Develop new ways of providing Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) while integrating services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In partnership with the County Council, developed a prioritisation framework to manage a 50% reduction in resources in 2011/2012.</li> <li>• Procurement framework for Disabled Facilities Grants in place to enable the City Council to do more with reduced funding.</li> <li>• Wrap around service provision through Homelife Carlisle.</li> <li>• Specialist Service provision in place for hospital discharge.</li> </ul>
Review the needs of Gypsy Travellers and if necessary identify suitable land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countywide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) completed in 2013.</li> <li>• Permanent site provision doubled in the District between 2008 and 2013.</li> <li>• Site provision included within new Local Plan.</li> </ul>

#### Private Sector Housing Team Performance Data

	2012/2013	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>DFG Service</b>				
DFG's Completed	132	117	93	56
<b>Private Sector Housing</b>				
HMO licences issued	11	37	33	13
HMO inspections undertaken	45	78	195	94
Complaints	61	79	60	59
Accreditation Inspections	58	42	0	0
Caravan site licences	4	6	3	1
Caravan site inspections	6	6	18	18
Immigration/overcrowding Inspections	4	2	3	9
Rent in Advance inspections	43	54	19	32
Gypsy and Traveller Encampments	11	7	8	16
<b>Empty Properties</b>				
Complaints	9	16	10	4
Grants	0	16	47	0
Property visits	9	46	169	305
Advice and Guidance	25	61	111	193

<b>3. Supporting Vulnerable People</b>	
Review the City Council's Homelessness Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Strategy adopted by the Council and Key local stakeholders in 2015.</li> <li>• Interagency Local commitment in place.</li> <li>• Prevention cases doubled.</li> <li>• Peer Review for Gold Standard confirms Carlisle in the top 5% services, nationally, with a score of over 80%.</li> <li>• Carlisle is on its way to achieving the gold standard: bronze standard awarded in February 2016.</li> <li>• Young Persons Homelessness Protocol implemented.</li> </ul>
Review the provision of interim and temporary accommodation in response to changes in the operating environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Women and Families Accommodation opened at Water Street, July 2013.</li> <li>• Sustainable Temporary Accommodation Plan delivered, following reduction in Supporting People funding.</li> </ul>
Reduce pressure on our services by developing innovative preventative approaches to homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Silver Screen award for Community engagement activities on offer in Water Street.</li> <li>• Prevention cases have doubled.</li> <li>• Focused community based projects delivered, in partnership with local schools and churches.</li> <li>• 16/17 year old protocol implemented in partnership with Children's Services, Youth Offenders Team &amp; other stakeholders.</li> <li>• Successful preventative work with schools to raise awareness of homelessness.</li> <li>• Pre action and early intervention plan actioned.</li> </ul>
Actively work to reduce isolation in older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelife Carlisle and a suite of staying put services targeted at older and disabled people put in place.</li> </ul>

Improve access to service for vulnerable people from hard to reach groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Neighbours set up – 65 partnerships in place.</li> <li>• Welfare advice service delivering proactive preventative outreach work in a variety of community settings.</li> <li>• Successful teletalk systems established to enable remote face to face welfare advice from the welfare advice service in rural environments.</li> </ul>
Coordinate and support front line services through Shaddon Gateway services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lease and management agreement was terminated by the YMCA in late 2015.</li> <li>• There is significant third sector interest in leasing the premises and developing service provision.</li> </ul>
Help vulnerable groups adjust to impact of welfare reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-agency Welfare Reform Board in place.</li> <li>• Welfare Advice service part of local Advice Transition network supporting the delivery of Key Projects, campaigns and interventions along with local key partners.</li> <li>• Benefit gains in excess of £5m from 13/14; 14/15 and 15/16</li> </ul>