

Fife Housing Partnership Meeting

Date:	Tuesday 21st May 2024 (11.30am – 1pm)
Venue:	Fife House (Rm FHM05.002) / Virtual
Attendance:	<p>Partners: Cllr Judy Hamilton (Chair), Cllr Lesley Backhouse (FC), Alan Dalby (FFOTRA), Lucy Denvir (NHS), Nicki Donaldson (FHG), James Erskine (Rural Property & Business Association), Jane Kell (CK), Susan McDonald (KHA), Gerry McDougall (Private Landlord), Caryn Nicolson (FF) & David Steane (Scot Gov).</p> <p>Support: Tracey Drummond, Nigel Kerr, Fiona McKay, John Mills, Mhairi Mullen, Joanne Saurin, Paul Short, Gavin Smith & Lucy Turner (FC).</p>
Issued:	27 th May 2024

Item	Agenda Items	Action
1.0	<p>Apologies Partners: Tom Barclay (KHA), Gavin Brady (CK), Bill Campbell (FFOTRA), Alistair Dee (Scot Gov) & Clare Jones (NEFTRF), Bruce McCall (GK).</p> <p>Support: Greig Henderson, Joan Lamie, Patricia Spacey & Helen Wilkie (FC).</p>	
2.0	<p>Note of Previous Meeting Query on the number of acquisitions recorded (100) in the previous note as recent discussions account for an increase to 150. The note was prepared in the previous financial year, therefore, figures may have changed. There is no funding for acquisitions in 2024-25 at present. These require self-funding. Numbers may change in response to this.</p> <p>The partnership agreed the note of previous meeting.</p> <p>Action Note: Action point 17 – reasons behind empty homes in Fife. This will be covered within agenda item 5.</p>	
3.0	<p>Housing Emergency Action Plan GS advised five Councils have now declared a Housing Emergency as well as several National Bodies. Regular contact is maintained with the Scottish Housing Regulator in relation to the Fife Engagement Plan to ensure statutory requirements remain a priority. Several factors contributed to the emergency declaration including a shortage of properties available for social rent, reduction in national funding available for new affordable housing delivery, increased pressure on homelessness and temporary accommodation, as well as economic factors. A Housing Emergency Action Plan is in development which focuses on three main themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosting affordable housing • Making best use of existing properties • Enhancing housing access and prevention of homelessness 	

	<p>Actions will be identified to support the three themes and address challenges faced at both a local and national level. A range of stakeholder engagement is on-going, with a Housing Emergency Summit scheduled to take place on Monday 27th May 2024. FHP attendance is encouraged at this event. A draft high-level action plan and covering report will be presented to Cabinet Committee on the 6th June 2024.</p> <p>Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Associations are receiving requests from homeowners/ex-tenants to purchase properties on a weekly basis. Is there a generic email address where these can be forwarded to Fife Council for consideration? • Funding for open market acquisitions is looking unlikely which implies these will require front funding. • It is anticipated 80% of the 2024-25 Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding from the Scottish Government will be available in 2025-26. • An additional £80m of Scottish Government funding is available for a two-year period from 2024-26. Discussions around the Local Authority split of this fund are currently on-going. <p>The generic email address for the acquisitions team can be shared with Fife Housing Partnership. 80% of 2024-25 funding for the 2025-26 period, is a safe figure for approving future projects but is not a confirmed budget position. The Scottish Government will meet with Fife Council in due course to discuss future affordable housing programmes and funding.</p> <p>Action/Decision Share the FC acquisition team generic email address with FHP - Property.Acquisitions@fife.gov.uk</p>	GS
4.0	<p>Housing Access & Allocations</p> <p>GS updated on the allocations policy review which will be conducted by a Task & Finish group between May and late autumn. Cllr Hamilton will Chair the group which comprises of a range of internal and external partners. The allocation policy review has not been driven by the Housing Emergency. The group will consider if the current policy is meeting local need, explore needs-based and choice-based systems, identify if commonality can be developed further between partners and consider if there is a more simple and effective way to deliver the system for customers, including tying in with ‘No Wrong Door’. A review of other landlord and national approaches will take place to identify best practice and the Task & Finish group will consult with customers as part of the process. The Task & Finish group will report back to FHP in due course which will include comparisons of needs-based and choice-based systems. Cabinet Committee will receive a report in autumn. This is a short timescale considering previous allocations policy reviews were conducted over a three-year period.</p> <p>Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scottish Government are keen for policies to be flexible to make best use of stock rather than containing rigid rules. • It can be very difficult to obtain staff for employment in rural areas. For this reason, private rented properties tend to be offered to locally employed people, which means less housing is available for let. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scottish Government have made £25m available through a rural affordable housing key workers fund. This is in addition to wider housing supply programme funding. <p>Flexible policies can cause confusion for allocating officers and create problems with customers if consistent advice is not provided. Transfer-led is regarded best practice as a chain of allocations can be used to help homeless households. Key workers will be included in the allocations policy review, and this will be taken on board. The rural key workers fund will also be explored.</p> <p>Action/Decision Report progress of Allocations Policy Task & Finish group to FHP including comparisons of needs-based and choice-based systems.</p>	GS
5.0	<p>Empty Homes Strategy</p> <p>TD updated on the draft Empty Homes Strategy. Resources in the Empty Homes team have recently increased to help return more homes back into housing use, which will help support the housing emergency. The Empty Homes Strategy links to Housing to 2040 as well as several local plans including the Local Housing Strategy 2022-27 and the Plan for Fife 2017-27. A range of internal and external funding has been identified, however, there is a requirement for more funding to expand services. 550 empty homes have been brought back into housing use since services initiated in 2014, with some of the reasons for these being empty including emotional attachment, financial problems, major repairs and inheritance issues. A range of support is offered to owners to assist. The following case study evidences how life changing this support can be: Case Study - YMCA Glenrothes - The difference empty homes work makes to people's lives (emptyhomespartnership.scot)</p> <p>A caseload of empty homes is received from Council Tax on a monthly basis. The highest proportion of empty homes in comparison with Council Tax tenure is within the Largo & East Neuk LHS area, followed by St Andrews. The largest proportion of empty homes is recorded in the Kirkcaldy area. The draft Empty Homes Strategy will be circulated to FHP by the end of May for comments. The strategy will return to FHP in autumn for approval. Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there likely to be Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) for empty homes in future? <p>CPOs are not currently in practice although these are included in the empty homes action plan for consideration. Glasgow currently operate CPOs and engagement has taken place to learn from experiences. These can be very resource intense and it's unclear if the capacity for CPOs is available at present. These would likely require additional funding.</p> <p>Action/Decision Draft Empty Homes Strategy to be circulated to FHP for comment</p>	TD
6.0	<p>AOCB</p> <p>Jane Kell confirmed this will be her last partnership meeting due to her retirement. Gavin Brady (StAndEN CEO) will represent Cosy Kingdom moving forward.</p>	
Next Meeting	Tuesday 27th August 2024 – 11.30am Virtual via MS Teams	

