



Clackmannanshire
Council

www.clacksweb.org.uk



Clackmannanshire Housing Strategy

Annual Update
2014

	Page
Contents	1
Introduction	2
New Housing Supply	6
Best Use of Existing Housing	8
Homelessness	10
Support for Independent Living	11
Specialist Housing	13
Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty	14
Improving Neighbours and Communities	16
Housing Investment	18

Introduction

Key Developments

Every household in our area should have access to a good quality and affordable home, with advice and support services that meet their needs.

Our Priorities

- New Housing Supply
- Best use of Existing Housing
- Homelessness
- Support for Independent Living
- Specialist Housing
- Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty
- Improving Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Housing Investment

Introduction

The Housing Strategy sets out our strategic housing priorities and the context for delivering the Council's corporate priorities and those of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Strategy also links closely to our Community Planning Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and to the Local Development Plan. Key actions identified to deliver the Housing Strategy's priorities are picked up annually in the Housing and Community Safety Business Plan, and the Alliance's Business, Jobs and Skills and Community Wellbeing Partnership Teams' action/delivery plans.

There are a number of significant developments that have impacted on the Housing Strategy over the past 18 months, not least the ever changing economic climate in which we operate. The Housing Service has responded to these challenges by continuing to develop flexible and responsive services, to improve the quality of services for customers. This has included the opening of a Housing Options Shop, the successful retention of our Customer Service Excellence award and rigorous preparation for our Scottish Social Housing Charter assessment.

At the publication of our Housing Strategy in 2012, the supply of new build private housing locally was stagnant between 2009 - 2012, with new house building levels lower than in any other Scottish local authority area. However, in line with our priority to maximise house construction in the area, new house building has risen since 2012. The past year has also seen increasing numbers of house sales, pointing to a recovering housing market. This is good news for the wider economy and will help to take pressure off the social housing sector to tackle market failure.

Key Developments

There has been a lot of activity since the Strategy was approved in 2012, but there are some key achievements to celebrate:

- 65 homes for affordable rent were built or acquired in the year. This includes the first new council housing for decades, with 25 new homes in Tullibody and Alva. We have also led the way for local authorities buying properties from the open market, with 40 units acquired. A further 56 affordable housing units are on site (28 council owned), and there is funding commitment to provide another 136 socially rented homes. This is a total of 257 additional units.
- Home@Clacks, our housing options service, was launched in March 2014 from our new offices in Kilncraigs. Everyone in housing need is now provided with advice and information across a range of housing tenures. A 'personal housing plan' geared to their circumstances can also be provided.
- The Council has approved a revised allocations policy and a common housing register has been introduced, simplifying the process for customers who wish to apply to more than one social housing provider.
- The Council approved a 5 year Capital Investment Plan as part of the 30 year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan model, which supports the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.
- The Housing Service retained its Customer Service Excellence award in 2013 as part of the Community & Regulatory Service, achieving 'compliance plus' standard in 8 categories.
- The Council has a new development partner, Kingdom Housing Association, who will start building in Tullibody this year, with their first development of 27 new affordable homes. It is hoped this will lead to a successful future development programme in Clackmannanshire.
- We continue to be amongst the leaders in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and are on track for 100% compliance by 2015.
- We have attracted over £4 million in external resources through challenge fund initiatives, including the Town Centre Housing Fund, Empty Homes, Home Energy and Scottish Legal Aid Board.
- In the year that saw the launch of a statutory duty to assess housing support needs for those at risk of homelessness, our Housing Support Service has once again comfortably passed their inspection by the Care Inspectorate.

The Changing Environment

There are a number of changes underway or proposed which will require a shift in policy or procedure to ensure that the Council is working as effectively as possible:

Scottish Social Housing Charter

Implementation of the Social Housing Charter will improve the quality of the services that social landlords provide to their customers. The actions required to fully implement the Charter are being worked up through the self-assessment process as part of our Annual Return on the Charter. This will be picked up in detail in the Service Business Plan.

Introduction

Housing Support Regulations

Introduced in June 2013, the review of Section 32b of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, places a statutory requirement on the Council to offer every homeless household, or those at risk of homelessness, an assessment of their housing support needs. This requirement has increased demand for support services by 63%.

