

## Fife Housing Partnership Meeting

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| <b>Date:</b>       | <b>Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (1:00pm – 2:30pm)</b>   |
| <b>Venue:</b>      | Virtual via Microsoft Teams  |
| <b>Attendance:</b> | <p>Partners: Cllr Judy Hamilton (Chair), Cllr Lesley Backhouse (FC), Tom Barclay (KHA), Lucy Denvir (NHS), Nicki Donaldson (FHG), James Erskine (Rural Property &amp; Business Association), Jane Kell (CK), Bruce McCall (GK), Gerry McDougall (Private Landlord), Caryn Nicolson (FF) &amp; David Steane (Scot Gov).</p> <p>Support: Tracey Drummond, Joan Lamie, Robert McGregor, John Mills, Mhairi Mullen, Paul Short, Chris Smith, Gavin Smith &amp; Lucy Turner (FC).</p> |
| <b>Issued:</b>     | 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024   |

| Item | Agenda Items   | Action |
|------|--|--------|
| 1.0  | <p><b>Apologies</b><br/>Partners: Bill Campbell (FFOTRA), Alistair Dee (Scot Gov) &amp; Clare Jones (NEFTRF).</p> <p>Support: Greig Henderson, Nigel Kerr, Fiona McKay, Patricia Spacey &amp; Helen Wilkie (FC).</p>   |        |
| 2.0  | <p><b>Note of Previous Meeting</b><br/>The partnership agreed the note of previous meeting.</p> <p><b>Action Note:</b><br/>JM updated on action points 15 &amp; 16, outlining the purpose and expectations from those participating in the Rural Housing Short-Life Working Group. It is anticipated three meetings will take place between summer and Christmas 2024, with the group reporting to the FHP in spring 2025. The group will identify housing pressures in specific areas, evaluate housing options to meet needs in rural areas, consider how local communities are involved in discussions and evaluate options to create affordable housing. The following three nominations were received from FHP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Erskine, Rural Property &amp; Business Association</li> <li>• Caryn Nicolson, Frontline Fife</li> <li>• Tom Barclay, Kingdom Housing Association</li> </ul> <p>One further nomination required to progress this work.</p> <p><b>Action/Decision</b><br/>Issue presentation outlining expectations to FHP and seek further nominations.</p> | LT     |
| 3.0  | <p><b>Homelessness Strategy 2024-2027</b><br/>GS advised the Homelessness Strategy was approved by Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Since the introduction of Fife’s Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) in 2018, a number of factors including the Covid-19 pandemic, Cost-of-Living crisis, war in Ukraine, increased homelessness rights and the Kirkcaldy Court Judgement have increased pressures on services. This has significantly impacted housing turnover, homeless presentations and the demand for temporary accommodation which has doubled in the last three years, making it difficult to meet statutory requirements. In addition, a 43%</p>   |        |

increase in housing applications was witnessed in January 2024. Although there has been positive progress delivered through the RRTP, a new strategy was requested by Cabinet Committee in October 2023 to continue the RRTP journey. The strategy covers the period 2024-2027 and focuses on prevention, supporting vulnerable households and increasing housing supply through the affordable housing programme, private sector leasing, acquisitions, tackling empty homes, improved access to the private rented sector and flipping temporary accommodation. There are still questions over resources, with most funding continuing to be short term. The Scottish Government affordable homes budget cut, for the period 2024-2025, will limit the ability to increase housing supply levels.

Comments were raised on the following:

- Tremendous work has been done in Fife to tackle homelessness. It is evident this is a supply agenda and RSLs are happy to assist where possible.
- The strategy notes a milestone of reducing the backlog homeless need to 1,000 households by April 2025. How realistic is this, given the 43% increase in applications in January?
- A review of the allocations policy is noted. There was no appetite for this when previously reviewed. What does this mean for Fife Housing Register (FHR)?
- The acquisitions programme will increase to 100 properties. Will these be for homeless or mainstream allocations?
- The acquisitions policy was introduced in 2017. Do we know, to what extent, the criteria in this policy has been met?
- It is noted that a Temporary Accommodation Strategy will be developed by September 2023. Should this timescale be 2024?
- The solution is to continue building, increase acquisitions and increase the return of empty homes, however, funding may limit this. Subsidy support is still to be agreed.

