

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE 9 DECEMBER 2021

PROGRESS WITH HOUSING AND BUILDING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN ACTIONS APRIL – END OF SEPTEMBER 2021 (ABERDEENSHIRE PERFORMS).

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on progress with the actions set out in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021.

1.2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Acknowledge and consider progress made with each action during the period 1 April – 30 September 2021 and

1.2.2 Instruct the Director of Environment & Infrastructure Services to continue to present reports to the Communities Committee on a six-monthly basis, evidencing progress with delivery of the priorities set out in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022.

2 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

2.1 On the 23 July 2020 Aberdeenshire Council received a report (Item 4) setting out the findings of a review of the existing Council Priorities. Because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Council services the report recommended that the existing Council Plan and associated priorities be formally closed down and a new Council Plan be developed around three pillars and six strategic priorities.

2.2 Between July and October cross-party and cross-committee workshops were held to shape and inform the detailed proposals. A revised Council Plan for the period 2020 – 2022 was then presented to Aberdeenshire Council for adoption on the 7 October 2020 (Item 3). The Council Plan sets out the outcomes (Council Priorities) expected for the six strategic priorities. In all 27 Council Priorities (outcomes) were identified.

2.3 At service level work was undertaken to identify those actions to be taken in support of the Council Priorities. These were set out in the Environment & Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan which covers the period October 2020 – April 2022 and was approved by the Infrastructure Services Committee at its meeting of the 11 March 2021 (Item 5). The Plan shows Environment & Infrastructure Services as the lead for delivering 15 out of the 27 Council Priorities.

- 2.4 During the development of the Environment & Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan the Communities Committee expressed a wish for a separate Housing and Building Standards Service Plan to be developed to enable the Committee to more easily monitor progress with those actions under its remit. The Service Plan was approved by the Communities Committee at its meeting of the 17th December 2020 (item 12). This plan was not a separate plan to the Environmental and Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan, merely a sub-set of it bringing together in a separate document all the actions identified for Housing and Building Standards in the Directorate Plan.
- 2.5 A report on progress with actions in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan covering the period October 2020 – March 2021 was presented to the Communities Committee on the 2 September 2021 (item 16). That report bridged the gap between the approval of the Council Plan last October and the start of the Council's revised Performance Framework (April 2021).

3 Discussion

- 3.1 There are 32 actions set out in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan. 22 of these are termed Strategic in that they were identified as actions that specifically supported delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities. 10 actions are termed Operational in that they relate to the actions being taken by Housing and Building Standards in support of its duties set out under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Building Standards (Scotland) Act 2003 and other related legislation.
- 3.2 Most of the actions set out in the Service Plan are high level in nature, they are designed to give an overview of progress against each strategic priority. More detail around the specific actions being undertaken are set in plans such as:-
- Housing Improvement Plan (HIP)
 - Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)
 - Local Housing Strategy
 - Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)
 - Housing Action Plan

Reports on progress with each of these plans are presented to Committee on a regular basis.

- 3.3 **Appendix 1** to this report summarises the progress achieved to date with the 22 Strategic actions set out in the Service Plan.

Appendix 2 to this report sets out the progress achieved to date with the 10 Operational actions set out in the Service Plan.

The tables given in the two appendices provide a description of each action, give an indication of the progress made and provide a brief narrative summarising what has been achieved to date. Headings on each table also show what Strategic Priority and Council Priority (Outcome) the actions support.

