

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet

**MEETING DATE:** 30 January 2024

**BY:** Executive Director for Place

**SUBJECT:** Proposed East Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2024-29

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the key changes made to the strategy as a result of the consultation and to seek approval for the proposed LHS 2024-2029 which will be implemented from April 2024.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the Proposed Local Housing Strategy 2024-29, to agree the priority outcomes identified and to support the actions towards achieving these outcomes.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Proposed Strategy is updated annually during the period 2024-29, as is required by LHS Guidance, with any updates and changes reported through the Member's Library Service.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

### **Legislative context**

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires local authorities to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for their area. The Act also states that the LHS must be supported by an assessment of need and demand, of housing provision and related services. The LHS must be submitted to Scottish Ministers and local authorities are required to keep their LHS under continual review.
- 3.2 The LHS sets out the strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services across East Lothian for the period 2024 – 2029 and within the context of the current financial challenges.
- 3.3 The LHS is the sole strategic document for housing, bringing together a wide range of housing related priorities into one place and enabling a co-ordinated response in terms of action. It plays a number of important roles, including:

- Setting out the strategic direction of the Council and its partners to delivering high quality housing and related services, to meet identified need across the county.
  - Outlining the Council's approach to meeting its statutory housing responsibilities, particularly in relation to homelessness, house condition and fuel poverty.
  - Summarising the response to national housing priorities, i.e. the Scottish Housing Quality Standard; town centre living; reduction in carbon emissions and supporting the development of sustainable communities, while also reflecting the needs and priorities of the local area.
  - Demonstrating how housing can contribute to improvements in health and wellbeing, the reduction of poverty and influence the effective integration of health and social care.
- 3.4 The consultative draft LHS has been developed in line with 2019 [Scottish Government Guidance](#), taking into account any recent relevant legislation such as the National Planning Framework 4.

### **Engagement**

- 3.5 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires local authorities to consult on their proposed LHS. To inform preparation of this Consultative Draft LHS, a process of engagement commenced in February 2022 and ended in January 2023. Over 1,000 people participated in this process which included a range of online surveys, in person focus groups and workshops.
- 3.6 Following the approval of the Consultative Draft LHS in September 2023 a series of consultation activities were carried out over a period of 9 weeks, including:
- Six drop-in event for members of the public were held across area partnerships in East Lothian to gather views on the Strategy.
  - One drop-in event for members of staff, H&SCP and elected members.
  - A multi-agency health and housing workshop facilitated between Housing and NHS Lothian's Partnership & Place Team.
  - One online survey found via the Council's Consultation Hub.
- 3.7 In total there were 114 responses to the Draft Local Housing Strategy Consultation with an additional five formal responses from the following stakeholders:
- Homes for Scotland
  - NHS Lothian – East Lothian Partnership & Place Team
  - Sustaining North Berwick

- MND Scotland
  - East Lothian's Tenant and Residents Panel
- 3.8 In total, over 1,300 individuals' views were collected throughout the engagement and consultation period, with 75% of respondents agreeing with the Strategic Vision.
- 3.9 All responses were considered and where appropriate, changes were made to the Proposed LHS. Actions were also added as a result of the consultation, including: exploring the effects of the cost-of-living focusing on multigenerational households; using the 2022 Census results to better understand how race and ethnicity impact housing and health inequalities; and defining 'key workers' within the East Lothian context.
- 3.10 A full summary of the engagement consultation and changes made following engagement can be found in [Supporting Paper 2](#).
- 3.11 In parallel with the consultation, a formal peer review process was undertaken by Scottish Government Policy Teams as well as another Local Authority. The peer review highlighted specific strengths of the draft Strategy:
- Wide engagement with communities.
  - Good awareness of the Private Rented Sector and challenges in rural areas.
  - In depth information on Specialist Housing Provision.
- 3.12 The peer review also made suggestions for areas of development. These areas were considered and amended accordingly. Key areas included:
- Review of the Housing Supply Target, including both an affordable and market HST.
  - Providing more information on how the LHS aligns with the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
  - Provision of more information around the good partnership working with Health and Social Care.
- 3.13 A full summary of strengths and suggested areas of development highlighted in the peer review is available in [Supporting Paper 6](#).

