

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 5 May 2010

Subject: Partial Housing Stock Transfer Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the Partial Housing Stock Transfer strategy for consideration and approval.

2. Background

- 2.1** 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 identified for transfer.
- 2.2** 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.
- 2.3** Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee, at its meeting of 2 September 2009, agreed that progress in respect of a partial stock transfer of 45% of the housing stock 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.
- 2.4** 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

Approval and focus on specific actions

- 3.1** The partial stock transfer strategy (attached as Appendix 1) requires approval in order for the project to move on to the next stage. This will enable the Council to continue to focus on the specific actions required to take the partial stock transfer project plan forward, with the continued aim of a ballot(s) of tenants in early 2012 with transfer later that year, if a majority of tenants vote in favour.

Strategic Aims of the strategy

3.2 The strategic aims of the strategy are:-

- To ensure that the stock transfer process is integrated effectively into wider regeneration master planning;
- To identify suitable receiving landlords who can provide robust business plan proposals that set out a sustainable plan for the long term management and maintenance of the stock; and
- To ensure a successful outcome is achieved at tenant ballot by implementing an open and effective communication and engagement strategy.

Tenant Communication

3.3 It is important that tenants affected by the stock transfer are provided with information. This will include issues such as access to independent tenant advice, the timetable and process of transfer, and how tenants can become involved in the future. An initial letter will be issued to all affected tenants following approval of the Partial Housing Stock Transfer Strategy.

Member Communication

3.4 Reports will be submitted to Committee as and when required. In addition in order to keep elected members fully informed briefings will be provided quarterly to members throughout the lifetime of the Stock Transfer project.

4. People Implications

4.1 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 Staff Issues Group will be to ensure effective mechanisms are in place 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 the stock transfer project in the current and remaining years of the project.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The key risks associated with a successful partial stock transfer identified within the strategy are:-

- Failure to achieve a positive ballot for all or part of the potential stock transfer; and

- Delay in attracting a potential receiving landlord expression of interest.
- Change in UK Government (Treasury) rules in respect of debt write off associated with housing stock transfer.

The actions to mitigate the risks are outlined within the strategy.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** An initial screening of the stock transfer identifies the potential for negative impact or discrimination as a result of such a significant policy. Development of an Equalities Impact Assessment, involving key stakeholder groups, therefore forms part of the draft strategy and is incorporated within the stock transfer project plan.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** The strategy that has been developed will enable the Council to continue to focus on the specific actions required to take the partial stock transfer project plan forward, with the continued aim of a ballot(s) of tenants in early 2012 with transfer later that year, if a majority of tenants vote in favour.
- 8.2** It is recommended that the Committee:
- (i) approve the Partial Housing Stock Transfer Strategy;
 - (ii) note that reports will be submitted to future Committees on relevant issues as required;
 - (iii) note that briefings will be provided quarterly to members throughout the lifetime of the Stock Transfer project; and
 - (iv) note that an initial letter will be sent to all affected tenants following approval of the Partial Housing Stock Transfer Strategy.

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Date: 16 April 2010

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Appendix: Appendix 1 - Partial Stock Transfer Strategy

Background Papers: Standard Delivery Plan

Wards Affected: All