Better Neighbourhoods

Working to ensure every household in South Ayrshire lives in a safe, sustainable and attractive neighbourhood

This document provides some background context and identifies issues to be explored in relation to ensuring that every household in South Ayrshire lives in a clean, safe and attractive neighbourhood.
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**Context**

In 2008, the Scottish Government produced new guidance relating to the development of strategy documents in relation to housing and housing related services. In short, the LHS should be the overarching document, which plans and guides strategic housing development within the Local Authority. Previous strategic documents such as the Homelessness Strategy, Community Care and Supporting People and Private Rented Sector Strategy, must now be integrated into the LHS.

The development process for the new LHS will be based on 4 overarching housing themes:

1. Balanced Housing Markets
2. Access, Advice and Support
3. Better Neighbourhoods
4. Housing Quality

Issues relating to fuel poverty and energy efficiency, regeneration, housing/estate management, local environmental quality, tenant participation and community safety will be included in the Better Neighbourhoods theme.

**Background**

South Ayrshire has population of around 111,670, which has remained stable since 2002. The majority of South Ayrshire's population is concentrated in the Ayr HMA, which has a population of 98,270. The population in the G&SC HMA is 13,400. There are around 51,133 households.

**Previous Local Housing Strategy and other Strategy Objectives**

The previous Local Housing Strategy which spanned from 2003 – 2008 had 10 objectives, each with their own action plans. On reflection this has been difficult to monitor and has, at times, limited the potential for synergy and joined-up working.

Other key strategies, such as fuel poverty (http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/housingstrategy/fp/publications/Fuel%20Poverty%20Strategy.pdf) and the tenant participation strategy (http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/housingstrategy/tp/) were developed separately from the Local Housing Strategy, further undermining possible opportunities to provide a truly inter-disciplinary and cohesive approach to the multi-
faceted challenges and problems which have the capacity to affect every household in South Ayrshire.

The new Local Housing Strategy guidance suggests that the separate strategies should be integrated into one document. This will make easier the task of monitoring and evaluation.

Recent Progress and Success
Hadyard Hill Community Energy Project
The Hadyard Hill Community Energy Project was established in December 2006 to reduce energy demand, decrease fuel poverty and obtain maximum community benefits. The delivery of the project was lead by the Energy Agency in Partnership with South Ayrshire Council on behalf of Scottish and Southern Energy.

Around 828 rural properties covering 3 Community Councils were initially targeted, which included all tenures in South Ayrshire near the Hadyard Hill windfarm. Doorstep surveys were conducted between March and August 2007 to establish the energy efficiency of households and determine whether each household was suitable for cavity wall or loft insulation or draught proofing. Benefit checks were also carried out with households.

Between March and October 2008, 63% of surveyed households benefited from the free insulation measures on offer. Those receiving cavity wall and or loft insulation will save around £178 on their average fuel bill. Furthermore, the annual average income increase following a successful benefit check was around £4,700.

Girvan Community Energy Project
The main objective of the project, implemented by the Energy Agency and funded by a grant provided by Scottish Hydro Electric was to reduce energy demand and decrease fuel poverty.

The most significant aspect of the project was the provision of free insulation for all suitable households in the community. Doorstep surveys were carried out to gather data about the properties and energy use in the town.

Just over 3,000 households within the Girvan Community Council area were targeted, which was across all tenures. The doorstep surveys were conducted between January to December 2008 to establish the energy efficiency of households and determine whether each household was suitable for cavity wall insulation or loft insulation. Between February 2008 and February 2009, 45% of surveyed households benefited from the free insulation measures on offer.

Those receiving cavity wall and/or loft insulation will save on average £240 on their annual fuel bill.

Community Benefit Fund
Scottish and Southern Energy established a general community benefit fund of £360,000 in the first year (2006) and £120,000) a year from 2007 onwards after building the wind farm in the area.

The community established a committee to review and approve applications to this fund to support community initiatives.

