

Fife Housing Partnership Meeting

Date:	Tuesday 20th May 2025 (3pm – 4.30pm)
Venue:	Virtual via MS Teams
Attendance:	<p>Partners: Tom Barclay (KHA), Nicki Donaldson (FHG), James Erskine (Rural Property & Business Association), Cllr Brian Goodall (FC), Iain Ralph (FFOTRA), Gerry McDougall (Private Landlord) & Caryn Nicolson (FF).</p> <p>Support: Nouchali Bandaranayaka, Alice Berry, Tracey Drummond, Taylor Folks, John Mills, Mhairi Mullen, Sarah Ritchie, Patricia Spacey, Gavin Smith & Lucy Turner (FC).</p>
Chair:	Tom Barclay (Vice Chair)
Issued:	26 th May 2025

Item	Agenda Items	Action
1.0	<p>Welcome Four Environmental Health Officer students from Protective Services joined Fife Housing Partnership (FHP) to gain an insight to the strategic elements of housing.</p> <p>Apologies Partners: Gavin Brady (CK), Chris Conroy (H&SCP), Alan Dalby (FFOTRA), Alistair Dee (Scot Gov), Lucy Denvir (NHS), Patricia Gray (FFOTRA), Cllr Judy Hamilton (Chair), Bruce McCall (GK) & David Steane (Scot Gov).</p> <p>Support: Rob Bowditch, Greig Henderson, Joan Lamie, Paul Short & Helen Wilkie (FC).</p>	
2.0	<p>Note of Previous Meeting The partnership agreed the note of previous meeting.</p> <p>Action Note: Action point 2 – an allocations policy review update is provided under agenda item 4. Action point 6 – all spaces are filled for the H100 demonstration centre visit. The agenda will be circulated over the next few days. Anyone still wishing to attend can be added to the reservation list.</p>	
3.0	<p>Rural Housing Short-Life Working Group Reporting As the Chair of the short-life working group exploring rural housing in Fife, JE introduced the agenda item. The work of the group has been impressive and has created an opportunity for innovation. The group reached out to other local authorities to gain learning from like-minded experts. Group member, TD, delivered a presentation on the project findings. Rural Housing is promoted nationally through Housing to 2040, the Rural and Islands Housing Action Plan and two dedicated funds to support affordable housing delivery in rural areas. It also links to various local strategies but most importantly the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). £30m is available through the Rural & Islands Affordable Housing Fund (RIHF). This is for new build housing, but it is not open to local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), therefore does not suit current Fife projects. £25m is available through the Rural Key Workers Housing Fund (RKWHF). This can be used by local authorities and RSLs for acquisitions in rural areas, however a key</p>	

worker policy is required, which Fife does not currently have. To qualify properties must be in class 4, 5 or 6 of the Scottish Government's six-fold rural classification. Fife contains class 5 (accessible rural) properties, particularly in the Northeast (NEF) and Southwest (SWF) areas. Fife presently contains 6,592 rural households with the predominant number in NEF. 23% of new builds completed between 2017-2024 have been in rural areas. House prices and affordability can be an issue in rural areas, as well as housing access, cost of living, access to healthcare, poverty and funding for public services. Engagement has taken place with Moray Council and Highland Council who have both accessed the RKWHF for acquisitions. Both used different approaches but were happy to share experiences to help inform the Fife research. Engagement also occurred with Business and Employability Services to look at staff shortages in rural areas. Amazon, Babcock, Kettle Produce, and the Old Course have all reported staffing issues. Further consultation work is required to help define a key worker in Fife. A key worker policy or statement within the SHIP must be in place to access funding. Further details on this research can be found within the report accompanying the presentation.