### **Proposed LHS**

- 3.14 The LHS has been undertaken under the backdrop of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the Covid-19 Pandemic, the War in Ukraine and most recently, the Cost of Living Crisis. Underpinning all of the challenges in the LHS is the increasing financial uncertainty and funding gap faced by East Lothian Council.

- 3.15 Taking account of the key housing issues identified; the changing strategic planning framework; local context and engagement from local communities, the proposed strategic vision for East Lothian is that by 2029

***People in East Lothian have access to warm, high quality, affordable homes which meet their needs and enables them to live in communities with the support and services they require.***

- 3.16 To underpin this vision, five priority outcomes have been identified:
- Communities are supported to flourish, be distinctive and well connected.
  - Housing supply accessible, affordable and provides a range of choices to meet the needs of households across East Lothian.
  - Homelessness is prevented as far as possible, where unavoidable, a rapid response with the appropriate support is provided.
  - Housing and support services are effective, accessible to, and will meet the needs of those most vulnerable in the community.
  - All homes in East Lothian are maintained to a high standard, are energy efficient and contribute to meeting climate change targets.
- 3.17 A five-year action plan underpins and supports these priorities, which will direct and target resources and activity over the period of the LHS. The proposed actions are set out from page 122 of the LHS.
- 3.18 Following approval, the intention is that the LHS will go live with an implementation date of April 2024 and updated annually with a report submitted to the Members Library Service every April.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Actions set out in the Action Plan of the LHS are likely to have policy implications. Any significant change or policy implication arising due to implementation of actions will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

#### **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 An integrated impact assessment (IIA) was carried out on the Consultative Draft LHS. This forms [Supporting Paper 1](#) of the LHS. Three areas were picked up during the IIA process:
- The need to ensure that the LHS is updated to utilise the Census Data when it is published. This recognises that the existing Census is now over 10 years out of date, and is normally a key resource for reporting on equalities data.
  - The need to continue to make efforts to reach out to groups which haven't been as well represented within engagement sessions. This includes LGBT+ and ethnic minorities. Housing will work

alongside ELH&SCP and ELC’s respective Equalities Officers and VCEL who have also identified similar gaps.

- To ensure that the Consultative LHS is fully accessible and includes Alternative Text (Alt Text) where there are tables or graphics. This has now been completed.

5.2 Due to the significant positive contribution Housing can make to the lives of children and young people, and in recognition of the UNCRC, a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Screening and a Full Assessment (CRWIA) was carried out. This is the first time a CRWIA has been carried out for an LHS. Both documents can be found in [Supporting Paper 3](#) of the LHS.

## 6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – There are no direct financial implications associated with approval of this Proposed Strategy although achievement of the actions and priority outcomes will impact on the financial planning arrangements of services over the Strategy term, both in relation to required interventions and anticipated realisation of future financial efficiencies for the Council.

It may also be possible that the financial situation of the Council may impact on the ability to complete or fully achieve the actions set out within the LHS. This will be monitored annually.

6.2 Personnel - Significant staff time will be required to complete, monitor and oversee the development of the LHS.

## 7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 [Proposed Local Housing Strategy 2024-29](#)

[Supporting Paper 1: Integrated Impact Assessment](#)

[Supporting Paper 2: Engagement and Consultation Plan & Report](#)

[Supporting Paper 3: Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#)

[Supporting Paper 4: Housing Supply Target Methodology](#)

[Supporting Paper 5: Research into the Private Rented Sector in East Lothian](#)

[Supporting Paper 6: Scottish Government Peer Review](#)

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