- 3.4 Of the 22 Strategic Actions set out in Appendix 1, 20 are progressing, 1 is complete and 1 has been abandoned. The completed action relates to the submission of the Annual assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator (action 4.04). This was sent off in October. The action that has been abandoned relates to the introduction of new energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector (action 4.02). These were to have come into force in 2022 but now the Scottish Government has committed to work with the private sector to introduce new regulations by 2025.
- 3.5 As a general point actions relating to maintenance and improvement works are progressing as well as can be expected given the difficult circumstances in which the service is operating. Covid restrictions during the period along with shortages of materials and skilled labour have resulted in many programmes of work having to be reprofiled. Both council officers and contractors are working well together to try to deliver an extremely large and complex programme of work.
- 3.6 Of the 10 actions set out in Appendix 2 there are 3 that are completed, the other 7 are on-going and making good progress. The actions that are completed relate to the completion of the self-assessment which provided the evidence to support the statements made in the annual assurance statement sent to the Housing Regulator (action 6.01), installation of the choice-based letting system (action 6.03) and the implementation of the Housing On-line system. (action 6.04)
- 3.7 The Council's Performance Framework is intended to provide Councillors with updates on progress with actions and performance. This report has concentrated on describing the progress made in delivering approved actions. There is a separate report on the agenda for today's Committee that specifically deals with performance. Together both reports are intended to support the Communities Committee in their role of scrutinising the performance of the Housing and Building Standards Service in delivering on Council and service priorities.

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 In October 2020 Full Council approved the new Council Plan for Aberdeenshire Council for the period of 2020-2022. The Plan sets out the strategic priorities for Aberdeenshire Council under three pillars:-

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

Linked to the Strategic Priorities are 27 Council Priorities (outcomes).

- 4.2 Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.
- 4.3 Actions in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan support the following Strategic and Council Priorities (Outcomes):-
- *Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing, Resilient Communities and Economy and Enterprise. This is about developing a modern and streamlined approach by those services required by legislation to monitor, enforce and provide permissions to business, individuals and communities.
 - *Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. It involves the actions taken to sustain people in their existing tenancies as well as actions to support people who present as homeless.
 - *Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. This involves the provision of affordable housing in partnership with other local social landlords through new build and acquisitions and actions taken to improve the quality and energy efficiency of the existing housing stock.
 - *Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building communities feel empowered and enabled.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing Resilient Communities. This involves a range of actions to be taken to support existing tenancies and reduce the threat of evictions, taking action to tackle anti-social behaviour and empowering tenants and service users to have a real say in the delivery of services.
- 4.4 The report also helps deliver actions set out in the [Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023](#).
- 4.5 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X
Climate Change and Sustainability			X
Health and Wellbeing			X
Town Centre First			X

4.6 The screening section as part of Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment process (IIA – 000287) has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken because this report is to inform the Communities Committee on the progress with actions and set out in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan. The report supports the scrutiny role of the Committee. No operational decisions are required from the Committee.

4.7 There are no risks associated with the report. However, in the development of the actions in the Directorate Plan the following Risks were identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

[Aberdeenshire Corporate Risks:](#)

ACORP001 – Budget Pressures

ACORP002 – Changes in Government Policy, Legislation and Regulation

ACORP004 - Business and organisation change

ACORP005 – Working with Other Organisations (e.g. Supply Chains, Outsourcing and Partnership Working)

ACORP006 – Reputational Management

ACORP010 – Environmental Challenges, e.g. Extreme Weather, Climate Change.

A link to the corporate risk register can be found here:- [Corporate Risk Register](#).

4.8 The risk register for Environment and Infrastructure Services has identified a number of risks at a strategic level associated with each Outcome. Those most relevant to the actions covered by this report are detailed in ISR014 –

ISR017. The Directorate Risk Register can be found here :- [Directorate Risk Register](#)

- 4.9 Mitigation of risks is addressed through a range of plans and also the Directorate Business Continuity Plan, which identifies our Critical Activities and puts in place plans to ensure our ability to continue to operate and deliver these vital services. Additionally, the Head of Housing and Building Standards assumes responsibility for each of the identified risks and ensures that appropriate plans for mitigation are put in place and reviewed regularly.
- 4.10 As this report is only to inform the Committee about performance there are no equalities, staffing or financial implications associated with the report.

5 Scheme of Governance

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The Committee is able to consider [and take a decision on] this item in terms of Section D 7.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance under which the following function of the Council is delegated to the Communities Committee:-

“To identify and where appropriate to make recommendations and implement improvements to the performance of services in respect of any function within its remit with reference to the relevant Performance Indicators in terms of Performance Management (provided that any changes to Council Policy will be made following appropriate consultation with Area Committees).”

