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**Report to:**                    **Housing Health and Care Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:**        **3 September 2015**

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**Subject:**                    **Housing Development & Community Safety,  
Support & Advice Services Update**

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**Report by:**                **Head of Housing & Community Safety**

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### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1. The report provides progress on the strategic housing programme, feedback from consultation on the lock-up strategy and an update on Community Safety.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that Committee;

- 2.1. Recommend to Council approval to vire £734k (4.3) from the HRA Capital Programme to Off The Shelf Purchases, to ensure that Scottish Government Affordable Housing Supply Grant is maximised for Clackmannanshire.
- 2.2. Agree to consult on the disposal of selected lockups at Wardlaw Street, Coalsnaughton.
- 2.3. Agree to conduct a feasibility study to identify the capacity for new housing at Craigview in Sauchie.
- 2.4. Notes the report, while commenting on and challenging as appropriate.

### **3.0 Affordable Housing Programme**

- 3.1. The Strategic Local Programme (SLP), as reported to Committee in April 2015 has been signed off by the Scottish Government, giving Clackmannanshire an affordable housing budget of £5.377m for the next 3 years, to 2018. The target spend for year one is £2.199m before 31 March 2016.
- 3.2. A total of £473,000 has been claimed to the end of July 2015 and £299,000 is projected to be spent in August 2015.
- 3.3. There is however some slippage on projects. As it is essential to spend the allocated grant funding, it is proposed below, to add to the programme off the shelf purchases.

#### **4.0 Off the Shelf Purchases**

- 4.1. The previous off the shelf purchase programme resulted in 40 properties being added to the mainstream housing stock in the last two years. This has proved to be a successful policy. To avoid any potential underspend in the housing grant target it is recommended that a programme of off the shelf acquisitions begin.
- 4.2. To facilitate this the underspend on the capital programme from the Tillicoultry Community Centre Development (Ann Street) phases 1a and 1b as well as the Capital Budget allowance approved for Phase 2 is vired to Off The Shelf Purchases. Phase 2 will be taken forward by Kingdom Housing Association and therefore the budget can be released, less amounts retained for remaining land assembly.
- 4.3. The £734k virement is from the following; Tillicoultry Community Centre Phase 1a (£65k underspend), Tillicoultry Community Centre Phase 1b (£77k underspend) and Tillicoultry Community Centre Phase 2 (£592k budget release) as project being taken forward by Kingdom Housing Association.
- 4.4. As before, the properties targeted would be of the type and size most needed, in high demand locations. Properties will be inspected to determine works to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard can be met, and the bid will reflect market value.

#### **5.0 On site Projects**

##### Council New build

- 5.1. Ann Street, Tillicoultry (former community centre) achieved a site start in June 2015. Kingdom is managing the development of 21 amenity homes, 17 of which are bungalows, for older or disabled tenants.
- 5.2. Fairfield, Sauchie Work commenced on this development in February for 19 homes and is due for completion in March 2016.
- 5.3. Delph Road, Tullibody is being progressed by Kingdom Housing Association and remains on target for completion of 27 units by March 2016.
- 5.4. Redwell Place, Alloa Kingdom started on site in July 2015. The single, accessible wheelchair bungalow has been designed to meet the needs of a family with specific needs. Because it is an individually designed unit on a single plot, the build costs, projected at £239k, take it over Scottish Government benchmarks. In recognition of the specialist, one-off nature of the project, the following funding package was agreed, to enable the project to proceed.

Scottish Government grant	£126,000
Contribution to build costs (HRA)	£29,999
Upgrade adjacent footpath (HRA)	£4,100
Kingdom Housing Association	£78,901
<u>Total</u>	<u>£239,000</u>

5.5. The contribution from the HRA will be repaid over a period of 3 years, from income generated from the reduction in Council Tax discount for empty homes, which is ring-fenced for affordable housing. It was estimated that the cost of extending this family's existing home would cost the council nearer to £40k. This case is highly unusual and is not intended to set a precedent for the future.

5.6. Tigh Grian Greener Homes, Alva. A start on site for the 48 highly fuel efficient homes, for rent by Paragon and Link housing associations, had been anticipated in June, following lengthy negotiations between Tigh Grian, Link and the Scottish Government. The delay has continued due to amendments needed to previously agreed missives, as a result of recent legislative changes, and finalising a road bond.

