



**West Dunbartonshire
Local Housing Strategy 2011 – 2016**

Executive Summary

November 2011

1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome to the summary of the West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy 2011 -2016. The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out our understanding of the housing issues over the coming five year period and indicates how the Council and its partners plan to address them.

The LHS provides the strategic direction for housing across all tenures and informs the future investment in housing and related services across West Dunbartonshire. This strategy replaces the previous Local Housing Strategy 2004 -2009.

1.2 The LHS is a key corporate planning activity and is the overarching strategic document on:

- **housing,**
- **homelessness,**
- **housing support services** and
- **fuel poverty.**

1.3 Views and comments expressed in the extensive consultation exercise in the summer of 2011 have been very important in drawing up this strategy. The full document and supporting papers can be found on the Council's website here:

<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/local-housing-strategy/>

2. Key Themes

2.1 Strategic Objectives

The new LHS has focused on the following five themes:

- Housing Need and Demand;
- Promoting Good Quality Housing;
- Homelessness;
- Sustainable and Supportive Communities; and
- Addressing Particular Housing Needs.

These themes link with the key West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership priorities and are outlined below.

2.2 Regeneration

There is a focus on regeneration in the document, reflecting the recognition of the need to improve many of our neighbourhoods and to provide housing which meets the changing requirements of our communities.

3. Housing Need and Demand

Key LHS Outcome: Ensuring people have access to affordable housing of all tenures which is in the right location and is suitable for their needs

3.1 The principal issues are around the population and household projections and what these mean for demand for housing and future supply. It is a requirement that the LHS be informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) which has been confirmed by the Scottish Government's Centre for Housing Market Research (CHMA) as robust and credible.

3.2 While West Dunbartonshire is projected to have a slight small drop in its population, the number of households is predicted to increase by 10% by 2025.

3.3 In broad terms, the HNDA indicates that demand for Private Sector housing is slowing down, the historic fall in demand for Social Rented housing is levelling off, and the Private Rented Sector is rising steeply. There is an adequate supply of housing land available in West Dunbartonshire for the period to 2025 although further work may be required to ascertain whether this is this is in the right location.

3.4 While house prices in West Dunbartonshire are below the Scottish average, so too are household incomes. This means that housing in West Dunbartonshire is more affordable than in many other places.

3.5 The Scottish Government encourages Councils to set annual supply targets for new housing supply. The LHS has set a target of 250 for the Private Sector and 70 for the WDC/Housing Association sector. Both targets may be ambitious in the current economic climate.

3.6 The LHS notes the expressed support for the introduction of Pressured Area Status whereby certain Council and Housing Association houses can be given protection from the Right to Buy arrangements. The Council intends to give this matter further consideration, in consultation with its Housing Association partners and the Scottish Government.

Key Actions

- Encourage and support appropriate applications to the SG Innovation and Investment Fund;
- Investigate alternative funding sources to contribute towards the provision of new housing;
- Maintain a generous supply of suitable housing land to meet Housing Supply Targets;
- Establish an integrated housing options approach with all partners;
- In consultation with partner housing associations, identify and designate appropriate housing types/areas for Pressured Area Status;

- Carry out further research on the value of mid-market/intermediate tenure options in West Dunbartonshire; and
- Consult on and produce an annual Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

4. Promoting Good Quality Housing

Key LHS Outcome: All residents live in good quality housing regardless of tenure.

4.1 This section considers progress towards meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the measures that are in place or are planned to address fuel poverty. Issues such as sustainability and the promotion of energy efficiency across all sectors are considered here.

4.2 West Dunbartonshire Council has a high percentage of non traditional housing stock and of multi storey flats which have higher investment needs, and associated costs, than traditionally built housing.

4.3 Council Stock Overview: While the stock has generally been well maintained on a day to day basis it has suffered from a lack of sustained planned maintenance investment. As a result, there are a significant number of major components that have reached or are reaching the end of their useful life and will require replacement in the short term. To meet its Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) obligations by 2015, the Council approved a Standard Delivery Plan for its housing stock in October 2008 which proposed a transfer of 45% of the stock to another landlord(s). It is planned that a tenant ballot on the transfer proposal will take place late in 2012. The Council is preparing an alternative “ Plan B”, should a decision be made not to proceed with the Partial stock transfer.

4.4 Private Sector Overview: The Council has recently carried out a Private Sector house condition which indicates that 88% of the housing in this sector would fail the quality standard. Most of failings are in relation to Energy Efficiency. There is significant equity in this sector which offers an opportunity unlock assistance for improvements and repairs. The Council’s Scheme of Assistance to Owners will have a crucial role in addressing these issues.

4.5 Housing Association Sector Overview: Currently 89% of stock in this sector meets the SHQS. Further work is needed to assemble the information on the quality of the housing association housing.

4.6 Private Rented Sector Overview: 41.3% of the private rented dwellings fail the Repairing Standard required of stock in this sector. The Council is developing a Private Sector Leasing Scheme and is working with this sector to improve awareness of landlord and tenant responsibilities.