Alan Wood Director Environment & Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Alan Morris Service Development Coordinator

Date 25 November 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Strategic Actions Update

Appendix 2 Operational Actions Update

Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 - 2022 Actions Update for Communities Committee December 2021



Appendix 1

Strategic Actions

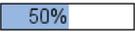
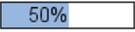
Report Author: Alan Morris
Generated on: 11 November 2021

Action Status	
	Cancelled
	Overdue; Neglected
	Unassigned; Check Progress
	Not Started; In Progress; Assigned
	Completed

Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities
Council Priorities (Outcomes) Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness.

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
4.05 Delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	Delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan & Action Plan 2019 – 2024.		<div style="width: 70%;"><div style="background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px; width: 70%;"></div></div> 70%	31-Mar-2022	The RRTP continues to progress well with progress across all actions. Update provided to committee in June 2021 and further update will be provided June 2022. Should you have any queries, please contact performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk , alternatively, if this relates to an Area Plan action, please contact alan.morris@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

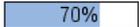
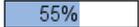
Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities, Economy & Enterprise
Council Priorities (Outcomes): Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.

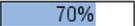
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
4.01 Take action to improve standards in the private rented sector.	Take action to improve standards within the private rented sector through routine compliance checks, routine advertising checks and Below Tolerable Standards Checks.			31-Mar-2022	On target to exceed the 10% target of compliance and routine checks
4.02 Regulation of new energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector	Assist with regulating the new energy efficiency requirements in the private rented sector.			31-Mar-2022	For the Private Rented Sector, the Scottish Government had previously committed to the introduction of regulations to ensure properties in the private rented sector reach an EPC D by 2022. However, following the recent publication of the Heat in Buildings Strategy, which consolidates the Governments approach to the zero-emissions heat transition and confirms their approach to the introduction of a regulatory framework for energy efficiency and heat supply and in recognition that the private rented sector has been significantly affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government have made a commitment to work with the sector to introduce regulations in 2025 requiring all private rented sector properties to reach a minimum standard equivalent to EPC C by 2025 where technically feasible and cost-effective, at change of tenancy, with a backstop of 2028 for all remaining existing properties. The previous option to introduce a standard of EPC D will not now be taken forward.
4.03 Ensure compliance with Buildings (Scotland) Act 2003	In accordance with requirements contained within the Buildings Scotland Act 2003 carry out enforcement actions to ensure compliance.			31-Mar-2022	The Building Standards service has met or exceeded each of its targets during 2020/21: - 98% of building warrant amendment applications were assessed for compliance with technical standards within 20 working days (target 95%) - 97% of building warrants and amendment applications were issued within 10 working days (target 90%)

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
					<p>- 100% of potentially dangerous buildings were risk assessed within 4 hours from notification (target 100%)</p> <p>- 95% customer satisfaction rate (target 90%)</p> <p>- 8.3 national customer satisfaction rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (target to meet or exceed 7.5).</p>
4.04 Submit statement each year to show compliance with Regulatory Framework	Submit assurance statement each year to show compliance with the new regulatory framework issued by the Scottish Regulator under the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014		 100%	31-Mar-2022	<p>In October the Communities Committee (item 9) approved the proposed Annual Assurance Statement which is to go to the Scottish Housing Regulator as an accurate reflection of Aberdeenshire Council's compliance with meeting our obligations under the Scottish Social Housing Charter.</p> <p>The statement is based on the templates released by the Scottish Housing Regulator.</p> <p>The Annual Assurance Statement was submitted to the SHR on 26/10/21. This brings all submissions to the SHR up to date.</p>

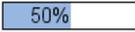
Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities
Council Priorities: Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.