Comments were raised on the following:

- This is a great piece of work which should be pursued, however, correctly defining a key worker is crucial. Amazon & Babcock potentially aren't the sectors which should be targeted as these would only be for economic reasons. The NHS & H&SC should be considered. Different organisations will have different perspectives.
- Both NEF & SWF are difficult areas to obtain acquisitions. Cost issues are prevalent in NEF. It's positive to know additional national funding can be levered in to increase affordable housing levels.
- New stock in Fife would be welcomed. Is it possible to identify the current number of key workers on the Fife Housing Register (FHR) waiting list?
- Tied accommodation (e.g. armed forces) is welcomed in the allocations policy but how does this align to the SHIP?
- Settling people into accommodation then moving them on isn't ideal. There needs to be a balance.
- House prices are extortionate in rural communities, making it difficult to retain staff in employment. Private landlords should be enabled to access funding to build affordable housing.
- A timeline is required for this work as the funding is due to end in 2028.

More time is required to digest the content of the report however, it is evident consultation with employers is required to help adopt a common agreement across partners for the definition of a key worker. Funding could be used to boost Mid-Market Rent (MMR) but the allocations approach needs to be correct to target appropriate households. A suitable tenancy agreement would also need to be agreed. There is no current data on the number of key workers through FHR. A strategic statement is required to determine who should be prioritised if this is to be an allocations priority and other policies/strategies need to be aligned to reflect this. This could be a general policy commitment with a localised approach through local lettings plans. The Fife Housing Association Alliance (FHAA) are due to hold an allocations workshop in August and key workers can be incorporated into this. It is evident national funding has not been well utilised, and action should be taken soon to ensure this can be accessed.

	<p>Action/Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objections to including a key worker statement within the allocations policy providing the definition is correct. Any further comments on the research or report should be shared with LT by the end of May. A timeline should be developed which includes consultation to help establish a key worker in Fife. 	<p>All</p> <p>GS</p>
4.0	<p>Allocations Policy Review</p> <p>GS provided an update on the allocations policy review. Choice-based lettings were explored by the group, but it was agreed this would not proceed. It is anticipated the current system can be simplified to make the process easier for tenants whilst also ensuring local needs are being met. A transfer-led approach will continue to be implemented to create chains of allocations. Incentives need to be enhanced to encourage downsizing to help make the best use of stock. Around 600 new FHR applications are received on a monthly basis which includes young care leavers and people experiencing domestic abuse. Along with evidence of an aging population, this supports the requirement to boost supply. It is important to ensure the correct mixes of housing are being delivered to meet diverse household needs. Consideration has been given to allocating 2-bed properties to single people. Although this addresses the mismatch in supply versus demand, it can create other issues such as fuel poverty. The current IT system for allocating housing is fragile and alternatives are being explored at present. A communication and consultation programme is in development which involves specialist stakeholder groups such as young people and key workers. The timeline for the review is expected to wrap up in November with Cabinet Committee reporting.</p> <p>Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a requirement to ensure different voices are heard and ensure a range of customers are engaged through surveys. How will different stakeholder groups be covered? <p>GS will be meeting with FHAA to develop a consultation programme to ensure all bases are covered and no voices go unheard. Engagement will take place during May-Sept. FFOTRA have already contributed by arranging the recent allocation policy workshop. Partners will wish to do their own consultation, but consistency is key.</p> <p>Action/Decision No further action / decision required.</p>	
5.0	<p>Housing Emergency Update</p> <p>GS advised the Scottish Government were slow to react to the housing emergency. Fife were one of five local authorities working on the recently concluded Housing Emergency 'Sprint' alongside the Scottish Government. A 'wash up' meeting will take place to cover unfinished business as it is expected further work is required in relation to the 'Sprint'. There is still no national action plan in place. Although affordable housing subsidy has been restored, the housing emergency has not been resolved. There are still systemic failures, slow new builds site starts and high numbers of empty homes to be addressed. It is important to find a balance between new builds and acquisitions to address supply issues. Engagement is on-going with the Scottish Housing Regulator regarding homelessness, tenant safety and gypsy/traveller sites. Homeless presentations remain static at 1,600 with the transfer-led allocations a real credit to this. There hasn't been an</p>	

