

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Acting Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development (Housing and Regeneration Services)

Housing Environment and Economic Development Committee: 9 January 2008

Subject: Surplus Council Housing Stock

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report asks the Committee to agree that the flats identified at paragraph 3.1 below, which are void or which may become void, should be kept unoccupied with a view to demolition because they are surplus to requirements. It also seeks approval to demolish properties at Hill St., Dumbarton.

2. Background

- 2.1** At 16 November 2007 there were 629 voids in the council's stock, with 527 considered to be low demand. Within this low demand group, there are 314 properties where there is no demand and where there has been no demand for a lengthy period. There is no expectation of a tenancy being accepted from this stock, and as a result these houses are outwith the letting pool.
- 2.2** Consultants are preparing an Asset Management Plan which will be completed in the early part of 2008. This plan will provide a full assessment of the council's stock and will show that the properties listed at paragraph 3 below are not sustainable. In tandem with the Asset Management Plan the consultants will also be reporting on Housing Need and Supply issues in West Dunbartonshire. The proposals relating to the properties shown below do not go beyond identifying them as surplus to requirements since it will be necessary to take account of this needs and supply report before considering the disposal of the properties and land.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The no demand council properties which have been identified as being surplus to requirements at this time are:

- 3.1.1** Salisbury Place Area, Clydebank
31-139 Salisbury Place (person flats only)
82-110 Lilac Avenue
1-37 Melbourne Ave (odd numbers only)

There are 104 council owned flats within this area, 66 (63%) of which are void. On average, these properties have been void for 4 years and 4 months. There are 8 flats in private ownership within the addresses shown above.

3.1.2 2 and 4 Penniecroft Avenue, Dumbarton

These are 2 tenemental closes comprising 12 flats, all of which are void. On average these properties have been void for 6 years and 2 months.

3.1.3 11,13,15 Aitkenbar Drive,Dumbarton

These are 3 tenemental properties comprising 18 flats of which 15 (83%) are void. On average, these properties have been void for 4 years.

3.1.4 15 & 16 Auchenreoch Avenue, Dumbarton

These are 2 tenemental properties comprising 12 flats of which 11 (92%) are void. On average, these properties have been void for 4 years.

3.1.5 2, 4, 6 & 8 Carrick Terrace, Dumbarton

These are 4 tenemental properties comprising 24 flats of which 21 (88%) are void. On average, these properties have been void for 5 years and 6 months.

3.1.6 11,13 and 15 Muir Road, Dumbarton

These are 2 maisonette blocks comprising 23 flats all of which are void. On average, these properties have been void for 5 years and 10 months.

3.1.7 4,6,7,8,10 Creuvil Court, Alexandria

These are 5 lower flats within a deck access maisonette block. These properties are unfit for habitation and would require substantial investment to bring them to a lettable standard. These properties are all void and have been so on average for 5 years and 10 months.

3.2 1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,18,20,22,24, Hill St., Brucehill, Dumbarton

These are three, 4 -in -the block flats, one of which is fire damaged. There are 12 council owned flats, 10 (83%) of which are void. On average, these properties have been void for 4 years and 1 month. Due to the condition and risk of further fire damage it is recommended that these 3 blocks are demolished, and that the 2 remaining tenants be-housed in accordance with the Council's Allocations policy.

3.3 If the Committee agrees to the recommendations at paragraph 8 below, the properties will be excluded from the calculation for the Statutory Performance indicator "Tenancy Changes-the percentage of rent lost due to voids." Based on 2006/07 rent charges, the percentage of rent lost due to voids would reduce to below 4% compared with the current rate of 5.2%.

3.4 The report on the Evaluation of Performance on the Management of Empty Homes prepared by Heriot Watt University has been submitted to the Committee for consideration. A finding of this evaluation is that there is scope for reducing void re-let times by focusing activity on voids judged to be lettable.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1** The removal of these void properties from the rental register will be cost neutral in relation to void and rental income estimates. There will be a reduction in rental income as tenants move from the areas identified, however, at this stage, it is only intended that 2 tenants be re-housed as part of a demolition programme and this will amount to a full year income loss of approximately £4,000.
- 4.2** The 163 void properties identified as being surplus to requirements are currently exempt from 50% council tax liability with the HRA being liable for the remaining 50% plus the water and sewerage charges. Approval of the recommendation at paragraph 8 below will exempt the properties from liability for council tax and water and sewerage costs. Based on 2007/08 charges this would result in an annual saving to the HRA of approximately £114,000 and a council tax income loss of £70,000.
- 4.3** There is an estimated cost of £34,000 to meet home loss payments and the demolition of the properties in Hill St., Dumbarton. There is provision in the HRA capital programme to meet these costs.

5. Personnel Issues

- 5.1** There are no personnel issues.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1** The inclusion of the properties identified at paragraph 3 above in Statutory Performance Indicators and other statistical data, does not present an accurate picture of void housing which can be let.
- 6.2** The report on the Evaluation of Performance on the Management of Empty Homes prepared by Heriot Watt University states that there is scope for reducing void re-let times by focusing activity on voids judged to be lettable. There is a risk that while the properties listed remain “active voids” the focus of activity on lettable voids will be diminished.
- 6.3** If the properties are not designated as being kept unoccupied with a view to demolition an unnecessary annual council tax charge and water and sewerage charge of approximately £114,000 will be incurred in the Housing Revenue Account.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1** There are a substantial number of void properties which have no demand. While it will be necessary to await the results of the Asset Management Plan and Housing Needs and Supply Study to formulate a council wide strategy for addressing void houses and supply demands, there are vacant properties within the stock which can be considered to be surplus to requirements immediately, and this has been confirmed by the consultants preparing the Asset Management Plan. By agreeing to this designation, the 163 properties

identified (and future voids in these areas) will be excluded from Statutory Performance Indicator statistics and be exempt from council tax and water and sewerage liability.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is asked to agree that:

8.1.1 the void properties shown at paragraph 3.1 above be kept unoccupied with a view to demolition because they are surplus to requirements

8.1.2 any subsequent void properties within the locations shown at paragraph 3.1 above, be kept unoccupied with a view to demolition because they are surplus to requirements

8.1.3 the properties in Hill St., Dumbarton as shown at paragraph 3.1 be demolished and the 2 remaining tenants re-housed.

Irving Hodgson

Acting Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development (Housing and Regeneration Services)

Date: 17 December 2007

Person to Contact:	Jeff Stobo, Manager of Strategy, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU, Tel No. (01389) 737580, jeff.stobo@west-dunbarton.gov.uk ; Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU, Tel No. (01389) 737829, Margaret.caldwell@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
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Appendices:	None
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Background Papers:	None
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Wards Affected:	All
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