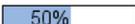
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
4.06 Provide repairs and maintenance service to tenants	Provide an efficient and responsive repairs and maintenance service to tenants.		 50%	31-Mar-2022	<p>During 2020 and the first part of 2021 the Coronavirus Pandemic had a significant impact on Aberdeenshire Council's ability to deliver a full repairs and maintenance service to our tenants. There were periods of time when only emergency and essential maintenance repairs could be carried out due to the lockdown restrictions. In addition, our ability to deliver maintenance and servicing was impacted in some cases due to tenants shielding or self-isolating.</p> <p>At present, despite the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19, Aberdeenshire Council is again providing a full repairs and maintenance service to all tenants.</p>

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
					<p>The Covid Pandemic has driven improvements, such as the introduction of virtual inspections using new software to minimise the need for staff to visit on-site. This has proved so successful that we have continued with this approach as part of our standard procedures. Other innovations planned include the adoption of new Photobook software to support staff in assessing properties at void, and the rollout of a new one stop housing portal, Housing Online. The repairs module of this portal is due to go live in Spring 2022 and will allow all tenants to report repairs and monitor progress via the portal.</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council continues to operate a Repairs and Planned Maintenance Management (RPMM) system in all depots, giving tenants the opportunity to specify an appointment slot convenient to them. Covid had some negative impact on our ability to keep appointment times, but performance is now returning to Pre-Covid levels.</p>
4.07 Deliver H&S improvements in relation to fire detection	Deliver programme Health and Safety improvements in relation to fire detection in council houses.			31-Mar-2022	Compliance has increased to 70% and the contractors are continuing to work throughout the Covid restrictions to maximise compliance by Feb 2022.
4.08 Meet Energy Efficiency Standards for Scottish Social Housing (ESSH 1)	Meet the Energy Efficiency Standards for Scottish Social Housing (ESSH 1) as part of the Housing Improvement programme (HIP).			31-Mar-2022	Contractors continue to work throughout the restrictions to maximise compliance however are being restricted by Covid social distancing and access to resources materials and staff. As a result, the contract has been delayed with completion has moved from May to December 2022
4.09 Develop and implement a programme of works for ESSH 2	Develop and implement a programme of works in relation to the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing 2 (ESSH2)			31-Mar-2022	Property Services are working with a specialist consultant to develop an ESSH2 strategy. With a view towards achieving Net Zero for retrofit and new build Housing.
4.10 Deliver Housing Improvement Programme (HIP)	Deliver the Housing Improvement Programmes in partnership with			31-Mar-2022	The programme is continuing in difficult circumstances with Covid restrictions and difficulty in accessing resources (staffing and materials), the programme

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
	colleagues in Property and private contractors.				is therefore behind its original plan, but the team is working closely with the contractors to maximise efficiency.
4.11 Improve Void turnaround times	Improve the time to relet vacant properties (Void turnaround)			31-Mar-2022	<p><u>Asset Management</u> - huge improvement in turnaround time through the introduction of a new process, new computerised system for change of tenancy inspections, a revised lettable standard and a restructured team with functional responsibility for voids across Aberdeenshire. Total number of voids in this part of the process is now well below 100, which is fantastic when on average there are 40 new voids each week.</p> <p><u>Tenancy Services</u> - the introduction of Virtual Sign Ups as a response to the Covid 19 pandemic has been continued as a method to ensure faster turnaround of new tenancy sign ups. The team continue to work with Options and Asset Management colleagues to facilitate the Voids process.</p>
4.12 Prepare and submit Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) each year	In accordance with regulations prepare and submit a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) to the Scottish Government each year.			31-Mar-2022	SHIP to go to Communities Committee for sign-off for submission to the Scottish Government.
4.13 Deliver actions in relation to affordable housing	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to affordable housing			31-Mar-2022	<p>Since the start of the period work has commenced on site for 312 units of which 67 are being delivered through the Council's New Build programme, the remaining 245 through our RSL partners. This includes developments across the following locations:- Fraserburgh, Banff, Peterhead, Newburgh, Kintore, Inch, Ballater, Banchory, Kincardine O'Neil, Stonehaven, Newtonhill Laurencekirk, Marykirk and St Cyrus.</p> <p>Of these 312 units 79 are suitable for particular needs including 23 for wheelchair users.</p> <p>There continues to be various challenges upon the development programme as we ease out of Covid 19 restrictions; these include a slowdown in pace of development, availability of contractors; supply chain issues; rising costs; and availability of finance for example. There may however be new opportunities to accelerate and or increase the delivery of affordable housing.</p>