4.7 The LHS details a wide range of energy efficiency initiatives and incentives which are in place or in the pipeline. The Council is committed to working in partnership to reduce fuel poverty and to help achieve the Scottish Government's reduced energy consumption and CO2 emissions targets.

Key Actions

- Direct council housing capital investment into larger scale projects over a longer period of time to ensure that all West Dunbartonshire Councils stock meets the SHQS by 2015.
- Work towards achieving the Scottish Government's targets contained in relevant legislation for reducing energy consumption and CO2 Emissions in line with Council Corporate Policy
- Work in partnership with developers and RSLs to ensure that all new build affordable housing incorporates sustainability measures where possible and energy efficiency standards.
- Work with partners to achieve a holistic approach to integrating housing policy, strategy and investment with wider area regeneration activities that contribute to creating sustainable and safe communities.
- Encourage private landlords to register with the Landlord Registration Scheme through participating in the Private Sector Leasing Scheme and building on established links with the private rented sector to improve awareness of tenant and landlord responsibilities.
- Engage with owners in mixed tenure blocks at an early stage to increase participation in improvement programmes and promote support and advice available through the Scheme of Assistance.
- Improve our understanding of fuel poverty in the local area, in order to target advice and assistance at those households who are most in need.
- Work closely with all partners including other Council Departments to ensure that funding opportunities are maximized for all households in West Dunbartonshire

5. Homelessness

Key LHS Outcome: Homelessness is minimised through prevention and early intervention measures.

5.1 This section links to the Council's Homelessness Strategy and provides updates in particular on key policy developments such as temporary accommodation and tenancy support measures.

5.2 West Dunbartonshire Council was one of the first in Scotland to achieve the Scottish Government's 2012 target to give all unintentional homeless households a right to settled status.

5.3 Over 2000 households still present as homeless every year in West Dunbartonshire. This figure, however, has been falling since 2007/08, largely

due to the preventative measures taken in recent years. This supports the prevention led approach adopted in the West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy.

5.4 41% of homeless applications were from households who are 24 years and younger. While the proportion of young applicants is falling, there is still an issue of high numbers of young female applicants in West Dunbartonshire. The Council is looking to develop a housing education programme in schools to help alleviate these problems.

5.5 Many homeless applicants have support needs arising from an addiction or require assistance to learn basic housing management skills. WDC has 257 temporary accommodation flats managed by workers who give support to residents. The Council is undertaking research on how the supported accommodation strategy can be best delivered.

5.6 The introduction and development of a housing options approach to improve access to housing in West Dunbartonshire is one of the Council's key aims over the next 12 months. A working group has been established to look at this issue. In addition, the Council, in partnership with housing association partners, is in the process of setting up a Common Housing Register and a Common Allocation policy to enable more housing choice and to make it easier for applicants to find suitable accommodation.

Key Actions

- Ensure that the aims and objectives of West Dunbartonshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 are realized;
- Develop and Implement a new West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2012-2016;
- Undertake a review of supported and temporary accommodation in West Dunbartonshire;
- Implement a new temporary accommodation strategy;
- Strengthen partnership with WD CHCP and Employability Services;
- Continue to work in partnership to tackle homelessness in West Dunbartonshire;
- We will introduce a housing options approach to ease access to suitable accommodation for West Dunbartonshire households;
- Develop an implement a West Dunbartonshire Common Housing Register and Common Allocation Policy;
- We will develop a West Dunbartonshire Tenancy Sustainment Strategy to improve tenancy sustainment levels in West Dunbartonshire;
- We will carry out a review of Housing Support in West Dunbartonshire to plan for future service provision; and
- We will introduce a Private Sector Leasing Scheme in West Dunbartonshire
- We will develop and implement an Empty Homes Strategy which will seek to bring empty properties back into use in West Dunbartonshire

6. Sustainable and Supportive Communities

Key LHS Outcome: We provide good quality neighbourhoods and housing services where all people feel safe and secure.

6.1 This section considers how we can improve the quality of our neighbourhoods and improve their sustainability. It also looks at how housing services are delivered and what improvements should be examined.

6.2 Housing Services in West Dunbartonshire Council are delivered through two Sections – Homelessness and Allocations and Anti-Social Behaviour and Estates. Our Estates service is designed to deliver services directly to residents within the community that enable individual tenancies and communities to remain sustainable and provide a safe and attractive environment in which to live.

6.3 Our housing estates service is underpinned by our values and principles relating to tenant participation. Our staff work directly with individual tenants and tenants and residents groups and in partnership with our tenant participation team to deliver appropriate services to achieve our objectives as outlined in our tenant participation strategy.

6.4 We will shortly be re-shaping these services by introducing a formal programme of tenant led inspections within our multi storey flats and our housing estates. It is important that our services are built around localised issues and that tenants have a role in helping to set our service standards and monitor local outcomes and performance against our objectives and targets.

6.5 We are committed to ensuring that the our services are provided on an equal and fair basis to all groups within our communities and have undertaken to research the housing and homelessness needs of Minority Ethnic Groups, LGBT people and gypsies/travellers.

