

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 6 August 2008

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**Subject: Surplus Council Housing Stock**

### **1. Purpose**

**1.1** This report advises the Committee of proposals received from housing associations in response to the Committee's invitation for detailed proposals relating to surplus Council Housing stock in the following areas:

- 31 - 139 Salisbury Place, Clydebank
- 82 - 110 Lilac Avenue, Clydebank
- 1 - 37 Melbourne Avenue, Clydebank
- 2 & 4 Pennicroft Avenue, Dumbarton
- 11, 13, 15 Aitkenbar Drive, Dumbarton
- 15 & 16 Auchenreoch Avenue, Dumbarton
- 2, 4, 6 & 8 Carrick Terrace, Dumbarton
- 11, 13, 15 Muir Road, Dumbarton
- 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 Creveul Court, Alexandria
- 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24 Hill Street, Dumbarton

### **2. Background**

**2.1** The Committee considered a report entitled "Surplus Council Housing Stock" on 9 January 2008. It was decided at this meeting to invite appropriate community organisations and registered social landlords to submit their views on the future of properties identified in the Report by Friday 25 January 2008.

**2.2** The responses received were reported to the Committee on 5 March 2008. It was decided at this meeting that the housing associations who had replied expressing their interest in the stock be invited to provide detailed proposals on the surplus stock by June 2008.

### **3. Main Issues**

**3.1** Responses were received from 6 housing associations covering 7 potential developments. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the detailed proposals received.

**3.2** Five housing associations included within their proposals, a wider area than that specified within the Surplus Housing Stock Report. This varied from one additional block of properties to whole areas that required to be regenerated and is highlighted in Appendix 1.

- 3.3** Four housing associations made reference to the master-planning of areas and indicated that they felt that this would be a more strategic approach to the regeneration of a wider area, rather than limiting re-development to the surplus stock locations. Link Housing Association, who did not submit a detailed proposal, stated that they felt master-planning should be used instead of a piecemeal approach but confirmed their commitment to work with the Council (Appendix 2).
- 3.4** A letter was also received from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) on behalf of the following housing associations: Knowes; Cube; Link; Trafalgar; Faifley; Dunbriiton; Cordale; and Clydebank. The letter is attached at Appendix 3. It outlines their dissatisfaction with the surplus stock exercise, and states that the process is lacking a strategic approach. It further stated that it goes against the efficiency drive that the Scottish Government is promoting in Firm Foundations, that the proposals for the surplus stock should be incorporated into masterplanning, and that there has been a lack of information for the associations in carrying out this exercise.
- 3.5** Overall, the housing associations provided details of varying degrees of community consultation that has taken place or was being proposed for the future. This was dependant on the location of the stock and the long term objectives of each of the associations.
- 3.6** An assessment of these detailed proposals is required in terms of the Housing Needs and Supply Study, the draft Standard Delivery Plan and the Council's regeneration priority areas in order that they can be considered within the context of a wider strategic plan.
- 3.7** The proposals that relate specifically to the surplus stock areas have been passed to the Scottish Government's Housing Investment Division for evaluation since it is essential that they provide an assessment of the financial viability of the proposals in relation to Housing Association Grant funding without which there would be little scope for progress.
- 3.8** In view of the limited time available between receipt of the proposals and the preparation of this report, it is recommended that no further action is taken until the issues identified at 3.6 and 3.7 above are reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** The financial implications cannot be reported without consideration of the factors identified at 3.7 and 3.8 above. It is therefore proposed that the financial implications are reported to a future meeting of the Committee along with issues stated at 3.7 and 3.8 above.

## 6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1 Should developments of the type proposed proceed outwith the framework of a strategic plan then this could present a significant financial risk to the Council as its ability to secure debt write off would be compromised.
- 6.2 In addition, given the previous criticisms of the Council regarding lack of transparency in decision making regarding housing matters, the Council will wish to ensure that thorough option appraisals of possible developments/ disposals is undertaken. Failure to do so would undoubtedly undermine the work to date in relation to satisfying the Scottish Government Housing Regulator in relation to generally improving the performance of the Housing Service.

## 7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The responses received from housing associations demonstrate a firm commitment to working with the Council and the community. Some associations have not limited their proposals to the specific surplus stock locations either due to their perception of natural development boundaries or because they feel that a more comprehensive approach to dealing with surplus stock is required. In addition, the desire for masterplanning for a wider area than the surplus stock provides for has been highlighted.

## 8. Recommendation

- 8.1 **The Committee is asked to note the responses received for the development of surplus stock sites and to instruct the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to report further to the Committee on the financial implications and other factors identified at 3.7 and 3.8 of this report.**

**Elaine Melrose**

**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Date: 15 July 2008**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1: Summary of Proposals  
Appendix 2: Link Group Letter  
Appendix 3: SFHA Letter

**Background Papers:** Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 9 January 2008 - Surplus Council Housing Stock

Housing, Environment and Economic Development  
Committee: 5 March 2008 - Surplus Council Housing  
Stock

**Wards Affected:** 1, 3 and 5