

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 3 May 2023**

Subject: Willox Park Sheltered Housing Complex**1 Purpose**

- 1.1** This purpose of this report is to provide the Housing and Communities Committee an update on the action we are taking to understand the damp and mould problems experienced by the tenants at Willox Park, Dumbarton and also the delivery of a wider masterplan approach to the future provision of sheltered housing within the location.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:
- (i) Note the content of the report and the progress made to date in carrying out initial surveys and approve spend for future surveys and required works at Willox Park sheltered housing complex; and
 - (ii) Note that a report will be provided to the November meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee following consultation with the tenants on future housing provision within the location.

3 Background

- 3.1** Willox Park comprises 36 terraced bungalows offering sheltered housing in Dumbarton. It was built in the 1960s and is typical of the building and space standards of that time. Whilst the tenants like having their own front doors and a little outside space the internal layout is not conducive to easy living for those with limited mobility.
- 3.2** The existing homes have received replacement roof and external wall insulation over the last twenty years alongside investment in kitchens, bathrooms and windows.
- 3.3** However, tenants have complained of dampness and draughts. Following initial inspections, it was agreed that specialist advice was needed and we instructed several in-depth specialist surveys at an empty property which meant we did not need to disrupt or decant any tenants to carry out these intrusive and detailed surveys.

3.4 A number of actions were approved by the February meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee around steps being taken to investigate the issues highlighted and an update in progress is provided in Section 4 of this report.

4 Main Issues

4.1 Invasive damp surveys

Three tenants within Willox Park have now volunteered to participate in the more invasive specialist damp surveys. We have now agreed terms and conditions with the contractor and these are due to commence in May. The outcome of these surveys will be known in early June and any required actions will be undertaken on receipt of the survey report by the appropriate officers within the Housing Service.

4.2 Non-invasive damp surveys

In advance of the invasive surveys, the Council had hoped to have carried out a non-invasive damp survey to all the remaining properties within Willox Park, these were intended to provide a degree of assurance for all tenants. While, we have identified a specialist surveyor contractor to carry out these surveys. The formal appointment had been delayed due to terms and conditions being agreed. However, these have now been agreed and these intended surveys will be completed within similar timescales to the more invasive surveys being carried out as highlighted in 4.1 above.

4.3 New build update

The development of the new homes to be delivered at the former care home site continues within the design phase towards a full planning application. A landscape architect has been procured for the design team, however the appointment of engineering consultants (structural, civil, mechanical and electrical) has been delayed as we were unable to appoint following a recent tendering exercise. Our development timescales have been updated as a result of this setback and the development is scheduled to complete in Winter 2024/25.

4.4 Enhanced fire safety

It was highlighted to the February meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2023 that following our regular Fire Risk Assessment of the properties that actions were proposed to improve the compartmentalisation between the properties, amongst other changes such as locations of the bin.

4.5 Our appointed consultants have now prepared an option to improve compartmentalisation but due to complexities and liabilities of providing fire safety advice we are clarifying with their legal and insurance teams the required caveats before this will be enacted. In the meantime, the Housing

Operation team is identifying more suitable waste solutions for the homes and these will be agreed with tenants.

- 4.6** The works identified within this report will support and inform our existing Housing Asset Management information and this will be used to develop a future Willox Plan masterplan which will identify future housing investment in the Willox park sheltered housing complex. It is intended that following a full consultative period with the existing tenants a report will be provided to the Housing and Communities Committee in November 2023.

5 People Implications

- 5.1** There are no new people implications for this report. It should be referenced however that because of the demographic of the tenant population staff resource from the Housing Development and Housing Operations Teams will be required to be prioritised to support this and this may impact on other functions and priority workstreams.

6 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The surveys and additional consultancy advice required to build a detailed picture of the homes have been budgeted for and likewise repairs and maintenance works will come from the appropriate budgets. However, once the survey findings and recommendations, including likely some indicative costings, are received we will carry out an asset management options analysis to ensure we are achieving value for money for these properties.
- 6.2** The suspension of lettings approved in February 2023 will result in lost rental income and this has been factored into void rent loss assumptions made within the Housing Revenue Account budget covering 2023/24. Should any properties become vacant this may provide a number of benefits namely it will allow the Council the potential to carry out further surveys or decant existing tenants into another property in the complex while any required work is completed to their home.

Procurement

- 6.3** We have procured our consultants to date through the appropriate competitive bids process and will continue to do so to ensure that we get the correct balance between quality and price to ensure value for money for the Council.
- 6.4** Where the contract award is less than £213,000, authority is delegated to the Chief Officer in consultation with the Procurement Manager to instruct the award of contracts for the planned revenue and capital spend detailed in this report to suppliers providing the most economically advantageous offer to the Council.
- 6.5** All procurement activity carried out by the Council in excess of £2m is subject to a contract strategy. The contract strategy for new housing development within the HRA Capital Programme will be developed by the

Corporate Procurement Unit in consultation with Housing Development Officers. The contract strategy will include, but is not limited to; contract scope, service forward plan, the market, procurement model and routes – including existing delivery vehicles, roles and responsibilities, risks, issues and opportunities and on-going contract management. Opportunities to maximise the positive social, economic and environmental impact for the Council through the relevant procurement processes will be developed in line with procurement policy.

7 Risk Analysis

- 7.1** We maintain risk registers for each project which highlights the risk within and out-with the project team's control. These are maintained and adjusted on an on-going basis.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1** The proposal does not alter any existing policy or pattern of service delivery and so is not considered to require an equalities impact assessment.

9 Consultation

- 9.1** We have worked to keep tenants up-to-date with the survey findings and next steps utilising newsletters, letters and the housing officer. The Tenants and Residents Association at Willox Park is actively involved in tracking the processes and have been heavily involved in the consultation for the new build element of the complex.

10 Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The Local Housing Strategy is the overarching document setting out the strategic direction for housing across all tenures and informs the future investment in housing and related services across West Dunbartonshire. Having considered all the Council's strategic priorities, this report and the provision of new supply social housing for rent contributes greatly to all strategic priorities.

Peter Barry
Chief Officer, Housing and Employability
Date: 18 April 2023

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

Appendices: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: Ward 3