

**To:** Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board

**On:** 12 March 2019

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**Report by:** Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services

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**Heading:** Council Laundrettes

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Council owns and manages 60 laundrette blocks across 14 areas in Renfrewshire outwith multi-storey blocks. This report provides information on the current service and the need to modernise arrangements for both Council tenants and private owners.
  - 1.2 Work is underway by officers to review the laundrette service, with a view to developing proposals for each of the laundrette sites across Renfrewshire. This report seeks authority to consult Council tenants and private owners as part of this work, starting initially at Montgomery Avenue in Gallowhill.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy Board:
    - (i) notes the current arrangements for the provision of laundrette services as set out in section 3 of this report; and
    - (ii) agrees that, following review of the service and consultation with Council tenants and private owners, the Director of Communities, Housing and Planning will prepare proposals for each of the laundrette sites for approval by a future meeting of the Policy Board.
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### **3. Background**

- 3.1 There are 60 laundrette blocks across 14 sites in Renfrewshire. Most of the laundrette sites are in Paisley (12 out of the 14), with one in Gallowhill (Montgomery Avenue) and one in Renfrew (Donaldson Drive). There are almost 1,500 residential properties with access to these dispersed laundrette facilities. Just over half are private owners (around 54%) and around 46% are Council tenants.
- 3.2 The laundrette blocks tend to be stand-alone structures, close to the cluster of flatted properties which they serve. In some cases, the laundrette is housed within the structure of the residential block (eg at the bottom of a block of flats) or is a part of the structure of an external ancillary building. While the laundry machinery tends to be of a high standard and well maintained, the fabric of the laundrette buildings (both internal and external) require upgrading in most cases.
- 3.3 The laundrette blocks are opened and closed each day by staff from the Council's high-rise caretaking service. Tenants and owners are each allocated a weekly slot for use of the service.
- 3.4 Where tenants of Council-owned flats have use of a laundrette, the tenancy agreement separately identifies the service charge for the laundrette. This is a mandatory charge which is based on property size. Tenants should be consulted on any proposed changes to the service.
- 3.5 There are now slightly more privately-owned properties than Council properties with access to the laundrette service. These are former Council dwellings which were sold through the Right to Buy between 1980 and 2016. There is some variation in terms of the title deeds for properties sold by the Council, depending on when the property was sold and the implications of this need to be considered as part of the review. Owners also pay a charge for use of the laundrette service based on property size. Many of these privately-owned properties are now rented out by private landlords rather than occupied by resident owners.
- 3.6 Previous feedback indicates that while some tenants and owners have their own washing machines and are no longer interested in paying for and using a communal facility, others still like using the laundrette service.

### **4. Review of the Laundrette Service and Pilot Initiative**

- 4.1 Work is underway by officers in Communities, Housing and Planning to review the laundrette service with a view to bringing forward proposals to a future meeting of the Policy Board. Issues being considered as part of this review include:

- the level of usage of laundrettes blocks;
  - repair and improvement work required to the fabric of laundrette blocks and the cost of this work;
  - any obstacles / opportunities in terms of improving the fabric of buildings;
  - condition/ lifespan of laundry machinery and cost of replacement;
  - charges to Council tenants and owners for the laundrette service;
  - the views of Council tenants and owners and their preferences for the future (this will include a range of options from retention and upgrading to withdrawal of the laundrette service);
  - any constraints affecting the Council's ability to implement changes to the service, and potential mechanisms for addressing these;
  - opportunities to modernise practical arrangements (eg potential use of IT to simplify access for service users, promote more flexible access, and reduce the resource impact on caretaking staff); and
  - the potential for tenants and owners to 'opt out' of the service or to use consolidated services in a more central location.
- 4.2 Given the variation across the 14 laundrette sites and 60 laundrette blocks, it is intended that proposals are developed on a site by site basis, taking account of the above information. The views of Council tenants and owners will be taken into consideration in developing these proposals.
- 4.3 The review will initially focus on the laundrettes at Montgomery Ave/ Montgomery Road in Gallowhill and pilot proposals will be developed. There are three separate laundrette blocks which serve 62 residential flats. Given the mixed tenure profile at Gallowhill (Council, owner-occupied and private rented properties), this pilot will help to identify and test solutions which may have wider applicability across Renfrewshire.
- 4.4 A report will be brought to a future meeting of the Policy Board which will: provide feedback from consultation with Council tenants and owners; provide an update on the pilot initiative at Gallowhill; and present proposals for changes to the laundrette service in other parts of Renfrewshire.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The cost of improvement works to the laundrettes at Montgomery Ave in Gallowhill will be contained within existing budgets.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None arising directly from this report.
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
  - ***Reshaping our place, our economy and our future*** – Upgrading facilities and services to meet identified needs and modern lifestyles
  - ***Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all*** – Reviewing the services offered to ensure they are fit for purpose

- **Working together to improve outcomes** – working with service users to ensure services are delivered effectively
- 4. **Legal** – Title checks are required for private properties sold through the Right to Buy where owners have use of the laundrettes.
- 5. **Property/Assets** - None arising directly from this report. .
- 6. **Information Technology** – Improved access arrangements will be investigated as part of the review.
- 7. **Equality & Human Rights** -
  - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
- 8. **Health & Safety** - None
- 9. **Procurement** –None
- 10. **Risk** – Potential risks will be considered as part of the review.
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – to be checked.
- 12. **COSLA Policy Position** – *not applicable*.

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**List of Background Papers** - none

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FC/LM  
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