Home Energy

The new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) will take over from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for rating the energy efficiency of social housing. The Council anticipates to be 65% compliant with the new standard, which is being introduced in 2017.

Recent changes to the Energy Company Obligation mean that less monies will be available from the energy companies for the Council to use to help fund future programmes. We will look to maximise resources and adjust programmes accordingly.

Guidance on the operation of Housing Revenue Accounts

New Guidance requires that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets must be used to benefit council tenants. Councils must have clear, published mechanisms and procedures for consulting with tenants on any matters relating to the HRA, and we are discussing the best approach to take in partnership with the Clackmannanshire Tenants and Residents' Federation.

The Housing (Scotland) Bill

The Bill, currently working its way through the parliamentary system, covers a wide range of issues concerning both social and private housing. There are 8 main provisions in the Bill which, if passed, will require a specific policy response from the Council and we will accommodate changes when the position is more definite. The provisions include:






- The abolition of the Right to Buy for all social rented housing tenants. Our Housing Revenue Account Financial Plan already reflects this change.
- Increased flexibility in defining housing need within local housing allocations policies and further powers to recover adapted or specially constructed properties if these are no longer required by current tenants.
- Additional tools to tackle anti-social behaviour and the use of Short Scottish Secure Tenancies.
- Regulation and registration of letting agents and increased powers to deter unregistered landlords, giving the Council more powers to deal with disputes and unregistered operators.
- Further powers to tackle poor private sector house conditions.

Monitoring

Progress against the Strategy is being monitored through the Council's Covalent performance management system. Actions are being incorporated within the Housing & Community Safety Business Plan to help drive progress which is directly controlled by the Housing Service. For Partner involvement, the Strategy is being monitored by the Community Partnership Alliance groups, to help ensure an integrated approach is developed which will contribute to the priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement, as well as delivery of the Housing Strategy outcomes.

The following pages give a summary of progress against each of the priorities and the previously approved key actions, as well as proposing new actions. The key to the symbols used is shown below.

Key

Action Status	
	Cancelled
	Overdue; No longer assigned
	Unassigned; Not Started; Check Progress
	Resuming; In Progress; Assigned
	Completed

New Housing Supply

New Housing Supply

Quality affordable housing is maximised

The Housing Service has adjusted to the changing face of the housing market by expanding the range of housing being provided with subsidy and providing an ongoing active programme of new build and other housing solutions:








- 25 New build Council homes completed in May 2013
- 28 mid-market rent properties due for completion shortly in Coalsnaughton
- 25 interim, homeless accommodation units due for completion in June 2014 in Sauchie
- Tillicoultry Library reconfigured to provide 3 additional council properties
- 20 'off the shelf' purchases for permanent accommodation during 2013/14
- 20 'off the shelf' purchases for temporary accommodation during 2013/14
- a further 136 properties are programmed for the next 3 years

The Council has a new development partner, Kingdom Housing Association, who will be starting on site in 2014 in Tullibody with their first 27 new rented homes.

Successes 2013/14

- Development of the Council's first new build housing in over 30 years, with the completion of 25 new homes 
- Supplementary guidance on affordable housing policy has been drawn up with the new Local Development Plan 
- £782k town centre funding received from the Scottish Government to redevelop the former Alva Glen Hotel site with new affordable housing 
- 28 Mid Market Rent houses in Coalsnaughton, proving to be popular, are due for completion in September 2014 as part of the National Housing Trust project 
- A supported housing facility at Hallpark in Sauchie will complete summer 2014 
- New RSL development partner approved at Council in December 2013 
- A multi disciplinary Housing Delivery Group has been established to plan the housing development programme 
- Off the shelf house purchase initiative has added 20 new council properties for rent and 20 for use as homeless temporary accommodation 

New Housing Supply

Key Actions	Progress
Develop a flexible Affordable Housing Policy, including commuted sums, with a settlement focus to maximise developer contributions towards affordable housing	
Continue to develop and implement innovative and flexible models for providing cost effective new housing	
Maximise the impact of new housing, including affordable housing in areas of demand	
Optimise the Council's new build programme	
Work with Housing Associations to deliver new affordable housing and maximise funding from all sources	
Promote and increase low cost home ownership schemes with public funding or private developer cross subsidy	
Promote central development sites, including Council owned, for housing in Alva, Tullibody and Tillicoultry	
Introduce incentives where required for tenants to move from larger to smaller properties	

Best Use of Existing Housing

Best Use of Existing Housing

The housing we already have is optimised and effective in providing choice and meeting need.