6.6 The integrated Anti Social Behaviour service represents an innovative approach to integrating ASB services between the Council and the Police, and is laying the foundation for even closer co-operation and joined-up services in the future. The new service is designed to achieve a good balance of resources between the preventative and early intervention elements of the service and the enforcement measures which may sometimes be required. A particular feature is the joint Public Reassurance initiatives, which engage communities in setting priorities and actions in their area. The Council's website more contains detail on the range of activities carried out by the Community Safety and Antisocial Behaviour service.

Key Actions

- Further develop joint working between Estate Management and Community Safety / ASB services in relation to West Dunbartonshire

- Council tenants and their communities;
- To continue to support the RSL partner's forum and to strengthen links with ASB Task Group action plans;
 - Continued commitment by partners to monthly ASB Task Group meetings and problem solving groups, both generic and area-based, as part of the West Dunbartonshire Community Safety Partnership;
 - Continue to develop specific partnership working and developing integrated services between WDC and Strathclyde Police, from early intervention to enforcement;
 - Further develop and monitor existing information sharing protocols, and continue to provide funding for information and intelligence sharing posts;
 - Engage in joint actions to reduce antisocial behaviour and disorder, in particular alcohol and drug related initiatives; and
 - Work with communities to encourage increased reporting and involvement in KIN networks to increase flow of community intelligence.

7. Addressing Particular Housing Needs

Key LHS Outcome: People with particular needs have access to suitable housing with any necessary support to optimise their independence and well being.

7.1 This section outlines the Council's approach to addressing the housing and support needs of specific groups in West Dunbartonshire and what we can do to enable people to live in housing which promotes their independence and well being. In particular we will here look at the housing issues surrounding the following groups:

- **Adults, including older adults with:**
 - **Disability**
 - **Long term conditions**
 - **Mental ill health**
- **Alcohol/Drugs**
- **Gypsy Travellers**
- **Vulnerable Young People**

7.2 These groups are particularly vulnerable within the local communities and are often subject to a disproportionate level of discrimination in relation to both their housing and social needs. Whilst acknowledging the particular issues which their specific disability may present, it is important to recognise that the housing support needs of particular groups are fairly consistent.

Successful housing (and social care) support often depends on the location, model and range of housing available. This is particularly true for those who present challenges to the local community or who themselves may be very

vulnerable in a main stream setting. With this in mind, it is important that engagement takes place with the specific client groups at an early stage which allows those client groups and their representatives to shape future housing development. This will allow those involved in the process to commission housing and services which are individualised and which fit with the authority's firmly held views on personalisation.

7.3 The strategy recognises the need to operate within the current financial constraints and to continue to address the service redesign issues which will allow us to provide more appropriate housing and support to individuals within limited resources. The Council recognises the very distinctive social circumstances of vulnerable people and acknowledges the need for earlier engagement with all parties in order to continue to improve access to appropriate housing in the West Dunbartonshire area.

7.4 A key driver in respect of the Council's housing support strategy for the coming years is the ageing demographic. It is projected that by 2024, 40% of WD households will be headed by a person aged 60+.

7.5 One strand of the national and local policy has been 'shifting the balance of care' from NHS and other institutional settings to tenancy based support in the community. Housing and housing support have a key role in supporting 'shifting the balance of care'. Providing the right housing support at the right time can avoid tenancy breakdown and hospital or institutional admissions and readmissions at great expense to the public purse as well the detrimental effect on a person's physical and mental wellbeing.

Key Actions

- Decide on the proposals to bring up WDC care home facilities to the Care Commission standards and agree on any reprovisioning arrangements;
- Identify which sheltered housing developments should be developed into extra care housing and establish a programme to meet this objective;
- Maximise the capital generated from reducing the WDC directly provided care home provision to contribute towards the capital cost of developing extra care housing and investing in technological developments;
- RSL partners will be encouraged to include a specified element of particular needs housing in any new developments;
- WDC and RSL partners will work with private developers to investigate options for the provision of new extra care housing;
- Consideration will be given to how best to incorporate all aids and adaptations income streams and to adopt a better strategic approach to their provision;
- Promote the use of telecare as a safe and valuable contribution to maintaining a tenancy;
- WDC/RSLs to revise the allocations policy to make better use of accessible stock such as sheltered housing and ground floor accommodation; and

- Social housing providers to collaborate in the re-provisioning of support housing for people with learning disabilities, mental health and addiction issues to allow efficiencies through clustering arrangements.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

8.1 The delivery of the Local Housing Strategy will be monitored and evaluated through the Council's performance management framework and based on the Outcomes Templates suggested by the Scottish Government. An Outcomes Table accompanies the LHS which will help to monitor progress against agreed timescales.

8.2 The LHS will be subject to review which will be rolled forward on an annual basis and supported by a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) setting out how the housing investment priorities will be delivered.

Further information

Should you require any further information about the Local Housing Strategy please do not hesitate to contact the Housing Policy team at:

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