

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL****Housing and Health Committee****14 August 2013****Garage Sites and Lock-Ups Update Report****Report by Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update elected members on the Review of Lock-Ups and Garage Sites and seek approval for consultation and implementation of outcomes with local tenants, residents and elected members.

**1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 1.1 In order to ensure the future best use of lock-ups and garage sites across Perth and Kinross, a short life working group was established to consider what actions were required. As a result, Housing and Community Care organised a full stock condition survey and feasibility study of all lock-up and garage sites throughout Perth and Kinross. This extensive exercise took place between April and July 2013 and included 1,161 lock-ups and 58 garage sites on 619 garage plots, 1,780 units in total.
- 1.2 The aims of the survey were to help inform future decisions on:
  - Maximising best use of land
  - Community sustainability
  - Maximising income and provide value for money
  - Ensuring appropriate rent levels
  - Reducing ongoing costs associated with vandalism and graffiti.
- 1.3 The specific objectives of the survey were to:
  - Identify the condition of 1,161 lock-up structures and 58 garage sites
  - Identify suitable future options for each site including
    - Refurbishment to allow continued use as a lock-up or garage site
    - Demolition
    - Affordable housing
    - Community space/landscaping
    - Suburban car parking (both free and charged)
    - Sale of site.
- 1.4 The tenants' Quality Panel also assisted the surveys of the lock-ups and garage sites viewing them from a tenant's perspective. Their findings broadly mirrored the survey findings.

- 1.5 Lock-ups and garage sites are two different types of provision as defined below.

### **Lock-Ups**

- 1.6 Lock-ups are held on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and are defined as a purpose-built structure maintained by the Council and rented to an individual. There are currently 1,161 lock-ups (on 135 sites). The majority of these (734, 63%) are located in Perth, 320 of which are in North Muirton. Council house tenants pay £7.65 per week if they rent a lock-up and non-Council house tenants pay £9.18 per week rent (including VAT). On average, 2 out of 3 lock-ups are rented by private owners.
- 1.7 The projected income generated from lock-ups for 2013/14 is £355,600, based on 77% occupancy.

### **Garage Sites**

- 1.8 Garage sites are also held on the Housing Revenue Account. The Council owns each garage site and lets individual plots of ground to residents on which to erect their own garage (usually of a wooden structure). The rental of garage plots is available to all residents, even if they are not Council tenants.
- 1.9 Of the 58 individual garage sites throughout the Perth and Kinross area there are a total of 619 garage plots, of which 437 are currently let. 22 of the 58 garage sites are located in the Letham/Hillyland area. The annual rent for a garage plot ranges from £23.94 to £80.17 per year depending on whether the site has a finished or unfinished surface.
- 1.10 The projected income generated from garage sites for 2013/14 is £32k.

### **Issues**

- 1.11 The provision of lock ups and garage sites is not a statutory function and is not subject to, or regulated by, the Scottish Housing Regulator. They do not form part of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and, although a stock condition survey was undertaken in late 2005/early 2006 and repairs to lock-ups were mentioned in Perth and Kinross Council's Standard Delivery Plan submission to Communities Scotland, work did not take place, as priority was given to refurbishing Council housing.
- 1.12 23% of lock-ups are currently void, with a rent loss of around £106,000 last year. North Muirton has the highest percentage of void lock-ups (121, 38% of the total available in that area). Work will be required to these if they are to be rented in a good condition and it is likely that the lock-up rents would have to rise to achieve this.
- 1.13 The issues with garage sites include some health and safety concerns, inappropriate use of the garage structure, non-payment of rent and non-adherence to the tenancy agreement. The lack of investment in garage sites over the years has resulted in a deterioration in the condition of many.

## **2. LOCK-UPS AND GARAGES' SURVEY**

- 2.1 An extensive survey of all 1,161 lock-ups and 58 garage sites (619 plots) was undertaken over a four month period, April-July 2013. This included:

### Lock-ups

- Inspection of all lockups throughout Perth and Kinross to assess their condition
- Determine the cost-effectiveness of the refurbishment of each lock-up sites
- Make recommendations for the future use of each site.

### Garages

- Inspect all garage sites throughout Perth and Kinross to assess their condition
- Ascertain the correct number of pitches for each site in accordance with current building regulations
- Determine any access issues
- Determine whether each site should be retained
- Make recommendations for future use where retention is not feasible.

- 2.2 The results indicate:

Survey options	Lock-ups (sites)	Garage sites
Retain for continued use	52%	16%
Demolish with alternative use	38%	84%
Part retain/part demolish	10%	0%

The survey also identified options for alternative use, including development for sale or affordable housing, off-street parking or allotments.

The results and options will be subject to consultation.

## **3. PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 This paper proposes a period of consultation with tenants, residents and elected members to agree the future use of lock-ups and garage sites.
- 3.2 The three main options identified by the surveyor were to:
- Retain for continued use
  - Demolish with an alternative use
  - Part retain and part demolish

Issues for discussion will include:

### **3.3 Retained Sites**

The retained lock-up sites should benefit from a comprehensive prioritised programme of improvements to start in 2014. A few require minor repairs with

the majority requiring works, including door replacement, roof, fascia and gutter renewal, work to facing brick piers and surface repairs. The void levels and demand will be taken into consideration when deciding on this option.

