

Annual Performance Review 2017-2018
Housing Services

KEY SUCCESSES

Key Improvements from previous year's annual performance review

Business Outcome 3 – Prevention and support reduces homelessness

90% of closed homeless cases achieved a positive outcome compared to 81% in 2016/17

Business Outcome 26 – People have a choice of suitable housing options

1 55 Empty Homes in the private sector were brought back into use against an annual target of 25. This represents a 12% increase on the number of Empty Homes brought back into use in 2017/16 (48)

2 75 affordable new homes completed via the SHIP. The total number of new affordable homes delivered in the first 2 years of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2016 – 2021 is 229 which is above the target of 200 units (100 per annum).

Other Key Improvements during 2017/18

Business Outcome 3 – Prevention and support reduces homelessness

1. 78% of households left as a Planned Departure from Housing Support in 2017/18 compared to 73% in 2016/17
2. Preparation for full service Universal Credit. The May 2018 start date was delayed to September 2018 by the Department of Work and Pensions(DWP). Housing Services staff received updated training on Universal Credit from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in March 2018. Laptops, printers and scanners have been purchased for each of the 6 front line area offices to enable staff to assist residents of the local authority to claim Universal Credit which must be claimed online.

Case Studies illustrating the positive contribution to our communities

Business Outcome 3 - Prevention and support reduces homelessness

A client came to the attention of Housing Services when the Welfare Rights Officer had been trying to contact him with no success. The Area Housing Officer became involved due to very high rent arrears (£3000) as it came to light that no Housing Benefit was in place. The client was previously housed permanently at the tenancy as a homeless person. A referral was made for tenancy support. The client was a pensioner, and a referral was also made to Social Work through the Adult at Risk process due to issues around personal care, condition of house and risk of homelessness. Carr Gomm immediately supported the client – it was soon apparent that a lot of work was required. The client was supported to get Pension Credit in place and also backdated with joint working from Carr Gomm and our Welfare Rights Officer. A repayment plan was set up to address rent arrears, Housing Benefit was applied for and put in place with partial backdate, a Community Care Grant was applied for to get new furniture, clothing and an industrial clean of property due to the poor conditions.

Carr Gomm also liaised with Social Work Department on a regular basis. Carr Gomm staff built up a good working relationship with the client and staff at the

complex where he lived told Carr Gomm that the client was spending more time in his tenancy due to the difference it has made. The client attended his tenancy support review and very positive about the support he had. Without the input of support from Carr Gomm the client could maybe have been homeless again if arrears not addressed. They continued to support client through difficulties that he continued to experience, and also liaised with hospital staff and Social Work when he was admitted to hospital. Unfortunately, the client passed away recently, however his quality of life had improved in his final year with the support of Carr Gomm who provided him with dignity and respect and prevented him from becoming homeless again.

Business Outcome BO23 – Economic Growth is Supported

Area Property Action Groups (APAGs)

To enable a more co-ordinated approach to addressing concerns regarding unsafe/problematic building Area Property Action Groups (APAGs) have been established within each of the Council areas. These groups consist of officers from Development Management, Housing Services, Building Standards, Landlord Registration, Environmental Health, and Economic Development.

Each APAG meets on a quarterly basis with the aim of identifying 'problematic buildings' and developing a proactive, co-ordinated and strategic approach for practical and effective Council intervention across a range of services. This method provides opportunities to address the relevant issues associated with a variety of buildings and to identify the most effective approach to liaise with building owners/occupiers to address the issue at hand.

Whilst there are many statutory powers available that Services can utilise to require owners to take action to bring properties up to the required standard this type of action can in some cases result in a significant outlay on the Council's part with limited likelihood of this cost being recovered in full in the short-term. By linking the different powers and tools available to each service, and identifying where there may be opportunities to provide or attract external grant funding, officers can now take a more targeted and joined up approach to addressing the issues at hand.

APAGs have improved communication and sharing of information between Services resulting in a synergy that promotes a pro-active, outside the box approach to problem solving by breaking down entrenched views and traditional systematic barriers between individual service areas.

Recent success which can be attributed to APAGs include 1 Bishop Street in Rothesay and 10-20 Longrow, Campbeltown where buildings which have suffered from a lack of maintenance for many years have been much improved following the co-ordination of building owners and funding sources to undertake improvement works. In the case of 10-20 Longrow, Campbeltown this innovative approach managed to provide £350,000 in grant funding in the form of housing repair grants and CARS funding) which saved three local businesses, six family homes and allowed two vacant units to be brought back into use as a restaurant which provides five new jobs.



10-20 Longrow -
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Business Outcome 26 - People have a choice of suitable housing options

The Port Ellen Police Station is rich in history; it was built in 1887 and originally comprised four cells with a wc, a charge room, a policeman's bedroom and upstairs flat type accommodation. After over 120 years in operation it stopped functioning as a Police Station back in 2007. The historic building was then left to fall into disrepair and was added to the Buildings at Risk register in 2009. Port Ellen is classified as a Conservation area. The property was purchased by the Ian MacTaggart Trust in 2014, with the vision of converting the property to provide affordable housing and opportunities for young Illeachs.

