
To: Communities and Housing Policy Board

On: 31 October 2023

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing and Infrastructure

Heading: Service Update Report

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of key service activities, an operational performance update on the services and key projects and updates on any other relevant changes to service areas covered within the remit of this Board.
 - 1.2 This is the first Service Update Report which has been presented to the Communities and Housing Policy Board and, moving forward, an update will be presented to each cycle of the Board.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities and Housing Policy Board

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report.
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Updates for Communities and Housing Policy Board

3. Housing Services

3.1 Housing-Led Regeneration and Development

- 3.1.1 As reported to the Board at its meeting of 22 August 2023, good progress continues to be made on the rehousing of Council tenants and the acquisition of privately-owned homes in order to progress demolition. Table 1 below illustrates the situation as of 2 October 2023.
- 3.1.2 Good progress is also being made where re-housing of Council tenants is required to facilitate demolition. Table 1 below illustrates the situation as of 2nd October 2023. Rehousing of tenants from properties approved for demolition

in the Auchentorlie area is now complete. Priority for re-housing is currently being given to tenants on a phased basis in the Howard Street Area, Springbank/Mossvale, Thrushcraigs and Waverley Road. It is envisaged that rehousing priority for the Howwood Road Area and Ferguslie/Broomlands will be applied on a phased basis as each phase of newbuild nears completion.

	Council Demo Properties	Properties to be Acquired	Properties Acquired	Total to be Demolished	Demo Void as at Sept 2023	Percentage %
<u>Auchentorlie</u>	17	1	0	18	17	94%
<u>Ferguslie/Broomlands</u>	64	16	6	80	28	35%
<u>Howard Street Area</u>	55	11	5	66	32	48%
<u>Howwood Road Area</u>	163	15	6	178	31	17%
<u>Springbank/Mossvale</u>	118	36	13	154	57	37%
<u>Thrushcraigs</u>	90	6	1	96	31	32%
<u>Waverley Road</u>	68	4	3	72	56	77%
Total	575	89	34	664	252	37%

Table 1

3.1.3 A Procurement Strategy has been put in place using CITB guidelines on community benefits. This includes a highly defined and locality-based approach to maximising community benefits leveraged to the overall programme. The contract with MP Group, of which the improvement projects will form a part, is already delivering community benefits – for every £3m of expenditure, the contractor provides six work placements, participation in two industry awareness events and donations of goods and/or services to social enterprises or community initiatives to a value of at least £2,000, as well as engagement with local businesses as potential suppliers or sub-contractors. A Neighbourhood Renewal Group for each regeneration area will be involved in setting out specific benefits to be delivered as part of each new contract, for example the contracts for newbuild housing at Ferguslie/Broomlands Phase 2, Howwood Road Area Phase 2, Springbank/Mossvale and Thrushcraigs.

3.1.4 Tenders have been received in respect of two of the newbuild projects – Howwood Road Area Phase 1 (the former Cochrane Castle Primary School site) and Ferguslie/Broomlands Phase 1 (the former Carbrook Street Nursery site). Applications for grant finance have been made to the Scottish Government and it is intended to seek approval to let Design-and-Build contracts from the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board at a future board.

3.2 Other Development

3.2.1 A tender has been received in respect of the newbuild project at Gallowhill. An application for grant finance has been made to the Scottish Government and it is intended to seek approval to let a Design-and-Build contract from the Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board at a future board.

3.3 Housing Services

3.3.1 Supporting tenants having trouble paying rent due, continues to be a priority. The process developed alongside rent collection activity to implement the Tenant's Support Fund and maximise Income Advice for Council Tenants;

approved as part of the budget process this year commenced in October 2023 and targets those in need of assistance.

- 3.3.2 Joint work continues with the Council's Benefits and Advice service to ensure Council Tenants in need of assistance have access to specialist income advisors. New Advice staff have been going through specialist training and targeted advice is now being offered, take up information related to specialist advice and numbers of referrals for Tenants Support fund will be available for future boards through the Service Update Report.
- 3.3.3 The challenges within the supply chain related to empty properties and works required still exist. This is a priority across Environment, Housing and Infrastructure and an end-to-end review is ongoing involving all teams who contribute to the process of preparing an empty house for reletting. The letting team continue to focus on meeting needs and managing the waiting list to match available properties as quickly as possible. At the end of September, the void rent loss figure was 1.48% compared to 1.95% at the same point last year.
- 3.3.4 Housing officers continue to attend the Daily Tasking meeting. Working with partners, the Daily Tasking process remains central to understanding and responding to incidents of anti-social behaviour in and around our estates.

