

Business Operations and Partnerships Department

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Date: 29 September 2023

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TO: Councillors O O'Donnell (Chair); A Anderson (Vice Chair); D Devlin and K Pragnell.

CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held in the Council Chambers, East Renfrewshire Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock on **Thursday, 12 October 2023 at 10.00am.**

The agenda of business is as shown below.

Louise Pringle

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DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

AGENDA

1. **Report apologies for absence.**
2. **Declarations of Interest.**
3. **Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024-2029 – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 3 to 12).**
4. **New Council Housing Contract Variation – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 13 to 16).**
5. **Housing Services Annual Performance Report 2022-23 and Assurance Statement (Scottish Social Housing Charter) – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 17 to 32).**
6. **Licensing of Short Term Lets – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 33 to 36).**
7. **Update on the Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery Fund – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 37 to 50)**
8. **Local Discretionary Fund 2 – Request for Further Business Growth Interventions – Report by Director of Environment (copy attached, pages 51 to 56).**

This document can be explained to you in other languages and can be provided in alternative formats such as large print and Braille. For further information, please contact Customer First on 0141 577 3001 or email customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

A recording of the meeting will also be available following the meeting on the Council's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/eastrenfrewshire/videos>

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentSTRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN 2024 – 2029**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the proposed Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024/25–202/29 and for its submission to Scottish Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Approve the East Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024 - 2029 for submission to Scottish Government by 27th October 2023. (Appendix 1); and
 - b) Note the significant pressure for additional affordable housing to meet the needs of residents, and the contribution that the SHIP programme makes in addressing this.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government requires local authorities to supplement their Local Housing Strategy (LHS) with a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) setting out in detail the Council's affordable housing investment priorities, and detailed programme for delivering this with our partners over the coming 5 years. This must be in line with national guidance for the preparation of SHIPs.

4. The SHIP details the number of homes that will be built, the location and who the developer will be. The profile of the programme should reflect the strategic priorities set out in the LHS for affordable housing delivery and should address identified need for affordable homes locally by a range of households, including older people and those with disabilities.

5. Annual Cabinet approval of the refreshed SHIP programme is a requirement for the local authority prior to submission to Scottish Government in October. This is to take account the progress of identified projects and ensure an effective operational plan for delivery of our strategic housing priorities. This involves rolling forward and adding to the programme as possible projects are identified and resource planning assumptions are updated by the Scottish Government.

6. The Scottish Government committed over £3.6 billion through its Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) to support affordable housing delivery over this current parliamentary term (2021-26). This was recently extended to 2032 and will support the delivery of 110,000 affordable homes across Scotland, of which at least 70% of this will be homes for social rent.

7. The priority afforded to the delivery of new homes, specifically affordable housing, reflects the significant national pressures for housing. This is specifically to meet demand from social waiting lists and homeless households, and those unable to get a foothold on the property ladder. The profile of need in East Renfrewshire closely mirrors this, with a significant shortage of affordable housing. Social housing represents only 12% of all homes in East Renfrewshire and the authority has an expensive housing market that is inaccessible to many residents.

8. The scale of national investment in housing delivery also reflects how integral investment in housing is to deliver on wider commitments such as tackling poverty and inequality, creating and supporting jobs, meeting energy efficiency and decarbonisation aims and creating connected, cohesive communities.

9. Whilst funding for local authorities has been increased with these commitments, it should be noted that grant funding for affordable new build is conditional on meeting additional requirements. These requirements include targets for wheelchair accessible homes, fire suppression systems, additional indoor space for work or study, improved connectivity and access to outside space, higher energy efficiency standards and the use of modern construction methods.

10. Members should note that affordable housing can include homes for social rent, mid-market rent and low-cost home ownership. The SHIP programme identifies affordable housing projects requiring Scottish Government grant subsidy and these homes are generally provided by the Council or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). As part of our broader Affordable Housing Strategy, linking together the LHS and Local Development Plan, other affordable housing may be delivered without subsidy as a contribution from private housing developers. While noted in the SHIP narrative, this is not included in the SHIP Programme.

REPORT

Resources & Planning Assumptions

11. Resource Planning Assumptions (RPA) provided to East Renfrewshire Council via the national programme provides a framework for the new affordable homes that could be delivered in East Renfrewshire through the SHIP. The current confirmed RPA's only cover this parliamentary term; therefore, we have assumed sustained levels of funding from 2026-29 to help us plan our SHIP programme. (Detail is set out in Appendix 1).

12. The current RPA's suggest around £36.73m may be available for projects in East Renfrewshire via the AHSP for the period 2024-29. The programme is expected to over programme projects to provide for a "safety net" or slippage of around 25%. This is to ensure the programme is robust and can account for any delays or other significant challenges in programme delivery. On this basis we have developed a programme which provides for this slippage factor and equates to around £46m of funding required if all projects are delivered.

13. Programme costs have been based on benchmark subsidy where actual project costs have not yet determined the grant per unit that will be required. The average grant available is as follows:

Subsidy Type	Benchmark Subsidy - Council	Benchmark Subsidy - RSLs
Social Rent	£83,584 per unit	£91,182 per unit
Mid-Market Rent	£57,281 per unit	£62,542 per unit
Rent Off the Shelf (Acquisition of existing private homes)	c. £60,000 per unit	c. £60,000 per unit

14. The actual grant provided will vary based on the size and type of homes being delivered. Additional quality measures provide scope to attract further grant of up to £17,000 per unit covering enhanced standards e.g. additional space for work/study, carbon reduction and energy efficiency standards. Figures for Rent Off-the-Shelf are based on current projects arrangements with Scottish Government for acquiring existing private homes.

15. It is important to note that increased subsidies have been welcomed, and there is some flexibility in grant awarded by Scottish Government. However in a context of increasing development costs per unit, trade and material shortages, the actual costs of delivery present significant challenges for the business plans of social landlords. East Renfrewshire Council and our partner RSLs need to be able to fund project costs sustainably over the longer term.

16. Where sites require significant investment to prepare them for development, this can make it challenging to keep costs of delivery at a reasonable level. The cost of building homes with enhanced standards and features, such as the delivery of fully wheelchair accessible homes which are essential, also increases the unit costs. Rent affordability also must be factored into this process, ensuring social and mid-market rents are kept within benchmark levels, and increasing costs not simply passed on to tenants.

SHIP Programme Profile 2024-29

17. In 2022/23, East Renfrewshire's SHIP programme delivered 94 new Council homes, and 26 homes were built or acquired by RSLs for social rent. A further 15 homes for sale at entry level prices were provided outwith the SHIP programme funding. These homes contribute to a total of 344 affordable homes delivered from 2017-23 against our strategic target of 270 affordable homes, which was based on available funding and sites.

18. The SHIP 2024-29 programme tables are attached at Appendix 1. The proposed programme uses the following approach to prioritise projects:

- Developments with the greatest certainty over timing and deliverability;
- Projects which support the reuse of brownfield sites, regeneration of town centres and local living, with 20-minute neighbourhoods in mind;
- Proposals which meet a range of needs, including smaller and family sized homes, demand from low income and vulnerable households, those suitable for the elderly and disabled with lifetime design in mind; and meets our statutory obligations to homeless households;
- A balance of projects across the area recognising the most significant unmet need for affordable housing in Eastwood, but also the need for certain sizes and types of homes in Levern Valley.

- Slippage provision through the acquisition of homes to increase social rented supply.
- A provision for delivery of mid-market rent homes to meet the needs of local people in the middle (i.e. cannot afford to buy on the market; and are lower in priority for available social housing)

19. All sites within the SHIP 2024-29 are included within the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) with the exception of the following:

- Commercial Road - Housing Services are developing plans to ensure this development enhances the local area and green space.
- Town Centre Regeneration Projects (Various sites) – one key site under consideration to be delivered towards the end of the programme subject to Local Development Plan 3 agreement.
- Hugh Fraser Retirement Village Partnership – this site was given planning consent post LDP2
- Mid-Market rent - no specific sites have yet been determined to deliver this element of the programme

20. The proposed SHIP 2024-29 could deliver:

- Up to 613 units of affordable housing (including slippage projects), primarily focused on new provision and social rented housing. The total figure of homes that will be delivered is dependent on grant funding, financial viability, project development with individual developers and the emerging Local Development Plan 3.
- At least 10% of the new units programmed are expected to be wheelchair accessible or adaptable to lifetime needs with up to 150 units potentially able to be delivered. The LHS (2023-2028), shortly due for approval, uses the outcomes of locally commissioned research into accessible housing needs to set out this 10% target for the SHIP programme. We are required to set “all tenure” targets for wheelchair suitable housing, which includes homes delivered through the private sector, and this will be addressed through Local Development Plan 3.
- Through the new LHS, research is underway to identify the detailed need, market and location for mid-market rent homes in East Renfrewshire. This will help identify who may be best placed to deliver this type of housing. More developed proposals will emerge shortly, but a marker for mid-market rent delivery has been set out in the SHIP programme.