The two storey building has now been transformed to provide six high quality affordable flats, with works completed in September 2017. The project is particularly unique as there is no other affordable private housing initiative across Argyll and Bute that has been delivered specifically to meet the needs of young people. The renovation of this significant existing building structure to provide affordable accommodation for local residents has been undertaken sensitively by retaining original features and using traditional stone, slate and hardwood materials. The renovation specification also focused on low energy costs and affordable living through use of up to date insulation materials throughout, FENSA compliant windows and low carbon, renewable energy heat sources.

This regeneration was facilitated by £180 000 of Empty Homes Grant and Loan.

KEY CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

Key improvements from previous year's APR not completed plus any additional challenges that have been identified

Business Outcome 3 – Prevention and support reduces homelessness

Challenge : Preparation for full service Universal Credit (UC) September 2018

Action : Monitor the situation as UC is rolled out and monitor mitigation plans for effectiveness. Continue to be an active partner in the welfare reform working group and build on existing good links to the Department of Work and Pensions.

Completion Date March 2019

Business Outcome 3 – Prevention and support reduces homelessness

Challenge : Respond to Scottish Government's Housing First and Wrap Around care agenda.

Action : Prepare action plan and protocols with housing partners once guidance is issued.

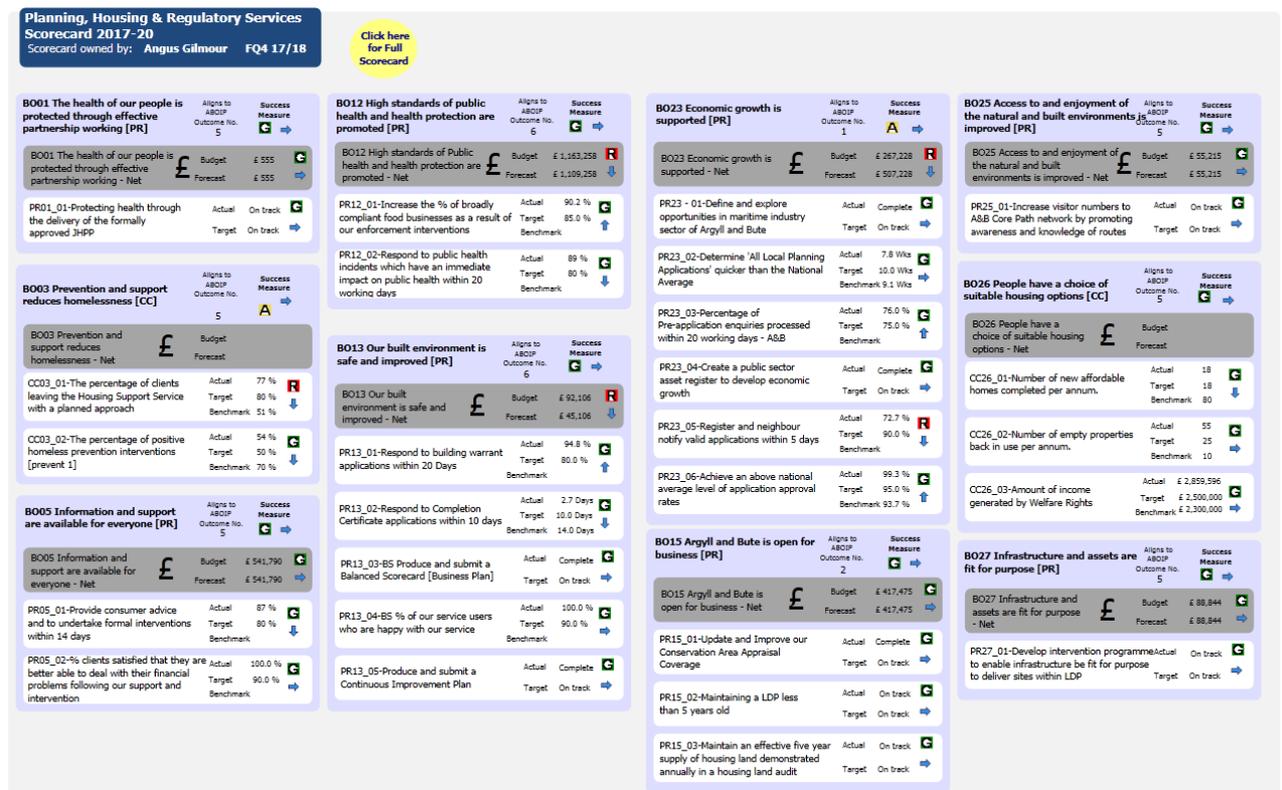
Completion Date March 2019

Business Outcome 26 - People have a choice of suitable housing options

Challenge : Revising prioritisation of needs for PSHG adaptation grants

Action : Regular reviews over the year constantly showed an unexpected reduced in application rates for adaptation grants so the action was withheld. The service will continue to monitor in the year ahead and take remedial action if required otherwise continue with existing framework.

Completion Date March 2019



Angus Gilmour May 2018