No.	D.O.M	Action Points	Action	Lead	Deadline	Complete
1	29.08.23	LHS 2022-2027	Circulate LHS 2022-2027 Scottish Government review letter to FHP. 01.09.23 – letter issued to FHP along with Note of Meeting.	LT	Aug 2023	✓
2	29.08.23	LHS 2022-2027	Final LHS 2022-2027 to be presented to FHP for sign off in due course. 30.10.23 – on the 21.11.23 FHP agenda for sign off.	MM/LT	Nov 2023	✓
3	29.08.23	National Dementia Strategy	Provide update to FHP at November meeting following the LHS priority group thematic discussion. 30.10.23 – on the 21.11.23 FHP agenda.	PS	Nov 2023	✓
4	29.08.23	Director-General Communities (Scottish Government) Visit	Issue visit feedback letter to FHP. 13.11.23 – Letter issued to FHP	JM	Nov 2023	✓
5	29.08.23	FHP Agreement	Ensure the FHP agreement is signed off by all FHP members. 30.10.23 – FHP agreement signed by all members.	LT	Nov 2023	✓
6	29.08.23	2024-2025 FHP Meetings	Issue the 2024-2025 programme of meetings to include one face-to-face meeting, held centrally during summer months. 14.11.23 – Meeting dates issued for 2024-2025. Room to be sourced for face-to-face meeting on 21.05.24.	LT	Nov 2023	✓
7	21.11.23	Letter to Scottish Government on LHS 2022-2027	Prepare and submit a letter to the Scottish Government confirming the actions taken to address the areas of consideration raised through the LHS review.	LT	Dec 2023	✓
8	21.11.23	Vacant and derelict land	Obtain and circulate information on vacant and derelict land potential funding / sites linking to the SHIP and circulate to FHP. 13.12.23 – Information from Ian McCrory circulated to FHP.	CK	Dec 2023	✓
9	21.11.23	Rural Housing Short-Life Working Group	Establish a detailed proposal identifying the objectives and commitment expected from participants.	JM/LT	Dec 2023	✓

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10	21.11.23	Rural Housing Short-Life Working Group	Those wishing to participate in the Short-Life Working Group to make contact with LT. 10.05.24 – Five nominations received for the group with details provided to JM.	All	Jan 2024	✓
11	20.02.24	Empty Homes	Share information on the reasons behind Empty Homes in Fife. 21.05.24 – TD updated on this within the Empty Homes Strategy presentation. The reasons include inheritance issues, financial problems, investment assets, emotional attachment, major repairs and unwillingness to sell.	MM	May 2024	✓
12	20.02.24	Fuel Poverty Research	Circulate full research report to FHP.	RM	Feb 2024	✓
13	20.02.24	LHEES Workshop	Circulate workshop invitation and details to FHP. 29.02.24 - Workshop scheduled to take place on 28.03.24.	LT	Feb 2024	✓
14	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	✓
15	21.05.24	Allocations Policy Task & Finish Group	Report on group progress to FHP including comparisons of needs based and choice-based systems.	GS	Nov 2024	
16	21.05.24	Draft Empty Homes Strategy	Circulate the draft empty homes strategy to FHP for comment.	TD	May 2024	

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