## 6.0 Future Projects

6.1. The Orchard, Tullibody is due for demolition by end of September and thereafter a decision on its future development.

6.2. Primrose Place, Alloa. Plans have been submitted by Kingdom for approval for 20 flats. The site is on target for a start by October 2015. The site is very tight and Kingdom may come back and ask for the Council to give consideration to selling additional ground in the area to ensure the site potential is maximised.

6.3. Primrose Street, Alloa was purchased by the Council in March 2015. It is currently programmed for a start in 2017.

6.4. Ann Street, Tillicoultry Phase 2 will see at least another 8 properties developed and managed by Kingdom Housing Association. The Council is progressing the purchase of two additional pieces of land surrounding the old community centre site to enable maximum development potential and number of affordable housing units in the area.

## 7.0 Lockups

7.1. Following agreement from Committee on 4th June 2015, informal consultation on the future of the five lockup sites has taken place. The consultation wasn't

statistically valid, however, it is clear from the comments received that surrounding residents and lock-up tenants have particular concerns over parking even if there is support for the demolition of the current lock-ups.

- 7.2. Therefore, when we consider the feasibility of these sites for in-fill development we will investigate whether additional housing can be provided as well as improved parking for local residents.

#### Wardlaw Street, Coalsnaughton

- 7.3. The lock-ups in Wardlaw Street are located within the curtilage of properties and the recommendation is to sell, or transfer, the lock-ups to the occupants of the respective properties, where they are also the tenants of the lockup.
- 7.4. With the exception of 2 houses, all of the properties with lock-ups attached have been bought through the Right to Buy. The lock-ups were not sold with the houses at the time of the RTB sale. To begin with, the owners who are also tenanted the lockup within their own curtilage will be asked if they would be interested in purchasing the lockup to make it part of their property. As other lockups become void, the owner of that property will be given the same option. Currently 6 lockups can be offered immediately with the 6 that remain continuing to bring in an income of around £2,000 each year to the Council.
- 7.5. As previously agreed by elected members on 30 October 2014, we will only consider the sale or transfer of lock-ups to individuals where this will not create the potential for future difficulties and if there is a majority agreement to do so. It is not our intention to sell other lockup units on a piecemeal basis.

#### Craigview, Sauchie

- 7.6. This site, which includes the lock-ups and an unused shop, together with other areas of surrounding HRA land, has the potential to provide much needed affordable housing. The service will conduct a feasibility study to identify the capacity for new housing which will also look to include additional parking spaces for community use.

### **8.0 Home Energy Efficiency Programme 2015/16**

- 8.1. The Home Energy Efficiency Programme: Area Based Schemes (HEEPS:ABS) 2015/16 contract for loft, cavity and external wall insulation is currently out to tender. It is envisaged that work will commence in October 2015/16.
- 8.2. The Council is presently working with Home Energy Scotland to promote the scheme and to identify homes that will be eligible for loft and cavity wall insulation. Letters and home visits are being organised to help us reach those most in need of assistance under this scheme.
- 8.3. Following the appointment of a contractor, public meetings will be held for the residents in Alva, Coalsnaughton and Tullibody who are scheduled to have external wall insulation applied to their homes. This includes 114 'non traditional' houses (31 Council and 83 privately owned).

- 8.4. As part of the HEEPS:ABS programme, the Council has been allocated funding to carry out enabling works associated with the Programme. This means that the two home energy advisers, employed by Home Energy Scotland to work exclusively in Clackmannanshire, are funded for a further year. They will assist in identifying properties suitable for this year's programme. The team has already brought in accumulated savings of over £670,000 for local fuel poor households

### **Renewable Energy Challenge Bids**

- 8.5. The Council has now been informed of the outcome of the bids for funding to explore the feasibility of renewable energy initiatives, reported to the previous Committee. As well as maximising income to the Council, these projects will improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and alleviate fuel poverty.

### **Geothermal feasibility study**

- 8.6. The Council has been offered the opportunity to work with the Project Development Unit for the Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme (LCITP) to further develop the proposals set out in the bid, which focused on bringing together a number of projects to utilise existing operational and decommissioned industrial infrastructure as a basis for driving sustainable economic growth. This is a welcome opportunity for officers to work alongside specialists in the field, to determine how we can best develop the project.

