

# WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

## Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability

Housing and Communities Committee: 5 May 2021

---

**Subject: Better Homes West Dunbartonshire – Housing Asset Management Strategy Update**

### **1. Purpose**

**1.1** This report updates Members on the More Homes Better Homes Housing Asset Management Strategy 2018-2023 which was approved in February 2018

### **2. Recommendations**

**2.1** It is recommended that the committee:

- (i) Note the progress made in the Strategy and the comments regarding the impact of Covid-19 on current and future progress;
- (ii) Note the results of the Asset Management Database assessment and the priorities that are emerging from this exercise;
- (iii) Invite the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability to enter into a consultative exercise with tenants in respect of the future of Brunswick, Montreal and Quebec Houses and report back to Committee in November 2021;
- (iv) Approve the suspension of letting activity for the above properties pending the completion of the options appraisal exercise;
- (v) Approve the revised approach to dealing with Owner Occupiers within the properties that have structural problems in Silverton; and
- (vi) Agree to receive progress reports on a yearly basis.

### **3. Background**

**3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council's 2012/15 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) Update identified 'housing maintenance and assets' as a 'significant scrutiny risk' for the council in 2012/13 and the concern of achieving the SHQS by 2015. A new Housing Asset Management Strategy 2013-2018 was developed and this was identified as a key strength by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). SHR ended any regulatory focus around the asset management of our housing stock, as a result of our robust and credible approach to strategic housing asset management.

**3.2** The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2013-2018 was successfully implemented and in February 2018 Housing and Communities Committee approved the new 2018-2023 Housing Asset Management Strategy entitled More Homes Better Homes West Dunbartonshire.

**3.3** The overall Aim of the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2018-2023 is:

“To ensure that through appropriate investment, maintenance and management of existing properties all homes are warm, dry and secure and build new affordable homes all of which meet the needs of tenants and residents of West Dunbartonshire”

**3.4** To achieve this aim, the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2018-2023 established the following objectives:

- Manage the stock across all relevant departments to a high standard whilst meeting and aiming to exceed all specified standards
- Identify housing stock that requires intervention and carry out appropriate actions to address this
- Build quality affordable accommodation of the right size and type that is energy efficient and meets needs, including particular needs
- Ensure all actions contained in the Housing Asset Management Strategy provide best value for existing tenants and future customers and are affordable to the HRA

## **4. Main Issues**

**4.1** Following its approval in 2018, the Strategy is on its way to achieving a number of its actions and milestones including:

- Over 300 new council homes are currently under construction and despite the challenges of Covid-19 and a period of lockdown, these well needed new homes will be complete by summer 2021.
- A further programme of new build will start with Clydebank East and new sites are being prepared that will commence during the period of this Strategy
- An assessment of the stock has taken place through the refresh of the Asset Management Plan Database and this will be used to inform decisions on improving the stock. This is discussed below at 4.4
- Establishment of the Better Homes Board to bring together key departments to share and approve decisions made regarding council housing stock
- Extended the Buy Back Scheme

**4.2** Staff across various departments continue to work on developing and completing the actions within the strategy and progress will be reported yearly.

4.3 It should be noted that a number of milestones within Strategy have been affected by the situation with Covid-19. Milestones that were targeted for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years have been impacted by the period of lockdown and following this the restrictions around physical distancing. Whilst Officers in their own respective areas are now working in a way that respects the restrictions but also provides a service to tenants, the limitations to this have and will cause unavoidable delays.

Asset Management Plan Database

4.4 The Council’s Housing Development Team has recently completed an update of the Housing Asset Management Plan Model which is one of the actions within the Strategy. The model gathers a wide range of information from the past 3 years about all council house properties at an individual level and assesses how they are performing against 9 key indicators. These are detailed in the Summary document Appendix 2 but cover Current Costs, Demand and Future Costs.

4.5 Since 2008, the Database has identified over 1000 properties of surplus stock, that is, stock that is not fit for purpose, unpopular and largely has been void for a number of years. This stock has been demolished over the years and the current demolition programme will end with the completion of the demolition of the multi storey flats and maisonettes at Clydebank East in October 2020.

4.6 The information that the model provides enables the Housing Team to see what properties are performing well, what properties may need some further action to help them perform well and what properties are a risk to the Council and not sustainable as future assets.

4.7 The results of the Model refresh can be found within Appendix 1 which also explains the methodology used to achieve the outcomes. In general the results of the refresh of the model outlines that the Council’s housing stock is performing well overall:

<b>Classification</b>	<b>No of Properties (2020)</b>	<b>% of Stock (2020)</b>
<b>Stock Performing Well</b>	8391	84%
<b>Possible Investigation Required</b>	1576	15%
<b>Poor Performing Stock</b>	95	1%
	<b>10,061</b>	<b>100</b>

4.8 The 95 units of stock in the poor performing category are all individual units of stock and not significant clusters within the same area. There are reasons behind each of these units of stock performing poorly such as expensive, ongoing repairs or in need of substantial void repair works.

- 4.9 Using the knowledge of the Better Homes Project Board alongside the assessment results, a number of key priorities for action have been identified. These either focus on an area or on certain types of property. The following have been identified as priorities during the period of this Strategy and noted below is the action taken so far with any approval required from Housing and Communities Committee indicated:

Brunswick, Montreal and Quebec Houses, North Mountblow

The 3 blocks situated at the top of the North Mountblow housing estate have been under review for a number of years. Whilst they contain large property sizes, they are unpopular due to the layout of the buildings. Over the years they have also been affected by recurrent anti social behaviour and vandalism resulting in a run down appearance.

