



LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

Report by Chief Planning Officer

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give a final position on the achievements and challenges of Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (LHS 17-22) and to give an update on preparation of the next iteration of the Local Housing Strategy which will cover the period from 2025-2030.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement for each local authority to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) approximately every five years.
- 2.2 The Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (LHS 17-22) was approved in March 2018. Work commenced on the Strategic Outcomes in the Action Plan immediately thereafter, though some were impacted by factors such as budgetary and other constraints such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. An overview of the Outcomes was given at the Housing Seminar on 1 May 2024, and they are further outlined at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030 (LHS 25-30) is at the drafting stage following completion of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment in 2023, preparation of the Housing Supply Target in April 2024, and conclusion of the in-person community engagement events in March 2025.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that a consultative draft of the LHS 25-30 will be available by September 2025 for general consultation and submission to Scottish Government for the peer review process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the achievements and challenges of Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 and progress towards preparation of Local Housing Strategy 2025-2030.**

Contact Officer: Angela C Smith, Housing Strategy Manager, angela.smith@cne-siar.gov.uk

Appendix: 1: Achievements and Challenges of Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022
2: LHS Development - Consultation/Engagement Report April 2025

Background Papers: Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022
Outer Hebrides Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2023-2042
Housing Supply Target Working Paper March 2024
Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024-25 – 2028-29

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	There is a statutory requirement for every local authority to prepare a Local Housing Strategy
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	The LHS gives due consideration to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
Corporate Strategy	The LHS feeds into and supports the Strategic Outcomes of the Corporate Strategy.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Comhairle has a statutory duty in terms of Section 89 of the Housing (Scotland) Act, to prepare a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) for a five-year period which sets out its strategy, priorities and plans for the delivery of housing and related services throughout the Outer Hebrides. Amongst its considerations, the LHS must set out the Comhairle's approach to Housing Supply, Fuel Poverty, House Condition and Homelessness, in addition to having a key role to play in contributing to the effective integration of Health and Social Care.
- 5.2 LHS development must comply with Scottish Government Guidance and have regard to the Local Development Plan, Corporate Plan, Community Planning Partnership priorities, in addition to other significant local strategies, and it must be underpinned by a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) which has been rated "robust and credible" by Scottish Government.

REQUIREMENTS

- 6.1 Scottish Government provide guidance under which a Local Housing Strategy must be prepared, though there is freedom within the guidance for each Local Authority to prepare an LHS in a manner which is appropriate for it.
- 6.2 The LHS must be:
- Evidence based;
 - Developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including residents and tenants;
 - A corporate document, agreed and supported by all relevant local authority departments;
 - Linked to the previous LHS to show progress achieved against outcomes and to carry forward outstanding actions, as appropriate;
 - Demonstrate how it supports equality and addresses inequality;
 - Developed using extensive and inclusive engagement and consultation;
 - Forward looking;
 - Delivery focussed;
 - Clear, concise and easy to read;
 - A standalone document (with relevant links provided); and
 - Reviewed with progress monitored annually through an Outcome Action Plan.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2022

- 7.1 The previous LHS covered the period from 2017-2022, though delivery of actions was impacted by COVID-19 and various budgetary constraints.
- 7.2 LHS 17-22 was extended for a further two years owing to preparatory work on the forthcoming LHS being impacted by data availability for the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2023-2042 following COVID-19 and associated priorities. This was further compounded by the loss of the entire Housing Strategy data bank as a result of the cyberattack of November 2023, and significant staff absences in the Housing Services Team from spring to autumn 2024. Work continued with the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) picking up any changes required in affordable housing delivery, and the Housing Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) and Housing Market Partnership/Local Housing Strategy Steering Group having oversight of other aspects of LHS work.
- 7.3 There was considerable success in housing development in partnership with Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP), Scottish Government, and Tighean Innse Gall, with 229 homes delivered over the original five-year period of the LHS and 52 shared equity homes. The aspirational rural/urban split of 55/45 respectively, was not achieved largely owing to delivery of one of the Comhairle's corporate objectives in respect of the Goathill Care Home Development, which included 74 affordable houses and 50 Houses with Extra Care (HWEC) in the development. The Comhairle's statutory obligations in respect of homeless persons also contributed to this as the majority of clients desire to be housed in and around the Stornoway area where they have access to support and services, and the inclusion of smaller urban properties in the development programme reflects this. Despite this, since 2017 the SHIP has delivered 118 affordable homes across 22 rural regeneration sites, which is greatly in excess of the target of 24 units on rural regeneration sites.
- 7.4 There were also budgetary constraints in respect of several actions, most notably the amount of funding available from the Capital Programme for adaptations. As our population is ageing and living longer there is increasing pressure on adaptations and demand is currently outstripping supply. By Year 3 of the previous Capital Programme, more than three quarters of the budget allocation had been depleted, and by the end of Year 4, approvals had to slow dramatically in order to manage what remained of the budget. In addition to this, it was not possible to progress several accommodation options in support of homeless clients with additional support needs owing to Capital budget constraints.
- 7.5 There remain a number of workstreams that will continue into LHS 25-30, and this will help to build on what has been achieved. Where actions have not been achieved, or where challenges have been encountered, we must reflect on the reasons for this, whether we can do anything differently in future, or accept that available resources may not stretch to our aspirations.
- 7.6 Of the 39 actions included in LHS 17-22, 15 were achieved, 12 were partially achieved, 9 were not achieved, and 3 did not progress. A full review of LHS 17-22 outcomes and actions is attached at Appendix 1.