### **Solar Photo Voltaic (PV) Panels**

- 8.7. A Prior Information Notice (PIN) has been lodged on Public Contracts Scotland website to gauge interest in the development of this project and to obtain preliminary costings for the proposal to install PV on around 3,000 Council owned homes.
- 8.8. Discussions have taken place with representatives from the Scottish Government over the availability of European funding to back this initiative. Initial discussions have identified favourable loan rates and assistance to apply for a loan, if approval is given to progress this project.
- 8.9. If considered a feasible project, this opportunity could lead to a 'Making Clackmannanshire Better' project, which would benefit the community, provide funding for the Council and reduce carbon emissions, helping to meet the Council's carbon reduction commitments.

### **Hydro feasibility study**

- 8.10. The Council has been awarded £24,000 from the Scottish Government Local Energy Challenge fund, to carry out a feasibility study into the potential use of hydro power in the Hillfoots. Work on this project will commence in September of this year, and our partner in this initiative is a local based company called 'BabyHydro'. The outcome of the study may result in further funding to develop a fully working model, which will improve the existing energy infrastructure and also help tackle fuel poverty, as well as potentially generating income for the Council.

## 9.0 Property Factoring

- 9.1. The Council registered as a property factor in 2012, under the Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011. The factored properties also require to be registered with the Scottish Government. Information was sent to all owners in factored flats (where the Council still owns at least one property) in September, 2012.
- 9.2. Although owners have historically been charged for their share of cyclical maintenance works undertaken by the Council, this was discontinued when a restructure of resources between Housing and Facilities Management in 2012 saw cyclical maintenance incorporated into the Property Contracts Unit (PCU). The 2011 Act has provided the focus to reintroduce charges to private owners and it made sense to delay the charging owners until the implications of the Property Factors Act was understood and then implemented.
- 9.3. Members received an update on the position of the developing factoring service at Committee in August 2014, where we reported that owners in factored properties were to be charged for cyclical maintenance works from April 2014. Since that meeting, an officer task team has been co-ordinating activity in the different parts of the Service, to develop procedures which will deliver the factoring service to private owners who have purchased flats in Council blocks. Work has included:
- Training for PCU and Housing staff
  - Briefing paper for Councillors in September 2014
  - Process mapping to identify the stages and responsibilities, from identification of works to invoicing and follow up
  - Improvements to systems, such as identification of factored blocks on IT systems and reporting detail of charges to owners
  - Annual statements issued to owners who have received invoices over the past year
- 9.4. In 2014/15, 114 invoices were sent out, amounting to £29,718. 74% of these have paid in full (84 invoices), bringing £19,442 back into the Housing Revenue Account. Of the remaining 30 invoices, 7 have an arrangement to pay, with £1,730 paid so far, and the 14 unpaid invoices amounting to £8,545 are being pursued, with 3 cases having gone to court.
- 9.5. As the new service gathers in momentum, procedural adjustments are made and owners generally become more familiar with their obligation to contribute to common works, it is expected that the rate of recovery will increase.
- 9.6. The next phase of development will include charging owners for day to day repairs. This is likely to require further refinement to existing IT systems, to allow transfer of details in a way which can easily be used for invoicing and reporting. However, officers are investigating the capacity for the replacement Finance system to incorporate invoicing for factoring.
- 9.7. The threshold for prior consultation with owners (excluding reactive repairs and regular planned maintenance), set out in the Council's Factoring Statement of Services, is £250 (per property). This threshold needs to strike a balance between keeping owners informed on works required to the

common areas of the block, and the staff resources required to engage owners in discussions prior to works being undertaken. For a block of 4, for example, any works estimated to cost over £1,000 (exclusive of VAT and administration charge) should not be progressed without the engagement of all the owners. This is making it difficult in some cases to proceed with works, and a review of this threshold is needed to ensure the system does not get clogged with relatively small cases which require substantial resources to resolve. A further report will be presented to Committee should an amended threshold be recommended.

