

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
2 November 2011**

Subject: Homeless Temporary Accommodation

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with information on the future provision of homeless temporary accommodation and seek approval to develop additional supported accommodation to meet the increasing demand from homeless households.

2. Background

- 2.1** The implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001; the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Unsuitable Accommodation Order 2004 have extended the range of duties that the Council has in respect of people who are homeless. These include a duty to provide temporary accommodation to households whilst there is a reason to believe that they are homeless. This duty is extended until the Council completes its assessment of the case and discharges its duty to the household. There are, on average, 2100 homeless presentations within West Dunbartonshire each year.
- 2.2** The duty to provide temporary accommodation to all homeless households has been in place since 2002. The Scottish Government's target is to abolish the 'priority need' test from 2012, giving all unintentionally homeless people the right to permanent housing. At its meeting on 6 October 2010, Committee approved measures to fully implement the abolition of the 'priority need' test in West Dunbartonshire from 1 January 2011. Although this has not had a significant impact on the initial take up of temporary accommodation, it does impact on the length of time that households spend in temporary accommodation while they are waiting to be re housed in permanent accommodation.
- 2.3** There are on average 2100 homeless presentations per annum in West Dunbartonshire and the local authority has the highest homelessness rate per head of population in Scotland. In addition there are currently over 6000 applicants on the Council's housing waiting lists and approximately 56% of these are in non secure accommodation e.g. staying care of relatives/ friends.
- 2.4** The pressure on the available housing stock in West Dunbartonshire is further reinforced considering that in 2010/ 2011 there were just over 1100 social housing lets in West Dunbartonshire by the Council and the local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

- 2.5** WDC currently uses 257 units of existing Council housing stock to accommodate homeless households. The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation to all customers who require it and this provision enables the Council to discharge its statutory duties.
- 2.6** The dispersed accommodation is managed by the Homelessness Teams which operate from Clydebank and Dumbarton Housing Offices. Officers deliver a range of services from practical property and housing management through to Housing Support. These Officers also work with customers to prepare them for permanent mainstream housing. The average length of stay in dispersed accommodation is around 23 weeks.
- 2.7** In addition to the Council's own provision, there is a small amount of more specialist accommodation targeted at specific client groups. This is managed by external agencies and funded via a mixture of housing rent, housing benefit and former supporting people funding.

The providers are:

Womens' Aid =	16 units
Blue Triangle =	31 units
Action for Children =	10 units

- 2.8** There are currently "good will" arrangements in place with all of these organisations and they work closely with Housing Services to ensure that placements are appropriate and reflect the prevalent need across the district. However, West Dunbartonshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 identified a need for greater provision of supported accommodation to meet increased demand but to date provision has only increased by 10 units.
- 2.9** Aside from the small amount of specialist provision delivered by the voluntary sector, the Council's provision is actively delivered via the 257 units of dispersed temporary accommodation.
- 2.10** A disadvantage of the Council's current provision is that direct placement of vulnerable clients into individual tenancies reduces the ability of staff and services to engage fully with them during their stay in temporary accommodation. Homeless clients are able to refuse services and staff have limited opportunities to work with them to maximise their ability to sustain their tenancies when they move on to their own accommodation.
- 2.11** The profile of West Dunbartonshire Council's homeless population is similar to that of Glasgow and neighbouring Councils. The Council's population rates as one of the highest nationally on all the social deprivation indices. The vulnerability and challenging behaviours demonstrated by a significant proportion of this population means that a significant number of clients require intense input and support by staff from the homeless service and from other Council Services including Children and Families, Adult Social Care and Criminal Justice and Health.

2.12 In partnership with Arneil Johnston, Housing Consultants, Housing and Community Safety Services has undertaken an intensive review of all homeless presentations which were made in 2009-2010. A total of 2,200 cases were reviewed by staff within the Homeless service and the parameters of that review were:

- household makeup
- reason for homeless; and
- if a wide range of accommodation options were available to the service, where would the applicant have been placed.

2.13 The outcomes of that review significantly challenge our current model of service delivery and present real opportunities for the Council to both better manage its approach to the provision of temporary accommodation and to deliver improved levels of tenancy sustainability.

