

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 18 AUGUST 2015

OPEN MARKET ACQUISITION SCHEME

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE

ABSTRACT

This Report provides an update on the Open Market Acquisition Scheme and seeks approval for it to be continued on an on-going basis, with the criteria extended to enable the purchase of homes to assist in meeting particular housing needs in complex cases.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i). Notes the position in relation to 2014/15 activity of the Open Market Acquisition Scheme.
- (ii). Agrees that a small number of properties are purchased on an ongoing basis funded from appropriate sources within existing resources.
- (iii). Approves extension of the initiative's criteria to enable the purchase of owner occupied homes where the occupant has a high medical priority for rehousing and an alternative suitable housing solution has been identified.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Angus is a good place to live in and work
- Individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them
- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services.

3. BACKGROUND

Members will recall that the Open Market Acquisition Scheme was approved in November 2014 per report 464/14. The report outlined the criteria that would apply when considering properties potentially suitable for purchase and advised that members would receive an update on scheme activity.

4. CURRENT POSITION

In 2014/15 the Council completed five purchases through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme. Of these, four were ex-Right to Buy Homes and one purchase specifically met the needs of a household with particular needs. These purchases have enabled the Council to increase its housing stock and meet the requirements of families in housing need.

A total of £590,000 has been invested in purchasing properties on the open market. This includes £414,000 from the Council's Housing Capital Budget and £176,000 secured through the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

5. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that the Open Market Acquisition Scheme is continued. Members are asked to agree that a small number of properties are purchased on an ongoing basis with related costs funded from appropriate funding sources, to be identified from within existing resources. No more than 20 properties will be purchased in any financial year and members will continue to receive updates on scheme activity.

Members will be aware that the Council is pro-active in contributing to more joined up public services, especially as part of Health and Social Care Integration. One area where the Housing Service can play a crucial role is in helping to minimise delayed discharge from hospital, where patients cannot return to their own home as it no longer meets their needs. Members are therefore asked to approve that the criteria for Open Market Acquisition are extended to include the purchase of homes where the occupant has a high medical priority for rehousing and an alternative suitable housing solution has been identified. In these circumstances, previously approved criteria that the property is being actively marketed for sale; the seller has a valid Home Report; and the seller does not appear on the Common Housing Register will not be applied.

In all cases we will assess the type, size, quality and location of the property to ensure it meets our requirements before an offer to purchase is made. A scoring matrix has been established in order to assess this and will be kept under regular review.

Members should note that a revised decision making framework is being developed to support a consistent, responsive and efficient approach to meeting the housing needs of households with particular needs. This framework will enable the Council to respond more effectively to complex housing needs in line with changes to the funding arrangements for adaptations being brought about as a result of health and social care integration. This framework will inform decisions on the future application of the Open Market Acquisition Scheme as a possible tool to assist in meeting complex housing needs.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of purchasing properties acquired through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme will be met within existing resources and identified within the Housing Capital Plan 2014-18.

Grant funding has been identified through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to support around six purchases in 2015/16. However further funding could be made available in line with the Council's priorities for the delivery of affordable housing. This is managed with the Scottish Government on an ongoing basis.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Open Market Acquisition Scheme 464/14

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