PROGRESS TO DATE ON LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2025-2030

- 8.1 Following approval of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment in October 2023, the Housing Market Partnership in place was expanded to form the Local Housing Strategy Steering Group, and the Group has met monthly since autumn 2023 (although work had to be suspended for seven months in 2024 owing to key staff absences within the Housing Services Team.) Steering Group membership is as follows and includes a broad spectrum of stakeholders from different Comhairle teams and external organisations and agencies:
 - Housing Services Team Manager, CNES;
 - Housing Strategy Manager, CNES;
 - Housing Development Officer, CNES;
 - Homeless Service Manager, CNES;

- Local Development Plan Manager, CNES;
- Research Officer, Local Development Plan, CNES;
- Senior Researcher, Chief Executive's Department, CNES;
- Clerical Assistant, Housing Services Team, CNES;
- Head of Partnership Services, CNES;
- Commissioning Services Manager, Health & Social Care Team, CNES;
- Service Manager (Resources), Education & Children's Services, CNES;
- Comhairle Elected Member;
- Chief Executive, HHP;
- Chief Executive, Tighean Innse Gall;
- Development Manager, Community Land Outer Hebrides (currently represented by a Board Member as post is vacant);
- Area Manager – Innse Gall, Highlands & Islands Enterprise;
- Occupational Therapy Services Manager & AHP Mental Health Lead, NHS Western Isles; and
- Fàs Fallain Manager, NHS Western Isles.

8.2 The Housing Need and Demand Assessment which was assessed as Robust and Credible by Scottish Government in October 2023, provides an evidence base from which to build the Local Housing Strategy.

8.3 The Housing Supply Target for the five-year period of the LHS was approved by the Comhairle in April 2024.

8.4 The Housing Contribution Statement which underpins the Specialist Housing aspect of the LHS is underway with Health & Social Care colleagues.

8.5 In-person engagement with communities has now concluded with two events in Benbecula, two events in Barra, and five events in Lewis and Harris. An engagement event also took place with students and staff at UHI Stornoway Campus, and two online events took place with Uist & Barra and Lewis & Harris Community Councils. The main themes from engagement are as follows:

- Population decline;
- The supply of housing;
- Establishing need and demand in different areas;
- Supporting rural communities; and
- Financial considerations.

A report outlining engagement feedback is available at Appendix 2.

8.6 A stakeholder workshop took place in April 2025 and from this, 78 actions and two additional outcomes were suggested. These were discussed at the Steering Group meeting of 29 May and further work is being carried out to refine them into a cohesive, resourced and deliverable strategy. With the two additional suggested outcomes, LHS 25-30 could be centred around the following core areas:

- Sustaining Communities;
- Supply;
- Quality;
- Fuel Poverty;
- Homelessness; and
- Independent Living.

8.7 There has been no agreement on the vision for LHS 25-30 yet though in light of consultation feedback, there is likely to be continuity with the previous vision which was:

Housing provision and services in the Outer Hebrides should make a strong contribution to health and well-being, encourage population retention, and support the sustainability of our communities.

8.8 It is anticipated that a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment focus group will be scheduled later this summer with assistance from Public Health Scotland. The remaining Equalities assessments will be

included in the Integrated Impact Assessment process, in addition to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (pre-screening).

- 8.9 It is hoped that a consultative draft will be ready to seek views from the public and to submit to Scottish Government for the peer review process in September 2025. Thereafter, all feedback may be considered/implemented and a final draft agreed.

CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Report outlines progress against LHS 17-22 and preparation of LHS 25-30. It is anticipated that LHS 25-30 will be submitted to Scottish Government in the latter half of 2025.