

Appendix 1 – More homes West Dunbartonshire BuyBack Policy – January 2024

1. Purpose of Buy Back Scheme

- 1.1** West Dunbartonshire Council's Buy Back Scheme will assist in increasing the provision of Council housing in the area by purchasing primarily but not exclusively former Council Right to Buy properties using a robust assessment criteria.
- 1.2** This Policy has the key aim of ensuring the Council has an increased supply of homes to meet housing need and to support our wider strategic housing asset management aims. The Policy will lead to an improved situation for existing and future Council tenants. This Scheme is also not designed to specifically assist owners and as such we will maintain a right of refusal at any point in the process.
- 1.3** In March 2023, the Council agreed to provide £4m of Housing Capital Investment funding each year to support the delivery of the buyback scheme. This meant the scheme could purchase more than it ever has in the past and make a real impact on assisting with the Aims outlined below which feed into wider Housing priorities.
- 1.4** We have established access to Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Grant towards these purchases and recently the Scottish Government have supported our proposal to increase the amount of grant for the purchase of larger family homes.

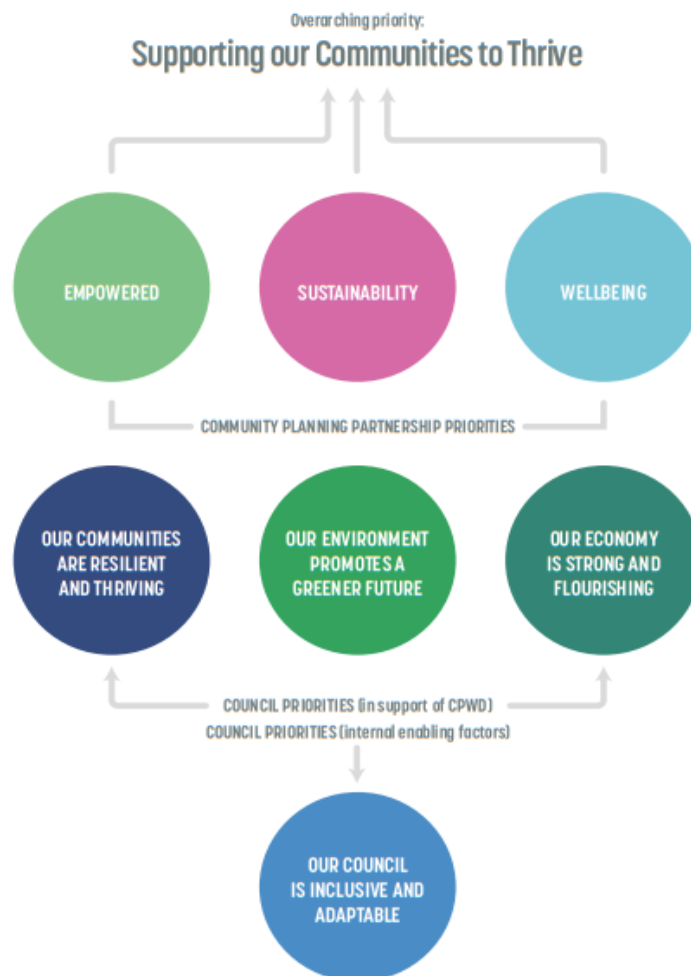
2. Background

- 2.1** Since the introduction of the Right to Buy (RTB) legislation in 1981, approximately 12,000 properties have been sold to sitting tenants in West Dunbartonshire. The RTB ended on 31 July 2016. All sales through the RTB legislation have a detrimental impact on the Council's ability to meet the housing needs of the wider community and its ability to meet its statutory responsibilities in respect of homelessness.
- 2.2** West Dunbartonshire's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) highlighted a range of factors which have led to an increased demand for rented accommodation in both social and private sectors including accessing mortgage finance.
- 2.3** There is a national shortage of Social Housing in Scotland. This has led to an all-time high in homelessness applications and demand for social housing both locally and nationally.
- 2.4** In West Dunbartonshire in particular we are experiencing a need for larger family housing and 1 bedroom properties. This Scheme will seek to prioritise to alleviate these issues.
- 2.5** The Council has built 496 new properties in the past 10 years and has an ambitious new build programme going forward. Together with the Buy Back Scheme, all properties built and purchased will help in re-dressing the

mismatch between the properties required to meet the needs identified within the Local Housing Strategy.

3. Strategic Context

3.1 The Council's Strategic Priorities outlined in the strategic Plan 2022-27 explain how the Council will work to improve the lives of residents. The priorities are:



Any increased provision of social rented housing contributes to these strategic priorities.

