

**ARGYLL AND BUTE HOUSING EMERGENCY – PROGRESS REPORT**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In June 2023 the Council's Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee declared a Housing Emergency due to a consistent reduction in supply of housing, a steady increase in demand for housing across all tenures and increasing levels of un-affordability.

The Committee approved the following:-

The intention to update the Local Housing Strategy

The intention to hold an Argyll and Bute housing summit together with relevant stakeholders in the Autumn of 2023

Note the operational officers group will explore and develop a series of options that will be brought forward to Members for consideration as and when developed.

- 1.2 This report is to update EDI Committee on progress towards these intentions and generally tackling the Housing Emergency.
- 1.3 A wide range of activity has been progressing including arranging a Housing Summit for November, draft revisions to the Local Housing Strategy Update, actions of the Officer Housing group, focusing initially on exploring release of Council Assets suitable for housing, liaison with National House Builders, exploring facilitation of constrained sites, partnership working with RSLs, improving the evidence base to justify innovation and intervention, working to secure Rural Housing Body Status, refining HOMEArgyll letting policy, exploring changes in the land use planning system; developing worker housing, and re-evaluation of the ex- Council Stock buy-back scheme.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Members of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee are asked to:-

- i. note and consider the activity and progress that is ongoing in pursuing the EDI Committee approved intentions and generally seeking to address the Housing Emergency.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

2.1 In June 2023 the Council's EDI Committee declared a Housing Emergency due to a consistent reduction in supply of housing, a steady increase in demand for housing across all tenures and increasing levels of un-affordability.

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Note the operational officers group will explore and develop a series of options that will be brought forward to Members for consideration as and when developed.

- 4.2 This report is to update EDI Committee on progress towards these intentions and generally tackling the Housing Emergency.

#### **The intention to update the Local Housing Strategy**

- 4.3 There is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Local Housing Strategy(LHS). The current LHS covers the period 2022-2027. There is also a requirement to provide annual updates on the progress towards the targets set in the LHS. On September 19<sup>th</sup> 2023 the draft annual update was reported to the Strategic Housing Forum which is the Housing Market Partnership required to be in place to scrutinise the LHS process. The draft annual update highlights some of the new issues which have come to the fore; particularly the need to address issues in the private sector supply of speculative new build housing, and the need to consider the requirements for regulation of the existing private stock and its use, particularly second homes and holiday lets.
- 4.4 The final LHS update will be produced for February 2024 EDI Committee with a summary feedback from the housing summit. A more detailed report on outputs will follow later, and subsequently the intention will be to amend the LHS Action Programme with any identified actions coming from the Housing Summit or other work. This is likely to be May 2023.

#### **The intention to hold an Argyll and Bute housing summit together with relevant stakeholders in the Autumn of 2023**

- 4.5 The summit will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> November at the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) buildings at Dunbeg. The Council has appointed Arneil Johnston consultants to assist with the organisation and delivery of the event. Initial discussions have taken place with the consultants and 4 broad themes have been proposed:-

Enabling the delivery of more market homes in Argyll and Bute  
Enabling the delivery of more affordable homes in Argyll and Bute  
Enabling the delivery of homes for Argyll and Bute's workforce  
Making the best use of existing homes in Argyll and Bute

- 4.6 Within the themes there will be a focus on topics such as tackling the homeless crisis, dealing with the skills shortage in the construction industry, encouraging the private sector to build housing in Argyll and Bute, effective procurement methods, tackling ineffective housing stock in the local authority area and the summit will also explore the construction methods available to deliver housing.
- 4.7 The following activities were planned in preparation for the event:-

A questionnaire has been issued to the public to get their up to date views on the housing situation in Argyll and Bute;

A questionnaire has been issued to businesses to gather up to date views on the housing situation in Argyll and Bute in relation to business sustainability and expansion; and

Pre-summit themed Teams meetings have taken place with



## **Rural Housing Body Status**

- 4.19 The Council applied to Scottish Government for Rural Housing Body Status at the beginning of 2023. Scottish Government have carried out in partnership with the Council's Housing Service an impact assessment of the proposal. This involved surveying local stakeholders that might be affected.
- 4.20 Scottish Government has indicated the Council should be awarded Rural Housing Body status on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Doing so gives the Council the ability to apply Rural Housing Burdens to properties it has constructed, purchased, or consented. This will be another potential important tool, particularly in ensuring the affordable homes remain affordable homes in perpetuity. Rural Housing Burdens can be used to introduce property burdens that will ensure property remains in use for its intended use. The intended use could be a range of affordability and or occupancy criteria. Officers will explore in more detail proposals for how these Burdens might be used in a way which best contributes to tackling the Housing Emergency and will report these to Council for approval.

## **Home Argyll Changes**

- 4.21 In September, Council approved changes to the HOMEArgyll common allocations policy. The changes were proposed in response to the Housing Emergency and in partnership with RSLs.
- 4.22 It is hoped the reduction in offers for 200 point housing applications will streamline and accelerate the process of finding permanent tenancies particularly for homeless applicants. The changes also allow for flexibility in the allocations policy where t







6.5.3 Islands – The delivery of affordable housing across Argyll and Bute facilitates socio-economic opportunities for all. The SHIP links with the Child Poverty Strategy.

6.6 Risk – The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment process takes full account of housing need on the islands.

6.7 Climate Change – New housing in the right location helps reduce carbon outputs particularly when heating is provided using renewable energy and utilizing high standards of insulation which can also be applied to existing stock.

6.8 Customer Service – None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with Responsibility for Development and Economic Growth**

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