

Business Bulletin

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

Convener:	Members:	Contact:
<p>Convener: Councillor Jane Meagher</p> 	<p>Councillor Graeme Bruce Councillor Jack Caldwell Councillor Stuart Dobbin Councillor Pauline Flannery Councillor Euan Hyslop Councillor David Key Councillor Ben Parker Councillor Tim Pogson Councillor Susan Rae Councillor Iain Whyte</p>	<p>Jamie Macrae Committee Officer 0131 553 8242</p>

Regeneration Capital Grant Fund / Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme

As advised on 8 August 2023, the Council made six bids to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) and five bids to the Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme (VDLIP), capital grant funds operated by the Scottish Government. The RCGF provides grants for “locally developed, place-based regeneration projects that involve local communities, helping to tackle inequalities and deliver inclusive growth in deprived, disadvantaged and fragile remote communities”, while the VDLIP provides grants to “transform long-term vacant and derelict sites”. The Council bids into both funds on an annual basis for support with relevant projects.

In September 2023, the Council was advised that the following bids were successful at stage one:

Regeneration Capital Grant Fund

- Granton Lighthouse
- Spartans Education and Work Building

Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme

- Granton Waterfront Regeneration, Phase 1
- Powderhall Housing-Led Regeneration

The Council has subsequently made stage two bids for the above four projects. Final decisions on the bids are expected in early 2024.

Contact: [Kyle Drummond](#),
Programme Development
Officer

Tenant Hardship Fund

In recognition of the additional financial burden that that tenants face from the cost-of-living crisis, a Tenant Hardship Fund (THF) was approved to support tenants, including those who cannot access benefits. The THF complements a range of existing support and services available to tenants to help them to maintain rent payments and maximise their income.

Contact: [George Norval](#),
Housing Operations Manager

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Background

A THF award provides financial relief for tenant experiencing financial hardship and has proven to be very popular with 1,337 payments made at a value of £293k since the fund launched in April 2023. The THF remains most beneficial where offered alongside advice and support to maximise income with signposting to services that can provide a range of support.

Come the colder months, and additional expense tenants will experience at this time of year, the THF team expect to be busy as Housing Officers extend offers of support to those tenants whose rent accounts may be affected by additional financial pressures. Given the expectation of increasing numbers of referrals, officers have taken steps to ensure that resources will be available to assist with any administrative pressures that the team may experience.

Housing Officers have been encouraged to complete referrals as early as possible and ensure that tenants also benefit from the range of support options provided by both internal and external partners.

As well as alleviating a critical financial pressure for tenants, positive feedback has been received from Housing Officers who are reporting that having access to the THF is helping strengthen relationships with their tenants.

Accessible Housing Update

Focus on data

The accessible housing study undertaken by the Housing Service highlighted some gaps and challenges in gathering data and information to inform this area of work and further policy development. The working group has been focused on improving adaptations data in existing homes, as well as broader accessible data on new homes.

As part of the digital improvements under the Council's Housing Service Improvement Plan, new functionality is being implemented onto NEC Housing (Asset Management System) that will enable better management of housing assets for long-term property

Contact: [Gillian Donohoe](#),
Senior Housing Development
Officer

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maintenance. NEC will hold data about each home in relation to capital work carried out, property and construction type etc. As part of this work, information on adaptations to homes will now be recorded directly onto NEC (for permanent ramps, wet floor showers or adapted kitchens for example). This information has previously been captured separately but not integrated into the asset management system. Where appropriate, historical adaptations will also be uploaded as well, which means officers with access to NEC will be able to make use of this information e.g. when preparing adverts for re-lets. Uploading of information should be completed within the next 12 months.

HARP is the Scottish Government system used to upload and record new development projects and make payments through Transfer of Management Development Funding (TMDF) to the Council and Housing Association partners.

There are data limitations in terms of the level of detail recorded on the HARP system for specialist homes. For example, it is difficult to record detail on specific design features of amenity homes or to get accurate information on the bedroom size of homes. General provision homes with allocations for specialist use are not necessarily recorded in HARP either. A lot of this information has had to be extracted manually and has had to be verified with delivery partners to get more detail on individual developments. Discussions are underway with partners to agree a more robust way of recording information on specialist provision at the application and completion stage of a project, accepting that some of this information will have to be captured out with the HARP system.

Update: Capital Funding opportunities for Council housing

On 9 May 2023 Housing Homelessness and Fair work committee [approved](#) a report on Capital Funding opportunities for Council housing. The report agreed that 100 void Council homes would be made available for housing Ukrainian Displaced People and that officers

Contact: [Derek McGowan](#),
Housing and Homelessness
Service Director

would continue to work with the Scottish Government and other partners to identify sites where Scottish Government funding could be sought to provide additional long term housing options in the city.

The Council received £1.720m from the Long-Term Ukrainian Resettlement Fund (LTURF) to bring forward up to 100 Council properties that were currently void and required medium to large scale repairs to return them to the lettable standard. This would include up to 30 properties which require more extensive work such as fire and water damaged properties or those requiring structural work in advance of repairs and would otherwise not be prioritised in the short to medium term. This would return them to a lettable standard at no cost to the Council.

To date 37 homes have been brought up to lettable standard and passed to the Ukrainian Support team to let to UDPs. Over half of the homes are expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year (December 23) and all 100 passed over by the end of July 2024.

On [21 September 2023](#), Finance and Resources committee approved the purchase of 20 new build homes (7 two bed, 11 three bed and 2 four bed terrace houses) within the Hawthorn Gardens development in South Queensferry, from Taylor Wimpey, subject to completing due diligence and subject to availability of Scottish Government funding. In October 2023, Scottish Government agreed to provide £3.286m in grant funding to support the purchase. The properties will be handed over in three tranches. 15 homes have been handed over to date with all 20 homes being available to let to UDPs by the end of January 2024.

Taylor Wimpey approached the Council to see if it would be interested in purchasing a second phase of 24 homes (24 two bed terrace houses) at the site. Finance and Resources committee on 21 November 2023 approved the potential purchase subject to due diligence. Unfortunately, following detailed work by officers the Scottish Government have indicated they will not provide funding from the LTURF due to the timing of the completed units. However, officers have been able

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to secure homes through a combination of HRA borrowing, UK Government Tariff and commuted sums.

Council Officers continue to be in dialogue with housebuilders regarding any further opportunities and Scottish Government for additional funding to support these.