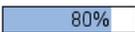
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
					<p>Officers continue to monitor delivery through the Affordable Housing Hub and Partnership Delivery Forum and take action where appropriate.</p> <p>In addition to the affordable housing detailed above work has also commenced on site for 34 units for Mid-Market Rent by an RSL and 23 units for Shared Equity and 2 units for LCSE in Stonehaven, Chapleton and Ellon. Of these 59 units 18 are suitable for particular needs including 1 for a wheelchair user.</p>
4.14 Deliver actions in relation to fuel poverty, sustainability and energy efficiency	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to fuel poverty, sustainability and energy efficiency.			31-Mar-2022	<p>Aberdeenshire Council was allocated £3.2m for the 2020/21 Energy Efficiency Scotland programme to install energy efficiency measures in the private sector. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, the 2020/21 programme did not commence until late October 2020, but had to stop from 1 January 2021 until end of April 2021 due to a second lockdown. As a result of the delays in installing measures, the completion date has been extended until end of October 2021.</p> <p>The project has been particularly challenging, not only have the contractors had to adhere to the COVID restrictions, which has drastically slowed down the process of installing measures, but as a result of the pandemic, sourcing building materials has been particularly difficult for all trades across all local authority areas.</p> <p>To date, we have spent £2.3m and are reasonably confident the total spend will reach £3m. The under-spend of approximately £200,000 will be handed back to the Scottish Government.</p> <p>This is the first time in nine years of the scheme that Aberdeenshire Council has had an under-spend, but this is ultimately a result of the unprecedented circumstances caused by the pandemic. However, our contractor has still managed to install 358 energy efficiency measures in private sector housing, including external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, injected bead internal wall insulation, underfloor insulation using Q-bot technology and loft insulation.</p>

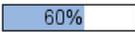
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
					<p>The application bid for 21/22 Energy Efficiency Scotland resulted in an award of £2,897,343 in funding. This will enable 430 energy efficiency measures to be installed in private sector housing including external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, underfloor insulation using Q-bot technology and loft insulation. Works will commence at the beginning of November 2021.</p> <p>From April to September SCARF has received 598 enquiries relating to energy efficiency and fuel bill concerns. By area the enquiries received were from 212 households in Banff & Buchan, 116 from Buchan, 77 from Formartine, 72 from Garioch, 66 from Kincardine and Mearns and 55 from Marr.</p> <p>During this period, SCARF carried out 106 home visits to provide in-depth energy efficiency advice. By area, 29 home visits were in Banff & Buchan, 17 in Buchan, 22 in Formartine, 10 in Garioch, 7 in Kincardine & Mearns and 21 in Marr.</p>
4.15 Deliver actions in relation to independent living	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy in relation to Independent living			31-Mar-2022	<p>An improvement exercise for the Planning and Delivery of Particular Needs (PN) housing has ensured collaboration between partners in Housing and AHSCP to establish effective working processes to produce an evidence base of the need for PN Clients and in turn to feed this into the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).</p> <p>For 2020/21 the target of 15% of new build properties developed and fully accessible for clients with a particular need was exceeded and a total of 26.71% of all new builds for 20/21 were suitable for PN Clients. The total includes 6.83% of fully wheelchair accessible properties and the intention is to continue a focus on and to improve on the provision of fully wheelchair accessible properties.</p> <p>In terms of disabled adaptations both the Occupational Health Service and the Care and Repair Service were severely restricted in what could be delivered due to pressure in other areas of the health service and restrictions on client visits. This was also compounded by the restrictions placed on contractors being able to work in client houses and also clients having to shield and self-isolate. It is hoped that the recent easing of Covid restrictions will allow the number of installations to return to normal levels.</p>

