

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Communities and Housing Committee

Agenda item \_\_\_\_\_  approval  noting    Ref BL/SL/PH    Date 22/05/19

### Tower Strategy Update

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#### Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to update Committee on the current progress relating to the fire safety within high rise towers in North Lanarkshire and progress with the re-provisioning programme.

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#### Recommendations

Committee is asked to;

1. Note the current progress with the ongoing structural surveys of the Council's tower stock
2. Note the refurbishment works to the four towers at Blairgrove, Merryston, Glen and Millbrae Courts in Coatbridge will commence Summer 2019.
3. Note remedial works for stage 2 enhanced fire safety works is now in progress and is expected to be completed over the next 18 months.
4. Note the progress with the re-provisioning programme to date.

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**The plan for North  
Lanarkshire**

**Ambition Statement 1:** Ensure a housing mix that supports social inclusion and economic growth.

**Programme of Work – PO13 – Tower Strategy**

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The council has just over 4,000 flats within 48 multi-storey blocks. 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 is to review the main structural condition of the towers i.e. columns, beams, floors as well as roofs and how they would react in the event of a fire or accidental loading. It will also confirm any areas of remedial works to the various cladding systems.
- 1.2 Phase 1 and 2 survey work is now complete and the findings are now being reviewed to inform future investment requirements. Phase 3 commenced in May 2018 and will take approximately 66 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 undertaken additional fire safety surveys in common areas within towers, over and above their routine tower survey programme following national developments.
- 1.3 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. In May 2018, the Enterprise and Housing Committee approved plans to commence the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the re-provisioning programme, supported by over 80% of tenants, which includes over 1,700 flats in 15 tower blocks and a number of low rise flatted blocks.
- 1.4 In February 2018, the Council approved proposals to develop a programme to retrofit sprinkler systems to the tower stock to provide further enhance fire safety and provide re-assurance to tenants.
- 1.5 Following completion of all survey work at four blocks in Coatbridge (Blairgrove, Merryston, Glen and Millbrae) approval was given by Committee in November 2017 to progress a procurement exercise for the full refurbishment of these blocks, including overcladding work and installation of sprinkler systems. This tender was approved by Committee in February 2019 and the contract has now been awarded with works due to start on site Summer 2019
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## 2. Report

- 2.1 As previously reported the intention was to undertake a 3 phased investigation of the 48 High Rise tower blocks together with inspections of the cladding on specific Social Work and Corporate buildings.
- **High Rise - Phase 1 (Assessment of Cladding).**  
Survey work complete. Exercise confirmed that no Aluminium Cladding Materials (ACM's) are present and that mineral wool insulation has been employed in every situation except one (Burnside Court – External Wall Insulation system).

- **High Rise - Phase 2 (Fire Compartmentalisation Assessment).**  
Survey work complete. Survey findings have identified remedial works required to blocks to enhance current safety requirements and address a range of issues.
- **High Rise - Phase 3 (Structural Investigation & Assessment).**  
Programme commenced 15th May 2018 and duration will be approximately 66 weeks.

2.2 An action plan has been developed with proposals to close out the issues identified from both the phase 1 and 2 surveys and the SFRS findings from their visits and checks of communal areas in the towers.

The remedial works within the action plan will be carried out in 3 stages;

- Stage 1; Works are now complete
- Stage 2; This work consists of renewing all front doors, common area door screens and fire escape doors to current standard where required, as well as fire stopping inside the tenants homes and common areas and testing and upgrading emergency lighting as required. The award of this work was reported to Committee in February 2019 and the work is now in progress and is expected to be completed over the next 18 months.
- Stage 3; It was reported to Committee in September 2018 that Michael Dyson Associates Limited (MDA) had been appointed to design sprinkler systems for 44nr tower blocks, with the installation of the first 23 blocks as part of the plan. Design work is well under way for a number of blocks and it is anticipated that installation of the first pilot sprinkler system will commence onsite in June/July 2019. It has now become apparent that the timescales for design work and installation will allow us to competitively procure the works for installation of the sprinkler programme (with the exception of the initial pilot block) instead of using the previously reported NTP.