3.4 **Homelessness**

- 3.4.1 There has been a 12% increase in homeless applications in Renfrewshire in the 2 years 2021/22 – 2022/23, in line with the national trend, and there are signs that there is likely to be a further increase this year. Over 75% of all homeless applications are from single person households, therefore demand is very much for 1-bedroom properties.
- 3.4.2 Whilst the pressure on the demand for social rented housing and temporary accommodation is significant and growing, there have still been some positive, effective measures in tackling homelessness in Renfrewshire:
- the upscaling of the Housing First approach has continued, with the number of people benefitting from this form of 'wraparound' support at any one time reaching 75 – increasing from 13 at the commencement of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in 2019.
 - The deployment of Resettlement Officers and joint working between Homeless Services and the Housing Support team has had a positive impact on tenancy sustainment levels, with the proportion of homeless applicants who sustain their Council tenancy for at least 12 months increasing from 80% in 2019/20 to 92% in 2022/23
 - the proportion of those who experience repeat homelessness (present as homeless more than once within 12 months) has reduced from just under 10% in 2019/20 to under 5% in 2022/23.
 - The Council is on schedule to meet the target of 49% of lets of general stock to homeless applicants in 2023/24, and it has been stressed to RSL's that there is a need for the number and proportion of lets by them to homeless applicants to increase in order to help address the growing housing pressures locally.

3.5 Housing Support

- 3.5.1 The demand for housing support has significantly increased, as would be expected at a time of a cost-of-living crisis and growth in homelessness.
- 3.5.2 Housing support focusses on helping people to manage their homes and enabling them to remain or become independent at home and in their communities and can be directed towards people who are facing homelessness; experiencing addictions; older people; those with mental health problems; those living with a disability; domestic abuse victims and so on.

3.6 Sheltered Housing

- 3.6.1 A new operational management structure is now in place following the lessons learned during COVID lockdowns and recovery period on the importance of ensuring our sheltered housing service remains resilient and can support the 310 tenants living in the 10 sheltered complexes across Renfrewshire owned and managed by the Council.

3.7 Housing Asset and Investment

- 3.7.1 Our Repairs and Maintenance Teams continue to respond to tenants reporting dampness and mould problems. New processes have been introduced to ensure that officers have the right resources in place and sufficient time to carry out inspections. Where appropriate, tenants are provided with advice from officers, both verbally and in the form of a leaflet, on how to prevent mould and condensation. All cases reported are recorded with outcomes monitored. Severe cases are referred to our specialist rotworks contractor and we have recently piloted some new methods of disinfection of severe cases of mould. Since April, 107 surveys have been carried out by repairs and maintenance officers and of these 22 have been passed to our specialist rotworks contractor. We are continuing to review processes in line with best practice and this will help to inform the strategy document that will be prepared within the next quarter.
- 3.7.2 We are currently reviewing all council buildings for the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) as part of their construction. While the likelihood of RAAC being identified in any domestic properties is low, as a precautionary measure we have conducted a desktop analysis of all our council properties and are now reviewing those which have been identified as having the potential for RAAC to have been used as part of their construction. This includes two houses, 44 flat blocks, nine shops or shop blocks and two office locations. 97% of the inspections have been completed and to date no RAAC has been found, work will continue on this over the coming weeks and months with the board kept updated in progress.
- 3.7.3 Our Housing Investment team are currently working with our external contractor, in various areas in Johnstone, Renfrew, Villages, Linwood and Paisley delivering a range of work programmes comprising of full externals programme, Solar PV, window and loft insulation programme and a window replacement programme. A total of 1,025 properties are at various stages of the process from planning to delivery. Our Housing Asset Management team

are working on designs for a further circa 1,000 properties in preparation for programmes for the next financial year.

