
To: Communities and Housing Policy Board

On: 16 May 2023

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Heading: Application for Funding to Support the Resettlement of Ukrainian Displaced Persons

1. Summary

- 1.1 In March 2022, the Council and its partners were asked to support the establishment of a Welcome Hub near to Glasgow Airport with the aim of supporting people arriving in Scotland from Ukraine through the Scottish Government's 'super sponsor scheme'.
- 1.2 Our staff have provided a warm welcome to Scotland for Ukraine Displaced Persons (UDP's), including the provision of temporary accommodation and support, with UDP's then moving to more settled accommodation across Scotland.
- 1.3 A number of individuals and families have since been supported to resettle in Renfrewshire through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and whilst the number of arrivals and people being supported in Renfrewshire's Welcome Hub has reduced from this time last year, there continues to be challenges in terms of supporting people staying in hotels to move to settled accommodation in Scotland.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government has made additional funding available to Councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) via a 'Longer-Term Resettlement Fund' for improving and bringing empty properties back into use that can then be provided to UDP's for up to 3 years.
- 1.5 This report provides an update on an application for finance from this fund to meet the repair costs of "last-in-the-block" Council owned flats, which are empty and scheduled to be sold, or may become empty. It is proposed that these properties would then be let to UDP's, with the intention of then marketing the property for sale as originally planned when the UDP's tenancy terminates. There are currently 33 properties that would be covered by the initial funding application.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities & Housing Policy Board:

- 2.1 Note that an application for repair and improvement costs for empty houses will be made to the Scottish Government's 'Longer-Term Resettlement Fund'.
 - 2.2 Agree that, if successful, this will allow 'last-in-the-block' properties be let to Ukrainian Displaced Persons, and a further report be submitted to the Policy Board on the progress with this initiative.
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3. Background

'Last-in-the-block' policy

- 3.1 The consent of a majority of the owners in blocks of flats is required to allow improvement work to proceed, except where permitted under the Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 3.2 As it was becoming increasingly difficult to secure such consent in blocks where the Council only has a minority ownership interest, in May 2014 the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board approved a report requesting authority to sell single Council flats in larger common blocks, where the Council owned one property in a block of five or more, when it became vacant.
- 3.3 In August 2022, the Communities and Housing Policy Board agreed to remove the minimum number of flats in a block so that any flat – including specifically four-in-a-block flats – could be included within the policy when it became vacant.
- 3.4 Receipts from the sale of these 'last in the block' properties can then be used to acquire properties that could assist in facilitating investment works in other mixed tenure blocks or meet other housing needs by adding to the supply of affordable housing for social rent across Renfrewshire.

Scottish Government Longer-Term Resettlement Fund

- 3.5 Renfrewshire has played its part in the 'Warm Scottish Welcome' for those arriving from Ukraine, and a number of social rented tenancies have been provided over the past 12 months, as well as many Renfrewshire households acting as 'hosts' for Ukrainians staying in their homes.
- 3.6 This fund is being administered by the Scottish Government to increase the number of homes available to support the resettlement of UDP's for up to 3 years.

- 3.7 Local authorities and RSLs are being invited to apply for funding for improving and bringing void properties back into use that can then be let to UDP's, provided the properties concerned, amongst other things:
- comply with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard;
 - any such house would need to be dedicated for the resettlement of UDP's for up to three years;
 - the UDP household would be given a Scottish Secure Tenancy; and
 - a Housing Support package would be provided.
- 3.8 Some of the current "last-in-the-block" properties which are currently empty and which would otherwise be marketed for sale could be fit for this purpose as :
- many are in need of repair and improvements that can be funded via this fund,
 - it will help the Council to continue to play its part in the resettlement of UDP's,
 - there is no disadvantage to other housing waiting list applicants as this only concerns properties which if they were not being used for this purpose, would otherwise be sold, and
 - the properties will be sold at a later date after the UDP's tenancies have concluded and the Council will benefit from the properties being in an improved condition of repair.
- 3.9 Initial discussions have commenced with Scottish Government officials on the feasibility of 'last in the block' properties being repaired and used for the resettlement of UDP's, and a further report will be submitted to the Policy Board providing an update on progress.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – any repairs expenditure would be funded by grant finance so there would be no negative effect on the Housing Revenue Account.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none.
3. **Community/Council Planning**
 - *Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all* – the changes proposed would provide high-quality homes for Ukrainian Displaced Persons without affecting our Housing Waiting List.
4. **Legal** – no work required. After the initial three years, any house which met the criteria would become eligible for disposal if it became void.
5. **Property/Assets** – none.
6. **Information Technology** – none.

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 –** if neither the Council's in-house staff nor its existing voids contractor has the capacity to do the work required then a new contractor may need to be procured.

10. **Risk – none.**

11. **Privacy Impact – none.**

12. **COSLA Policy Position – none.**

13. **Climate Risk –** the houses would be brought to Scottish Housing Quality Standard if not already at that level.

List of Background Papers

Report to Housing and Community Safety Policy Board, 13 May 2014, 'Single Council Dwellings in Larger Common Blocks'

Report to Communities and Housing Policy Board, 16 August 2022, 'Last-in-the-block Sale and Acquisition Policy'

Report to Leadership Board, 22 February 2023, 'Update on Ukrainian Resettlement and Asylum Dispersal'

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