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
4.16 Deliver actions in relation to minority ethnic communities	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy in relation to minority ethnic communities			31-Mar-2022	It has now been agreed that Aberdeenshire will commit to resettling 30 Afghan families each year through the three Afghan Resettlement Schemes (UKRS, ARAP and Afghan Citizen Scheme). Additional resources will be provided to the delivery team to help support families resettling in the area. Responsibility for the delivery team is to move from Housing to Business Services.
4.17 Deliver actions in relation to the private sector.	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to the private sector			31-Mar-2022	<p>The bid for 20/21 Energy Efficiency Scotland:ABS funding resulted in £3.22 million being awarded to install energy efficiency measures in private sector housing throughout Aberdeenshire.</p> <p>Because of the Covid lock-down last year works for the 20/21 programme did not commence until late October 2020. However, further COVID restrictions resulted in all works, apart from outdoor work where surveys had previously been completed, ceasing once more. Surveys and installations of all energy efficiency measures resumed again on 26 April 2021, ensuring all relevant guidelines issued by the Scottish Government are adhered to.</p> <p>The Scottish Government extended the timeline, in which to complete all works to accommodate the challenging and unprecedented times the Pandemic has resulted in. Not only have contractors had to adhere to the COVID restrictions, which has drastically slowed down the process of installing measures, but as a result of the Pandemic, sourcing building materials has now become difficult for all trades across all local authority areas.</p> <p>In addition to energy efficiency improvements managed by Housing information and advice is available to all homeowners and private tenants across Aberdeenshire in relation to repairs, maintenance and energy efficiency to their homes. Information and advice are provided via Telephone, Aberdeenshire Council web page, e-mail, sign posting to other agencies, provision of leaflets and attendance at events & seminars.</p>

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
					<p>Communities Committee reviewed and approved the new Below Tolerable Standard and Housing Renewal Area Policies on 1 April 2021.</p> <p>Practical assistance is offered to all homeowners and private tenants across Aberdeenshire in relation to repairs, maintenance and improvement to their homes. Practical assistance is provided through home visits to help identify works and source contractors and help identify sources of funding. Further practical assistance will be provided to those who are over 60 and/or disabled in order to improve and adapt their home, to complete small repairs by providing grants to help promote independent living within people's own homes.</p>

Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities
Council Priorities (Outcomes): Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
4.18 Provide pre-tenancy support to prospective tenants	Provide pre-tenancy support to new tenants in advance of them taking up their tenancy.			31-Mar-2022	The lifting of some elements of Covid 19 restrictions has allowed a refocus on the provision of Pre-Tenancy Support. A re-examination of aims and objectives will prove necessary to account for additional levels of vulnerability now evident.
4.19 Provide outreach support to help prevent homelessness	Provide out-reach housing support to meet the needs of people who require help to prevent homelessness and keep people living independently in their tenancies.			31-Mar-2022	<p>New support services all now in place. Specialist Adult and Youth outreach support services and Housing First service all fully operational from 1st October 2021. All other support services remain ongoing.</p> <p>Should you have any queries, please contact performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, alternatively, if this relates to an Area Plan action, please contact alan.morris@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>
4.20 Provide support to people who run into rent arrears to manage debt	Provide support to people who run into rent arrears to manage their debt and pay			31-Mar-2022	The Covid 19 pandemic has necessitated a full focus on support for tenants experiencing problems with rent arrears and debt in general. A Rent Strategy Member Officer Working Group has allowed a detailed examination of rent

