

Local Housing Strategy 2021/26, Consultative Draft**Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director - Place****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations**

Council is recommended to:

- (a) note and comment on the draft consultative Local Housing Strategy (LHS), 2021-26; and
- (b) approve the proposed consultation and engagement plan set out in section 3.7 of this report.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

This report provides information for consideration in respect of Midlothian Council's draft consultative Local Housing Strategy, 2021-26 and the planned engagement activity.

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3 Background

- 3.1 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is at the heart of arrangements for housing and planning through its links with Development Plans and its strategic role in directing investment in housing and housing related services locally. It sets out a strategic vision for the delivery of housing and related services and the outcomes that it will seek to achieve.
- 3.2 The development of a LHS provides an opportunity for local authorities to identify strategic housing priorities and it enables the monitoring of progress against delivery of local and national priorities and targets. The Scottish Government expects a LHS to be prepared and submitted around every five years. Development work has been underway for some time to update the current LHS resulting in the draft consultative LHS, 2021/26 which is attached for information and comment at Appendix 2. The draft consultative LHS has been developed in accordance with Scottish Government guidance <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-housing-strategy-guidance-2019/pages/2/>
- 3.3 The draft consultative LHS includes chapters on: equalities; engagement and consultation; local context; place making and communities; preventing and addressing homelessness; specialist provision; fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change; house condition; and housing, health and social care integration.
- 3.4 The draft consultative LHS has been informed by community and stakeholder consultation and engagement undertaken virtually via social media and during July and August 2020.
- 3.5 The draft consultative LHS's strategic vision for housing in Midlothian is that all households in Midlothian will be able to access housing that is affordable and of good quality in sustainable communities. In order that this vision is realised, the LHS must ensure that the following outcomes are realised within the five year period of the Strategy. These outcomes are:
- Households have improved housing options across all tenures.
 - Homeless households and those threatened with homelessness are able to access support and advice services and all unintentionally homeless households will be able to access settled accommodation.
 - The condition of housing across all tenures is improved.
 - The needs of households with particular needs will be addressed and all households will have equal access to housing and housing services.
 - Housing in all tenures will be more energy efficient and fewer households will live in, or be at risk of, fuel poverty.

A summary of the key challenges identified in the consultative draft LHS is provided in Appendix 1.

3.6 The Scottish Government guidance recommends LHS should be developed using extensive and inclusive engagement and consultation. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires that local authorities consult on their LHS, and the statutory Equality Duty on public bodies requires the involvement, consultation and engagement of as wide a range of local residents and tenants and communities of interest as possible.

3.7 The engagement and consultation plan proposed below takes into account Covid-19 guidance issued by Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland, and seeks to utilise social media platforms and IT technology, to ensure as wide an audience as possible within local communities and from relevant representative groups including people with or who share protected characteristics and other existing stakeholder networks have their say and influence the future delivery of housing and housing related services, through;

- Online consultation running from Wednesday 18th November to Friday 11th December 2020.
- Online consultation will include Zoom/Microsoft Teams drop-in sessions, social media promotion, emails to draft LHS consultation respondents and an online survey.
- Online consultation will ask stakeholders to prioritise the key challenges identified in the draft consultative LHS. This will inform the key actions and finalised Outcomes Action Plan.
- Midlothian Community Planning Day – Friday 27th November 2020. Lead officers will facilitate a session whereby members of the public and community groups can discuss the draft consultative LHS.
- The LHS Strategy Forum meeting to be held on Thursday 3rd December 2020 will focus on consulting with Midlothian's RSLs and other stakeholders.

3.8 Following the completion of the engagement and consultation activities described above, the finalised LHS 2021-26 will be submitted to the February 2021 Council meeting for approval.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

There are no resource implications related to this report.

4.2 Digital

There are no digital implications related to this report.

4.3 Risk

It is critically important to prepare a LHS document. The LHS is a key corporate Strategy that sets out a strategic vision for the delivery of housing and housing related services and the outcomes that it will seek

to achieve. The Scottish Government expects a LHS to be prepared and submitted around every five years.

4.4 **Ensuring Equalities** (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

The Scottish Government expects to see equality issues embedded throughout a LHS including housing advice, homelessness, procurement, new build and refurbishment, specialist housing services, housing management services, allocations and private sector housing.

An IIA is provided.

