

## **South Lanarkshire Council submission on the housing emergency, 10 February 2025**

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 January 2025 in regard to the housing inquiry and our opportunity to update you following our previous submission in the summer of 2024. I have provided updates on each of the areas of your inquiry below.

### **Tackling the Housing Emergency**

As previously advised, South Lanarkshire Council took a range of mitigations to Housing & Technical Resources Committee in February 2024 to support the service in addressing the unprecedented levels of homelessness that it has seen in the previous 12 months. Following this, the Council developed a Homelessness Strategic Plan focusing on these mitigating actions and long-standing strategic objectives.

The Council's Strategic Plan, founded on maintaining a person-centred approach, focuses to:-

- Address the significant increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- Maintain a sufficient supply of appropriate temporary accommodation
- Improve the timescales to resolve homelessness, and
- Reduce the number of children who are currently experiencing homelessness.

The next update on the Strategic Plan is to be presented to Housing & Technical Resources Committee on 26 February 2025 and we would be happy to share this document with you in line with our committee publication timeline.

### **Void Properties, Empty Homes & Acquisitions**

The Council have a robust void management process, ensuring that properties are maintained and relet within efficient timescales. The Council are proud to be a top performer amongst our peers in relation to void management and continue to demonstrate this within our Annual Charter indicators, with an average of 22.5 days in 2023/24 and 19 days to relet our properties during 2024/25.

We continue to maximise opportunities to bring empty homes back into use, with dedicated resources and a strategic focus on working with owners of long-term empty properties. Since the start of its current Local Housing Strategy in 2022, 71 long term empty homes have been brought back into use across South Lanarkshire, three of which were purchased directly by the council for social rent.

A key part of the council's Affordable Housing Supply Programme is its Market Purchase Scheme, enabling the council to purchase existing homes from the private sector to provide affordable council homes in areas of high demand. This scheme has operated successfully since 2016, with over 450 homes purchased to date.

Recognising the increasing pressures facing housing and homelessness services, the council expanded its existing scheme in late 2023 to allow for more opportunities to purchase homes directly from owners, including private landlords and those with empty properties. Focus was also given to advertising the areas where the council needed certain types of homes to help meet demand and sharing this information with estate

agents and property solicitors.

These changes were a success, with 165 homes across all areas of South Lanarkshire purchased through the scheme during 2023/24. This significant increase on previous years supported the council's approach to meeting housing need, providing more opportunities to find accommodation that meets people's needs in areas they wish to live.

This year, the council are on track to purchase a further 150 homes, fully utilising the additional funding provided through the Scottish Government's National Acquisition Programme. Significant resources from the council's Housing Investment Programme are also being utilised to bring the properties up to the relevant standards and let to households in need as quickly as possible.

### **The Impact of these Actions**

The Council have been monitoring homelessness presentations prior to our declaration of a housing emergency and continue to do so with the most recent HL1 publication now released. The Council has identified that at the end of quarter 3 in 2024/25, we have seen a 14% reduction in applications received when compared to the previous year and an 11.5% reduction in the number of homelessness decisions being made.

Already, internal analysis has evidenced that the acquisition programme has significantly reduced the length of time that large family households will wait for permanent settled accommodation, specifically within East Kilbride, which is our most pressurised area in terms of housing need and demand. During 2024/25, we took a focused approach to purchasing larger family accommodation with this aim in mind. We have shared this information with senior officers within the Scottish Government and have committed to continue with the market purchase scheme into 2025/26.

At 2023/24 yearend, the Council recorded that we had 305 households who were pregnant or with a dependent child, however at 31 December 2024, this had reduced to 259. This is a positive indication of the impact we have made to date.

However, we are yet to see a positive impact on our overall open homelessness caseload, it is recognised that this will take place over a longer period of time due to the significant increase during 2022 and 2023, and we appreciate will be dependent on housing turnover. The Council are committed to our Affordable Housing Supply Programme, with a delivery programme already in place, and are in regular contact with the Scottish Government's More Homes Team. The Council are awaiting details of our 2025/26 Resource Planning Assumptions and any commitment to future years as this will influence if we can add further projects to our affordable housing supply programme. I appreciate that the budget process is underway, and it is anticipated that we should have an update in due course.

### **Progress & Performance Management**

The Council's Strategic Homelessness Plan and other key performance indicators will allow for progress to be measured and reported. These are aligned to The Council Plan and the Resource Plan, along with the Local Housing Strategy and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. All of which are published online, and we would be happy to provide any specific performance outcomes should this be required.

The latest HL1 statistics were published on 5 February 2025 and although these show that we are still within the top 5 Local Authorities impacted by high levels of homelessness, we have made progress with reduced number of children within temporary accommodation and a slight reduction in our homelessness presentations.

Finally, I want to offer assurance that the Council are fully committed to tackling the ongoing housing emergency, providing settled and secure accommodation for those most in need and ending the ongoing homelessness crisis.

Senior Officers continue to meet with Officers within the Scottish Government and ensure that any joint working opportunities are maximised, progress updates are provided, and ongoing discussion and dialogue takes place which we feel is important during this time.

Should you wish any further detail, then please don't hesitate to contact and we will be happy to support any requests.