Reducing the backlog to 1,000 households will heavily rely on prevention. The 43% increase is in FHR applications, not homeless applications. The allocations policy will be reviewed in collaboration with partners to ensure the policy meets local need. A Task and Finish Group, chaired by Cllr Hamilton, will be exploring this. 50 of the 100 acquisitions will be targeted at homeless households. The acquisitions policy was written to create a chain of allocations. On occasions a property is purchased with a tenant in-situ, which prevents homelessness, but does not fulfil the policy ambition. The 2023 target for the Temporary Accommodation Strategy is a typo, this should be 2024. The affordable homes budget should be agreed by the Scottish Government in around one week's time. The Scottish Government have a good relationship with Fife, and a large proportion of funding above the Resource Planning Assumption (RPA), has been made available in recent years. The Scottish Government will endeavour to work with Fife on a programme which will meet needs.

**Action/Decision**

No actions/decisions required.

**4.0**

**Short-term Let & Private Sector update**

MM updated on Short-term Lets (STLs). The STL licensing scheme was approved at Cabinet Committee during September 2022 and existing hosts had until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to apply for a licence. Over 1,000 applications were received in September 2023 alone, with 1,836

received in total. The highest concentrations of applications are in the Largo & East Neuk and St Andrews areas, with secondary lets the dominant type of application. Fife has received the fourth highest number of applications when comparing with other Local Authorities nationally. There is overlap recognised between some STL applications and HMO licences, second homes, empty homes and non-domestic rate properties. Planning Services are currently considering Short Term Let Control Areas (STLCA) to help manage high concentrations of secondary letting which impact residential housing or neighbourhoods. An elected member workshop was recently held with further consultation scheduled to take place in due course. Cabinet Committee will also be consulted during May 2024.

TD updated on the Private Sector. There are 1,782 second homes in Fife and a further 2,256 empty homes. When comparing with tenure, the highest concentrations of both second and empty homes are recorded in the Largo & East Neuk area. HMO licences and Private Registered properties are more prevalent in the St Andrews area.

Comments were raised on the following:

- What size will control areas be? Are we looking at individual villages or larger LHS areas?
- Is there a breakdown available of the reasons behind 2,000+ homes being empty? Bringing these back into use, would be equal to 4 years' worth of new affordable housing delivery.
- The data shows an interesting spread, particularly across the East Neuk. Increasing the resources for Empty Homes would significantly help this issue.
- JE sits on the Kingsbarns Local Place Plan (LPP) steering group and has links established with other LPP groups in the East Neuk area. He is happy to make connections in relation to control areas where this would help.

There is no defined size for STLCA's, these will be evidence based. The Local Development Plan Evidence Report will be a key influencer which will balance positive and negative impacts of a specific area. A STLCA is not a moratorium but will allow more control over certain areas. The issues in the East Neuk area are not new, these are legacy issues which need to be addressed. Empty Homes resources are currently being reviewed, as it is recognised further work is necessary. The reasons behind homes being empty can be shared with FHP.

**Action/Decision**

Share information on the reasons behind Empty Homes in Fife.

MM

**5.0**

**Fuel Poverty Research**

Robert McGregor, Business Change Manager, updated on research conducted with 35 tenant households living in fuel poverty which comprised of 2-3 semi structure interviews to gather a picture of tenant struggles with energy costs, support impacts and assistance required. Tenants reflected on last winter and current experiences, with many struggling to make ends meet, resulting in dependence on family/friends for support. Some households are still dealing with debt from last winter. Partnership support received from local/national organisations was recognised as crucial, with households grateful for the help. Winter 2023-2024 was dreaded, with some households unsure how they would cope. Fuel Poverty support packages have been reduced, as the previous winter approach was unsustainable. A preventative approach has been established, where in-depth

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|                     | <p>support is targeted at those in crisis. Although pressures remain the same as previous winter, demands for services have reduced with no clear explanation why. The research is augmented with real tenant stories which are harrowing but provide a true insight to experiences.</p> <p>Comments were raised on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuel poverty maps don't always correlate with areas identified as deprived through Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data. This in-depth research helps identify the true extent of fuel poverty.</li> <li>• It would be interesting to read the full report if this could be made available?</li> </ul> <p>The full research report will be issued following the meeting.</p> <p><b>Action/Decision</b><br/>Full report to be circulated to FHP</p> | <b>RM</b> |
| <b>6.0</b>          | <p><b>AOCB</b><br/>JH advised a presentation on the Local Heat &amp; Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) was deferred from the agenda as it was anticipated this would be more suited to a workshop style format, to allow a deep dive into the topic.</p> <p><b>Action/Decision</b><br/>FHP happy to support an LHEES workshop.<br/>Circulate workshop details to FHP.</p>   | <b>LT</b> |
| <b>Next Meeting</b> | <b>Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 – 11.30am</b><br><b>Rm FHM05.002 Fife House / MS Teams</b>   |           |