4.4 **Additional Report Implications**

HOUSING DELIVERY – KEY CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting the delivery of social and market housing, as well as specialist housing, to ensure the housing targets during 2021-32 are achieved. - The construction of 1000 new council homes as per present phases of Midlothian Council's Affordable Housing Programme. - Supporting the development of mid-market rent across Midlothian to ensure that households who are able to afford this housing tenure can access it. - The level of turnover for Council and housing association properties in Midlothian is very low and applicants have to wait a long time before accessing council housing. - The average house price in Midlothian is 15% higher than the Scottish average. - The median income for Midlothian residents is lower than the Scottish average. - There is a clear indication of the attractiveness of the Midlothian housing market areas to outside buyers and the pressure from other housing market areas is likely to exacerbate affordability concerns for local residents. - There has been a significant increase in the average private rented sector rental costs in Midlothian. The proximity to Edinburgh impacts on affordability in Midlothian and has made the private rented sector a less affordable option for many renters in Midlothian. - Midlothian has a combined annual Housing Supply Target of 534 units (165 affordable housing, 369 market housing).
PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS – KEY CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The turnover in social rented housing is low in Midlothian compared to other areas. In order to meet the need for homeless accommodation a total of 446 lets would need to be available for homeless households. In 2019/20, 176 lets were made available for homeless households. - The supply of new affordable housing in recent years has not been sufficient enough to meet the need. - There were 945 open homeless cases as of 31 August 2020. - The availability of housing in the private rented sector only supports a

small proportion of households to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

- Despite an ongoing new build affordable housing programme and an increase in the proportion of allocations to homeless households, the length of time taken homeless households wait for permanent housing is the longest in Scotland. The length of time will not decrease for several years due to the backlog in homeless applications.
- There are over 3,100 households (as of 31st August 2020) on the Council's Housing List who are not homeless but many of these households also have important housing needs which should also be addressed.

SPECIALIST PROVISION – KEY CHALLENGES

- Midlothian's population of over 75 year olds is expected to increase by 41% between 2018 and 2028, the second highest population increase in Scotland.
- The number of people in Midlothian suffering from dementia is likely to be 2,800 in 20 years, double the current number of sufferers.
- In Midlothian 89% of adults with learning disabilities do not live with a family carer which is much higher than the Scottish average (43%).
- In Midlothian 80% of adults with learning disabilities are living in mainstream accommodation whilst only 20% live in supported accommodation, a registered adult care home or 'other'.
- 17% of housing applicants have medical needs for seeking housing from the Council.
- Set Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target. Difficulty enforcing these within the private sector.
- Review housing for key workers may be required in light of Covid 19 epidemic.

FUEL POVERTY, ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CLIMATE CHANGE – KEY CHALLENGES

- 29.57% of residents experience fuel poverty.
- Areas with a high density of older properties are more likely to have a high probability of fuel poverty.
- Midlothian Council is currently seeking to achieve Passivhaus standard on all directly commissioned housing projects.

HOUSE CONDITION – KEY CHALLENGES

- The quality of housing varies between the private and social housing sectors in Midlothian, with a higher proportion of private housing requiring upgrade works.
- Investment is required in housing in order that private housing is

maintained to adequate standards or adapted to meet particular household requirements.

- A proportion of residents have concerns in relation to the quality of neighbourhood that they live in.
- There has been a significant reduction in the level of investment made in Midlothian to help people maintain their private properties.
- Review and update The Housing Renewal Area (HRA) Policy.

HOUSING, HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE INTEGRATION – KEY CHALLENGES

- More people who are frail or have dementia are living for longer at home.
- People are living longer with multiple long term conditions.
- There has been little progress in reducing health inequalities.
- Local services are facing a range of pressures.

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The LHS contributes to the Midlothian 2020 vision of improving the quality of life for Midlothian's citizens and safeguarding housing assets for future generations.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☐ Holistic Working
- ☐ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☐ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☐ Asset-based
- ☐ Continuous Improvement

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☐ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☐ Efficient and Modern
- ☐ Innovative and Ambitious

A.4 Delivering Best Value

There are no direct implications related to this report.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The proposed consultation and engagement plan is set out in section 3.7 of this report.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The LHS will set out ambitious plans to deliver good quality housing and housing related services, including the outcomes that it will seek to achieve as summarised in section 3.5 of this report.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Scottish Government expects a preventative approach embedded throughout a LHS.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The Scottish Government expects sustainable development is supported throughout a LHS.