### **Part Retention/Part Other use**

- 3.4 In some areas it would make sense due to lower demand to reduce the number of lock-ups and consider off-road parking or the provision of new lock-ups to compensate for a loss of garage sites in the area. This and the option below will be the subject of consultation with tenants and the local community.

### **Demolition/Alternative use**

- 3.5 Providing adequate parking provision is important for the community and has a large impact on the success of the housing environment. Parking through the provision of garage sites, often located some distance from car owners' houses, is a historical practice carried out as part of the volume of social housing-building era of the post war years. The high level of voids on many sites and the low numbers of people on the waiting list for garage sites, particularly in the Letham area, suggest that there is an over provision of garage sites. People generally want their car to be parked close to their home where they can see it. If it is parked in a garage on a site some distance from their home they do not have any awareness of the deterioration of the structure. Some garage sites might be best cleared and an alternative use considered.
- 3.6 Where new-build has been identified as a possibility, consideration should be given to selling the sites and the income used to support the Housing Revenue Account or transferred to a Registered Social Landlord for future affordable housing as part of the Council's contribution to the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. This would have to be agreed with tenants.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Given the number and varied condition of lock-ups and garage sites, public interest and the range of potential options for future use, this project requires detailed consultation with all relevant stakeholders. This will be undertaken on rolling programme supported by dedicated resources, namely a Tenant Liaison Officer, allocated to manage the process.
- 4.2 Based on volume and priority, the following phases are proposed:
- **Phase 1:** North Muirton (lock-ups), Kinross (lock-ups), Letham (garage sites)
  - **Phase 2:** Letham (lock-ups) Hillyland (lock-ups) Blairgowrie/Rattray/Alyth (lock-ups)
  - **Phase 3:** All other lock-up and garage site locations

4.3 There will be a detailed communication and engagement plan which will include regular updates and briefing sessions for elected members to keep them fully informed and involved about local options and decision making.

4.4 The consultation will involve:

- Speaking to local Elected Members
- Approaching any Tenant and Resident Associations/Community Councils in the area to ascertain if they would be interested in hosting a meeting
- Issuing a press-release to raise awareness of forthcoming consultation.

It will also involve asking those who rent lock-ups and garages:

- If they wish to continue renting/have a continued requirement
- What they use the lock up for
- If the site is retained and improved, would they be willing to pay more rent
- Are there alternative uses for the site
- Would they want a parking space.

4.5 At the same time as writing to tenants we will place posters/flyers on the site and develop specific pages on the Council's website to promote this work.

4.6 The information received from tenants will determine the level of activity in each area, but will include

- On-site visits and individual visits
- An information bus may be used for on-site visits.

4.7 Wider Community

Once the above detailed information is known, staff will consult the wider tenant group, as plans may affect the Housing Revenue Account. This would be done through 'On the House', Tenant Participation Forum and at the rent consultation events in October/November.

Following this, staff will return to individual areas to discuss plans with the community and ascertain their views. This could be done through Tenants' and Residents' Associations or Community Councils where they exist.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 This report summarises the work undertaken to review the lock-ups and garage sites across Perth and Kinross. It proposes that tenants, residents and elected members are involved in a consultation to discuss the detailed findings and elicit views as to their future use. Measures will be implemented as areas conclude their consultation phase and a subsequent report will be made to committee to update on progress.

5.2 Housing and Health Committee (report 13/56) approved funding for any future investment in relation to lock-ups and garage sites. Where there is historic demand for lock-up sites, following agreement, these could be factored into a refurbishment programme over the next 3 years commencing in 2014/15.

5.3 Housing and Health Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the current position on the Review of Lock-Ups and Garage Sites;
- (ii) Approve consultation with relevant stakeholders and implementation of outcomes as outlined in the report; and
- (iii) Request the Executive Director (Housing and Community Care) to submit a further report to committee updating on progress.

**Author(s)**

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**Approved**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Date</b>
David Burke	Executive Director, Housing and Community Care	7 August 2013

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

*The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed*

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>None</b>
Workforce	<b>None</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>Yes</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>Yes</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>Yes</b>
Risk	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>Yes</b>
External	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications plan	<b>Yes</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan/ Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 sets out five strategic objectives:

- Giving every child the best start in life
- Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

- 1.2 This report relates to the third and fifth objective.

Corporate Plan

- 1.3 The proposals relate to the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives in the same way as they do to the Community Plan as detailed above.

**2. Resource Implications**

Financial

None from this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.1 This will be determined following consultation.

**3. Assessments**

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This will be considered during the consultation process.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

*Option 2* no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

- 3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 [The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on this report](#)



### Risk

- 3.5 A risk profile will be developed as part of the consultation process.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

- 4.1 The Garages and Lock-ups Working Group have been consulted about the proposals in this report.

### External

- 4.2 The Tenant Committee Report Panel discussed the report at their meeting on Thursday 25<sup>TH</sup> July 2013 and commented as follows:

The Tenant Committee Report Panel supports this paper.

## **5. Communication**

- 5.1 Information relating to Garage Sites and Lock Ups will be made available to tenants of these sites and any one who is currently on the waiting list for a lock up or a plot. The method of communication will include updates on the web site, article in On the House and leaflets. Further contact will be made with tenants and residents who are directly affected by the proposals.