

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Enterprise and Housing Committee

Agenda item 14 approval noting Ref BL/BE01 Date 15/02/2018

Future Tower Strategy

From Brian Lafferty, Head of Business Housing Property and Projects
Email LaffertyB@northlan.gov.uk **Telephone** 01698 524758

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek committee approval to take forward the future investment and re-provisioning strategy for the Council's towers. This is directly linked to Our Ambition Programme and the delivery of improved outcomes for our tenants, communities and town centres. This strategy will reflect the outcomes of the current structural survey programme; updated information from Scottish Fire and Rescue service and the decision announced as part of the HRA Budget Motion to start consulting stakeholders regarding the potential long term re-provisioning of all 48 tower blocks.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Approves the proposals to progress a planned investment programme for the Towers, including remedial works identified from the previously commissioned structural survey and the retrofitting of automatic fire sprinkler systems, where it is deemed appropriate to do so.
- (ii) Approves the commencement of consultation with stakeholders in the first phase of the potential re-provisioning programme as set out in Appendix 1.
- (iii) Notes that future reports will be submitted to committee for approval regarding the outcome of the Phase 1 consultation and the detailed future investment proposals and programme for all tower blocks, including current proposals relating to Allershaw Tower and Milton Court.

Supporting Documents

Council business plan to 2020 This proposal contributes towards the council's business plan priority outcome of improving economic outcomes and opportunities and the specific objective of providing access to high quality housing.

Appendix 1 Phase 1 Re-provisioning priorities

1. Background

- 1.1 A significant proportion of the council's total housing stock (11.1%) is within multi-storey blocks of flats. The council has just over 4,000 properties within 48 multi-storey blocks. 57% of all the tower stock is in Motherwell, where flats within tower blocks accounts for nearly 40% of all council stock in the area. Coatbridge has the second highest proportion of tower stock, accounting for around a third (34%) of all tower accommodation. Only 6 properties have been purchased under the Right to Buy, across 5 tower blocks in Motherwell.
- 1.2 The council has a Tower Strategy in place to effectively manage and maintain its multi-storey flats and ensure their safety and security. The specific objectives of the Tower Strategy are:
 - To ensure that all the tower blocks are as safe and secure as possible
 - To ensure that all the tower blocks are maintained in a good condition and are as energy efficient as possible
 - To ensure the blocks are sustainable and attractive to both current and future tenants
 - To improve the health and wellbeing of tower residents
- 1.3 The towers were constructed between 1965 and 1973 and consist of six various types of construction. All of the tower blocks have had cladding systems installed between 1985 and 2013. A report was approved at Housing and Social Work Services Committee in August 2016 to undertake a structural survey to assess the condition of all of the council's tower stock to help inform the future investment strategy. Following the Grenfell tower tragedy in June 2017 the format of these surveys was changed to support a three phased approach. Phase 1 of the survey was to provide information regarding the external cladding's fire integrity; phase 2 was to provide information in relation to the internal elements of the structure i.e. compartmentalisation of the homes and common areas and phase 3 was to review the main structural condition of the towers i.e. columns, beams, floors and roofs.
- 1.4 Phase 1 and 2 survey work is now completed and the preliminary findings are now being reviewed to inform future investment requirements. Phase 3 will commence early in 2018 and will take approximately 40 weeks to complete with findings considered to help inform future investment decisions. In addition to the current structural survey programme, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have been undertaking additional fire safety surveys within towers, over and above their routine tower survey programme following national developments.
- 1.5 In December 2017, as part of the HRA budget motion, the council announced its intention to start a consultation regarding the potential re-provisioning of all of its tower blocks over the next 20 years.
- 1.6 Following earlier completion of all survey work at four blocks in Coatbridge (Blairgrove, Merryston, Glen and Millbrae) remedial repair works have been instructed and are currently underway. As approved at committee in November 2017, it is also proposed to progress with the refurbishment of these blocks, including replacing existing cladding systems which are nearing end of life. The

specification and procurement of these works is underway and aligns with planned future investment and linked re-provisioning considerations e.g. replacement of the towers at the end of envisaged re-provisioning programme period, circa 20 years+, in line with identified need and condition and as informed by any next stage consultation.