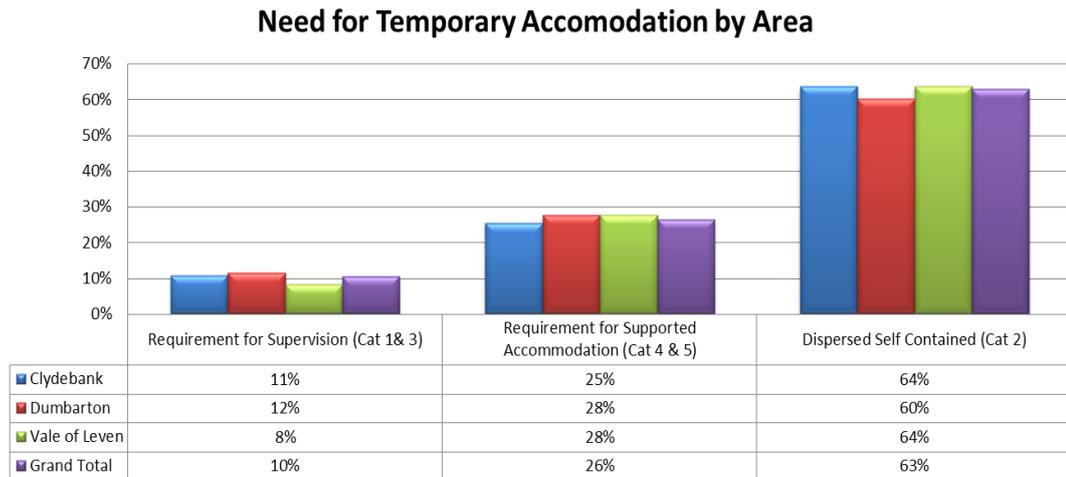
2.14 A secondary positive outcome is the opportunity to better manage the overall pool of housing stock and it will enable receiving landlords post the proposed partial stock transfer to work closely with the Council to deliver better targeted services for vulnerable and/or challenging clients.

2.15 Table 1: Profile of expressed housing need in 2009/2010 (as demonstrated via homelessness presentations)

Demand for Temporary Accommodation - Numbers of Presentations				
	Clydebank	Dumbarton	Vale of Leven	Grant Total
Direct access accommodation	38	16	3	57
Dispersed Self Contained	542	181	229	952
Hostel - Supervision	55	19	27	101
Hostel - Support	200	31	45	276
Shared Accommodation	17	52	54	123
Anomalies		1	1	2
Grant Total	852	300	359	1511

N.B. This table does not include residual need contained within the housing waiting lists.

2.16 Table 2: Need for Temporary Accommodation by area



2.17 Table 3: Temporary Accommodation Demand

Summary: What Clydebank Needs

- **Hostel = 93**
 - 44% female/56% male
 - 50% female <25; 30% male <25
- **Dispersed = 542**
 - 80% need for 1 or 2 bed units
- **Supported = 217**
 - 89% = support, 11% = intense support
 - 65% need independent living support
 - 23% drug and alcohol dependency

Total Need = 852 per annum.

2.18 Table 4: Temporary Accommodation Demand

Summary: What Dumbarton Needs

- **Hostel = 35**
 - 14% female/86% male
 - 60% female <25; 30% male <25
- **Dispersed = 181**
 - 80% need for 1 or 2 bed units
- **Supported = 83**
 - 72% = support, 28% = intense support
 - 45% need independent living support
 - 34% drug and alcohol dependency

Total Need = 299 per annum

2.19 Table 5: Temporary Accommodation Demand

Summary: What Alexandria Needs

- **Hostel = 30**
 - 23% female/77% male
 - 57% female <25; 17% male <25
- **Dispersed = 229**
 - 74% need for 1 or 2 bed units
- **Supported = 99**
 - 68% = support, 32% = intense support
 - 47% need independent living support
 - 35% drug and alcohol dependency

Total Need = 358 per annum

2.20 The Arneil Johnston research findings were presented and fully discussed at the Member Officer Working Group on 7 September, 2011.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The research undertaken by Arneil Johnston, and Homeless Services clearly indicate that there is a distinct lack of supported, hostel type accommodation throughout West Dunbartonshire
- 3.2** To ensure that the Homeless Service can continue to deliver high quality services that meet the needs of the homeless population, there is a strong evidence base to suggest that the current model of temporary accommodation provision must be reconfigured.
- 3.3** It is clear that in addition to the existing provision, there is a need for additional supported, hostel type accommodation managed by the Council. An exercise has been undertaken to identify possible locations across the area to establish a pilot project within the local authority area.
- 3.4** The commissioned research clearly identifies the need for a significant increase in the provision of supported accommodation. However, the creation of a single pilot project will ensure that service outcomes can be carefully managed, monitored and evaluated within the framework of current service provision.
- 3.5** It is intended that, from the outset, the pilot project will be an integral part of the existing homelessness accommodation and support provision and as such will be integrated in to the existing management structure of the Homelessness & Allocations service.
- 3.6** Approval is sought to establish a 24 hour Council managed supported accommodation project at 28 Ashton View, Dumbarton.