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
	back the arrears once they are able				affordability and the resultant adjustment to rent strategy. ESF funding has been awarded for the introduction of Welfare Rights Officers for a period of two years and work is ongoing to introduce new software to assist with the identification of tenants experiencing issues with rent debt at an early stage.
4.21 Community Safety - supporting tenants affected by criminal and anti-social behaviour	Improve links with individual communities and with Community Safety Partners and others to ensure that a comprehensive and coordinated approach is offered to tenants, particularly when criminal and anti-social activities are involved.			31-Mar-2022	A staffing review within the Community Safety team has allowed the team to focus on key issues including criminal and anti-social behaviour. Partnership working has been enhanced and developed with a focus on joint investment in key projects encouraged. A Community Safety Strategy and Action Plan has been approved with a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework now being developed.
4.22 Actions to empower tenants and users to have a say in delivery of services.	Empowering tenants and service users to have a real say in delivery of services. Carry out a tenant satisfaction survey using a telephone-based model to allow greater engagement with tenants and explore the reasons for their dissatisfaction.			31-Mar-2022	The relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions has allowed the roll out of tenant engagement within local areas, supplementing the virtual environment created. The Communities Committee have recently approved a new Registered Tenant Organisations although recent issues have been experienced in respect of the functioning of the group concerned.

Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 - 2022 Actions Update for Communities Committee December 2021

Appendix 2

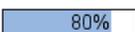
Operational Actions

Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities
Council Priorities (Outcomes): Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.

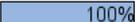
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
6.01 Scottish Housing Regulator	Carry out a self-assessment of performance against the criteria set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Present to Communities Committee to be signed off then forward to the Scottish Housing Regulator.		<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%; background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div></div> 100%	31-Mar-2022	The annual Assurance Statement was submitted for approval to the Communities Committee at its meeting of 14th October 2021 (item 9) before being submitted to the SHR on 26/10/21. Appendix 3 of the report to the Committee contained an evidence statement for each identified outcome and legal obligation, explaining how Aberdeenshire Council performs in comparison to the required standard, and identifying where any improvements are required. This document was developed following a self-assessment of Housing performance against the standard and was not be submitted to the Regulator.
6.08 Building Standards Customer Services accreditation	Prepare for and undergo independent audit assessment as part of the Customer Services Accreditation. This Standard tests Building Standards against 57 components with a		<div style="width: 50%;"><div style="width: 50%; background-color: #4f81bd; height: 10px;"></div></div> 50%	31-Mar-2022	Earlier in the year it was announced that Building Standards had retained the Customer Services Excellence Standard at the recertification audit. This Standard tests an organisation against 57 components with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism, staff attitudes and customer insight and customer journey. In order to achieve the award Building Standards had to provide evidence against the criteria during an independent assessment. During this period the

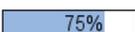
Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
	particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information and professionalism.				assessor not only considered the evidence provided, but also spoke virtually with staff in different roles and levels, as well as a range of key customers and stakeholders. This year the audit was held virtually. During the independent assessment the auditor praised the adaptability of the team, moving to home working whilst still maintaining the highest level of service provision, performance, and customer focus. Developing virtual site inspections and holding a virtual Agent Forum were also noted as key customer service improvements.

Strategic Priorities: Health & Wellbeing, Resilient Communities
Council Priorities (Outcomes): Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required;

Action	Action Description	Status	Progress	Due Date	Latest Note
6.02 Procure and implement repairs and maintenance on-line reporting system.	Repairs and Maintenance – procure and implement an on-line repairs system for tenants to report repairs.			31-Mar-2022	<p>Housing Online was launched in April 2021, providing customers with the ability to register and monitor housing applications online. Advanced housing application related features such as choice based letting (with online virtual tours) and auto bidding (for those with limited access to IT) have been added over the last couple of months.</p> <p>Housing Online also includes additional functionality for our existing tenants, such as the ability to query rent balances and tenancy agreements.</p> <p>In December 2021, the capability to log and monitor repair requests will be added to Housing Online. The advanced graphical repair logging capability called Interfinder will follow sometime in the first half of 2022.</p>