Changes in the welfare system, including under-occupation charges (the 'bedroom tax'), along with a shift in demographics to smaller households, is making it increasingly important to use the properties we already have in Clackmannanshire to their full potential.








Homes lying empty are a wasted resource, and the Council has been working with owners of empty homes to bring them back into residential use. Over the past year, 14 properties have been brought back into use and almost £48,000 in Council Tax revenue will be generated next year on properties identified to be no longer empty, so not entitled to Council Tax discount.

The new Housing Options approach to helping customers find suitable housing has been launched to help match customers with vacancies. Improving access to private renting is an important part of housing options, and work is progressing to deliver a rent bond guarantee scheme to help with this. It is no longer financially viable, however, for the Council to lease properties from private landlords and this has been removed from the key actions below.

Successes 2013/14

- Launch of 'Clacks Home Finder' - an online information service for private landlords and prospective tenants ✓
- The launch of a Housing Options Shop, and introduction of Personal Housing Plans for customers ✓
- Successful implementation of a new system for Personal Housing Plans ✓
- Completed a review of the Housing Allocations Policy ✓
- Empty Homes Officer successfully brought 14 empty properties back into use, and increased Council Tax income ✓
- Continuing to successfully engage with private landlords, through training and regular forums ✓
- 96% of social housing stock met SHQS in March 2014 ✓
- Look at options to better match social sector property sizes to demand ✓

Best Use of Existing Housing

Key Actions	Progress
Introduce a Housing Options Service	
Review the allocations policy, considering downsizing, mutual exchange and choice based lettings.	
Maintain a programme to bring private sector empty homes back into use	
Maintain a programme to purchase existing housing for social stock	
Consider options to better match social sector property sizes to demand	
Work with private landlords to maximise the number of private lets available for households in need, including deposit guarantees	
Improve quality across the private rented sector, encouraging training and accreditation	

Homelessness

Homelessness





Homelessness is reduced and homeless and potentially homeless households have access to effective and appropriate housing options






The Council continues to improve service quality and reduce costs associated with homelessness, such as bed & breakfast, through buying properties on the open market, converting low demand flatted properties and development of purpose built interim accommodation.

The biggest challenge for the homeless service continues to be finding accommodation for young, single households. Although presentations reduced from 2012 to 2013, this group still account for around two thirds of all homeless applicants. The changes to benefit awards for single people under 35 has restricted payments to a single room rate and the housing option is basically restricted to scarce, one bedroom properties, resulting in increased time spent in temporary accommodation. Our focus is to deliver as many one bed units as practicable.

Important improvements are also being made in the following section on support.

Successes 2013/14

- Housing Options approach now incorporates homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainment. 
- The supply of temporary and interim accommodation has been increased through new build and off the shelf purchase. 
- The use of B & B reduced by 38% since November 2013 and further planned completions of additional accommodation is intended to continue this trend. 
- Implementation of Mental Health and Housing clinics. 

Key Actions	
Develop homelessness prevention activities, such as mediation, debt counselling and assessment of support needs.	
Continue our commitment to deliver new models of supported accommodation for young people and single people, including shared tenancies and concierge support.	
Increase the supply of temporary and interim accommodation through newbuild, purchasing 'off the shelf', private renting and stock conversions.	
Implement a plan for the reduction of B & B use	
Deliver a detailed Homelessness Action Plan with Partners	

Support for Independent Living

Support for Independent Living









Those requiring assistance to live independently at home have access to effective housing support

New legislation means that every member of a homeless or potentially homeless household is entitled to an assessment of their housing support needs. This could include help to develop budget, cooking and other life skills required to sustain a tenancy. Non-homeless households where a need has been identified will also be referred to the Housing Support team.





Significant assistance is being given to the community to help maximise household income to help counteract the impact of Welfare Reform.