3.2 The Housing and Employability Delivery Plan sets out the actions that the Division will undertake to help deliver the Strategic Plan. The Buy Back Scheme will help to meet the following Actions:

- Deliver the Council's Affordable Housing Supply Programme
- Review the Council's Buy Back Scheme

3.3 One of the key LHS aims is to ensure that people have access to affordable housing of all tenures which is in the right location and is suitable for their needs.

3.4 The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) sets out how resources will be used over a 5 year period to deliver affordable housing priorities set out in the LHS.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The main objective of the Buy Back Scheme is to:

‘Assist the Council in meeting and delivering its strategic housing objectives’

4.2 The main aims of the Buy Back Scheme are:

- Deliver the key objectives of the Local Housing Strategy by
 - Accelerating the supply of new housing of the right size and type to meet housing need
 - Reducing the need for Temporary Accommodation
 - Reduce the number of Empty Homes
 - Help maintain and create vibrant communities
- Deliver the key objectives of the Housing Asset Management Strategy
 - Improve the standard of housing across the Council areas
 - Assist the Council with SHQS/Capital Works obligations, including future compliance with the Social Housing Net Zero Standard

4.3 The Scottish Government recently released guidance on the National Acquisition Programme. While the Council’s Policy does not fully adopt all aspects of this Guidance, where it does, the Policy fully complies.

5. Principles of the Buy Back Scheme

5.1 All properties will be assessed using a methodology adopted within a Scoring Matrix. The Scoring Matrix which has been developed in consultation with Tenants will be fully outlined within the Buy Back Scheme Policy.

5.2 The Scoring Matrix has been developed based upon the following principles:

Capital Funds

There must be Capital funds available at the time of any enquiry. If, on consulting the HRA Business Plan, it is established that it is not financially viable then the Council will decline any request.

Housing Need and Demand

Any acquisition of properties for social housing use must be of the right size and type as informed by our Housing Need analysis. Therefore, any purchase must assist the Council in achieving the aims outlined above

Scottish Housing Quality Standard/Investment Requirements

The valuation must reflect the current market value and any costs associated with ensuring that the property achieves the SHQS can be justified in line with the aims of this Policy.

Empty Homes

The Scheme will assist with the Empty Homes Initiative to work in partnership to bring back properties into the Council's housing stock in line with the Policy Aims.

Former Right to Buy or Specific Purchase

The majority of properties that are purchased will be former Council properties bought through the Right to Buy (RTB) Scheme and will therefore be a similar style and construction to those that the Council already maintain and will be in areas that the Council has a presence.

However, if there is a specific need that cannot be met through existing stock or planned new build that the market can provide the solution too, then so long as the principles outlined above are fulfilled, this purchase would be justified.

6. Financial Approach

- 6.1** From 23/24 to 27/28 The Scheme has a budget of £4m each year.
- 6.2** The Housing Development Team have a target of 60 purchases within each of these financial years.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1** More Homes Board
The actual spend of the Buy Back Scheme will be monitored by the More Homes Board. The details of the sales, including address, size and type and purchase price will be recorded and reported to the More Homes Board on a monthly basis.
- 7.2** Housing and Communities Committee
An update on progress will be reported quarterly to the Housing and Communities Committee as part of the More Homes Committee Report
- 7.3** Policy Review

The Buy Back Policy and Procedure will be reviewed on an annual basis and report to the More Homes Project Board each May.

8. Further Information

- 8.2** If you require further information on the Buy Back Policy or Procedure visit the Councils website - <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/private-housing/buy-back-scheme/> or Email: Buy.Back@west-dunbarton.gov.uk or call: 07551 422 581

Lead Officer - Laura Hanna – Senior Housing Development Officer, Housing Development & Homelessness Team, Housing & Employability, email: laura.hanna@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

9. Glossary of Terms

Right to Buy (RTB)

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 gave tenants the right to purchase the Council home they lived in. The RTB has been altered several times since and will be abolished in 2017.

Local Housing Strategy (LHS)

The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out our understanding of the housing issues over the coming five year period and indicates how the Council and its partners address them.

The LHS provides the strategic direction for housing across all tenures and informs the future investment in housing and related services across West Dunbartonshire.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) sets out the funding priorities for affordable housing in West Dunbartonshire for a three year period.

The LHS and SHIP together guide the application of Scottish Government and other housing funding. The main focus of the SHIP is the targeting of the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme Funding and the Council House Building Programme.

Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme

The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme is part of Housing's 30 year Business Plan and sets out how the Council will improve and repair its housing and estates. Meeting and maintaining the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is part of this investment.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

This is the standard that all social landlords in Scotland have to meet by 2015.

Empty Homes Initiative

This initiative is called Homes Again West Dunbartonshire. The aim is to bring private sector homes that have been empty for over six months back into use.