21. The SHIP also includes options to purchase housing from the open market. However, this option will generally be utilised where slippage in the new build programme occurs, or to target types of properties are in short supply.

22. The proposed SHIP programme supports the delivery of priorities in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and will continue to align with the Council’s Vision for the Future going forward. The SHIP programme is integral in delivering the strategic housing priorities identified for East Renfrewshire through our Local Housing Strategy.

23. Using our SHIP programme, the Scottish Government will prepare a Strategic Local Programme Agreement (SLPA), setting out the agreed programme of housing projects to be funded in East Renfrewshire over the next 5 years. The SLPA is expected to be received in early 2024/25 and will be brought to Cabinet for consideration.

24. Members should be aware that the SHIP Programme is heavily reliant on landowners and private sector developers bringing forward sites for development, presenting an element of risk in delivery timescales. This could result in uncommitted resources being redistributed by the Scottish Government. However, close partnership working with Planning Services and RSLs ensures clear communication on SHIP project progress and close monitoring of programme delivery to build in slippage projects where possible.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

25. In addition to grant funding, the council also uses monies raised via commuted sums (e.g. provided by private developers in lieu of on-site homes) and second home Council tax discounts to subsidise the cost of delivering affordable housing projects. Currently £1.88m of income from these sources is committed to SHIP projects.

CONSULTATION

26. Consultation on the SHIP programme is carried out throughout the year with a range of stakeholders, including local RSLs and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

27. More recently Housing Services have undertaken online and face to face consultation to inform this iteration of the SHIP. This will support ongoing partnership working as noted above with our Corporate, Planning and Regeneration colleagues and RSLs (amongst others) to address our strategic priorities for housing.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

28. On sites where the delivery partner (Council or RSL) has still to be confirmed, we will invite expressions of interest and discussions are held to identify the most suitable partner to take a project forward in relation to locale, scale and the size and type of housing required.

29. We will use the data we have from research into accessible and mid-market housing, as well as our contribution towards the Health and Social Care Strategic Plan, to agree with our partners the detailed mix of housing required on identified development sites.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

30. The equality and sustainability implications associated with the SHIP programme are addressed in relevant Equality Impact and Strategic Environmental Assessments undertaken for the LHS and Local Development Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

31. The proposed SHIP details how available funding for affordable housing will be invested in East Renfrewshire from 2024-29. Demand for new social rented housing, especially new council housing, continues to outstrip supply available. We will continue to actively explore options for increased affordable housing investment in conjunction with our local partners. This includes contributing insight on housing pressures faced by our residents to the Local Development Plan, HSCP Strategic Plan and Council's Vision for the Future.

32. Identifying additional sites for development is ongoing, and we continue to work proactively to consider potential sites for development in the short term. At a strategic level, the LHS identifies the importance of delivering new homes, but also maximising use of available homes. We will continue to work with RSLs and others to ensure available housing actively meets the current and future needs of our residents. Where existing homes may need remodelled to meet future needs more sustainably, or empty homes brought back into use, this will be supported to ensure available affordable homes are maximised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

33. The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Approve the East Renfrewshire Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2024 - 2029 for submission to Scottish Government by 27th October 2023. (Appendix 1); and
- b) Note the significant pressure for additional affordable housing to meet the needs of residents, and the contribution that the SHIP programme makes in addressing this.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Strategic Services), 0141 577 3186.

September 2023

Appendix 1 – Cabinet 12.10.23

East Renfrewshire SHIP Programme Proposed 2024-29

PROJECT	Location	Developer	Units	Profile	Tenure						
						2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Estimated SG Grant
Commercial Road, Barrhead	Levern Valley	East Renfrewshire Council	49	General/ Wheelchair	Social Rent	0.499	2.867	0.789	0.000	0.000	4.155
Walton Street, Barrhead (1)	Levern Valley	Barrhead HA	40	General/ Wheelchair	Social Rent	0.000	0.000	2.520	1.120	0.000	3.640
Chappelhill - Chappelfield Farm	Levern Valley	Barrhead HA	25	General	Social Rent	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.275	2.275
Town Centre Regeneration Projects (Various sites)	East Renfrewshire	Barrhead HA/ East Renfrewshire Council	80	General/ Accessible	Social Rent / MMR	0.000	1.560	1.560	1.560	1.560	6.240
Sustainable Housing Design Demonstrator Project	Levern Valley	Barrhead HA	4	Wheelchair/ Accessible	Social Rent	0.264	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.364
Kirkton Road, Neilston - Dawn Homes	Levern Valley	Link HA	24	General / Accessible	Social Rent	0.000	0.700	1.820	0.000	0.000	2.520
Holehouse Brae, Neilston	Levern Valley	BHA	16	General	Social Rent	0.000	0.248	1.208	0.000	0.000	1.456

Barrhead North Masterplan, Shanks Park, Crudens	Levern Valley	East Renfrewshire Council/ BHA / Other TBC	70	General/ Accessible	Social Rent / MMR / LCHO	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.360	3.100	5.460
North Darnley Road Barrhead	Levern Valley	East Renfrewshire Council	40	General/ Accessible	Social Rent	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.680	1.680	3.360
Barrhead Road, Newton Mearns	Eastwood	East Renfrewshire Council	17	General/ Wheelchair	Social Rent	1.358	0.176	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.598
Maidenhill Area A1 (CALA)	Eastwood	East Renfrewshire Council	48	General / Accessible	Social Rent	2.070	2.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.070
Maidenhill Area A2 (CALA)	Eastwood	East Renfrewshire Council	34	General/ Accessible	Social Rent	2.883	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.883
Maidenhill Area A3 (CALA)	Eastwood	East Renfrewshire Council	18	General/ Accessible	Social Rent	0.000	1.526	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.526
Hugh Fraser Retirement Village Partnership	Eastwood	TBC/ Retail Trust (Charity)	27	17 "Smart" Accessible/ 10 Wheelchair	MMR or SRS - TBA	1.000	0.689	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.689
Mid market rent programme	East Renfrewshire	Various	50	General/ Accessible	MMR	0.000	0.000	0.600	1.200	1.200	2.250

ROtS programme	East Renfrewshire	Barrhead HA / ERC	40	General/ Accessible	Social Rent / MMR	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.300	0.300	2.400
Arnside Court	Eastwood	Hanover HA	8	Wheelchair/ Accessible	Social Rent	0.000	0.000	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.500
Barrland Court	Eastwood	Hanover HA	13	Wheelchair/ Accessible	Social Rent	0.359	0.00	0.00	0.000	0.000	0.359
Total			603			9.033	10.434	9.077	9.220	9.115	46.379

Available Affordable Housing Supply Programme Grant	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Estimated SG Grant
Resource Planning Assumptions for East Renfrewshire	£7.25m	£7.37m	£7.37m	£7.37m	£7.37m	£36.73m
Overprogramming with 25% slippage factor	£9.06m	£9.21m	£9.21m	£9.21m	£9.21m	£45.90m

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentNEW COUNCIL HOUSING CONTRACT VARIATION**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise of a breach in Contract Standing Orders and request that the required variation be approved by Cabinet retrospectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to note breaches in Contract Standing Orders with regards to Contract value variations of up to £141,397 (subject to finalised legal assessment of contractual liability).

BACKGROUND

3. In November 2016, Cabinet approved in principle a programme to build up to 120 new Council homes. This was subsequently increased to 240 homes and then to 370 homes. This programme was the first Council house new build programme by East Renfrewshire Council.

4. CCG (Scotland) Ltd were approved in principle to undertake the design and build of the following 4 sites:

- Robertson Street – 13 homes, complete April 2019;
- Fenwick Drive – 10 homes, complete February 2019;
- Blackbyres Court – 22 homes, complete October 2019; and
- Balgraystone – 47 homes, complete June 2022.

REPORT

5. The construction of the final site awarded to CCG (Scotland) Ltd site at Balgraystone commenced in September 2020 and completed in June 2022.

6. The delivery of the programme was delayed by 6 months due to the following issues:

- Impact of continuing Covid restrictions and subsequent changes to the way of working;
- Additional works relating to adaptations required for wheel chair properties;
- Additional works required for the pumping station;
- UK wide industry labour and materials shortages caused by Covid and Brexit; and
- Statutory undertakings and wayleaves etc. to connect the power cables to the SPEN network.

7. The contract awarded to CCG (Scotland) Ltd for Balgraystone was for £7,472,814.62. However the final account notice from the contractor has indicated that the final contract value may be £7,614,211.68, an over spend of up to £141,397 and a breach of Contract Standing Orders, Clause 14.