We are working with the voluntary sector, and as part of the Reshaping Care Change Fund, to deliver a handyman and befriending service for older and disabled households in the private sector and expect to have a service in place this year.

Successes 2013/14

- Improved housing support and homeless referral systems in place 
- A 65% increase in the number of referrals made to the housing support team by March 2014 
- Improved joint working between the housing support team and third sector support groups 
- Improved joint working between housing support and throughcare and aftercare teams to consider the long term needs of young people leaving care 
- £170k funding received from the Scottish Legal Aid Board to provide advice to the community and maximise household income through 'Making Advice Work' 
- New Tenancy Sustainment Strategy in place to identify new tenants who may be at risk of failing in their tenancy, to offer early intervention 
- Intensive tenancy management plans in place, detailing the nature of measures in place and the frequency of visits to monitor the situation 
- Training complete for 51 staff on raising awareness of service-users with drug and alcohol issues 

Support for Independent Living

Key Actions	Progress
Improved referral processes and information sharing between services	
Improve joint working for young people leaving care, for example: improved referral processes, risk assessments and information sharing	
Identify people at risk of tenancy failure and put in place support packages	
Launch a redesigned Supported Owners service	

Specialist Housing

Specialist Housing



People have access to specialist or adapted accommodation where there is an assessed need.





The context for the adaptations service is changing both at national and local levels and this has meant that the adaptations review has been delayed. Delivering an improved and streamlined adaptations service, across all tenures, will be a priority for the forthcoming year.

A 'Joint Commissioning Strategy' between Social Services and Health is being finalised, which contains a statement setting out how housing services will add to changing agendas. A short life working group, comprising Housing and Social Services staff, is delivering an action plan to enable better use of council accommodation, through matching individuals to appropriate housing.

A review this year of the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment will incorporate an assessment of particular needs, which will feed into the provision of targeted specialist housing.

Successes 2013/14

- 9 out of the 25 new Council units completed in 2013 were specialist housing 
- Gypsy / Traveller needs have been reviewed as part of the Local Development Plan process 
- Working group set up to better match specialist council housing to appropriate client 

Key Actions	Progress
Review the adaptations service across all tenures	
Deliver specialist housing on all appropriate new housing development	
Keep gypsy/traveller needs under review and develop the policy on small sites through the LDP	
Define the need for specialist housing and agree best way to supply gaps in provision	

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Energy efficiency is improved and fuel poverty and carbon emissions are reduced across all tenures

The new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) will be introduced in 2017, in line with requirements set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The Council's stock is estimated to be around 65% compliant with ESSH, which puts us in a good position to meet the standard by 2020.

The greatest challenge locally is to tackle the increasing numbers of people falling into fuel debt due to changes in local demographics, welfare reform and rising energy prices.





High on our priorities will be to improve the energy efficiency of our 'hard to treat' properties, which are of non-traditional construction, or have solid walls. The cost of providing external wall insulation to these properties is between £7,000 - £17,500 per property and has created challenges on our multi-tenure estates. We may also have to address an issue of 'slumped' cavity wall insulation where this was installed over 20 years ago.

We have had significant success in attracting external funding for energy efficiency programmes in both social and private stock. Recent changes to the Energy Company Obligation mean that less ECO monies will be available for the Council to use to help fund future programmes. We will work with the Scottish Government to maximise resources to help support energy schemes.

Successes 2013/14

- Retrofit programme completed 100 units, with 8 air source heat pumps, 8 solar photo voltaic panels ✓
- Over £300k in individual financial savings achieved for the most vulnerable in the community, according to Energy Savings Trust figures ✓
- Around £11.3 million has been secured for energy efficiency improvements to local homes ✓
- Surgeries have been established at the Mental Health Unit and other community points ✓
- New social housing tenants offered a visit from the Home Energy Team ✓
- Draft Renewable Energy Plan drawn up ✓
- Heat and Fuel Poverty Mapping exercise complete ✓
- UHS programme 2013/14 is complete ✓

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

Key Actions	Progress
Implement the Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Action plan	
Continue to maximise funding from Government and utility company initiatives to help households improve the energy efficiency of their home	
Continue to provide match funding where possible, to maximise income	
Maximise funding from energy providers to increase renewable energy across all housing, such as solar panels and air source heat pumps	