	<p>increase in cases as predicted and resettlement has not impacted homelessness. Fife will not follow the City of Edinburgh where the lettings policy has been suspended to allocate to homeless households as a priority. Fife are looking to include a small number of housing emergency actions to be embedded into the existing LHS framework and be delivered through existing housing partnerships. These actions are still to be agreed and will take no wrong door and the place agenda into consideration. It's evident funding will be required to support actions.</p> <p>Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FHAA are committed to support and deliver with regards to the housing emergency. Data collected and presented should show FHAA contribution. • The focus areas of the housing emergency should be used to inform the FHP agenda moving forward. • A report will be presented to the reform board on the 21st May. This will be crucial for decisions. It is likely another housing summit type event will follow in due course. • Children in temporary accommodation are a concern. Allocating 2-bed properties to single people will not address this. How can partners contribute to this? • Why did the anticipated surge in homelessness not materialise? • Farming payments will no longer be ringfenced. Could this be used to free up land for new build developments? • Is there any indication of how access to Housing First will be broadened? <p>Progress can't be expected too quickly. Although good progress and hard work is obvious across partners, land constraints are hindering building at scale. The surge in homelessness was anticipated by Crisis Scotland. Homelessness is driven by poverty and the demand for temporary accommodation increased after the pandemic. The work around prevention has been excellent in Fife, which has stopped the surge. Interventions and decisions are still required on the way services are provided - should things continue as they are, or are big changes required such as heavily increasing Housing First tenancies? The Housing First evaluation should be available over the next few weeks and can be reported to FHP. Conversations are required with wider partners about how this can be broadened wider than homelessness, however, this is fragile as homelessness funding is not certain beyond year end.</p> <p>Action/Decision Ensure housing emergency focus areas are incorporated into future FHP agendas. Evaluation of Housing First to be shared with FHP once concluded.</p>	LT GS
6.0	<p>AOCB No other business for discussion.</p>	
Next Meeting	<p>Thursday 28th August 2025 – 1pm Virtual via MS Teams</p>	

No.	D.O.M	Action Points	Action	Lead	Deadline	Complete
1	21.05.24	Acquisitions Team Email	Share the generic acquisitions team email address with FHP. Email address - Property.Acquisitions@fife.gov.uk	GS	May 2024	✓
2	21.05.24	Allocations Policy Task & Finish Group	Report on group progress to FHP including comparisons of needs based and choice-based systems. 09.05.25 – Allocations policy update on May agenda.	GS	Nov 2024 Feb 2025 May 2025	✓
3	21.05.24	Draft Empty Homes Strategy	Circulate the draft empty homes strategy to FHP for comment. 27.08.24 – Strategy circulated 21.08.24 and approved during FHP meeting.	TD	May 2024	✓
4	27.08.24	Housing Emergency Action Plan (HEAP) Cabinet Committee Report	Circulate the 6 th June Cabinet Committee report which contains the HEAP to FHP.	LT	Aug	✓
5	25.02.25	Short-term Let (STL) data	Data to be circulated on the number of STL licence refusals 28.02.25 - To date no applications for a licence have been refused. However, due to invalid applications received (for reasons such as relevant certificates not provided), we have rejected to determine these applications, additionally invalid applications have been withdrawn by applicants for similar reasons such as certificates and not following the correct procedure.	TD	May	✓
6	25.02.25	H100 demonstration centre site visit	An FHP site visit will take place on 28 th May from 11am – 1pm. Anyone interested in attending should contact LT. 09.05.25 – all places filled. Agenda to be circulated by SGN one week prior to site visit.	All	May	✓
7	20.05.25	Rural Housing Funding Options Report	Any further comments on the research or report should be shared with LT by the end of May. 12.08.25 – No further comments received.	All	May	✓
8	20.05.25	Key Worker Policy / Consultation	A timeline should be developed which includes consultation to help establish a key worker in Fife.	GS	Oct	

No.	D.O.M	Action Points	Action	Lead	Deadline	Complete
9	20.05.25	FHP agendas	Ensure the focus areas of the housing emergency are incorporated into future FHP agendas.	LT	Nov	
10	20.05.25	Housing First evaluation	Evaluation of Housing First to be shared with FHP once concluded. 12.08.25 – On August FHP agenda.	GS	Aug	✓

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