8. The contract overspend amounts to 1.89% of the original contract value and can be broken down as follows:

- a. ERC additional requests £66,397 – within the 47 units, there are 6 wheel chair adapted properties. Whilst the basic specification was agreed as part of the contract, once allocated, additional works were required. For each property resident discussions took place with the HSCP Occupational Health team to ensure the properties met the applicants' individual and ongoing needs. In addition, while onsite, additional drainage and acoustic measures were required; and
- b. Loss & Expense Claim £75,000 – as noted above the development was delayed by 6 months and the contractor has requested additional costs as per the terms of the contract. The contract with CCG (Scotland) Ltd permits the contractor to submit a Loss & Expense Claim. CCG (Scotland) Ltd submitted a claim of £75k to our Employers Agent. The current claim is being assessed by Legal Services before any payment is approved. If rejected, the overspend will reduce to £66,397 which amounts to 0.89% of the original contract value

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

9. There are no immediate financial implications associated with the report. Budgetary provision exists should the loss and expenses claim be approved.

CONSULTATION

10. No consultation has been required for the preparation of this report.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

11. Assistance from Legal Services has been provided in the preparation of this report.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

12. There are no climate change, equality or sustainability implications associated with this report.

CONCLUSIONS

13. The site at Balgraystone was the largest site to date and was constructed at a time when Housing Services were operating at unprecedented emergency restrictions.

14. Housing Services have put in place a number of actions to ensure that breaches of standing orders do not re-occur for future new build projects:

- Monthly Contract Managements Meetings – all spend levels are reviewed and any procurement action or activity agreed. Procurement colleagues attend this meeting; and
- Training for all relevant officers on Contract Standing Orders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. The Cabinet is asked to note breaches in Contract Standing Orders with regards to Contract value variations of up to £141,397 (subject to finalised legal assessment of contractual liability).

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from: Phil Daws, Head of Environment (Housing, Property & Climate Change) phil.daws@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

October 2023

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentHOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 & ASSURANCE STATEMENT (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) 2023. This outlines Housing Services' compliance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) Regulatory Framework, Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) standards and our statutory obligations. It also takes account of our engagement plan with the SHR. The AAS is an annual submission required of all Social Landlords by the SHR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Note our performance for 2022/23 against SSHC indicators and measures, and comparisons to the previous year and wider housing sector. (Appendix 1);
 - b) Note the Action Plan to continue to strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC. (Appendix 2); and
 - c) Approve the 2023 Annual Assurance Statement of our compliance with the Regulatory Framework & SSHC standards and its submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2023 (Appendix 3).

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) requires each landlord to provide the SHR with details of their performance against 37 performance and 32 contextual indicators by 31st May each year. This is known as the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). A report on this matter has been submitted to Cabinet each year since its introduction in 2013/14.

4. The SHR will based on the ARC submission publish:

- A summary Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland. East Renfrewshire's performance information from 2022/23 can be viewed at: <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/east-renfrewshire-council>
- An Engagement Plan for each landlord, which outlines the areas of scrutiny they will focus on based on the landlord's reported performance and areas of national priority. The current year's engagement plan can be viewed at: <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/east-renfrewshire-council/engagement-plan-form-31-march-2023-to-31-march-2024>

5. The Regulatory Framework also requires all social landlords to produce an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) confirming compliance with the Regulatory Framework, SSHC standards and with our statutory obligations. On approval by the Cabinet. This requires to be submitted to SHR for consideration by 31st October 2023.

6. The AAS:

- Requires a self-evaluation to be undertaken by each landlord looking at performance and the evidence they have of the quality of services provided.
- Should be accompanied by an appropriate action plan, where any areas of non-compliance with standards are identified.

7. A self-assessment of performance and quality of services has been undertaken. Members can be assured there is a good level of compliance with the Regulatory Framework. An action plan (Appendix 2) has been developed to further strengthen our compliance against the Framework and to attend to areas for improvement in our performance against the SSHC.

8. The SHR will use the information from the ARC as well as the Annual Assurance Statement to inform the Engagement Plan for the following year, which sets out the key areas of risk identified for each Local Authority.

REPORT

9. The performance report against the SSHC (Appendix 1) demonstrates that Housing Services perform well in key areas in comparison to last year and to the average for the housing sector in Scotland. The highlights of performance are set out below.

10. Social landlords across Scotland continue to face a range of pressures in service delivery given current economic challenges. The areas identified for improvement are also set out below and reflected in our Action Plan (Appendix 2).

Areas of Good Performance

11. Housing Services performed better than the Scottish local authority for the majority indicators in the performance report :

Repairs

12. The repairs service is delivered by the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist work. The performance is excellent, illustrated in response timescales for emergency, non-emergency repairs and right first time.

Maintenance

13. Housing Services are also meeting the Scottish Government's requirements for gas safety (with 100% of annual gas servicing checks completed on time) and have a good standard of performance for EESSH1 (Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing 1), with 99.7% of stock meeting the standard.

Empty Homes

14. Ongoing investment on the repair and letting of empty council homes, has reduced rent lost for a second year from a high of 1.8% in 2020/21 to 0.95% of rent due in 2022/23. Housing Services continues to drive for excellent performance.

Rent Arrears

15. Housing Services have reduced gross rent arrears to 7.36% through an Arrears Recovery Action Plan. To sustain this will be challenging and intensive engagement with and support to tenants will continue to collect rent and reduce arrears where possible. As such, despite being an area of good performance, rent arrears has been identified as key issue in the action plan (Appendix 2)

Areas for Improvement

16. The following areas have been identified for improvement. All of these areas have already seen improvement in the last 12 months.

Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) Renewals

17. Housing Services are undertaking a targeted programme of electrical surveys to ensure that homes have a renewed Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) every 5 years. This was a change from the previous requirement of every 10 years. The challenging timescales to procure fresh surveys meant a dip in compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) solely due to this issue. At the end of 2021/22, Housing Services had 48.5% EICR compliance from 91.42% in 2020/21. 64% of council homes now achieve SHQS due to our EICR renewal programme and we expect to achieve 100% compliance on this issue by March 2024.

Customers & Engagement

18. A review of customer engagement and participation is currently underway. The service recognises the need to continue improving communication and raising customer satisfaction levels. Satisfaction has improved in 2022/23 from a post pandemic dip. A biennial large-scale tenant satisfaction survey is underway and will refresh survey results for 2023/24. This will be supplemented by focus groups to provide a detailed understanding of areas for improved performance.

19. The AAS 2022 (Appendix 3) will be published to tenants, as well as submitted to the SHR by 31 October 2023 detailing compliance with the Regulatory Framework and performance against the SSHC. The draft AAS outlines good compliance and performance, although identified the following areas for increased focus and improvement: EICR Renewals; Rental Income Maximisation; and Customers and Engagement.

Homeless Performance Issues

20. For 2023/24 the focus of the SHR Engagement Plan for East Renfrewshire is on "Services for People who are Homeless", and the provision of suitable temporary accommodation where required. This engagement will take place with all Councils due to the significant pressures faced nationally from increasing homelessness and demand for temporary and settled accommodation.

21. Homelessness in East Renfrewshire and across Scotland has increased significantly in the last 3 years reaching its highest level in 2022/23. In order to meet this growing need, particularly the need for temporary accommodation, Housing Services have had to rely on hotel accommodation out with East Renfrewshire. Placement of any household in unsuitable accommodation such as a hotel for more than 7 days, is a breach of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO).

22. Housing Services are seeking to further increase the current stock of temporary accommodation and utilise more local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and private sector accommodation to meet this growing need. However the wider service is under review to identify options to reduce homelessness occurring.

23. During the first 6 months of 2023 this review has involved a full review of homeless procedures, documentation and updated staffing training. New processes have been put in place to focus on improved housing options to assist with homeless prevention. However as homeless numbers continue to increase more work is required to support homeless prevention, housing support services and increase the provision of temporary accommodation. This work is expected to be undertaken throughout the remainder of 2023/24.

24. The engagement plan will also focus on the plan to achieve electrical safety compliance and our work to improve service quality performance in relation to rent arrears and tenant satisfaction, as noted in our improvement plan.

25. In May 2023, the service participated in a “thematic” study on assurance with SHR to discuss our assurance process and self-evaluation of performance. This was to share good practice and identify areas for development for the sector. Positive feedback was received on the work of Housing Services Business Improvement Team to support service improvement and performance awareness and on the Convenor’s support of scrutiny and Cabinet reporting.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

26. Housing Services must demonstrate annually that the service it provides meets the needs of its customers and provides value for money. Ongoing monitoring of the HRA Business Plan will continue to inform any alterations to our plans to ensure the Council can invest in new and existing homes, whilst keeping rents as affordable as possible.

27. The annual rent setting consultation process will commence in November 2023, with a view to agreeing an increase which will see rents remain affordable but will support vital investment in existing and new homes for tenants. National guidance on fair rental increases and the ongoing impact of cost-of-living pressures will be evaluated as part of this process.

28. The improvements identified in relation to the AAS will also contribute towards improving the efficiency of the service and reinforce that tenants’ rents are both collected effectively and spent wisely.