6.03 Implement choice-based letting	Implement the revised allocations policy based around Choice Based Letting			31-Mar-2022	<p>CBL now fully implemented</p> <p>Should you have any queries, please contact performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, alternatively, if this relates to an Area Plan action, please contact alan.morris@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>
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<p>6.04 Implement Housing On-Line system</p>	<p>Implement new on-line housing application system to replace Apply-4-Homes. As part of the project develop a housing options loading page to enable applicants to access lists and apply for Housing with all relevant landlords in the North East.</p>			<p>31-Mar-2022</p>	<p>On the 12th April 2021 the NPS Housing On-Line portal went live replacing the previous Apply for Homes System. This system provides an on-line channel for submitting and progressing social housing applications and also includes a "rent-on-line" portal that allows tenants to directly manage their rent balances and payments.</p>
<p>6.05 Consider long-term rent strategy and review business plan</p>	<p>Set up an officer-member working group to consider the longer-term rent strategy in the light of the Covid pandemic. Consider outcomes as part of the regular review of the 30-year business plan</p>			<p>31-Mar-2022</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire Council set up a member-officer working group in 2020 to consider our longer-term rent strategy in light of the Coronavirus Pandemic – this group recommended that Aberdeenshire Council implement a smaller than planned rent increase in 2021/22. This proposal was agreed in December 2020, resulting in a rent increase of 2.8% overall for 2021/22.</p> <p>This group continues to meet in 2021/22, with the remit of identifying a rent strategy for 2022/23 that balances the ongoing challenges of the Pandemic for our tenants with the need to fund improvements and services from the Housing Revenue Account.</p> <p>This work is being conducted alongside the regular 30-year HRA business plan review, which evaluates the affordability of our business plan with regard to factors such as the cost of energy efficiency works and capital upgrades. The final decision will also take account of the affordability of our rent levels, and the sustainability of this in future years.</p>
<p>6.06 Implement review of Sheltered Housing</p>	<p>Consult on an implement the review of Sheltered Housing. Continue to review the balance of sheltered housing and very sheltered housing.</p>			<p>31-Mar-2022</p>	<p>Significant savings in terms of staffing have already been generated by the review. However significant delays have occurred in progressing other aspects of the review due to Covid. It is still hoped to complete the review within the 2-year time frame.</p>
<p>6.07 Consult on proposed changes to Housing management structure and implement</p>	<p>Consult on the proposed changes to the management arrangements within Housing and implement new structure.</p>			<p>31-Mar-2022</p>	<p>Options & Homeless and Asset Management changes now implemented</p> <p>Should you have any queries, please contact performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, alternatively, if this relates to an Area Plan action, please contact alan.morris@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>

6.09 Benchmark the Housing Service, develop and implement improvement actions as a result	Take part in annual benchmarking exercises through Scottish Housing Network and Housemark. Develop actions to address areas of improvement identified through the benchmarking. Monitor and report on progress with the improvement actions to committee every six months.			31-Mar-2022	<p>As previously noted, we submit data to both Housemark and Scotland's Housing Network for benchmarking purposes. Both organisations provide a performance and benchmarking session to their members, which have now been arranged in November for Aberdeenshire Council.</p> <p>In addition, we submit quarterly benchmarking information to both organisations, allowing for more up to date insights on key indicators. We will incorporate relevant benchmarking information from these organisations and the Scottish Housing Regulator into our performance reporting to Communities Committee.</p>
6.10 Undertake annual self-assessment using agreed methodology	Take part in annual self-assessment using appropriate methodology to identify areas for improvement. Agree actions to address identified issues and monitor progress with actions on a regular basis.			31-Mar-2022	<p>Progress with this action has been delayed by a corporate decision to move away from the How Good is Our Council methodology and instead to use the Public sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) methodology developed by the Improvement Service. A corporate programme of self-assessments is being developed with a request out for a service to volunteer as a pilot, Whilst Housing would be willing to pilot the new methodology it has been suggested that more lessons might be learnt by engaging with a service which is less experienced in carrying out self-evaluations.</p>