Doorstep Surveys
The doorstep surveys were carried out by trained surveyors. These surveys gathered data relating to build and structure of the property, heating fuel and systems. Surveyors also established whether cavity wall insulation and loft insulation measures were suitable.
Regeneration Bid for Girvan, Troon, Maybole and Ayr

South Ayrshire Council has submitted applications for funding to the Scottish Government’s Town Centre Regeneration Fund for a total of £5 million. The bids include:

- £2.75M Girvan Community Health and Well-Being
- £877K for Maybole Town Hall and Town Centre
- £200K for Troon Traffic and Travel
- £1.2M for Wallace Tower and Ayr Town Centre

Place-making in South Ayrshire

Place-making is a participative approach to engaging with communities to transform or revitalise parts of South Ayrshire into vibrant places at the heart of individual neighbourhoods. The process involves stakeholders from partner agencies and the local community observing the use of public spaces through workshops, surveys and photography.

Problem Solving Approach

Community concerns often require a multi-discipline team to work in partnership to resolve local concerns. In acknowledging this, the Community Safety Team developed the nationally recognised Problem Solving approach. Bringing local communities together with partner agencies, the Problem Solving Approach has led to a number of successful projects designed to resolve conflict, youth disorder or other community concerns. This has included problem solving teams focusing on Minnoch Crescent in Maybole, Forehill in Ayr and the Harbour area in Troon.

Sustaining Tenancies

Working with Aspire2gether, a number of projects are delivered in South Ayrshire to enable individuals to sustain their tenancy and integrate in the community. These include a befriending project, literacy and numeracy support in addition to projects aimed at preparing or assisting new tenants to move in to and take ownership of their new home.

Neighbourhood Planning

Due to a recognised concern in the Wallacetown area of Ayr, a pilot project is currently reviewing how services are delivered throughout this neighbourhood. Taking a more holistic view, services such as Caretaking, Community Safety and street cleaning are being reviewed to improve the appearance of this neighbourhood. This pilot project will continue over the coming months until the project is in a position for evaluation to be completed. The outcome of this review may lead to suggestions to improve other communities or highlight potential efficiencies that may exist.
Steering Panel
A Steering Panel consisting of professional staff from a range of relevant agencies will be created for each housing theme. The Panel will plan, guide and coordinate the strategic action plans relating to each theme.

The Better Neighbourhoods Panel will consist of representatives from housing, regeneration, environment, community safety and tenant participation.

Setting Outcomes
The LHS guidance suggests strategies should be ‘outcome’ focused rather than objective-led. This will allow greater integration with other strategy documents, such as the Single Outcome Agreement.

The overall vision for the LHS is the Council Vision:

“to establish South Ayrshire as the most dynamic, inclusive and sustainable community in Scotland”

The panel must agree an LHS outcome within the theme of Better Neighbourhoods. This must communicate the desired outcome in the future perfect tense. For example:

“every household in South Ayrshire lives in a safe, sustainable and attractive neighbourhood”

The panel must also set lower level objectives, also in the future perfect tense. For example:

Better Neighbourhoods Outcome 1:
“South Ayrshire Council and its partners work together to identify and alleviate causes and consequences of fuel poverty across South Ayrshire”

Better Neighbourhoods Outcome 2:
“South Ayrshire Council and its partners provide leadership and support to help local communities create and sustain the kind of neighbourhoods they want to live in”

Better Neighbourhoods Outcome 3:
“South Ayrshire Council and its partners proactively identify new and widen existing regeneration and renewal activities, which help to make South Ayrshire a good place to work visit and live”.

Panel Members
Gus Collins
Regeneration Team Leader

Andy Marnie
Energy & Resources Group Leader

David McGivern
Housing Manager, Ayrshire Housing

Liz Marquis
Energy Agency

Douglas Campbell
Councillor

John Hodge
Housing Policy Officer

Ken Gibb
Sustainable Development Manager

Fiona Ross
Environment Strategy Officer

Thea Petticrew
Area Coordinator

Louise Christie
Chief Executive Officer, Aspire2gether

Valerie Stewart
Community Planning Coordinator

Louise Fyfe
Community Safety Manager

Sheila Barclay
Divisional Housing Manager