CONSULTATION

29. East Renfrewshire Council is required to publish an annual performance report to tenants each year by October. The details of performance and assurance improvement plan will be distributed through our Annual Housing Report to tenants as well as making the full report available online and on request to other customers.

30. The details will also be considered by the Registered Tenants Forum as part of their performance scrutiny and made available more widely with the Annual Housing Report 2023. Housing Services will consult on the format and content of the annual report to ensure it is accessible and understandable to tenants and other customers.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

31. Many of the services provided by the Council's Housing Service are in partnership with internal and external bodies. Services continue to work together to demonstrate that the outcomes of the Charter are met. The outputs from these partnerships form a key part of our evaluation of service performance and quality. Key partners include East Renfrewshire's Health & Social Care Partnership and other RSL's operating locally.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

32. There are no implications associated with this report in terms of staffing, finance, property, legal, IT, equalities and sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

33. The Housing Service is performing well against the majority of the indicators and measures are in place to improve performance in other areas. East Renfrewshire's AAS addresses the areas required for improvement for Housing Services. The key areas of priority are listed in section 12 of this report, and they include rent arrears recovery and customer engagement.

34. 2022/23 saw performance begin to return to post pandemic levels and East Renfrewshire Council perform better than most Scottish local authorities in a number of areas. Key areas of improvement have been identified and Housing Services are actively working to improve services in these areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

35. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- (a) Note our performance for 2022/23 against SSHC indicators and measures, and comparisons to the previous year and wider housing sector. (Appendix 1);
- (b) Note the Action Plan to continue to strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC. (Appendix 2); and
- (c) Approve the 2023 Annual Assurance Statement of our compliance with the Regulatory Framework & SSHC standards and its submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2023 (Appendix 3)

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Head of Environment (Strategic Services) on 0141 577 3186.

October 2023

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Appendix 1
Scottish Social Housing Charter
Housing Services Annual Performance Review 2022-23

This report provides East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services' performance in key areas of our work and services in 2022-23.

This performance report will assess our achievement against set indicators and measures in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) and inform our Annual Assurance Statement 2023. We will also compare our performance in previous years and against the average of all local authorities in Scotland, and with all Scottish social landlords. This will highlight where we are performing well and areas in need of improvement through a traffic light system:



= Performance is good and is above the average of other local authorities or the sector in Scotland;






= Performance is improving or in line with or the benchmarking averages of other local authorities or the sector in Scotland.



= Performance needs improved and is below the average of local authorities or the sector in Scotland.

Service Delivery (Customer)

Estates & Tenancies

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% of new tenants housed who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	94.43%	89.36%	91.4%	91.2%	
Average time to complete medical adaptations	30.69 days	23.51 days	46.9 days	46.8 days	
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	93.88%	96.49%	91.4%	94.2%	

Our performance in dealing with anti-social behaviour and estates issues remains strong. There has been a small number of tenancies which have not sustained for those housed mainly through our general waiting list, and we are reviewing the contact with and support we offer to those beginning a tenancy. Our refreshed Neighbourhood Housing Officer team also allows us to work more closely with all tenants in our estates and support them to live there sustainably.




Our performance in completing vital medical adaptations for our tenants remains high also, despite taking slightly longer to complete in 2022/23. This provides critical support so that people with disability, mobility or cognitive issues can live as independently as possible at home.

Property Services, Assets and Capital Programme

East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services own 3126 homes including 244 sheltered homes. We also own and lease a number of temporary and supported properties to support the most vulnerable. Through our Council House Build programme, we added a further 94 new council homes to our stock in 2022/23.

The energy efficiency of our homes is very good against current EESSH1 standards, but with significant investment required to meet the national programme of increasing standards in coming years. This is a challenge faced by landlords across the sector.

We have 100% compliance in ensuring gas safety certificates are renewed each year by their anniversary, ensuring we keep tenant safety at the forefront of our efforts.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% of properties meeting SHQS at year end	59.21%	49.52%	70.9%	79.0%	
% of tenants' homes meeting EESSH1**	99.71%	98.3%	87.96%	91.01%	
No of properties that failed to have a gas safety check by anniversary date	0	0	454	1032	

* - Scottish Housing Quality Standard – National property standards set for all social landlords in Scotland

** - Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing 1– Energy standards set for all social landlords in Scotland




The condition of our homes against SHQS (Scottish Housing Quality Standard) has been largely affected by our compliance with renewal of Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's). This dipped in 2021/22 when the renewal period for EICR's dropped from 10 to 5 years, meaning a dip in SHQS compliance solely relating to this element with just under half of homes meeting standard. Many other landlords have faced similar dips and are challenged to get these certificates in place and bring the pass rate for SHQS back to previous levels.

Our focus in 22.23 has been on renewal of EICR's to maximise the number of homes with a valid certificate. By the end of 22/23 64% of our homes now had a valid EICR, achieved through commissioned survey work. We have a target for 100% compliance with EICR requirements by the end of 2023-24. Considering other reasons why properties may not meet SHQS (e.g. abeyances or exemptions) we expect our SHQS compliance to be above 90% at the end of 2023-24.

Housing Repairs

Our repairs service is delivered by the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist work. The performance is excellent, illustrated in our response timescales for emergency repairs at 2.77 hours, and a reduction in time to complete non-emergency repairs since last year. The quality of repair work is also evident through a top quartile performance for jobs completed right first time (98.38%).

Challenges remain in sourcing materials and retaining and attracting skilled tradespersons. Continuing improvement is focused on communicating more clearly with customers on what to expect for certain types of repairs, and to continue to increase satisfaction with the repairs service.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Average time to complete emergency repairs	2.77 hours	2.66 hours	4.70 hours	4.2 hours	
Average time to complete non-emergency repairs	7.09 days	8.35 days	9.7 days	8.7 days	
% of day to day repairs completed 'Right First Time'.	98.38%	98.97%	88.2%	87.8%	


Rents, Empty Homes and Value for Money

East Renfrewshire Council rents although higher than the Scottish Council Average in 2022/23, are broadly in line with the average for all social landlords but notably lower than other social landlords operating in the East Renfrewshire area. We agreed a rent increase for 2023/24 (5% with a limit of £5 per week), which would support ongoing investment in our homes but acknowledged the challenges tenants face through cost-of-living pressures and national guidance requiring modest sector-wide increases for this reason. Our rent setting consultation later in 2023 will again seek an increase which will support vital investment in existing and new homes, but also see rents remain affordable.

Rents

Average Weekly Rent	ERC Housing 2022-23	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23
All Properties	£88.15	£81.02	£87.59
1 Apartment	£75.63	£66.46	£78.26
2 Apartment (One bedroom)	£77.46	£75.21	£83.46
3 Apartment (Two bedroom)	£89.58	£80.60	£86.28
4 apartment (Three bedroom)	£103.28	£87.15	£93.96
5 Apartment (Four bedroom)	£105.74	£94.23	£103.72




Value for Money

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Gross rent arrears as % of total rent due	7.36%	9.95%	9.6%	6.9%	

Gross rent arrears are those owed by both current and former tenants combined and are the value of rent and related charges that remain unpaid. Post-pandemic a significant increase in rent arrears across the country, given the financial challenges households face, has made it challenging for landlords to reverse this trend and reduce arrears.

Our implementation of a fresh Arrears Recovery Plan, for both current and former tenancy arrears, has allowed us to focus on engaging more directly and providing additional support to our tenants to help meet their rent payments and reduce arrears. This has resulted in a notable reduction in outstanding rent in 2022/23, with a reduction of £125,000 in the value of rent arrears owed by current tenants. It will prove challenging to continue to reduce rent arrears at the same rate in future years, but we will continue working closely with our tenants to tackle this.

Housing Options & Access to Housing

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Average length of time to re-let properties.	62.94 days	99.84 days	66.9 days	55.6 days	
% of rent due lost through empty homes	0.95%	1.41%	1.7%	1.4%	
% of tenancy offers refused	47.1%	51.17%	38.5%	30.9%	

We re-let 281 existing homes in 2022/23, a reduction on previous years in part reflective of the improvements we have made in eliminating long term empty properties and turning

properties around more quickly for re-let. The timescale to turn empty homes around is also reducing and now in line with the local authority average. These improvements are also shown through the reduction in rent lost through properties being empty.

We also built 94 new council homes last year and a further 25 households on our queue were nominated by us and accepted an offer from a local housing association. Despite this an ongoing increase in pressure is building from waiting lists, with demand outstripping the rate at which we can provide more homes.

The Council's waiting list now sits at an all-time high of around 6400 with 1640 of these joining the list in the last year or so. Homeless approaches also remain the highest we have seen at around 440 applications in the year 2022/23 reflecting the limited alternative housing options people have to find an affordable home in East Renfrewshire. Last year, 70% of all lets were to households facing homelessness.