- 3.7.4 As noted in paragraph 3.3.3 above, void management is an area of high priority for improvement across the service. We are currently working with external consultant Savills to carry out an end-to-end review of processes and will be developing an action plan for improvement in conjunction with colleagues in all teams involved in the void process.

4. Public Protection

4.1 Protect Duty (Martyn's Law)

- 4.1.1 The PROTECT Duty (known as Martyn's Law) is pending UK wide legislation that will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible locations to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.
- 4.1.2 Pre-legislative scrutiny has been conducted by the UK Parliament Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) and this has provided an assessment of the legislation in its current state and will develop as the legislation goes through the parliamentary process.

4.2 Firework Control Zones

- 4.2.1 The use of fireworks in Scotland has been subject to Scottish Government consultation since March 2019, after growing public concern about matters such as safety, noise and animal welfare. This is a complicated legislative area, as the sale of fireworks is reserved to Westminster, while the use of fireworks is a devolved matter.
- 4.2.2 After extensive consultation, and the convening of an expert sub group, the [Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#) was passed by the Scottish Parliament received Royal Assent in August 2022. Controls such as restriction on the sale and supply, are being phased in slowly, with regulatory and economic impact being carefully considered at each stage.
- 4.2.3 The most recently enacted provision is for Local Authorities to consider the use of "Fireworks Control Zones". Fireworks Control Zones would be small, evidence-based areas, set up and maintained by the Local Authority, but enforced by Police Scotland; in which the unplanned use of Fireworks in any area is banned. This is a discretionary power, and Local Authorities must "have regard to" the [Scottish Government guidance](#) in relation to the use of these Zones if they choose to proceed.
- 4.2.4 The guidance will ensure that the power is applied fairly and consistently, as the implementation of a Zone will restrict the rights of our citizens in their own homes. Zones must be evidence-based, limited to where they will have an impact, and subject to robust consultation to ensure that the rights of individuals, workers and businesses are considered. These will be of most benefit in bolstering powers in areas where there are annual public order disturbances. There are no such areas currently identified in Renfrewshire.
- 4.2.5 Renfrewshire Council have convened a short-life task group to review the provisions. A policy position will be agreed and reported back to a future Board for approval, and an appropriate service will be identified to lead on any

Council position. Relevant partners – particularly Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Services will be involved at the earliest possible opportunity, to ensure any decisions are well-founded, sustainable and deliverable, for the people of Renfrewshire.

4.3 Food Law

- 4.3.1 The Food Law inspection programme is on track to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Current compliance shows that compliance with food law is currently 99%.
- 4.3.2 Officers are working with Food Standards Scotland on a Fraud case relating to Kebab meat. This is a National, cross border investigation and involves suppliers in the Renfrewshire area.

4.4 Health and Safety

- 4.4.1 The Health and Safety interventions programme is continuing with visits being carried out in terms of Gas/Electrical Safety, Swimming pools and spas, warehousing and safety at visitor attractions.
- 4.4.2 Officers are currently preparing a report to the procurator fiscal in relation to an accident where an employee fell from a ladder and sustained multiple fractures.

4.5 Communicable Diseases

- 4.5.1 There has been a marked rise in the number of communicable disease investigations with referrals from NHS up 65% as compared to same period in the previous year. This is in part, due to foreign travel acquired infection and is comparable with figures reported across the whole country.

4.6 Short Term Let Licensing

- 4.6.1 The deadline for applications from hosts to obtain a statutory licence passed on 30 September 2023 and Officers within the team are currently involved in the inspection of secondary letting premises to ensure compliance with licence conditions, in advance of the application being determined. Whilst not inspecting home sharing/home letting property, licence applications are being reviewed to ensure these will satisfy licence conditions, based on the information provided in support of the application. At this stage it is unclear how many operators exist within Renfrewshire; however, additional work will commence shortly to identify potential short term let operators who have failed to apply for a licence.

4.7 Air Quality

- 4.7.1 Officers have completed the Council's Annual Progress Report for 2023, reporting on monitoring activity during the 2022 calendar year. This is outlined in a separate report presented to the Board today. Air quality is continuing to show an improving trend across monitoring locations and there have been no exceedances of statutory air quality objectives during 2022.

