


DECISION

	Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association Central Area Committee		
	15/05/2024	Item 10	No. of appendices: 0
	Subject: Lettings Strategy 2024/2025		
	Clare Morrison Housing Manager		
Group Corporate Strategy - Strategic Objectives: Customers first <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investing in our assets <input type="checkbox"/> Growing our services <input type="checkbox"/>			
Executive Summary To provide the Central Area Committee with the outcome of targets set in the 2023/2024 lettings strategy. Central Area Committee approval is sought for the local letting strategy for North Lanarkshire and Edinburgh for 2024/25 Recommendation: The area committee is requested to note the contents of this report and to approve the proposed Letting Strategy for 2024/2025.			
Customer Considerations There are no direct customer or employee considerations.			
Risk Management RM 3 Cost and Income Pressures; the allocation of Sanctuary Scotland houses and flats remains one of the most important aspects of our business. Ensuring that properties are allocated in a fair and transparent manner and in accordance with legislation and guidance is very important. The Lettings Strategy therefore contributes to the management of risks associated with low demand for properties and regulatory compliance.			
Value for Money Providing effective guidance on lettings promotes balanced communities, reduces turnover and minimises void loss which has a positive impact Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association Limited's cash flow and financial position.			
Freedom of Information: For publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not for publication <input type="checkbox"/> Partial publication <input type="checkbox"/>			

1. Strategic Context

The aim of the letting strategy is to assist in the creation and maintenance of balanced communities. This approach complies with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) Performance Standards for Registered Social landlords and Section 20(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001, 2010 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association's lettings strategies are aligned with the Group's core strategic priority of Engage. We engage with local authorities in open, honest and on-going relationships to set letting targets and to agree referral arrangements. We will communicate our priorities and consider issues from their perspective.

2. Analysis/Proposal

This paper proposes the Lettings Strategy for Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association's properties in the North Lanarkshire and Edinburgh areas for 2024/2025 for general needs housing in accordance with the Lettings Policy.

Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association's Lettings Policy's primary aim is to provide affordable and well managed rented accommodation to those in housing need, and at the same time contribute to providing balanced and sustainable communities. Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association aims to achieve this, using the Lettings Strategy, by pursuing the following objectives:

- Allocating homes to people with high levels of housing need including applicants under-occupying properties, homeless persons and those living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- Ensuring that access to the allocations process is open at all times to all sections of the community.
- Making the best use of available stock and using the allocations process to assist in the creation and maintenance of balanced and sustainable communities.
- Establishing comprehensive and clear targets for the allocation of properties

3. Review of Letting Strategy

3.1 For every allocation, applicants at the top of the CHR waiting list will receive a formal offer. Exceptions to this would be:

- where the property on offer has been adapted for a disabled person

- properties that are larger than the minimum size the applicant requires may be offered where there are no suitable applicants who have a minimum requirement for the size of property to be let. (For example, a couple may be allocated a 2-bedroomed property, but only if there are no families on the shortlist for that particular property or similarly a single applicant may be allocated a 2-bedroomed property where there are no families or couples on the shortlist).

- 3.2 For Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association’s current Edinburgh stock where there are 24 x two bedroomed flats, these are allocated via nominations from Edinburgh City Council. It should be noted that these properties are very small, are all electric and can accommodate no more than 3 persons and therefore the lettings process follows that as is detailed at 3.1 above.
- 3.3 Properties deemed to be low demand will be subject to ‘expressions of interest’ should the person at the top of the list refuse the first offer.
- 3.4 In order to address tenancy sustainment in Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association’s lower demand properties, in April 2015 a furniture project was introduced. The furniture project is available to applicants moving into low demand properties, or to those applicants moving into Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association’s general rented properties in other areas, where they do not have essential household items including white goods, beds and sofas. Staff work well with the furniture provider, Recap Cumbernauld, who provide an excellent service to applicants in need.
- 3.5 During 2023/2024 Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association had a total of 163 lets – 162 being re-lets and one new build allocation. This was lower than the previous years reporting due to the Burns Road development having been allocated during 2022/2023.

Table 1 below shows where the 163 lets took place and shows a comparison with the previous reporting year.

