

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Housing & Regeneration Committee

approval  noting

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## Tower Strategy Update

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### Executive Summary

The purpose of this 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.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the committee:-

- (i) Note the current progress of the structural surveys
- (ii) Note the progress of the Ambition programme
- (iii) Note the progress of the Sprinkler Installation / Fire Safety programme
- (iv) Note the progress of the major refurbishment project at the 4 Towers, Coatbridge
- (v) Note the progress of Fire Risk Assessments of tower stock.

### The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities

Ambition statement (1) Ensure a housing mix that supports social inclusion and economic growth

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The council had in excess of 4000 flats within 48 multi-storey blocks in the estate, two of which are now demolished as part of the phase 1 programme. The towers were constructed between 1965 and 1973 and consist of three types of construction. All of the tower blocks have had cladding systems installed between 1985 and 2013. A report was approved at Housing & 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 in relation to the external claddings 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 fire or accidental loading. It will also confirm any areas of remedial works to the various cladding systems.
- 1.2 Phases 1, 2 & 3 of the structural surveys are complete.
- 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 its tower blocks over the next 25 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 demolition of over 1,700 flats in twelve tower blocks and three low rise flatted blocks.
- 1.4 Committee will recall in February 2018, the council approved proposals to develop a programme to retrofit both sprinkler systems and fire stopping/fire doors to the tower stock providing enhanced fire safety and reassurance to tenants.
- 1.5 Following Committee approval in February 2019, a Design & Build contract for the major refurbishment of towers at Glen, Millbrae, Blairgrove and Merryston, located in Coatbridge.
- 1.6 Fire Risk Assessments are being carried out on the tower stock to determine potential fire hazards, evaluation of existing fire safety measures, necessary controls and mitigation measures.

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## **2. Report**

### **2.1 Structural Surveys**

Phase 3 surveys (structural investigation & Assessment) are 97% complete. Unavailability of void properties within the final tower preventing the necessary intrusive surveys being carried out to complete the programme. In order to avoid further delay in receiving the structural assessment, a report has been released to allow consideration of the findings and instruct additional verification tests where appropriate to allow the mitigation of potential risk areas to be considered.

Information relating to the final tower will be added as an addendum once the intrusive surveys are complete.

Officers are currently assessing findings from the report which may inform future capital investment in tower stock.

## 2.2 Ambition

The re-provisioning programme is gathering momentum with 1127 of all properties scheduled for demolition within phase 1 vacant. Breakdown as at end October 2020 is shown in the table below:

Tower	No. of Properties	No. Empty	% Empty
Burnside Court	44	44	100%
High Coats, Jackson & Dunbeth	570	320	56%
Coursington, Draffen, Allan	351	220	63%
Birkenshaw, Allershaw	140	50	36%
Shawhead low rise	176	125	71%
Gowkthrapple low rise	304	204	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1750</b>	<b>1127</b>	<b>64%</b>

There are six owners within the first phase of the re-provisioning programme whose properties require to be bought back. Engagement with these owners has taken place with five now having sold properties back to the council. In addition, there are five owners remaining in the multi-storey flats, all in Motherwell. As previously approved by Committee, the council is seeking to acquire these properties and allow owners to occupy the properties as tenants, should they wish to do so.

The first phase of the demolition programme is progressing well with two of the three high-rise towers at Holehills, Airdrie, now demolished.

A contract to demolish the tower at Burnside Court, Coatbridge has recently been awarded with works scheduled to commence in January 2021

With regards to the remaining tower blocks on the phase 1 programme, phasing of the towers has been reviewed with a number of factors including void status, demand analysis and contractor procurement influencing the proposed running order. Committee are asked to note the proposal to bring forward the demolition of Coursing, Allen, Draffen to spring 2022. Demolition of Jackson Court, Dunbeth & High Coats now proposed to commence in spring 2023.

Phase 2 of the demolition programme is currently being evaluated with findings of the structural investigations, demand analysis and available housing for re-provisioning being considered. A report will be brought to a future committee for consideration by Elected Members on the proposed future phasing.

## 2.3 Sprinkler / Fire Safety Programme

- 2.3.1 Following completion of the pilot installation at Birkshaw, the next phase of the sprinkler programme is progressing well with a contract recently awarded to install sprinklers at the following towers in Motherwell; Burnside, Lodge and Doonside.

The Principal Contractor is scheduled to mobilise pre-Christmas and provided there is no further impact due to Covid-19 restrictions, the contract is expected to last twelve months. Consultation has been carried out to fully explain arrangements to tenants and how works affect them. Project Liaison officers will also be available to answer tenant queries as the project progresses.

- 2.3.2 The fire stopping/fire door programme has recommenced following a pause due to Scottish Government Covid-19 restrictions. Installations are gradually increasing and expectations are that productivity will increase to pre-Covid-19 levels whilst ensuring compliance with current social distancing/PPE requirements.

The programme is now 75% complete with towers in Airbles Road currently receiving installations. Engagement with tenants continue in line with Covid-19 safety guidance.

Installation of smoke detection to meet Scottish Government targets had also been progressing well with 21 tower blocks complete to date. The remaining blocks will be completed in alignment with the fire door installation programme.

The emergency lighting upgrade programme has now reached 95% completion with the final tower nearing completion. The successful completion of this programme has ensured that emergency lighting in towers now meet current standards.

## 2.4 Major Refurbishment – 4 Towers

The Principal Contractor, returned to site immediately after Scottish Government restrictions were lifted in July 2020.

Due to the pause in works and newly introduced social distancing/Covid-19 safety measures, the estimated completion dates for both contracts have slipped to late 2021. In terms of site progress, cladding removal and structural improvements are progressing along with internal improvement works. Engagement with tenants continues in line with Covid-19 safety measures to reduce the risk of no-access for essential works.

## 2.5 Fire Risk Assessments

Phase 2 of the tower fire risk assessment process has now commenced. Once reports are received, officers will consider recommendations for remedial action.

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## **3. Equality and Diversity**

### **3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty**

- 3.1.1 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**

- 3.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.
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## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial Impact**

4.1.1 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 2020 in the outline capital programme.

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

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

### **4.3 Environmental Impact**

4.3.1 The works will contribute to reducing the councils overall carbon footprint and will assist in promoting the health and wellbeing of residents within North Lanarkshire.

### **4.4 Risk Impact**

4.4.1 Risk will be managed throughout the duration of the programmes and reported to the Project Board in line with the council's project management model. The significant risk to project/programme delivery as a result of COVID-19 and further restrictions are currently under assessment with mitigation measures being considered.

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## **5. Measures of success**

5.1 Enhanced fire safety across the tower estate.

5.2 Successful progression of the Ambition programme including demolition and re-provisioning programmes over the next 5 years.

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