

# West Dunbartonshire Council Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016

## Report First Stage Consultation

### 1. Introduction

The LHS Housing Issues Paper was distributed for comment in mid May 2011 as the first stage of the consultation process over the forthcoming LHS<sup>1</sup>. The document was accompanied by a series of more detailed background papers. The first stage of the consultation lasted until 15 July 2011.

The consultation process was approached within the framework of the Council's Consultation Toolkit<sup>2</sup> and Tenants' Communication Strategy<sup>3</sup>.

The consultation exercise comprised three main elements:

- Circulation of the Papers around a wide range of consultees based on the list held by Chief Executive's Department but also including all current TROs. The list was supplemented by information from Planning following their recent Local Development Plan consultation and from the Tenant Participation Officer, which included a list of "interested tenants". In total, almost 260 organisations and individuals were approached in this fashion, although this figure includes some internal WDC consultees.
- Three deliberative public events were held in the principal centres of Clydebank, Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven. In addition, presentations were made to the WDTRO Committee, the Clydebank Community Forum and the WD Private Landlords Forum.
- Information was posted on the Council's website and the opportunity was given to make comment through a "Survey Monkey" questionnaire. In addition a press release was issued inviting comments and this was publicised in Housing News<sup>4</sup> and the local press.

Some approaches were more successful than others. The Council is evaluating the consultation process with a view to improving participation numbers and demographic spread in the future. In particular we will look at ways to increase attendance at public meetings and how we engage with younger service users.

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<sup>1</sup> WDC Local Housing Strategy Housing Issues Paper Consultative Draft 11 May 2011  
<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/local-housing-strategy/Documentation/>

<sup>2</sup> WDC Consultation Toolkit  
<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/community-and-living/consultation-toolkit/?locale=en>

<sup>3</sup> WDC Tenant Communication Strategy  
<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/tenant-participation/tenant-communication-strategy/>

<sup>4</sup> Housing News is the quarterly newsletter for tenants of West Dunbartonshire Council.

## **2. Comments Summary**

The Consultation Responses Summary Table attached to this paper (Appendix 1) lists the comments made from the various strands of the consultation exercise and are listed under the five key themes contained in the Housing Issues Paper. Almost all the questions posed in the issues paper received some answer or comment in the consultation process. In broad terms the key points made were:

- **Housing Need and Demand**

There was general agreement that sufficient land was available for housing. There was very strong support for the provision of more affordable housing. Making better use of existing stock was a recurring theme. There were mixed views on the value of mid-market rent and on the expansion of the private rented sector (PRS). There was some disagreement with the Housing Need and Demand Assessment headline finding that there was a surplus of affordable housing. It was suggested that this assessment may not have accounted for a mismatch between the type of supply and the needs of those applying for affordable housing. There was some support for the view that affordability was an issue and also that PRS rents were too high.

There was strong support for designation of Pressured Area Status (PAS) and some support for the development of an affordable housing policy. The proposed Council new build programme was welcomed. Housing for varying needs standards should be promoted in any new housing.

- **Promoting Good Quality Housing**

There was overwhelming support for making regeneration the main focus of housing investment. Different views were expressed over how best to involve owners in meeting the SHQS. There was strong support for fuel poverty measures being given a priority.

- **Homelessness**

Providing information and advice at an early stage and through schools were noted as ways of helping prevent homelessness. There were serious and widespread concerns expressed over the potential impact of the new welfare reforms on homelessness. There were a large number of comments made on the issue of how the Council provides temporary accommodation. Considerable support was expressed for providing more support in this type of housing and more options generally for those facing homelessness.

- **Sustainable and Supportive Communities**

A more visible presence by housing and other staff was considered to be a way of improving the housing service and reducing anti-social behaviour. More attention should be paid to environmental improvements in housing areas. Some comments were made on the Allocation policy and how this may be improved to

address the needs of all groups within our communities. Various suggestions were made on how community involvement could be improved including giving more support and encouragement to residents' committees.

- **Addressing Particular Housing Issues**

There was a lot of feedback on the challenges facing us especially in regards to the ageing population profile. There was considerable support for the policy of helping people stay in their own homes for as long as possible. Support was also expressed for an increase sheltered and other supported housing models. The issue of accessibility of the housing stock was also raised and the need to have a better coordinated and strategic approach to the provision of aids and adaptations across all housing providers noted.

### **3. Next Steps**

The comments made will be considered when drawing up the draft LHS. The circulation of the draft document in September 2011 will initiate a second period of consultation before the final version is submitted to the Scottish Government in November 2011. However, further comments on any part of the LHS are welcomed at any stage of this process. If you wish to make any comment, please do not hesitate to contact the Policy Team at:

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