- 9.8. Lack of engagement by owners is a significant issue. The recent report to Council on 13 August on the Private Sector Housing Assistance Scheme highlighted that it is likely there will be an increased need for enforcement action, particularly to mixed tenure blocks, where owners are unwilling or unable to participate in essential maintenance or repair works.
- 9.9. Work has commenced on applying the 'lean systems' principles of the Vanguard approach, being used with success in other areas of the Service, to the factoring service. Although improvements have already been identified and put in place by staff, this will look at processes from a customer perspective and highlight areas where procedures, along with customer satisfaction, can be streamlined and improved.
- 9.10. In line with the requirements of the Social Housing Charter, a satisfaction survey carried out in May highlighted a low level of satisfaction with the new service. Only 18% of the people who responded indicated they were satisfied. Whilst we were expecting this would be low, as for some owners it was a surprise to them that they should pay for these common works, there is considerable area for improvement. The areas causing the biggest issue for owners are communication and value for money. Changes have already been made to address concerns, such as lettering owners before works commence, determining where properties are privately rented and contacting landlords direct, providing more clarity on the cost of works and keeping costs to an absolute minimum. The lean systems approach mentioned above will identify areas of improvement, and customers will be invited to take part in a focus group for valuable feedback.
- 9.11. Now that we are in the second year of the service implementation, the experience gained will be applied to a review of the Statement of Services, ensuring it provides clear information on what a factored owner can expect from the Council as property factor, and also on what individual owner responsibilities are.

## **10.0 Landlord Registration**

- 10.1. The Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 requires that private landlords be registered in order that they can let their properties. Registration requires the payment of a fee and consideration by the local authority as to whether the applicant is a "fit and proper person". Registration requires renewal every three years with this year, 2015/16, being a particularly busy year being 12 years since the introduction of the scheme. There are currently 1,689 landlords registered with Clackmannanshire Council.

- 10.2. A recent review of records identified 315 cases where registration had lapsed without renewal or removal from the system. This has prompted an exercise involving landlord registration and the Community Wardens Team to investigate the circumstances of these cases. In the first 4 weeks, this exercise has identified 42 expired landlords and a further 6 cases where the landlord had never registered. 37 of the expired landlords have reregistered, paying the £55 personal registration fee, £11 for each property and £110 late registration penalty. 5 cases are appealing the application of the late registration fee.

## **11.0 Money Advice**

### **New cases this quarter**

Debt cases - 14

Welfare benefits cases - 15

- 11.1. On 1st April 2015, the team as planned absorbed the 45 remaining cases from the SLAB Making Advice Work projects as per the projects exit strategies. The permanent team has a current open caseload of 87 cases. The average debt case remains open for 4-6 months.
- 11.2. Members of staff have been involved in the Vanguard rents experiment team since March 2015. The team have been working closely on a daily basis with the staff in the rent experiment team to offer support and mentoring on how to assist tenants with budgeting and how to use these tools to ensure payment arrangements for arrears are sustainable going forward. This has predominately been done through shadowing at office interviews and home visits.
- 11.3. Five clients have received first Tier tribunal representation since the start of this year. This figure is low but on par with other advice agencies in Scotland. The slow down in the introduction of Personal Independence payment and the low numbers of Employment Support Allowance cases being reviewed by the DWP has resulted in a 71% drop in appeals being heard by Tribunals service in Scotland.
- 11.4. Two clients have been supported to appeal to the Upper Tribunal (administrative appeals chamber) with both appeals being successful and both clients receiving backdates of benefit. Leave to appeal to the Upper chamber was granted as the team were able to demonstrate that an error in law had occurred during the first tier tribunal decision making process. One client received a backdated benefit payment of £11,594.00.

### **Debt cases reasons for presentation/engagement**

- Rent arrears - 43%
- Council tax arrears - 36%
- Mortgage arrears - 14%
- Credit cards and other finance company loans - 7%



## **Kinship Care**

- 11.5. The team have been working closely with Children and families to assist with the introduction of the new Kinship Care payment arrangements. All 60 kinship carers have been offered an income maximisation check and the team have been assisting children and families by gathering and verifying current benefit entitlement.

## **SLAB Tackling Money Worries Project**

- 11.6. The Tackling Money Worries project, which is funded through the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB), focuses on debt advice and financial capability work for vulnerable families referred through the multi-agency early years screening group. The project began in April 2015 and is working closely with clients at Alloa Family Centre and with Action for Children.
- 11.7. The project currently has 14 open individual client cases. The project worker visits both Alloa Family Centre and Tulliboboy Family project twice per week. and has been introducing and discussing various topics at their weekly drop in sessions such as; preparing a household budget, preparing financially for Christmas and promoting initiatives such as the warm home discount. It is still early days for measuring outcomes but so far we have been able to increase household income for some families and help them to make sustainable arrangements for repaying debts.