New Actions
Deliver the new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by 2020
Approve the Renewable Energy Plan in 2014

Improving Neighbourhoods and Communities

Improving Neighbourhoods and Communities

Organisations and partnerships working with communities will improve the quality of life for all households







Significant partnership work has taken place to help improve local neighbourhoods, through initiatives such as the Making Clackmannanshire Better pilot in Tullibody, and the Asset Based approach in Hawkhill. Working together with partners, including the community and voluntary sectors, is the way forward if neighbourhood improvements are to be realised, and a number of initiatives are underway.

The Council registered as a property factor in November 2012, formalising the role of the Council to carry out maintenance and repairs to flatted properties previously sold through Right to Buy. Procedures are being developed across a number of services to ensure smooth delivery of factoring duties, with owners being charged for works from April 2014.

Successes 2013/14

- Housing Strategy incorporated into Community Planning 'Alliance' framework ✓
- Community Safety Strategy completed via Community Planning Partnership ✓
- Improved Tenancy Management Anti-social Behaviour procedures in place ✓
- Review of CCTV arrangements ✓
- Multi-agency Tasking and Co-ordination group set up between the Council and Police Scotland to reduce the risk from offenders ✓
- New, improved monitoring system for anti social behaviour cases ✓
- Private Housing Sector Section 72 Scheme of Assistance reviewed ✓

Improving Neighbourhoods and Communities

Key Actions	Progress
Develop action plans for Alloa, Sauchie and Alva town centres and prioritise areas where housing management initiatives are established	
Review the private sector Scheme of Assistance and target resources to tackle Below Tolerable Standard properties and disrepair	
Explore the role of the social enterprise approach to improve the look of neighbourhoods and improve employment and skills opportunities	
Implement area plans with partners, targeting resources to the Council's priority areas	
Enforce responsibilities of tenants and owners	
Work with CTSI to consider services that may be better provided by voluntary sector	

Housing Investment

Housing Investment

New, improved and innovative funding opportunities will ensure a flow of funds to achieve essential housing priorities

As part of the Council's overall Strategic Housing Investment Plan, the Scottish Government has allocated an Affordable Housing Supply Fund of £3.5 million for 2012/15, £2.199 million for 2015/16 and a provisional allocation of just over £4 million for 2016 to 2019. This is supported by both Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) monies, as well as Housing Association resources, to help maximise affordable housing activity.









The Council's General Fund has supported a number of affordable housing developments:

- £2.92 million for 28 mid market rent National Housing Trust units in Coalsnaughton
- conversion of the former library in Tillicoultry to provide 3 affordable units
- £1 million to purchase 20 off the shelf units for homeless accommodation
- £897k for redevelopment of the former Alva Glen Hotel site





The HRA includes £2.195 million in 2013/14, and £2.46 million in 2014/15 to support affordable housing, with £2.63 million earmarked for the following two years. A further £1.5 million is being invested by Kingdom Housing Association, with plans to deliver future developments.

We have attracted over £4 million in external resources through challenge fund initiatives, including the Town Centre Housing Fund, Empty Homes, Home Energy and Scottish Legal Aid Board, and will continue to bid for resources where we can.

Successes 2013/14

- HRA funding set aside for the next 4 years to provide affordable housing. 
- 96% of social stock meets SHQS at 31 March 2014 
- £782k secured through town centre funding for former Alva Glen Hotel site 
- £2.26 million attracted for Greener Homes development in Alva 
- Partnership scheme of 28 mid market rent properties built in Coalsnaughton 
- 25 homes completed in 2013 on Council owned land 
- 2 previous school sites being developed for affordable housing in 2014 
- Income from reduction in Council Tax discount used for off the shelf purchases 

Housing Investment

Key Actions	Progress
All social housing stock to meet the SHQS by 2015	
Maximise the funding for new housing through private sector investment, match funding and bidding for challenge funds	
Use Council land and assets to provide additional affordable housing	
Use income from reduction in Council Tax discounts to provide additional affordable housing, including bringing empty homes back to use	



**Clackmannanshire
Council**

www.clacksweb.org.uk