We saw a reduction in tenancy offers refused last year but would wish to reduce refusals further. Although Choice Based Letting is used and we have improved choice for homeless households, the homes which do become available for letting do not always reflect the types and locations of homes that people might need. This year we will put forward revisions to our allocations policy and processes to support choice and balance the needs of those who are homeless, with those on our other waiting lists in urgent need of rehousing.








Customer Engagement & Satisfaction

We have continued surveying our tenants on a range of issues throughout 2022/23 and continue to see improvements in levels of satisfaction from a previous pandemic dip as we have recovered our frontline service delivery. Although on some matters we still have headway to make on getting satisfaction to the same levels as other landlords in some areas, very visible improvements have been achieved across the board in our customers views about us.

We are also underway with a large-scale tenants' and factored owners survey over the autumn, being carried out independently on our behalf by Knowledge Partnership. This will allow us to gather a broader range of views and get a clearer picture of where our services are viewed positively, and where we can do better. This will allow us to remain responsive to customers' needs.

We are also currently working with our staff and customers to strengthen the voice they have in making service improvements happen, through scrutiny and influencing practical improvements via our neighbourhood inspections and housing surgeries. This places customers at the centre of what we do, including improving communication, clarifying the standards they should expect and offering proactive routes for tenants and customers to get involved.

We ensure we consider the needs of our tenants and customers, and the equalities and human rights matters that may affect them, when we are reviewing or planning services. This includes ensuring impact assessments are carried out thoroughly. We also understand the need to have good data about the protected and other characteristics of our customers and gather this through our key service functions. However, there can be challenges in ensuring this information is kept up to date on an ongoing basis, and the implementation of our new housing management system and customer self-serve portal will be used as a key tool in allowing tenants and other customers to provide us with important information about them.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% Overall Satisfaction with Landlord	82.05%	72.24%	83.2%	86.7%	
% Satisfied with quality of home	82.91%	70.99%	81.8%	84.2%	
% Satisfied rent is good value for money	80.10%	70.15%	81.9%	81.8%	
% Satisfied with landlord contribution to management of neighbourhood	78.33%	68.47%	82.5%	84.3%	
% Satisfaction with keeping informed about services & decisions	77.84%	75.76%	81.1%	89.7%	
% Satisfied with repairs service	81.40%	70.29%	89.4%	88.0%	
% Satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making	68.06%	66.18%	76.5%	85.9%	

Housing Services Landlord Assurance Statement 2023				
Improvement Plan				
Compliance Issue	Service Area	What we need to address	When will we do it?	Who is responsible?
Statutory Obligations	Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)	Complete renewal of EICR's for each home that we own to achieve full compliance with the statutory 5-year renewal cycle. This will continue with a targeted programme of "catch up" electrical surveys to maximise compliance.	100% of stock has a valid EICR certificate by March 2024	Senior Housing Manager
Statutory Obligations	Provision of temporary accommodation	Increase the supply of suitable accommodation within East Renfrewshire Council to reduce and eradicate breaching of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO).	September 2024	Senior Housing Manager
Meeting Charter Standards	Rent Collection and Arrears Management	Arrears Recovery Plan We will move through the next phase of implementing our Arrears Recovery Plan, focusing our Neighbourhood Officers efforts on close contact with tenants. This will allow us to support those in most need of assistance and will help drive sustained rent collection performance, while reducing arrears where possible.	March 2024	Senior Housing Manager



Appendix 2

Meeting Charter Standards	Customers and Engagement	<p>Customer Engagement and Satisfaction</p> <p>We will build on our refreshed strategy which has taken account of customers' views on better engagement and will provide a range of mechanisms for fuller involvement in shaping our services. Work to complete our biennial large scale tenants' survey will be used to provide fresh insight and analysis to support this strategy.</p>	March 2024	Senior Housing Manager
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Housing Services

Annual Landlord Assurance Report 2023



East Renfrewshire Council has reviewed the services we provide and available evidence, and gives assurance that:

- ✓ We comply with the regulatory requirements set out in section 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework document.
- ✓ We comply with our legal obligations as a landlord, specifically in relation to:
 - ❖ housing,
 - ❖ homelessness,
 - ❖ equality and human rights, and
 - ❖ tenant safety (including • Gas safety • Electrical safety • Water safety • Fire safety • Asbestos • Dealing with Damp and Mould • Lift safety)

except for:

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)

We reported last year that we were not fully compliant in transitioning our renewal of EICR's for all our homes to the shorter time frame of every 5 years. We have made significant progress in the last year to reduce the instances where we are not compliant. Compliance increased from just under 50% to 64% at March 2023, and work continues through 2023/24 to achieve full compliance.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO)

We are currently reviewing our supply of temporary accommodation and with the support of partners, we aim to reduce significantly and eradicate any breaches of the UOA

Through ongoing self-evaluation and evidence gathering we are also assured that:

- ✓ We achieve the standards and outcomes in the Social Housing Charter for tenants and other customers who use our service.

However, we recognise improvements in the following areas will strengthen our compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- ❖ **Income Maximisation** - Through our arrears' recovery plan, tenant rent arrears reduced last year. But with tenants struggling financially, our Neighbourhood Housing Officers will continue engaging closely with tenants in their patch to support them to pay rent and reduce arrears where possible. We will also focus on maximising income due to us via our range of services, to ensure our rent payers get Value for Money.
- ❖ **Customers and Engagement** - We have refreshed our customer engagement strategy and seen some improvements in satisfaction levels in the last year. However, we will work with customers to support fuller involvement, better communication and improved satisfaction with our services. We will complete a fresh large-scale survey of our tenants and factored owners.



The Assurance Statement was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 12 October 2023, and I sign this statement on their behalf.



Signed: (Convenor): Councillor Danny Devlin



EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentLICENSING OF SHORT TERM LETS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to amend East Renfrewshire Council's Short Term Let (STL) Licensing Policy following a change to Scottish Government Guidance. Cabinet is also asked to homologate the decision to update space standards for short term lettings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Note the timescale changes associated with extended application deadlines;
 - b) Homologate the decision to update space standards for short term lettings; and
 - c) Approve the updated STL Policy.

BACKGROUND

3. On the 1st October 2022, it became a statutory requirement for all local authorities in Scotland to have established a short term let licence (The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-Term Lets) Order 2022).

4. The definition of a short term let (STL) is broadly defined as a business agreement to use residential accommodation by a guest but excludes: hotels; hostels and other licensable activities e.g. mobile homes. A popular example would be AirBnB. There are 4 categories that are covered in the definition:

- Secondary Letting: Host makes use of separate premise;
- Home Letting: Concerns the use of the host's only or principal home;
- Home Sharing: Concerns the use of the room(s) in the host's only or principal home; and
- Home Letting & Sharing: A mix of both during the licensing period.

5. Members will note a paper submitted on 13 October 2022, seeking approval of the Short Term Licensing Policy and the associated fees. A copy of the paper can be found at the following link, https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/8247/Cabinet-item-04-13-October-2022/pdf/Cabinet_item_04_-_13_October_2022.pdf?m=638001325779270000.

6. A copy of the existing policy can also be found on the Council's website via the following link, <https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/short-term-lets>.

7. The objective of the licensing scheme is to regulate a previously unregulated business activity and aims to improve: guest health and safety; property condition; reduce anti-social behaviour within communities and allow local authorities to determine what impact this business activity has in relation to local planning and housing provision.

8. The deadline for existing hosts to make applications was extended by the Scottish Government from 1st April 2023 to 1st October 2023. The 12 month timescale for the Council to make a determination on the licence application has also been extended to 30th September 2024 (unless planning permission is required - 1st January 2025).

9. New short-term let businesses are unaffected by this extension and therefore have been required to make an application and have it fully approved to operate since October 2022.

REPORT

10. In June 2023, a court ruling declared that parts of City of Edinburgh Council's STL policy were unlawful.

11. Following this ruling, the Association of Scottish Self Caterers wrote to the Scottish Housing Minister. They intimated legal action against other Scottish local authorities for potential "illegalities" in their STL policy if the Minister did not extend the STL Licensing deadline by a further six months and instruct a review of policy. The Scottish Government have stated that they have no plan to extend the deadline further: <https://www.assc.co.uk/representation/local-authority-short-term-let-licensing-policies-illegalities>.

East Renfrewshire Council Policy on STL Space Standards

12. East Renfrewshire Council has received 2 enquiries from STL operators regarding the existing space standards. Of 4 properties managed by these operators, 3 may be unable to meet the bedroom space standards set out in the existing policy. These are traditional build 2 and 3 bedroom houses. They further advised that other local hosts are also considering exiting the market as they feel that they cannot comply with the space standards set out in our current policy.

12. Each local authority previously had discretion to decide to how to apply space standards to STL licences. East Renfrewshire decided to base space standards on the overcrowding standards contained within the Housing Scotland Act (HSA) 1987, specifically following the approach of existing licensing functions e.g. House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). This was permitted in the original Scottish Government guidance.