## **12.0 MATAC and Community Wardens**

- 12.1. The Multi Agency Tasking & Coordination group was set up in November 2013 to improve communications and partnership working across a range of operational community safety and anti-social behaviour issues. Meeting fortnightly, the group shares information about offenders and the victims of troubling behaviour and, where possible, arranges for joint intervention work to take place. Public space disturbances or complaints are also discussed, again with the objective of better coordinating responses and interventions.
- 12.2. A recent review of the local MATAC process found broad satisfaction with the arrangements with regular attendance of Police Scotland, Clackmannanshire Council's Community Warden Service, Clackmannanshire Council's Housing Service, Ochilview Housing Association, Paragon Housing Association, Youth Services and Trading Standards. All parties report improved communication, improved coordination of activities and less waste. Community Wardens receive direct tasking of activities from MATAC.
- 12.3. An illustration of the benefits of this approach can be seen in a recent case involving a rogue trader providing poor quality, exorbitantly priced tarmac work to elderly residents. Trading Standards brought the case to MATAC which resulted in Community Wardens and Police Scotland keeping an eye open for the vehicle used by the trader. The trader was identified, the vehicle seized, the business disrupted and criminal proceedings are anticipated.
- 12.4. MATAC has tasked the Community Wardens team undertake the "Schools Out" Anti-Vandalism initiative over the summer of 2015. Patrols of the Council's schools take place on a daily basis, at various times, throughout the summer holidays. Any damage is reported to Facilities Management to ensure

a swift response and repair, and to Police Scotland. The high visibility presence in and around schools act as a deterrent. Anyone found using school grounds during the initiative is informed of the reason we are carrying out patrols and any details, descriptions etc are noted for future reference should any damage occur.

- 12.5. During the summer holidays the Wardens carried out 603 patrols which gave an average of 30 patrols per school. Young people found with school grounds were engaged with positively during the campaign and were compliant with requests to be mindful of their personal safety and to respect the fabric of the school buildings. Of note is the fact that vandalism had occurred at Abercrombie, Coalsnaughton, Fishcross & St Mungos Primary School's prior to the summer holidays and nothing during the Schools Out Initiative.

### **Community Wardens Service Requests 1st April to 30 June 2015**

Total number of service requests in quarter 1 = 258

Top 5 issues dealt with by the wardens

1. Landlord Registration Investigations = 120 service requests
2. Groups gathering / causing annoyance /vandalism = 32 service requests
3. Noise issues = 26 service requests
4. Dog fouling = 16 service requests
5. ASB neighbour disputes = 12 service requests

### **"Respect" Youth Initiative Pilot in Sauchie**

- 12.6. Community Wardens, in partnership with Youth Services and Police Scotland were involved in the recent "Respect" youth initiative pilot in Sauchie. The initiative was funded by "Cashback for Communities" and looked to address the issues of youth disorder and nuisance in the Sauchie area. A series of workshops and activities took place where agencies positively engaged with young people on issues of anti social behaviour.
- 12.7. Early indications show that there was a 38% reduction in youth related anti social behaviour calls to Police Scotland for the same period than the previous last year. Youth Services, as the lead agency, are currently carrying out a full evaluation of the initiative. Youth Services have identified the model as an example of good practise to be used in other areas experiencing high levels of youth related anti social behaviour.

### **13.0 Sustainability Implications**

- 13.1. The supply of affordable housing helps in the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions. The project at Alva will provide 48 new homes to gold energy standards, and the Council will pursue the inclusion of renewable technology in newbuild where feasible.

13.2. Participation in the HEEPS initiative, and the numerous renewables projects underway, will make a significant contribution to the carbon reduction targets as well as helping to reduce fuel poverty across Clackmannanshire.

#### 14.0 Resource Implications

14.1. Financial Details

14.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

14.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

14.4. Staffing

14.5. There are no staffing implications arising from this report

#### 15.0 Exempt Reports

15.1. Is this report exempt? Yes  (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

#### 16.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses

Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive

People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment

Our communities are safer

Vulnerable people and families are supported

Substance misuse and its effects are reduced

Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing

The environment is protected and enhanced for all

The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

#### 17.0 Equalities Impact

- 17.1. Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?  
 Yes  No

**18.0 Legality**

- 18.1. It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

**19.0 Appendices**

- 19.1. Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

None

**20.0 Background Papers**

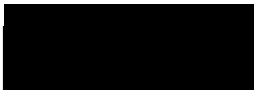
- 20.1. Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered).

Yes  (please list the documents below) No

**Author(s)**

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