

Fife Council, Thursday 21st March, 2024.

Housing Emergency

SNP Amendment

Council notes with great concern:

- the extreme pressures on housing and homelessness in Fife:
- that despite the approval of a medium-term Homelessness Strategy 2024-2027 and the progress made over recent months in reducing void turnaround times, with reprovisioning of temporary accommodation and in increasing the number of properties available for relet, the number of households assessed as homeless and waiting for a tenancy and the number of families with children in temporary accommodation remains worryingly high:
- that like other local authorities across Scotland, Fife faces difficulties in meeting its statutory duties in regard to homelessness:

Council also notes the circumstances that have led to the current situation over the last 2 years:

- The significant increases in the cost of construction of new builds due to rampant inflation in the construction sector , and the skill shortages caused by Brexit.
- The court judgment on Temporary Accommodation
- Fife Council voids timescales substantially worsening over the previous 2 years partly due to Court Case but also inefficiencies within Fife Council.
- Delays in Fife Council's new build programme
- The ideological impediments to property acquisitions by the administration particularly the buying back of former Council houses.
- The Housing Service has struggled with large delays in assessing tenants whose Fife Housing register applications require a Housing Functional Needs Assessment.
- Delays in bringing empty homes up to a lettable standard quickly,
- A surge in cases of damp and mould in properties resulting in a backlog of around 300 cases
- The foregoing all have previously influenced the inability of the HRA to balance its books without reducing CFCR.

Council also notes that the Fife Council affordable housing programme has benefited from and investment of more than £100 million over the last 10 years from the Scottish Government and that Housing Associations in Fife will have received grants in excess of £100 million.

Council also notes that the Scottish Government's ability to invest in infrastructure has now faced savage cuts of £1.6 billion from the Westminster Government, that the Scottish Budget has been approved by Holyrood, with no alternative to the housing proposals made by any party or group.

Council further notes that the Scottish Government is focused on the target of delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032 and to support that target it will bring forward the review scheduled for 2026-27 to 2024, which will concentrate on deliverability.

Council believes that adding a slogan to the current housing situation will achieve little. It also believes that delaying effective action to June is just another example of complacency when the Council had the option to establish a Working Group in May 2022 and chose not to do so.

Council seeks:

- An urgent review of the HRA Capital Plan to maximise the provision of affordable homes using the quickest and most affordable way possible.
- A report from the Chief Executive to the Cabinet Committee asap addressing how Fife Council, Housing Associations, and others can collaborate to make best use of the Scottish Government substantial budget of £556 million for affordable homes the new financial year.
- A report to the Cabinet Committee of 9th May 2024 which will follow a review of the Councils Housing Service procedures in relation to housing allocations, repairs, eliminating inefficiency and proving to tenants that the high rent increases they have had to bear in recent years are worth the cost.

Proposer - Cllr David Alexander

Seconder - Cllr Lesley Backhouse