13. New published Scottish Government guidance states: "in determining an appropriate maximum occupancy for a short term let premises, licensing authorities should note that minimum space standards that apply to HMO licensing do not apply to short term lets. Guests staying in a short term let may be prepared to accept staying in a smaller room that does not meet the HMO bedroom space standards in a number of cases such as city breaks where the room is only used as a bed for the night, or where the premises has large living accommodation".

14. The existing policy has been amended in accordance with this new guidance. The policy will still utilise statutory space standards set out in the HSA 1987. However where the space standards are not met, properties will be inspected jointly by Housing Services and colleagues from Environmental Health to determine the risks.

15. Due to the timescales for the introduction of the licensing regime it has been necessary for the space standards to be reviewed immediately. Failure to do so may encourage hosts to leave the market and damage tourism in East Renfrewshire. In approving this change the Convener for Environment and Leader of the Council were consulted and homologation of the decision is now sought.

Additional Conditions for STL Licences

16. The updated guidance also requires local authorities to be more explicit about the use of additional conditions and when they are likely to apply. Additional conditions cover issues such as hot tubs, waste disposal and anti-social behaviour. However additional conditions if applied, must be applied to all properties and not on a case by case basis.

17. Current evidence and consultation feedback has highlighted concerns around: noise; litter and (where applicable) hot tubs. Therefore the policy has been reviewed to focus only on these areas. However members should note that other concerns can still be addressed through the existing enforcement powers.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

18. There are no adverse implications on finance and efficiency from the recommendations within this report. It is however important to note that true income and expenditure costs will not be known until 2024/25.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

19. In addition to the previous public consultation, the policy has been reviewed using views from individual STL hosts/operators, benchmarking with other local authorities and updated guidance from the Scottish Government.

20. A forum for hosts was held on the 16th August 2023. The new proposals were discussed and majority consensus (70%) wanted a flexible approach to overcrowding standards applied to space standards and did not see a need for temporary exemptions and licences.

21. Consultation has taken place with Legal Services, Environmental Health in relation to the recommendations.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

22. There are no implications with these proposals in terms of staffing, legal, property or sustainability.

23. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for this policy in 2022 and no issues identified. A further assessment will be undertaken in 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

24. Despite members approving the new policy for Short Term Lets in October 2022, East Renfrewshire Council has yet to receive the expected number of applications. This is due to the initial extension of the deadline for applications being moved from 1st April 2023 to 1st October 2023.

25. In addition there has been legal challenges from hosts/operators to the legislation in place. As noted in the report, the challenge against Edinburgh City Council required Scottish Government to change the existing guidance.

26. Following a review of the legal challenge and the change in guidance, the paper sets out the required changes to East Renfrewshire Council's Short Term Letting Policy. The changes seek to minimise any risk of legal challenge and support the STL market in East Renfrewshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

27. The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Note the timescale changes associated with extended application deadlines;
- b) Homologate the decision to update space standards for short term lettings; and
- c) Approve the updated STL Policy.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Head of Environment (Strategic Services) on 0141 577 3186.

September 2023

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentUPDATE ON THE LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUND**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to update members in the relation to the progress of the Local Authority COVID Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) in East Renfrewshire which was awarded by the Scottish Government in February 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to note and approve the update provided on the delivery and spend associated with the LACER Fund.

BACKGROUND

3. On 21 February 2022, the Scottish Government announced a new £80 million Covid Economic Recovery Fund aimed at supporting businesses and communities to help Scotland as it moved to a new phase in the Coronavirus pandemic. Funds were to be allocated via a weighted formula based on the number of towns and population in a local authority area and deprivation indices.

4. Following approval of the distribution methodology by COSLA Leaders, East Renfrewshire Council was awarded £1.469m to be used to support covid economic recovery activity. The funds require to be fully committed by the end of March 2024.

5. The guidance to the fund advised that local interventions must meet one or more of the following principles of spend, but innovative approaches that addressed multiple principles were encouraged:

- Interventions that supported local economic recovery and contributed to businesses being able to move from surviving the period of trading restrictions towards recovery, growth, adaptation and building resilience.
- Projects that could rebuild consumer confidence and stimulate demand and economic activity in their specific contexts.
- Support the low-income households that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, to become more economically active.

6. On 18 August 2022 Cabinet agreed a three-tiered approach to this fund, to provide an appropriate balance of support for the local economy as well as low-income households:

- **Support to businesses who were linked to low-income households.** This focused on prioritising support to businesses in sectors with lower-paid staff. This aimed to reduce any adverse COVID impacts to employees and, where relevant, support towards increased fair work practices (i.e. Real Living Wage accreditation).
- **Support to businesses who were most adversely affected by the pandemic.** This supported the wider economic recovery across East Renfrewshire. This support included direct support to businesses (including compliance with COVID requirements) as well as initiatives to stimulate economic activity (including the 'Shop Local' campaign).
- **Support to low-income households who were most adversely affected by the pandemic.** This focused on providing direct (i.e. shopping vouchers, food) and indirect (i.e. advice around income maximisation and fuel poverty) support to residents. This was targeted at those households most in need as identified in the research findings and by ongoing engagement through the Child Poverty Oversight Group.

Call for Proposals

7. A call for proposals was issued on 25 May 2022 to internal and external stakeholders with a working group set up with officers from Economic Development and Business Operations & Partnerships to assess proposals against the fund's objectives. The allocation of funding was informed by the evidence gathered through the recent consultation and community research findings around the impact of COVID in East Renfrewshire. In delivering support, we utilised ongoing multi-agency partnership working including the Covid Humanitarian Support Group, the Child Poverty Oversight Group and the Local Employability Partnership.

REPORT

8. There was broad engagement with a range of internal and external stakeholders to build on the research and consultation on the impact of Covid in East Renfrewshire and to develop a series of projects. These projects, listed in Annex A of this report, provided a mix of outcomes across the 3 criteria specified. In total 19 projects were approved by Cabinet on 18 August 2022. Of the £1,469,000 awarded, £1,271,774 was spent by 31 March 2023 and £174,073 is committed to be spent by the end of March 2024. There has been some reallocation of underspend within the programme of circa £20k to achieve full spend of the fund.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

9. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Projects were funded through the LACER Fund with activity being supported until the end of March 2024.

10. The Council must comply with the conditions of grant, as set out in the Scottish Government guidelines.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

11. Consultation took place with a range of key stakeholders within the community and across Council services.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

12. There are staffing implications as the Council have recruited a number of temporary posts using LACER funds. This means there will be employees whose temporary contract will be brought to an end. In some situations employees may return to a substantive post or be placed on the redeployment register. There are no property, legal, IT, UK Subsidy Control, equalities, sustainability and climate change implications associated with this report.

13. The programme has funded a wide range of projects that have supported local residents and businesses. The intention of this funding was to support work to mitigate the widening inequalities arising from the pandemic and support local economic recovery. Where appropriate and possible the results and learnings from the projects will be incorporated into mainstream operations and future strategy development that support a more inclusive, fairer and sustainable local economy.

CONCLUSIONS

14. This funding has provided much needed support to our local businesses and residents who have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis.

15. Appendix 1 provides progress against those projects which were supported via the LACER Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The Cabinet is asked to note and approve the update provided on the delivery and spend associated with the LACER Fund.

Director of Environment

Report Author: Michael McKernan, Economic Development Manager
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September 2023

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Annex A: Update on the progress of LACER funded projects

Approved Budget: £1,469,000

Project Title	Description	Funds Awarded	Spend	Outcome of Delivery to Date
Fuel Poverty Officer	Cabinet on 7 April 2022 agreed to this funding to extend this post to 31 March 2023. The Officer works with households who are struggling to pay their utility costs and maintain supply. The post focuses on accessing energy grants from various sources, liaising with energy providers to ensure continuous supply, and liaison with other specialist service, like Home Energy Scotland, for energy efficiency measures.	£35,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Funding was used to support this post up until end of March 2023 with LACER funding being used until end of March 2024. • An officer was recruited into the MART team covering a period of 6 months over the financial year 2023/2024. • The Officer has generated £20,200 in savings for residents since starting in post on 15/05/2023.
Covid Compliance Officer	Cabinet on 7 April 2022 agreed to fund this post to 31 March 2023.	£40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underspend of £11,788 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet approved funding for this post for one year only (2022/23). • The person that was in the post left and although the vacancy was advertised it was not filled. • Underspend £11,788 to be reallocated