Table 1

Area	2022/23	2023/24
Carbrain	56	65
Greenfaulds	7	9
Kildrum	146	35
Ravenswood	9	7
Seafar	31	35
Village	9	9
Gartcosh	2	3
Edinburgh	3	0
Total	263	163

- 3.6 In order to maintain a balance between the various categories of lets, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association operate a quota system. Target percentages within the different groups set out below will be determined by

Local Letting Plans to ensure reasonable preference is given to those in greatest housing need.

- Direct Applicants
- Transfers
- Homeless Applicants
- Referrals from Voluntary Organisations

Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association will make selections throughout the year on a rotational basis to help ensure that the target percentages are broadly achieved each year.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the allocations made against the respective targets set last year and includes commentary on the outcomes.

Table 2

Annual Targets	% Target 2023/24	Outcome	Comments
Housing list applicants (General)	70%	81%	Above target
Homeless persons from CHR list	20%	13%	Below target
Sanctuary Scotland (Central) transfers	10%	6%	Below target
Dispersed lets to NLC	As required		N/A
Dispersed lets to Woman's Aid	As required		N/A
Management Transfers	As required		N/A

In terms of Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association's targets for last year, we exceeded the target set for general housing list applicants with 132 of the 163 properties being allocated to this group. Lets to homeless applicants amounted to 21, and this figure, whilst below our target, is due to the number of potentially homeless cases being housed in advance of a statutory homeless decision being reached (and therefore being allocated in our General category). Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association did not meet the target for transfer applicants. The issues to highlight in this respect are that:

- a high proportion of our re-lets are low demand.
- transfer applicants either refuse or do not respond to offers in our lower demand areas. When this happens we move to the CHR General list to re-let the property within acceptable timescales.

4. Analysis of Housing Supply and Demand

- 4.1 In the Central area Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association own 2,268 houses and flats. Included in this figure are 12 individual supported properties within North Lanarkshire and 24 flats in the Edinburgh area.
- 4.2 Of the total lets, 162 were relets, which equates to over 7% of the total stock.
- 4.3 We currently have 2,795 waiting list applications. With a ratio of over 17 applicants for every available property, demand far exceeds supply.
- 4.4 Points to note in this respect are:
- There is a relatively high turnover in 3 apartment (2 bedrooms) properties.
 - There is little desire from applicants on any of our lists to be allocated bedsit accommodation.
 - The turnover of our larger properties is extremely low.
- 4.5 Criteria to distinguish areas of low demand have been set by the Scottish Housing Regulator to include: a small or non-existent waiting list; tenancy offers for dwellings which are frequently refused; and higher than normal rates of tenancy turnover. Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association areas in Cumbernauld which fall into these categories include flats in Glenhove Road, Glenacre Road and Sandyknowes Road.

5. Lettings Strategy 2024/2025

5.1 Anticipated turnover

5.1.1 At year end we had 2,268 lettable properties.

5.1.2 Based on last year's figures and previous turnover, we anticipate approximately 180 lets (including new build at Gartcosh), which equates to an approximate turnover of eight per cent of stock.

5.2 North Lanarkshire Common Housing Register

5.2.1 Since joining the Common Housing Register as a full partner in October 2009, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association has used the same lists as NLC to allocate properties. This has made the previous system of nominations and referrals redundant and allows us to speed up the allocation process.

5.2.2 Targets for 2024/2025 are proposed as follows:

- CHR General – 65%
- CHR Homeless – 25%
- Sanctuary Scotland (Central) Transfers – 10%

- Dispersed Lets – as required

5.3 Edinburgh Common Housing Register

- 5.3.1 Sanctuary Scotland have new build developments on site in the Edinburgh City Council area at South Queensferry (100 Units) and Edmonstone Park (58 units). We expect the South Queensferry development to be handed over in 2024/25.
- 5.3.2 Until now we have received 100% nominations for our 24 properties in Edinburgh. With the increase in stock, we have been accepted to join the Edindex Common Housing Register. We propose to allocate all properties in the Edinburgh City Council through Edindex, and that targets for lets to waiting list, transfer and homeless applicants are brought to committee later in the year following discussions with Edindex.

6. Conclusion / Recommendation

The area committee is requested to note the contents of this report and to approve the proposed Letting Strategy for 2024/2025.