



Equality Relevance Assessment

1. Policy details	
Policy title	Housing Capital Programme 2017/18
Policy lead officer	Alistair Shaw – Head of Housing, Customer and Building Services
Date relevance considered	25/01/2017
2. Does the council have control over how this policy will be implemented?	
YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy will, or may potentially:	
General Duties	Level of impact (high , medium or low)
Reduce or increase discrimination, victimisation or harassment against people covered by the equality protected characteristics?	Low
Reduce or increase equality of opportunity between people who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	Low
Provide opportunity to improve good relations between those who share an equality protected characteristic and those who do not?	Low
4. Equality impact assessment required? (All high and medium policies MUST be impact assessed)	
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
5. Decision rationale	
<p>The ten year capital programme was originally approved by the Council Executive in December 2008 (subsequently revised in 2012). This programme details where West Lothian Council intends to spend its capital receipts. The justification for this expenditure is on house (stock) condition as outlined by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, new build council houses as well as other additional non SHQS upgrades and improvements including externals, environmental work to aid in achieving energy efficiencies (in support of EESSH compliance) and Equipment and Adaptations.</p> <p>A screening was carried out as recommended by the EQIA in 2008 on the proposed capital programme, and funding levels for each year subsequently. This was required as there were proposed changes to the funding committed to projects, particularly to take into account the impact of the recession and associated central funding restrictions being faced by the service. Any concerns around potential equality issues were met at this point through examination of the breakdown provided within the report on the proposals for investment.</p> <p>The focus on meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and delivering the 1,000 new council</p>	

houses project mitigated any of the initial concerns as the outcome of these works would improve the condition of older stock to make it more secure, safe, accessible and energy efficient by design. The new build were being built to an exceptionally high specification and the selection of the designs at tender bid stage were made in partnership with members of the local equality groups to ensure the service had considered the needs of potentially vulnerable tenants from the formative stages of the project.

A significant level of investment has been driven towards improving property standards to meet the SHQS standard, and investment in this area going forward will also support further energy efficiency work in compliance with EESSH regulations. Demographically, the communities in greatest need of housing improvements tend to include people who may face fewer life choices and decreased social mobility – these tenants benefit most from improvement projects. By improving the appearance and overall quality of stock in these areas as a priority the life chances of those living there are significantly improved, with benefits to education, health and wellbeing and community safety.

This type of combined approach to meeting demand of increasing housing supply through new homes and improving older stock is continued in the proposed 2017/18 programme through the environmental upgrade works in communities, and the energy efficiency measures through the provisions made for increased spend on improving energy efficiency of properties and external environmental improvement projects to regenerate the communities most in need of works to improve the local environment.

A needs based investment approach prevents areas from becoming undesirable places to live, increases choice for potential tenants and encourages social mobility for existing residents, thereby increasing the social diversity of communities while seeking to prevent socio-economic deprivation.

The capital programme specifically budgets for needs based improvements to aid active living through provision of funding projections for adaptive equipment and adaptations to West Lothian Council's housing stock as determined by the health assessment process. Improvements made to meet the SHQS ensure all stock is more accessible at a basic level. The provision made for improvements to lighting, kitchen and bathroom renewals will also increase safety and quality of life for residents in older properties. This portion of the programme remains need-based and reactive in terms of service delivery in order to deliver improvements at the point of need to the tenant.

The approach of making general structural and fixture/fittings improvements combined with specific adaptations where required enables tenants with mobility issues to remain independent in their own homes for longer and ensures that the adaptations that are made are tailored to the individual. As the surrounding properties and area are also improved via general upgrading works the possibility of any discrimination or perceptions of unfairness is avoided and the fostering of good relations between minority groups and the rest of the community is maintained.

By budgeting for and recognising the importance of this type of improvement work to properties the proposals ensure the provision of needs based solutions for those who require it most. The policy on equipment and adaptations is centred on qualification via a set criteria applied by Occupational Therapy professionals and is based on the social model of disability; this has led to a straightforward process that is transparent and easy to access. Most requests meet the criteria and are approved.

By designing new build properties with the capacity for future aids and adaptations future proofs the supply of accommodation types in order to meet the needs of a diverse range of tenants. The decision to build one story bungalows is a result of responding directly to the needs of our local communities as expressed during consultation activity.

The other main driver of the direction of capital funds is phase 2 and 3 of the new build projects. This new house-building has been combined with the demolition of older, financially unsustainable estates and seeks to address the gap in supply and demand issues for decent and affordable socially rented housing in the area. Provision of modern housing, built to exceed the SHQS standard that is well supported by robust local infrastructure and services will benefit those most in need of housing and increase housing options for tenants and potential tenants. There is enormous housing demand pressure on all local registered social landlords; the capital programme priorities are directed towards alleviating some of this pressure and increasing the supply of affordable, socially rented accommodation.

The funding to help tenants achieve energy efficiency and keep fuel bills as low as possible will obviously aid those in most danger of fuel poverty and deprivation. This funding commitment for 2017/18 continues the previous financial years commitment allocated for improvements including boiler and heating system replacements and the installation of energy efficient loft and cavity wall insulation. The service intends to continue to focus on this area in recognition of the importance of tackling poorly insulated and heated homes to mitigate the threat of fuel poverty for those tenants most vulnerable to this threat. Improving the energy efficiency of our stock most in need of this work is a priority for the service. The additional specific funding for district heating in Westfield is a further positive investment in relation to tackling fuel poverty.

The original 10 year Capital Programme and the subsequent budgetary breakdowns each financial year have been subject to EQIA relevance screening. During this further screening process for 2017/18 consultation was made on these proposals with the service Group Accountant, HCBS Senior Management Team, Housing Strategy Officers, Special Projects Co-ordinator (responsible for the Capital Programme) and the service equality lead. The details of the budget proposals within this report support these findings and it is unnecessary that a full EQIA be carried out.

It is recommended that any further budgetary proposals or amendments to the Capital Programme be screened for EQIA relevance where required.

- **No assessment required – process ends**
- **Assessment required – continue to next section**