Barrhead Housing Association (BHA) Tenant Economic Recovery Support	BHA provided support to tenants including Community Chest/Hardship fund providing grants of up to £250 to pay fees for clubs, classes or memberships; Education such as evening classes, courses or extra tuition; Skills development related activities and clothing for a specific event or need e.g., a job interview, winter coat, shoes.	£42,400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<p>The fund received from LACER was split into 3 categories:</p> <p>Customer Support Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £24,000 was distributed to 129 BHA Customers who are in low income households. <p>Christmas Presents/ Vouchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 383 Christmas presents purchased. <p>Back 2 School Bank Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has partnered with Back to School Bank East Renfrewshire and to date has made 17 individual referrals for either school uniform or warm clothing for children.
East Renfrewshire Council Housing Service	Support to low-income households who have been most adversely affected by the pandemic and still continue to be due to the cost of living crisis.	£127,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 140 referrals • 103 tenants receiving award – this ranged from £500-£2,800 dependant on the households needs.
Winter Clothing Support	This project provided a cash payment to school pupils who are in low-income households but do not meet the eligibility for the Family	£65,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LACER funding was combined with Covid Reserve Funding to provide

	Bridging Payments that were provided by Scottish Government. Target was to provide support to 500 children through LACER and other funding			<p>support for 632 children in total in December 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LACER proportion benefitted 250 children who qualified for a school clothing grant of £260 each.
Adult Learning/Family First/Education Project	This project was aimed at increasing the wellbeing and skills of parents living in poverty to support their child's learning at home and in nursery leading to increased confidence which will enable them to move towards employment.	£54,860	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of 23 families received support via this project.
'Scotland Loves Local' Gift Card - Low Income Household Payments	Provision of funding to low income households to assist in mitigating poverty. Eligible households were those in receipt of Council Tax Reductions in bands A to G (c. 4,532 households). They received a gift card for £105 to be spent with local businesses in East Renfrewshire.	£511,291	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date 204 East Renfrewshire businesses registered for the scheme To date £339,128.61 has been spent locally 4,469 low-income households received the £105 card
Discretionary School Vouchers	This project provided financial support to low-income families across East Renfrewshire. This project provided vouchers to school pupils who are in low-income households or who found themselves in short-term financial need.	£10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 households of low-income families were assisted with ASDA vouchers issued in schools.

Additional Staff for Accounts Payable/Compliance	There was a significant volume of work required to process hardship payments in tight timescales with large datasets, in a secure financial control environment to protect against fraud and ensure best use of resources. The funding was used to recruit additional staff for the Accounts Payable and Compliance team.	£58,400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Accounts Payable staff commenced employment in September 2022 with 1 Accounts Payable Staff member continuing after March 2023.
Low Income Household Holistic Support	<p>This funding 'topped up' the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) budget; extended the current Humanitarian Discretionary Fund administered by Money Advice and Rights Team (MART); and provided a new fuel poverty fund.</p> <p>Scottish Welfare Fund - £30,000 for Grants & 2 x Grade 5 posts (c. £60,000) = £90,000</p> <p>MART = £60,000 for Grants</p> <p>Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) - Fuel – £60,000 for Grants & 1 post (£40,000) = £100,000</p>	£250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<p>The funding was distributed to 3 interventions:</p> <p>MART Discretionary Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This intervention was awarded £60,000 via LACER however activity was funded via the Humanitarian need Fund • The £60,000 from LACER has been carried into 2023/2024. To date the programme has achieved: • The fund provided assistance to 77 families between 1st April 2023 and 18th September 2023.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The households assisted contained 108 adults and 54 children. <p>East Renfrewshire CAB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fuel adviser was recruited 245 clients received advice with regards to energy bills 47 clients received advice on benefits. <p>A combined client financial gain of £173,407.96</p> <p>Scottish Welfare Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The additional resource from LACER have supported 500 Crisis Grant applications from April to July 2023.
Grow Local Supplier Development	Resources through Business Gateway East Renfrewshire to develop the Grow Local supplier development scheme which supports local SMEs to improve their tendering potential with the public sector.	£10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underspend of £1,629 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant employed, database of local suppliers collated, stakeholder engagement undertaken, process developed. Consultant work complete. Project now being progressed further by Economic Development and Procurement teams. After first round of engagement 13 businesses

				<p>expressed interest in becoming suppliers with the public sector. Further engagement is planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses are being supported with guidance and resources to help make them tender and bid ready. • Underspend of £1,629 to be reallocated.
Dunterlie Foodshare 2022-2023	This funding enabled the continuation and development of the project over 18 months and allowed the group to respond to the growing cost of living crisis and its effects on local people and families including providing food vouchers alongside existing food provision.	£24,925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunterlie Foodshare managed to give out 3,100 bags of food to low- income households. • 23 vulnerable families have received £30 vouchers in the total value of £690.
Thornliebank Foodshare 2022-2023	This funding enabled the continuation and development of the project over 18 months and allowed the group to respond to the growing cost of living crisis and its effects on local people and families including providing food vouchers alongside existing food provision.	£24,925	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59 families were supported • Thornliebank Foodshare provider, estimates that they were able to distribute some 28,000+ meal portions
Prevention Officer Trading Standards	Trading Standards Enforcement with Prevention project to tackle illegitimate traders and support reputable traders to recover from the impact of Covid and ensure consumers can employ reputable traders with confidence.	£58,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention officer appointed in November 2022. • Patrol Van hired until March 2024. (Funded via SCOTSS) • Van signage completed and project officially launched and thousands of “No cold

				<p>calling” stickers widely distributed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scam prevention posters distributed in local Community. • Started engaging with on-site traders and providing business advice. • Started promoting and encouraging new trusted traders. • Contacts established with Police Scotland, Community Safety and Trading Standards Scotland. • Arrangements in place with Police Scotland to escalate suspicious activity.
Economic Recovery Graduate Interns	Recruitment of graduate interns from the East Renfrewshire area to work on projects that supported economic recovery. Graduates had at least 1 barrier to employment and worked on projects including: ‘Grow Local’ supplier development scheme which supported local SMEs to improve their tendering potential with the public sector and assist in the developing a community wealth building approach to economic development in East Renfrewshire.	£32,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 local graduate interns recruited started January 2023 • Both graduates working on projects that support local businesses/suppliers and the local economy.

Greenlaw Growth	Greenlaw Works opened to support both start up and growing business. There was a need to ensure that those who are based in this flexible workspace had on hand a wide range of support to assist them to succeed. The funding was used to provide immediate support through Business Gateway and Economic Development to make Greenlaw Works a place of knowledge, capacity building and growth. Key partners were also brought in to support this wide and varied business base.	£40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underspent of £2,912 	<p>Business Gateway are continuously working across businesses located at Greenlaw Works. They have supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 business networking events took place to bring Greenlaw based businesses together • 50 meetings were held with businesses to promote Business Gateway services to tenants • 8 businesses received direct advice and support from Business Gateway, including access to grant finance. • Underspend of £4,712 to be reallocated.
Social Enterprise Development and Network	This project helped the East Renfrewshire social enterprise network to develop and grow through support and guidance from Business Gateway and Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire (VAER).	£15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	<p>The project took three main phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attendance by 6 local social entrepreneurs onto the Social Enterprise Leadership programme at University of West of Scotland, all attendees each received £250 grant. • Mentoring support for one enterprise to develop their presence in East Renfrewshire.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a Social Enterprise Network in partnership with VAER. • In total 7 enterprises have been supported under this project. • Over spend of £1,800 reallocated from Greenlaw Growth above.
Development of Green Business Initiatives	This programme supported several businesses who had innovative ideas and concepts to change the way their business operated and delivered projects which reduce carbon, increase efficiency, improve processes to reduce waste or other similar initiatives to meet the green agenda and the net zero target.	£25,000	Underspend of £611	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 new green business initiatives were developed and 5 businesses received funding of £2000 towards expert help and consultancy. • 5 businesses were able to access expert help from the University of Strathclyde including energy audits, surveys, and technical information on specific technologies to assist their business. • Underspend of £611 to be reallocated.
Black & Minority Ethnic (BAME) Business Network	This project focused on economic community building within the local BAME business community; created a BAME Business	£35,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full funds committed 	This is a two-phase project:

	Network and delivered the first annual event; engaged with the BAME community to identify businesses needing support and businesses able to offer peer support and developed a suite of materials in required languages and appropriate business related topics.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Food Festival took place on 12 September 2023. • This event allowed local businesses to connect, network and promote their products. • The creation of a network of businesses from the BAME community with support from Business Gateway East Renfrewshire
Real Living Wage (RLW)	This project was to promote the benefits of offering the Real Living Wage to local business and provide a direct payment for one year to encourage take up of the RLW in the area, including grants to support transition.	£9,999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underspend of £4,413 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 marketing posts on Business Gateway and East Renfrewshire Council social media pages took place. • Real Living Wage Accreditation has been promoted at various business networking events. • One Accreditation delivered to one local company. • Underspend of £4,413 to be reallocated.
Totals:		£1,469,000		

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET12 October 2023Report by Director of EnvironmentLOCAL DISCRETIONARY FUND 2 – REQUEST FOR FURTHER BUSINESS GROWTH INTERVENTIONS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the progress on the implementation of the Local Discretionary Fund 2 (LDF2) which was approved by Cabinet on 13th October 2022 and to seek approval for further business growth interventions for the use of the remaining funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to:
- a) Note the activity to date on the Local Discretionary Fund 2 programme;
 - b) Agree to additional activities to use the remaining Local Discretionary Funding 2 as set out in the proposed interventions in paragraph 9;
 - c) Delegate to the Director of Environment to vary the amounts allocated under each programme based on the level of take up and to ensure full spend of the Scottish Government allocation; and
 - d) Agree to extend the programme of activities until the end of March 2025.

