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**Dunbritton Housing Association**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group of the current activities and challenges facing Dunbritton Housing Association

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group note the report.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 At the last meeting of this Group I was asked to provide a report on the work being undertaken by Dunbritton Housing Association. I have included information that pertains to our activities in Helensburgh & Lomond.

**4. Detail**

**Development Programme:**

- 4.1 We are on-site with a development of 24 one and two bedroomed flats at East King Street, Helensburgh. This is a 'design & build' development by Persimmon Homes. We expect completion of the flats in February 2016.
- 4.2 We are working on resolving funding challenges to allow us to go on site with a development of 26 flats and houses in Succoth, Arrochar. Having received planning permission and all necessary consents, Transport Scotland is now insisting on a major road junction re-alignment on the A83 for the turn in to Succoth all at our cost. The costs of this are disproportionate to the size of our development and we, along with the National Park Authority,

Argyll & Bute Council and the Scottish Government are seeking a meeting with Transport Scotland to try to resolve this.

- 4.3 Future interests: we own a site at Helensburgh Golf Club and are working in partnership with the Club and a developer to work up proposals for the relocation of the golf course, clubhouse and develop land for housing for sale and rent. The land has been designated for housing in the new Local Plan. At this stage it is too early to give timescales and actual numbers although it is anticipated that there may be up to 70 homes for social rent within the completed development.
- 4.4 We continue to explore other development opportunities in Helensburgh & Lomond as well as in our West Dunbartonshire area of operation (where we are currently on site in Alexandria with a development of 6 flats – part of the larger Kippen Dairy development by Caledonia Housing Association).

### **Housing Standards**

- 4.5 All social landlords' properties have to meet the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)** now, unless there are justifiable reasons for exemption or abeyance. The deadline for meeting the requirement was April 2015. Exemption is allowed where the landlord believes it is not possible to meet it for technical, disproportionate cost or legal reasons. In abeyance is described as: when work cannot be done for 'social' reasons relating to tenants' or owner-occupiers' behaviour (e.g. where owner-occupiers in a mixed ownership block for common elements of SHQS such as roofs, hallways etc do not wish to pay for their share).
- 4.6 Dunbritton has 37 properties in Rosneath that currently are exempt (and, of those, 2 are also in abeyance due to them being in blocks of flats where other owners do not wish to pay for door entry systems). The reason for exemption at this time is due to the energy efficiency of the properties. It is our intention in due course to bring these up to a more stringent standard, which, following on from SHQS, is the next standard all social landlords need to meet; however we have to find the most cost effective way to do this and one that is least disruptive for the tenants.
- 4.7 Known as the **Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing**

**(EESSH)** this raises the bar in terms of energy standards in buildings, but is particularly challenging to meet in rural areas where there is not gas grid.

- 4.8 All social landlords are expected to meet this new standard by 2020. The Association is currently exploring funding options for providing measures that will bring these up to and beyond EESSH and not just SHQS. To this end, on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 Dunbritton and Allenergy are hosting workshops in the Princess Louise Hall, Rosneath for residents to come and explore options as well as discuss their own energy use & get advice from the Affordable Warmth Team.

### **Welfare Reform and addressing tenancy sustainability**

- 4.9 A major challenge that is already impacting on our tenants is the Government's Welfare Reform agenda. The roll out of Universal Credit has reached West Dunbartonshire and we have recently had our first tenant (a single person) go on to this new form of benefit, not without difficulties and confusion. Our housing staff and the tenant are working closely with DWP to try to resolve this, our first case. This is a tenant more than able and willing to engage with us in the process: there may be many others who are not so able or willing to do so in the future as more people become eligible for Universal Credit. We are spending a great deal of time gearing up and learning from this and the pilots that have been run in other parts of Scotland.
- 4.10 Our Crisis Intervention Officer, employed through Argyll Net Works\*, is carrying out regular visits to families living in destitution, due to ESA claims being cancelled, benefits sanctions & raising debts and will continue to work with these tenants and refer for additional support as required and in preparation for the Universal Credit roll out to Argyll & Bute which is in December 2015.

\*Argyll Net Works is a project set up by Dunbritton Housing Association, West Highland Housing Association and Fyne Homes. Initially funded by Lottery, additional grant from the People & Communities Fund has been secured this year to extend the project to March 2016. It employs 'Crisis Intervention' Workers for each of these housing associations.

## **Community Support & Employability**

4.11 People & Communities funding has been secured this year to enable us to support the Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust to set up a social enterprise to continue with the landscaping training & employability project which, for many years until March 2015, had been provided through the Argyll & Bute Employability Team. Match funding for this project is coming from Argyll & Bute Council, SNH and the Forestry Commission. Recruitment of staff is underway.

## **5. Conclusions**

Other information about the Association and its activities can be found on our website: [www.dunbritton.org.uk](http://www.dunbritton.org.uk)

I would welcome feedback on the usefulness of this information and suggestions on future items to include in this information report.

## **6. SOA Outcomes**

This paper is related to Outcome 5: People life active, healthier and independent lives and, in particular:

Outcome 5.1.6: Maintain a new build social housing programme including housing for varying needs to enable people to live more independently. This includes reference to the new build programme referred to within this report.

Outcome 5.6.7: Adverse effects of Welfare Reform are minimised. Reference in this report to the work of Crisis Intervention Officer working for 3 RSLs in Argyll & Bute.

**For further information please contact:**

**Morven Short, Director – Dunbritton Housing Association Limited**