- 1.7 As the strategic housing authority the council also supports, and helps to facilitate through use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), the re-provisioning of all 12 of the multi storey flats and Millcroft Road flats in the Cumbernauld area, led by Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association.
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2. Report

- 2.1 It is proposed to undertake consultation regarding the long term re-provisioning strategy on a phased basis. Following consideration of a number of factors, including waiting list demand; stock turnover and investment requirements, the first phase of a potential re-provisioning programme has been identified and is attached at Appendix 1. It is proposed that consultation will be progressed with stakeholders affected by these proposals using a range of methods, including newsletters; open days; meetings with tenants and residents groups and surveys. In addition to undertaking stakeholder consultation, option appraisals will also be progressed for each of priorities identified in Appendix 1, taking into account the future potential investment requirements of the blocks, informed by the current survey programme, as well as factors such as demand; availability of other housing stock and land.
- 2.2 The re-provisioning programme, subject to consultation outcomes, represents a long term strategy for the multi storey flats. In the meantime the council will continue to carry out the investment necessary to ensure its towers remain safe, secure and attractive places to live. The preliminary findings from the phase 1 and 2 surveys, along with wider SFRS developments, have identified a range of recommended works to maintain and enhance the fabric of the buildings and the safety of our tenants. A programme of inspection and repairs is currently being progressed to take forward all identified repair and upgrading works reflecting on the age, construction and condition of the towers.
- 2.3 Following discussion with SFRS regarding their recommendations for options to enhance future safety within multi storey flats, and taking into consideration future re-provisioning implications, it is proposed that consideration be given to progressing a programme of installing automatic fire sprinkler systems within the tower blocks where deemed appropriate and feasible to do so. While there is no legal requirement to fit sprinklers (at this time) it is considered to be the most effective way to comprehensively enhance fire safety within tower blocks.
- 2.4 Consultation is ongoing at this time with the SFRS, the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association (BAFSA) and Scottish Water regarding the most appropriate specification for these systems, taking account of best practice from other parts of the UK. It is important that tenants are kept informed regarding the potential installation of sprinkler systems in their home, and that the potential disruption and impact to tenants is minimised. Subject to the conclusion of this feasibility work it is proposed that work to progress the

installation of sprinkler systems should start as soon as practical, during 2018/19.

- 2.5 The council has previously designated a number of towers for older people, including Allershaw Tower, Wishaw. Two years ago, plans were approved to extend the common space areas and improve access to technology within this block. Plans were also being developed to enhance common space areas at Milton Court, Airdrie, which is also designated for older people. Given the decision to potentially re-provision all of the tower blocks, as informed by the current on-going survey programme, it is proposed to await the outcome of the survey and consultation regarding future re-provisioning plans before any next stage actions are progressed at these towers. All normal planned investment and routine works to maintain the high standard of accommodation within these towers will continue for the foreseeable future.

3. Implications

3.1 Financial Impact

The total cost of retro-fitting automatic fire sprinkler systems based on the current market rates would be circa £10m for all towers. Initial provision will be made within the 2018/19 HRA Capital Programme, and subsequent years, for the investment required to install sprinklers and undertake any other remedial repair works to the towers, estimated at up to £5m (subject to final survey outcomes).

3.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

It is anticipated that there will be future changes to guidance and potentially legislation in relation to fire safety following the Grenfell tower tragedy. The council has been involved in consultation arrangements with the Scottish Government regarding any potential review or enhancement of legislation in relation to fire safety. Whilst it is unknown at this point as to whether the retro fitting of sprinklers may become a mandatory requirement, it is felt that taking all factors into consideration, it is appropriate for the council to move forward on the basis of the installation of sprinkler systems at the present time.

3.3 Environmental Impact

There are no significant environmental impacts arising from this report. Any future works contracts will seek to ensure that the impact on the council's carbon footprint is minimised.

3.4 Risk Impact

The risk relating to the safety of tenants and the management of the tower blocks is contained within the council's risk register and managed accordingly. The proposals contained within this report are considered to further enhance the safety and well being of tenants.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The measures of success will include the completion of works which will enhance the safety, security and wellbeing of our tenants, and the development of a long term strategy to improve the overall quality and choice of housing to meet the needs of our current and future residents.



Brian Lafferty
Head of Business (Housing Property & Projects)

Re-provisioning Strategy – Phase 1 Consultation

Location	Area	Type	No Units
Holehills multis (Merrick / Cheviot / Pentland)	Airdrie	tower	138
Northburn Place	Airdrie	flats	26
Shawhead flats (Fintry/Tinto/Sidlaw/Nevis/Pentland/Cheviot/ Ettrick/ Campsie/ Etive /Striven /Killin	Coatbridge	flats	176
Gowkthrappe towers - Allershaw and Birkshaw	Wishaw	tower	140
Gowkthrappe low rise flats	Wishaw	flats	272
Coursington multis (Allan / Coursington / Draffen)	Motherwell	tower	351
Dunbeth Court /Highcoats/Jackson Court	Coatbridge	tower	569
Total			1672