BACKGROUND AND REPORT

3. As part of the Scottish Government's ongoing response to the COVID pandemic an additional allocation of £1.25M was awarded to East Renfrewshire Council for the Local Discretionary Fund to support local businesses. On 13th October 2022 Cabinet approved the use of these funds.

4. The purpose of this fund was to mitigate the short term financial challenges being experienced by businesses adversely impacted by restrictions and regulations introduced since October to control the spread of COVID-19. Unlike previous funds which have been targeted towards specific groups or sectors such as hospitality and retail sectors, impacted by COVID-19, this fund sought to empower local authorities to direct additional financial support to specific groups or sectors within the business community where they consider this to be necessary or justified based on the distinct characteristics of their local economies. This recognises the insight that councils have on the business community in their area and where funding would be most effectively deployed in supporting local economies.

5. This non-statutory Government guidance sought to support local authorities in making decisions on how they should distribute this funding whilst recognising that the variability within and across local economies will demand differing approaches. It did not specify sectors or business types for support but rather drew on the experience of developing financial support packages for businesses during the pandemic to identify gaps in support that local authorities may wish to address.

6. Local authorities could use this funding to provide direct financial support to businesses in their area so long as it is specifically for the purposes of mitigating immediate financial challenges arising from COVID-19 restrictions and regulations.

7. Guidance from the Scottish Government also asked that local authorities prioritised micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (250 employees or fewer) and the self-employed as the intended recipients of this funding.

8. This fund empowered local authorities to direct additional financial support to SME businesses, based on needs within the business community where they considered this to be necessary or justified. This recognised the insights that Councils have on their own business community and their knowledge of where funding would be most effectively deployed.

9. The programme was implemented from December 2022 and currently supports businesses up to the end of March 2024. Agreement has recently been agreed through COSLA that unspent funds can be carried forward into the next financial year 2024/25. The programme has strict eligibility criteria and a robust due diligence process for assessing each grant application and award. This process produces a clear audit trail of application, documentation and decision making.

10. As at the end of July 2023, the programme has achieved the following:

- Engaged with over 160 businesses;
- Total amount spent to date is £198,438
- Allocated £417,562 of funding to 80 businesses;
- £638,281 is still to be committed
- Secured 2 Business Administrative posts until June 2025;
- Carried out 5 business networking events to promote services to the local business community;
- Funds awarded to businesses will safeguard 59 FTE positions and support up to 115 FTE jobs within 3 years; and
- The turnover of supported local businesses is forecast to rise within the next 3 years from £4.366 million to £8.455 million.

11. Applications can take some time to be developed into viable propositions and for the Economic Development team to carry out their due diligence checks. Extending the time frame on which to spend the LDF2 funds will allow more businesses to prepare their applications fully and take advantage of the grant assistance provided.

12. Further consultation within our business community including via East Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and the 3 Business Improvement Districts has identified other areas of support that could benefit businesses in the longer term and which will assist with their growth.

13. It is proposed that the remaining funds (£638,281) be carried forward into 2024/25 and be deployed in a strategic manner, continuing to deliver existing support to more local businesses and developing new programmes to respond to local business needs as follows:

Continuation of Current Programmes

Special Growth Grant (up to £50,000 with 50% match funding required)

Businesses should have a turnover in excess of £500,000 and a workforce of at least 10 employees to qualify for this grant. To date this programme has already supported 5 businesses.

Businesses to be supported 4+

Total allocated: £200,000

Get to Zero - Grants (Up to £10,000)

Funding for sustainable technologies such as solar, thermal, air and ground source systems as well as low energy lighting, insulation and more energy efficient equipment. To date this programme has supported 2 businesses.

Businesses to be supported 10+

Total allocated: £110,000

Get to Zero - Green Jobs Training (Up to £1,000)

Funding for non-statutory training that upskills the workforce in green technologies and energy efficiency systems. No businesses to date have been supported under this activity. Further engagement and promotion within the local business community will be undertaken for the remainder of the year.

Businesses to be supported 10+

Total allocated: £10,000

Micro Grant Funds (Up to £500 grant award)

Small businesses (under £50,000 turnover) can apply for one grant per year to assist in small business growth or diversification through a piece of equipment, E-commerce activity, training, health and wellbeing of the workforce or ideas testing. To date this programme has supported 9 businesses.

Businesses to be supported 40+

Total allocated: £20,000

Support for Local Events

Support to East Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts and other partners for local community and business events that encourage economic activity and encourage increased footfall within our town centres and within their surrounding areas. To date 7 local events have been supported.

Events to be supported 4+

Total allocated: £16,000

Marketing Costs

Promotion of the various grant schemes, through events, social media and advertising, to local businesses to encourage maximum take up.

Total allocated: £5,000

Staffing Costs further 1 year

Current staffing posts have been funded through Local Discretion Fund until June 2025. Further support to cover the programme extending into the next financial year would also require a further year's extension of 2 posts (1.5 Full Time Equivalents).

Total staffing costs £70,000

Proposed New Activities**New Start Grant (£500 grant award)**

To support new small businesses (under 6 months old). Subject to eligibility criteria, the programme will provide a grant of up to £500 to businesses that have just commenced trading. The grant should be used towards business set up costs. Businesses will need to engage with Business Gateway.

Businesses to be supported 40

Total allocated: £20,000

Enhanced Digital Boost Activity

Digital technologies are driving transformative change and reshaping product markets and altering the way businesses market their work. This new programme follows on from the success of the Business Gateway Digital Boost programme and will offer one to one advice and support to East Renfrewshire businesses wishing to develop and improve their digital presence.

Businesses to be supported 30+

Total allocated: £65,700

Accelerator Programme

This new programme will deliver a range of individual support to a selected set of 8 ongoing professional services businesses who wish to move from current home-based office premises into a permanent office situation. The programme will use the Co Working space at Greenlaw Works as a long-term incubator space. Businesses wishing to start on this programme would have access to dedicated office space within Greenlaw Works for a period of 18 months along with the support from the Council's Economic Development team including Business Gateway East Renfrewshire and other partners such as Barclays Eagles Labs. Programme costs include rental costs at Greenlaw Works, consultancy and professional service support that will be provided.

Businesses to be supported 8

Total allocated: £135,000

New Enterprise Academy Programme

This is a new programme for business start-ups in East Renfrewshire. The programme will provide dedicated and individual support to each business, through a one month concentrated programme aimed at getting businesses ready and starting to trade. This support will be delivered by the Business Gateway team. Each new business will have an individual plan to work to and be provided with access to other support mechanisms, funding and mentoring for a period of 12 months. Costs for this include consultancy and professional support costs

Businesses to be supported 27

Total allocated: £36,900

TOTAL FUNDS ALLOCATED: £638,281

Benefits

14. The programme outlined above would support over 170 local businesses with specific growth activity that would improve their resilience and improve job retention, job creation opportunities and increased turnover.

15. This would be additional support to businesses who have the potential to grow, including new starts. Success will be measured by creating wider economic activity across East Renfrewshire in terms of growth and employment generating opportunities.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

16. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. All activity will be funded through the Scottish Government LDF 2 allocation of £1.25 million.

17. The Council must comply with the conditions of the grant, as set out in Scottish Government's Offer of Grant. All programmes of support will be subject of monitoring and regular review. Should take up in any programme be less than what has been anticipated, the budget will be reallocated based on demand and needs of business to other programmes within the list presented in the report. This is subject to approval of delegated authority to the Director of Environment to vary the funds to ensure full spend of East Renfrewshire's Local Discretionary Fund for business.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

18. Consultation has taken place with a range of key stakeholders within the local business community including the Council's Economic Development team, Business Gateway East Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and the 3 Business Improvement Districts.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

19. There are no equalities, IT or staffing implications associated with this report. There are no subsidy control implications associated with the proposals.

CONCLUSIONS

20. The proposals presented fully allocate the balance of £638,281 across a range of strategic measures and interventions to support more local businesses. Delegation of authority to the Director of Environment to reallocate any funds if required, between all the proposals set out in the report will help ensure a full spend of the Scottish Government Grant Award.

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Note the activity to date on the Local Discretionary Fund 2 programme;
- b) Agree to additional activities to use the remaining Local Discretionary Funding 2 as set out in the proposed interventions in paragraph 9;
- c) Delegate to the Director of Environment to vary the amounts allocated under each programme based on the level of take up and to ensure full spend of the Scottish Government allocation; and

- d) Agree to extend the programme of activities until the end of March 2025.

Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from Gillian McCarney, Head of Place, 0141 577 3116
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September 2023