

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 3 March 2010

Subject: Stock Transfer Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update and to note the progress of implementation of the stock transfer project.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Council, at its meeting of 29 October 2008, approved a Standard Delivery Plan to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for its housing stock and selected its preferred option of transferring approximately 45% of its stock to a registered social landlord(s).
- 2.2** In April 2009, the Scottish Government indicated that the Council's strategy for meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard was achievable. Risks were also identified, including the challenge of identifying registered social landlords willing to take on the stock available for transfer.
- 2.3** The Scottish Government also confirmed that, since it no longer funded the Community Ownership Programme, it was for the Council to manage the transfer process. However, it was confirmed that the Scottish Government would liaise with HM Treasury in securing the relevant debt write-off.
- 2.4** Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee, at its meeting of 2 September 2009, approved governance arrangements, which reflect the corporate commitment to the stock transfer project from the outset. While the Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee is the decision taking body for the Council for this project, it was agreed that progress will be made at the required pace through the delegated powers of the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development.
- 2.5** Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee, at its meeting of 2 September 2009, also approved a Stock Transfer Steering Group, meeting quarterly, being established to oversee the project.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The Stock Transfer project team is now being established with the Service Manager - Stock Transfer having started in January 2010, with the remaining Stock Transfer Project Officer post to be appointed by early February. This will enable the Council to focus on the specific actions required to take the partial stock transfer project plan forward, with the continued aim of a ballot of tenants in early 2012 with transfer later that year, if a majority of tenants vote in favour.
- 3.2** An early milestone is the appointment of a Lead Consultant to advise on all aspects of the stock transfer. The advice will be required to support the Council meet its objectives for tenants in respect of the transfer and to ensure compliance with all regulatory and statutory obligations and will be an important input when finalising the Stock Transfer Strategy.

Tender

The appointment is subject to a tender process which commenced on 25 January 2010 and is anticipated to be reported to the Tendering Committee on 10 March 2010.

- 3.3** Another significant milestone is the establishment of the Stock Transfer Steering Group to oversee implementation of the stock transfer project.

Membership

This group will include:

- Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development;
- Head of Housing and Regeneration;
- Head of Finance;
- Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services;
- Head of Personnel;
- 2 Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) representatives;
- 3 Trade Union representatives;
- Corporate Communications; and
- Stock Transfer Project Team.

Frequency of meetings

It is planned that the Steering Group will meet quarterly, with the first meeting scheduled to take place on 11 February 2010.

Role and remit of the group

The group will have an important role in influencing and shaping the delivery of the stock transfer project, being satisfied that all the key stakeholders including tenants, staff, Registered Social Landlords and the Council have a shared understanding of what is involved at all key stages of the project, and identifying and exploring areas that require clarification. In addition the group will require to identify those issues that require to be considered by Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee for decision.

- 3.4** An early critical milestone is the approval of the Stock Transfer Strategy by Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee which is currently planned for presentation to committee on 5 May 2010.

Tenant input

The Stock Transfer Project Team will be engaging with the West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO) and other Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) to ensure that tenants' views are considered in the development of the strategy.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) input

Discussions with the Service Manager Stock Transfer and officers from the RSLs within the affected areas are now underway. This will build on previous dialogue and is aimed at jointly developing the best outcomes for the RSLs themselves, as well as for tenants, for affected staff, and for the Council.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** As indicated above, the Service Manager for Stock Transfer is now in post, with recruitment under way for a second member of the Stock Transfer Project Team. The Stock Transfer team will lead the implementation of the stock transfer strategy and stock transfer project plan.
- 4.2** The Stock Transfer project has potential implications not only for staff directly involved in the delivery of Housing Services but also staff in central support services and a key role for the project team will be introduce effective mechanisms to facilitate engagement with affected staff and their representatives.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There is provision within the HRA capital budget to meet staffing, consultants and other costs associated with this project in the current and remaining years of the project.
- 5.2** There are no specific costs associated with the establishment of the Stock Transfer Steering Group.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The stock transfer process carries significant risks if robust governance arrangements are not in place and if appropriate staffing and consultancy resources are not in place to drive the project forward to achieve the Council's objectives at a pace consistent with the timescales detailed in the project plan.
- 6.2** Recruitment of the right lead consultant, to provide the required expert advice to the Council and the project team, is essential and will mitigate this overall risk. This will be managed through application of a robust tender evaluation process.
- 6.3** In recognition of the risks associated with the project a detailed risk register will be developed and utilised through the life of the project to support effective and timely consideration of risks, scenario planning and risk management. The aim will be to optimise the impact and opportunities the project presents realising the Council's strategic priorities.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** The project team will ensure that an appropriate equality impact assessment is carried out as part of the planning for stock transfer, and this will be addressed in subsequent report(s).

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** Following the Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee's approval of the proposed governance and project management arrangements the Service Manager Stock Transfer has now taken up post, a Stock Transfer Steering Group has been established and procurement of lead consultancy is at an advanced stage.
- 8.2** The Committee is asked to:
 - (i) note the progress in establishing the Stock Transfer Project Team;
 - (ii) note the establishment of the Stock Transfer Steering Group;
 - (iii) note the progress in procuring a lead consultant for the stock transfer project; and
 - (iv) note that a report on stock transfer strategy will be submitted to the Committee for consideration in May 2010.

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Date: 3 February 2010

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Appendix: None

Background Papers: Standard Delivery Plan

Wards Affected: All