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| No. | D.O.M    | Action Points              | Action   | Lead   | Deadline | Complete |
|-----|----------|----------------------------|--|--------|----------|----------|
| 1   | 24.05.23 | FHP Agreement              | Update agreement with details of the agreed Voluntary Sector representatives.  | LT     | Aug 2023 | ✓        |
| 2   | 24.05.23 | HMO Overprovision          | Circulate figures on HMO growth in the St Andrews area prior to the HMO Overprovision Policy implementation in 2019.<br><b>30.05.23 – figures provided by TD and circulated to FHP:<br/>2015: 906, 2017: 968, 2019: 1,046, 2023: 1,029</b> | TD     | Aug 2023 | ✓        |
| 3   | 24.05.23 | Rural Poverty              | Circulate report on research conducted on rural poverty in Fife.<br><b>30.05.23 – report on ‘Lone parent poverty in rural Fife’<br/>circulated to FHP</b>  | RM     | Aug 2023 | ✓        |
| 4   | 24.05.23 | Future Meetings            | Issue survey to all members / attendees to check preferred method of meeting (virtual or face-to-face) for the future.   | LT     | Aug 2023 | ✓        |
| 5   | 24.05.23 | LHS 2022-27                | Provide timescales for the Scottish Government conducting the Fife LHS 2022-27 review and circulate to the Partnership.<br><b>30.05.23 – Partnership informed the review is expected to be<br/>concluded by the end of July.</b>           | DS/LT  | Jun 2023 | ✓        |
| 6   | 24.05.23 | Housing Summit             | Provide the Partnership with details of the Housing summit to be held in St Andrews on the 30 <sup>th</sup> June.  | Cllr H | Jun 2023 | ✓        |
| 7   | 29.08.23 | LHS 2022-2027              | Circulate LHS 2022-2027 Scottish Government review letter to FHP.<br><b>01.09.23 – letter issued to FHP along with Note of Meeting.</b>  | LT     | Aug 2023 | ✓        |
| 8   | 29.08.23 | LHS 2022-2027              | Final LHS 2022-2027 to be presented to FHP for sign off in due course.<br><b>30.10.23 – on the 21.11.23 FHP agenda for sign off.</b>   | MM/LT  | Nov 2023 | ✓        |
| 9   | 29.08.23 | National Dementia Strategy | Provide update to FHP at November meeting following the LHS priority group thematic discussion.<br><b>30.10.23 – on the 21.11.23 FHP agenda.</b>   | PS     | Nov 2023 | ✓        |

| No. | D.O.M    | Action Points  | Action  | Lead  | Deadline | Complete |
|-----|----------|--|---|-------|----------|----------|
| 10  | 29.08.23 | Director-General Communities (Scottish Government) Visit | Issue visit feedback letter to FHP.<br><b>13.11.23 – Letter issued to FHP</b>   | JM    | Nov 2023 | ✓        |
| 11  | 29.08.23 | FHP Agreement  | Ensure the FHP agreement is signed off by all FHP members.<br><b>30.10.23 – FHP agreement signed by all members.</b>  | LT    | Nov 2023 | ✓        |
| 12  | 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.<br><b>14.11.23 – Meeting dates issued for 2024-2025. Room to be sourced for face-to-face meeting on 21.05.24.</b> | LT    | Nov 2023 | ✓        |
| 13  | 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 | ✓        |
| 14  | 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.<br><b>13.12.23 – Information from Ian McCrory circulated to FHP.</b>                                 | CK    | Dec 2023 | ✓        |
| 15  | 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 | ✓        |
| 16  | 21.11.23 | Rural Housing Short-Life Working Group                   | Those wishing to participate in the Short-Life Working Group to make contact with LT.<br><b>10.05.24 – Five nominations received for the group with details provided to JM.</b>   | All   | Jan 2024 | ✓        |
| 17  | 20.02.24 | Empty Homes  | Share information on the reasons behind Empty Homes in Fife.  | MM    | May 2024 |          |
| 18  | 20.02.24 | Fuel Poverty Research                                    | Circulate full research report to FHP.  | RM    | Feb 2024 | ✓        |

| No. | D.O.M    | Action Points  | Action   | Lead | Deadline | Complete |
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| 19  | 20.02.24 | LHEES Workshop | Circulate workshop invitation and details to FHP.<br><b>29.02.24 - Workshop scheduled to take place on 28.03.24.</b> | LT   | Feb 2024 | ✓        |



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