

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 22 February 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.

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.
 - (ii) Approve a temporary suspension of letting activity at the complex whilst further surveys are completed.
 - (iii) Note the expected timescales for completion of surveys (Q1 2023) and expected information and recommendations for the future of the homes (Q2 2023, subject to findings of surveys); and
 - (iv) Note that a further update report will be provided to the next meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee

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 (no 3

Willox Park) which meant we did not need to disrupt or decant any tenants to carry out these intrusive and detailed surveys.

4. Main Issues

Survey findings and next steps:

- 4.1** The survey of No 3 Willox Park found evidence of rising damp which, if present in all of the properties, may have implications for the long-term integrity of the buildings. The next steps are carrying out further damp surveys at the complex.
- 4.2** We are seeking a couple of tenants to volunteer their homes for an invasive damp survey which will monitor moisture in the walls and floors over a number of weeks. One tenant has so far volunteered and we will be working closely with this tenant and we are also liaising with the contractor to give the tenants a briefing on the surveys they will be doing to keep everyone informed.
- 4.3** In addition, we are working with another specialist contractor to organise non-invasive damp surveys of every property at the complex. These surveys will take less than an hour and will provide a second professional opinion on the extent and potential causes of the dampness across all the homes at Willox Park. The outcome being all homes, where tenants are able to give us access, will have received a damp survey and combined with the findings of the more invasive surveys we will build up evidence of the cause, and extent, of the dampness experienced by tenants. This will provide us with important information to plan for the long term future of these homes.
- 4.4** Based on the survey of number 3 the consultants recommended a number of fire safety improvements be made to the properties. These included ensuring that the EICR certificates were up to date, correct fire alarms were installed in the homes, additional plug sockets were provided (to discourage people overloading sockets) and new fire doors. The first three of these items have been completed by the Council and new doors have been ordered and will be installed shortly.
- 4.5** Following the initial survey the Council also completed a fire risk assessment on the non-residential property within the complex, this identified some of the same recommendations and additional ones we can take to enhance the fire safety of these properties. These have been flagged on the council H&S reporting system and action has been taken for example we are exploring bin storage solutions and carrying out PAT testing on the electrical appliances used by the wardens.
- 4.6** Both the survey and the FRA recommended that fire compartmentalisation was enhanced in the loft and ceiling spaces and we are researching appropriate solutions to boost the fire resistance between properties at loft level. We are working with a consultant to identify solutions and once agreed the Council will prioritise any works identified.

- 4.7** We are ensuring a people centred approach to fire safety at Willox Park and all actions seek to enhance the fire safety measures already in place.
- 4.8** The surveys highlighted outstanding repair and maintenance issues at number 3 and many of these affected the rest of the complex such as blocked gutters and broken window vents and as a result we have prioritised these repairs to ensure that the homes continue to be well maintained.
- 4.9** Whilst we carry out the surveys to ascertain the cause and extent of the dampness we have placed a hold on replacement kitchens, bathrooms and windows. However, all other repairs should be reported and will be completed by the Council. As indicated above we intend to continue a more proactive approach to identifying repairs within the complex.
- 4.10** The redevelopment of the care home site continues and we are in the process of procuring engineers and other consultants to enable the development to progress to planning permission and correspondingly construction site start. Ultimately, we intend to develop 17 new amenity standard homes which will be energy efficient, designed with dementia and wheelchairs/ mobility frames/ electric scooter usage in mind
- 4.11** In conclusion, over the next two months, we are aiming to build a comprehensive picture of the condition of all of the homes so we can decide on how best to proceed in terms of a wider housing masterplan for the area which will look at investment in the current properties and the opportunities to redevelop the site through demolition and new build. It would be the intention to bring such a report following consultation with tenants to a future meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee in Summer 2023.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications from this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

Financial

- 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 will result in lost rental income but should any properties become vacant this will provide us with a number of benefits namely it will allow us to carry out further surveys or decant existing tenants into another property in the complex while 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 WDC.

6.4 Where the contract award is less than £50,000, 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.

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 (EIA)

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 TRA 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: 9 February 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