

New Build Council Housing – Local Letting Initiative

Report by Eibhlin McHugh, Joint Director, Health and Social Care

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1** This Report proposes a Local Letting Initiative (LLI) to be used for the allocation of housing at Eastfield Farm Road, Penicuik.

2. Background

- 2.1** In May 2016 Midlothian Council revised its Housing Allocation Policy. As part of the changes it was proposed that a Local Letting Initiative will be developed for each new build housing site prior to the allocation of properties. It is important that we make best use of our housing stock, which includes how these are allocated. Scottish Government guidance requires that houses are let in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need, which makes best use of the available stock and helps to sustain communities.

- 2.2** The Scottish Government publication, “Social Housing Allocations – A Practice Guide” refers to Local Lettings Initiatives, noting that legislation allows Registered Social Landlords to operate separate allocations policies for different parts of their stock. However, a Local Lettings Initiative cannot take into account:

- (i) how long a household has been resident in the area
 - (ii) previous rent arrears which are no longer outstanding
 - (iii) age of applicant
 - (iv) income of applicant
 - (v) ownership of property
- (this is subject to change shortly as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act (2014))

- 2.3** Midlothian Council has previously used a Transfer Led Local Lettings Initiative to allocate new build housing in communities. This helped to create a vacancy chain whereby transfer tenants would be able to move into a new build property and their existing home could be reallocated to an applicant on the Housing List. However, the 2011 Inspection Report of the Scottish Housing Regulator noted using this method meant that sometimes the Council did not always allocate properties through its LLI to households with a recognised

housing need. Consequently LLIs for new build properties must clearly address housing need.

2.4 In August 2014, Midlothian Council agreed to the development of 12 homes, designed to meet the needs of people with very complex needs, on the site which was previously the John Chant Centre at Eastfield Farm Road, Penicuik. These council houses are being built to meet the need for housing options for people with a learning disability and complex needs and will provide the best environment to support people whilst ensuring they can live in their own tenancy with dignity and privacy. This development has been specifically designed to meet the needs of these households and will reduce cost pressures on the General Fund by £0.590 per annum compared to the alternative care requirements in accommodating these households in mainstream accommodation.

Table 1: Housing Mix at Complex Care Development, Eastfield Farm Road

Property Type	Number of Properties
1 Bed, 2 Person Ground Floor Property	12

2.5 Following a procurement process, Richmond Fellowship have been appointed to provide supported living services to tenants living within the development.

2.6 Staff will be based at this development and shall provide a range of support services to tenants including:

- Setting up their home
- Following care plans
- Management of medication
- Personal finances
- Accessing services
- Emotional support
- Social skills
- Education, training and skills development

2.7 The weekly rental charge for these properties will be £74.06 per week. There is also an additional service charge of £9.52 per week to cover the costs of cleaning, maintaining and heating communal areas within the building. Tenants will have a Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement which gives them the same rights and responsibilities that mainstream council tenants receive.

2.8 In order to allocate these units in a way that ensures that Housing Applicants in the most need are accommodated, a Complex Care Housing Allocation Panel has been established to agree which applicants with complex care needs will be allocated a property in this development. The Panel will recommend allocations for all lets and prioritise applicants based on assessed need, where it is determined that an individual's support needs cannot be easily met in mainstream accommodation.

2.9 This Panel shall then continue to meet whenever a vacant property becomes available for let at this development in the future to ensure that an individual

with the greatest need for the housing and support service provided at the development is allocated a property. The Complex Care Housing Allocation Panel includes officers from Housing and Health and Social Care. The following criteria will also apply for the allocation of these units:

- (i) Properties to be allocated to applicants on Midlothian Council's Housing List.
- (ii) Properties to be allocated to applicants who are resident in Midlothian (including Midlothian residents who currently stay in supported accommodation outwith Midlothian).
- (iii) Properties to be allocated to applicants who have an assessed medical priority determined for complex care needs.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no resource implications within this Report.

3.2 Risk

It is essential to develop housing capacity for Midlothian citizens with very complex care needs in association with a Learning Disability.

The two key elements in the care of this group are the right support and the right environment.

The risks of failing to develop maintain, appropriately manage and allocate such properties in line with the needs of this group are that Health and Social Care packages are reactive and far more expensive than they need to be.

Not having the appropriate living environments would also result in the Council failing to deliver against national and local policy objectives for people with a learning disability and failing to make adequate planning and provision for future need.

3.3 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to reduce inequalities as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan.

The themes addressed in this report impact on the delivery of the Single Midlothian Plan outcome measures in homelessness and stable and balanced communities. Early intervention and tackling inequalities are key priorities for Midlothian Council and the Community Planning Partnership and these proposals meet those objectives.

- ☐ Community safety
- ☒ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The core aim in the revised Housing Allocation Policy is to offer applicants to Midlothian Council flexibility in the type and location of housing they wish to apply for. A key strength of the management of council housing in Midlothian is tenancy sustainment and introducing a Local Letting Initiative for new build developments will ensure a sustainable community.

3.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The complex care housing development facilitates a more planned approach to the delivery of complex care and support in Midlothian. This in turn contributes to reducing reactive expenditure to meet needs, stemming from expensive stand-alone packages of care and use of out-of-area placements, thus mitigating demographic pressures.

3.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The use of Local Lettings Initiatives for new build housing was recommended as part of the review of Midlothian Council's Housing Allocation Policy which was revised in May 2016. The key elements of the Local Letting Initiative for this development are consistent with the aims of the Policy. Consultation was carried out with service stakeholders, including Social Work Adult Care, Children and Families and Legal and Audit services in relation to this report. External consultation had also been carried out with the Registered Tenant Groups and Registered Social Landlords in Midlothian, the Housing Association Forum, tenancy support agencies, Midlothian Disability Access Panel, Shelter and the Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer.

Members of Midlothian Tenants Panel have been consulted in relation to this Local Letting Initiative. In addition, consultation with Housing Applicants with complex care needs and their families has taken place in terms of the design of the building and the support needs of tenants who move to the building. Some individuals with complex needs were also given the opportunity to view the development during construction.

Midlothian Council's Housing Allocation Policy and the Local Letting Initiative for this development will both be published documents which are available for tenants and housing list applicants to view.

3.7 Ensuring Equalities

The revised Housing Allocation Policy was subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment in accordance with the Council's Equalities Schemes to ensure equality of opportunity.

The policy ensures that discriminatory practices and procedures are eliminated and that the needs of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other target groups are assessed. The duties required of local authorities when letting their houses are set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

3.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not Applicable

3.9 IT Issues

Not Applicable

4 Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Approve a Local Letting Initiative outlined in Section 2.8 of this report for the allocation of housing at Eastfield Farm Road, Penicuik.

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Background Papers: Council Report: Progressing Complex Care in Midlothian