- 3.7** This block of 8 flats is currently vacant and there is no demand for accommodation within this area.
- 3.8** Costs have been obtained to carry out the necessary refurbishment work with a view to providing an additional 12 supported accommodation places.
- 3.9** The local community in Westcliff has previously expressed concern in relation to the management of the dispersed homeless temporary accommodation units. In September 2010, following a very serious incident in Ashton View, Dumbarton, members of the local community arranged a meeting with the MSP, the local elected members, the Police and officers from Housing services in order that their concerns could be discussed in more detail.
- 3.10** Whilst there was general agreement that not all of the difficulties in the area originated in the homeless temporary accommodation units, concern was expressed about both the transient nature of the population and the lack of visible support to address the needs of the more challenging individuals.
- 3.11** It was agreed at that time that Housing Services would investigate alternative service delivery options with a view to improving community stability within the Ashton View area.
- 3.12** The proposed additional 12 supported accommodation places are a first step in the reconfiguration of temporary accommodation provision throughout West Dunbartonshire. However, although the local community would seem to favour the idea of temporary accommodation being more effectively managed and monitored, it will be essential for officers from Housing and Community Safety to ensure that the local community is fully consulted on the proposal and that any concerns are addressed.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** The creation of this project will involve a reconfiguration of staff duties within the Homeless service. Whilst additional staffing resources will be required to deliver the core project, management and staff support will also be provided from existing resources within the Homeless service.
- 4.2** Appropriate staffing levels are essential to the success of any supported accommodation project. Officers have sought advice and information from staff managing a similar project managed by West Lothian Council and existing local Blue Triangle Projects.
- 4.3** To ensure that there is 24 hour cover available at all times, the project will require a dedicated manager (Grade 8), 4 Housing Support Workers (Grade 5) and a Housing Support Assistant (Grade 3). (Please note that grades at this time are indicative as all posts will be subject to job evaluation). Estimated staff costs are £180,000 per annum including on costs. However, there is an opportunity for this figure to be reduced by the use of existing staff resources.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The creation of a supported accommodation project at 28 Ashton View is a pilot within a planned reconfiguration of temporary homeless accommodation ahead of the financial challenges associated with the changes to the DWP regulations and the impact of the proposed partial stock transfer on the Council's income stream.
- 5.2** Outline costs have been obtained from Consultancy Services in relation to the proposed refurbishment of 28 Ashton View. They have estimated that the associated works will cost approx. £100,000 which will be funded from the HRA Capital Programme. This estimate includes the installation of CCTV in the common close area and monitoring equipment in the newly created office accommodation in the 2 ground floor flats. It has been agreed in principle that this will be funded from the Capital Programme. The refurbishment of the individual flats and the provision of furniture will be funded from the existing Homeless budget.
- 5.3** The property at 28 Ashton View will provide 12 supported accommodation places. Based on the Blue Triangle projects, Housing Benefit of approx. £300.00 per week is payable for each place. Therefore, after the initial refurbishment outlay, the project will be self financing.
- 5.4** Homelessness is a statutory service and as such the service has to be available out with normal working hours. At present the standby service is delivered by staff from within the Homeless Service at a cost of £11,000 per annum. It is proposed that the out of hours service will be delivered by the night shift staff based at 28 Ashton View generating some efficiency in out of hours provision.
- 5.5** If Committee approves the establishment of this pilot project, it is envisaged that the project will be fully operational before the end of the current financial year.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There are significant risks associated with reconfiguring the Council's temporary accommodation model within the appropriate timescales and these are as follows:
- The availability of units by size, type and area outwith the proposed partial stock transfer areas to meet the assessed demand.
 - The ability of stock to be developed as hostels.
 - The need to ensure there is a consistent spread of units to avoid concentration and the destabilisation of communities

- The continuing changes to the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) regulations in relation to the continued funding for temporary accommodation including hostels, supported accommodation and dispersed temporary accommodation units.
- The commitment of receiving landlords post stock transfer to ensure the Council can continue to meet both its statutory obligations and its commitments to customer service.

6.2 It is, therefore, essential that the process to reconfigure the provision of temporary accommodation is undertaken as a matter of urgency.

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment

7.1 West Dunbartonshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment

8. Strategic Assessment

8.1 The Council has identified four main strategic priorities for 2011/2012, namely Social & Economic Regeneration, Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Fit for Purpose Services.

8.2 The reconfiguration of temporary accommodation contributes to the underlying principles of the West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013:-

- Prevention - To prevent homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
- Housing Options - To improve the range of housing options available in West Dunbartonshire and to respond effectively to households in homelessness crisis
- Sustainable Solutions - To ensure a sustainable solution for individuals who have experienced homelessness
- Commitment - To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach

8.3 The Homelessness Strategy is a key element of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which 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.

8.4 The LHS places regeneration at the heart of local outcomes which contribute to all four of the Council's main strategic priorities for the communities of West Dunbartonshire.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 There is clear evidence to support the reconfiguration of homeless temporary accommodation.

9.2 The establishment of a Council managed supported accommodation project at 28 Ashton View, Dumbarton is the first step in the reconfiguration process and should provide the opportunity to establish clearly the benefits and challenges in developing this model as a mechanism for delivery across the Council.

9.3 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approve the development of the pilot project at 28 Ashton View and agree that, in consultation with local communities, officers can investigate other possible locations for further supported/hostel accommodation projects; and
- (ii) note that a further report will be submitted to a future Committee in early 2012 outlining a temporary accommodation strategy for West Dunbartonshire to meet the challenges faced by the service.

Elaine Melrose

Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Date: 11 October 2011

Person to Contact: Janice Lockhart - Homelessness and Allocations Manager, Mitchell Way, Alexandria, telephone: 01389 608033, e-mail: janice.lockhart@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: 1. Cost Benefit Analysis

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008/2013

Wards Affected: All