An Options identification exercise has now been carried out by the Better Homes Board and can be found at Appendix 2. A wide range of options have been examined including carrying out capital works; fully refurbishing the blocks including trying to re-design the layout and full or partial demolition of the blocks. Before making a final decision on these blocks, consultation will be carried out with tenants who are resident within them on the options appraisal. In the meantime Committee are being asked to approve the suspension of letting activity within these addresses until the options appraisal exercise has been concluded.

The results of the consultation will be brought back to Committee in November 2021.

Silverton Structural Issue Properties

Issues with a number of flat roofed properties within the Silverton housing estate emerged in 2013 when a roof collapsed within a property. This led to an investigation of similar properties and a defect was discovered relating to the age and the concrete structure.

The Council re-housed all tenants within affected properties and provided a support package to 20 owner occupiers which included the offer to purchase the property at the price that the property was originally sold by the Council through the Right to buy scheme.

Over the last 8 years there has been very little progress made with these properties and those that were vacated by the tenant or owner have now been empty for that length of time which is starting to have an impact on the overall area. Some owners are still in situ and are surrounded by empty properties. In order to try and overcome this and improve the area, in particular 2 sections within the estate that would benefit from action, the Better Homes Board are in agreement that a revised Action Plan to deal with this issue is required and that would require approval from Members to revise the decision taken in 2013 to purchase back properties at the original Right to Buy price.

An Options Appraisal has been carried out by the Better Homes Board assessing the following options:-

#### Options Appraisal

1. Continue with the offer to repurchase at the original RTB price
2. Increase the offer of re-purchase to a flat rate of £25,000
3. Remove the re-purchase offer in totality
4. Increase the offer to re-purchase at flat rates that differ for property size and type

The outcome of which provides a recommendation to members to approve Option 2 to purchase owned properties at a flat rate of £25,000. With the condition that any owner who sold back to us previously at less than this would be reimbursed.

Any future decision to demolish the properties and what would happen with the land would be brought back to a future Housing and Communities Committee for consideration.

#### Mini Multi Blocks across Council Estates (also known as Stub Blocks)

The Asset Management assessment has also shown that across our Housing Estates there are issues with this particular type of property. In general, these blocks have not performed well within the assessment. There are a number of this type of block within our estates and they are most commonly made up of flats on the ground floor with 2 levels of maisonettes above them; although they can be all flats.

The Better Homes Project Board will develop an action plan and options appraisal for a future Committee on what is possible to improve this type of housing. It is proposed that that a pilot project may be undertaken within a block that is one of the worst performing that will assist in future decision making.

#### O'Hare

This estate has been highlighted by the Asset Management Assessment as having a number of poorly performing properties. Unlike some other areas that have also been identified, these cannot be attributed to individual properties within that are known to officers. It appears that within this area the over provision of flatted blocks which are unpopular and suffer from high turnover. The Better Homes Board will examine this more closely and bring back an action plan to a future Committee.

- 4.10** The Better Homes Board over the period of the Strategy will also investigate and establish further priorities including looking at the 'amber' scoring stock to establish actions that will enable this stock to perform more successfully. This will be done in parallel with looking at developing proposals to meet the future Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing and the wider decarbonisation agenda. Any actions related to this will be reported to future Housing and Communities Committees.

## **5. People Implications**

**5.1** There are no people implications in relation to this report.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications**

### Financial

**6.1** The additional costs attributed to the delivery of the acquisition of properties in the Silverton area will be met within existing provision in the Housing Capital Programme. There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report (the delivery of the Strategy is dependent on existing resources). The agreed HRA Capital Plan supports the objectives of the wider Housing Asset Management Strategy.

### Procurement

There are no procurement implications arising directly from this report.

## **7. Risk Analysis**

**7.1** As mentioned above, the strategy has been impacted by the Covid-19 situation and therefore this carries risks for completion of some actions and milestones particularly if they involve contact with others. However, as this is an emerging situation and all Local Authorities are currently reacting to it, the real and ongoing impact of the risks are as yet unknown. These will be built into the Strategy with any possible mitigation as impacts become clearer and will be reported to a future Housing and Communities Committee.

## **8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**8.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out in November 2017 and approved. This is attached at Appendix 2. No negative impacts were identified for the protected characteristic groups and the conclusion was that the strategy should impact favourably on all tenants as the long term objective is to ensure that there is sufficient good quality housing stock to address all types of housing need.

## **9. Consultation**

**9.1** If Committee agree to suspending allocation of housing within Brunswick, Montreal and Quebec Houses, consultation will take place with tenants who are resident in this block over the options for the future of the block and results and a decision reported back to the November Housing and Communities Committee.

**9.2** There was an 8 week consultation period for the Housing Asset Management Strategy. This included a survey consulting on the main objectives of the Strategy. A total of 32 responses to the survey were received and all

comments have been taken into consideration when preparing the final draft of the Strategy.

- 9.3** A group session was also held in Dalmuir CE Centre on 6 November 2017. This was attended by 7 interested tenants/residents. This provided the opportunity to speak in depth about the Strategy and its objectives and the final draft has been influenced by the discussions that took place.

## **10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The Strategic Housing Asset Management Strategy sits within the Council's Asset Management Framework and will contribute to the objectives within the Council's Local Housing Strategy.
- 10.2** The ongoing implementation of the West Dunbartonshire Housing Asset Management Strategy contributes greatly to all five strategic priorities but principally to the priority to improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

**Peter Barry**  
**Chief Officer, Housing and Employability**  
**Date: 21st April 2021**

---

**Person to Contact:** John Kerr – Housing Development and Homelessness Manager, Housing Development and Homelessness Team, telephone: 07793717981, email: [john.kerr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:john.kerr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

**Appendices:** Appendix 1: HRA AMP Assessment Summary  
Appendix 2: BMQ Options Appraisal

**Background Papers:** Housing Asset Management Strategy 2018-2023

**Wards Affected:** All