

60. Acquisitions Policy

Andrea Ripley, Housing Strategy Officer:

- a) presented the revised Acquisition Strategy (Appendix 1) for review prior to consideration by Executive
- b) highlighted that the renewed Acquisitions Policy represented a refresh of the old one
- c) advised that the sale of council homes continued to create pressure to replace sold properties via Right to Buy (RtB) and to ensure that capital receipts were utilised within the required timescales for the purposes of replacing social housing
- d) explained that the process of purchasing homes from the open market or via direct approaches continued to work well; to date the policy had facilitated the purchase of 99 homes and this number would continue to increase following the structured process set out in the revised Acquisitions Policy
- e) summarised the amendments made to the Acquisitions Policy as set out in paragraph 3 of the report
- f) advised that following the budget update by Government the previous week, up to 50% of capital costs could now be apportioned to the Right to Buy (RtB) fund
- g) invited Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committees questions and comments.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail. Questions raised were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: How did the Housing Authority use the 50% costs it was apportioned?

Response: Rtb receipts could be used for 50% of the capital costs for the purchase and repair of a property or new build development/acquisitions. Each purchase would undergo financial viability modelling on funding and revenue with delegated authority in place to authorise before proceeding with a purchase. Each year the government determined the level of RtB receipts the Council was able to retain from the sales of council properties. The receipt and spend of these funds was tracked by Finance and Housing Strategy to ensure compliance and to reduce any risk to pay back unspent funds within the required timescales. As only 50% of each purchase could be funded via the RtB receipts the remaining cost was funded via prudential borrowing or direct revenue financing. The Housing Strategy team would provide members with an example of how funding had been apportioned and potential future availability of funding for 2024/2025.

RESOLVED that:

1. A breakdown of Rtb receipts apportionment and potential future availability of funding to be forwarded to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.
2. The revised Acquisition Policy be supported and referred to Executive for approval.