2.3 The re-provisioning programme is progressing well with 28.4% of all flats in Phase 1 now vacant. All flats at Northburn Place, Airdrie are now empty and the demolition of these blocks should start in June. It is currently estimated that the three multi storey flats in Holehills, Airdrie will be vacated by the end of September 2019 and the procurement of a demolition contractor is underway. As at 11th April 2019, 325 tower properties within Phase 1 have become void. The breakdown is: 71 properties within Merrick, Cheviot and Pentland Court in Airdrie; 135 properties within Highcoats, Dunbeth, Jackson and Burnside Court in Coatbridge; 94 properties within Coursington, Draffen and Allan Tower in Motherwell and 25 properties within Allershaw and Birkshaw Tower in Gowkthrapple, Wishaw. In addition, 172 of the non-tower flatted properties in Coatbridge and Gowkthrapple are now void.

Currently 1258 of the remaining tenants within Phase 1 have a live Common Housing Register (CHR) form. This equates to over 95% of tenants now being on the waiting list for housing, with all being offered housing options advice to allow them to make informed decisions on where they can realistically expect to be rehoused. Visits are ongoing to ensure that the 92 tenants who have not engaged with officers are supported to complete a CHR application form.

2.4 There are six owners within the first phase of the re-provisioning programme who require to be bought out, and engagement with these owners has taken place. Two owners have now sold their properties to the council, and discussions are taking place with the remaining four. In addition there are 5 owners in the remaining multi storey flats, all in Motherwell. As previously approved at Committee, the council is seeking to acquire these properties and, if they wish, allow owners to remain in the flats as tenants. To date one flat has been purchased and discussions are on-going with the other owners.

2.5 Plans for the re-development of the re-provisioning sites are also progressing, including the appointment of consultants to undertake a masterplan for the Gowkthraple sites, and the arrangement of site investigation works once sites are cleared at Holehills, including adjoining land, and Northburn Place, Airdrie.

An initial newsletter was sent to all tenants and residents within properties included within phase 1 of the re-provisioning programme. The third in a series of regular newsletters to tenants and residents within all towers in North Lanarkshire, was delivered on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2019, which provided an update on the progress of re-provisioning, information on the improvement and investment works continuing within the towers, with particular emphasis on fire safety improvement works, such as renewal of fire doors and fire stops, emergency lighting, installation of sprinkler systems and the progress of refurbishment programmes.

Where fire safety work is scheduled to commence in the near future, tenant meetings have been held in order that the requirement for and extent of the improvements can be explained and discussed.

2.6 As the work on the tower strategy is now at various operational stages, a management board consisting of Heads of Service has been set up to oversee the management of the tower strategy in line with the Councils contract management procedures.

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### **3. Equality and Diversity**

#### **3.1 Fairer Scotland**

The plans contained within this report will help to improve housing conditions and housing choice for our residents which contributes to addressing inequality.

#### **3.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

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## **4 Implications**

### **4.1 Financial Impact**

Any financial impact of the measures implemented will be contained within the existing HRA Capital Investment budget and will be drawn down via borrowing/CFCR as required and as reported to Committee in February 2019 in the outline capital programme.

#### 4.2 **HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

Any policy/legislative impacts will be identified and included in any future documentation relating to the projects.

#### 4.3 **Environmental Impact**

The works contracts will ensure that where the impact on the council's carbon footprint is mitigated. The specifications incorporated within the contract documentation will deliver reduced energy need; encourage sustainable construction; promote health and wellbeing; reduce waste and resources through effective storage and composting of waste and recyclable materials and include measures which will reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

#### 4.4 **Risk Impact**

There is a robust risk assessment process in place within the service to manage and mitigate risks relating to the tower strategy and associated works contracts.

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### 5. **Measures of success**

The measures of success include:

- the successful completion of works to enhance fire safety in the tower blocks
- Completion of Phase 1 of the demolition programme over the next five years
- Re-development of the re-provisioning sites to create new, high quality housing to meet future needs.

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