5. Community Development

5.1 Team Up to clean Up

- 5.1.1 Spotless September, a Team Up to Clean Up flagship event, brings new members to the Campaign. It offers an opportunity to reach those who don't use social media but notice bus stop ads, articles in local press or posters in libraries or community centres. 357 litter picks took place across the month with over 1,000 volunteers participating. The campaign also encourages groups and organisations to become involved which included ThermoFisher, Expeditors, Decathlon, and Lloyds Bank, Paisley Wild Swimming Buddies, Milldale and The Mirin Day Opportunities as well as 6 Guide and Scout Groups were keen to get out and pick.
- 5.1.2 Spotless September facilitates an introduction to the Team Up principles to school pupils through delivering presentations and encouraging litterpicking activity for pupils. School presentations focus on litter's negative impact on local wildlife, its contribution to climate change, as well the consequences in their own community. 25 schools took part in the event across September. An additional supply of bins was moved to Gleniffer High at the beginning of September to encourage their use and pupils took part in their own event, litterpicking Durrockstock Dam and the surrounding areas.
- 5.1.3 Winter Warriors, a Team Up to Clean Up mini project, will again offer a limited supply of salt spreaders and salt over the winter to community volunteers. These volunteers support their local community by clearing and gritting local footpaths which prevents slips and falls within their neighbourhood.

5.2 Take the Lead

- 5.2.1 Over 300 Renfrewshire dog owners have so far taken The Pledge to be responsible dog owners and pick up after their pets. The 'Take the Lead' principles were discussed, and merchandise offered to dog owners at the Doggy's Day Out in Robertson's Park on 24 September.
- 5.2.2 Team Up to Clean Up were supported by SHS Events who delivered a market stall event coupled with their Dog Companion Day hosted by Crufts Judge, Deborah Fleming. St Mirren Dog Training also offered volunteers free taster dog obedience and fun classes which were enjoyed by attendees and their pets.

5.3 Environmental Taskforce

- 5.3.1 The Environmental Taskforce continues to work with Renfrewshire's communities to reduce flytipping, which along with Duty of Care visits (ensuring correct business waste arrangements are in place) is the Team's main focus. Table 2 below offers some key statistics of the work delivered by the Taskforce over this period:

Action	August – To date	Cumulative from 1 December
Proactive visits to identified hotspot areas	483	1,764
Number of reports investigated	348	1,529
Tonnes of flytipping removed	40	400
Number of sites secured to prevent further flytipping	2	10
Letters to private landowners	11	76

Visits to businesses to ensure Waste Disposal Arrangements in place	24	105
Fixed Penalty Notices Issued	18	65

Table 2

6. Criminal Justice

- 6.1 The volume of work generated by court and tribunal services continued to increase throughout the year. This reflects ongoing measures to address the still significant backlog stemming from the pandemic.
- 6.2 Renfrewshire's Justice Social Work service has worked hard to respond to these increasing demands by reviewing and prioritising workloads to ensure resources are in place to support people with convictions, on community orders and on release from custody. This maintains focus on those with high levels of risk and need. Significant challenges are arising from staffing changes and recruitment difficulties, something that has rarely been a challenge for justice social work in the past.
- 6.3 Working practice has adapted in accordance with safe working requirements to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff and service users. Unpaid work has progressed from home working to community provision. Groupwork continued to be prioritised and has returned to pre pandemic levels.
- 6.4 Within 2023/24 in response to the government vision of reducing remand and engaging with individuals at the earliest point, and limiting their involvement in the justice system, an Early Intervention service is under development to employ additional paraprofessional staff to undertake new services.
- 6.5 Electronic Monitoring bail (tagging) commenced on 17 May 2023, as did the provision of Structured Deferred Sentences utilising existing staff during the initial phase. Additional staff, temporary until 2026 due to funding, will be employed in 2023/24 to enable the creation of a bail supervision service, extend diversion for more complex cases and develop voluntary supervision and post custody supports.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – Any financial elements referenced in this report will be progressed through the Council's financial & budget planning process.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The report details a range of activities which reflect local community and council planning themes.
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** –None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - 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** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – None
13. **Climate Change** – there are a range of actions and activities throughout the Service Update Report which support the Council's Plan for Net Zero,

List of Background Papers: None

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