

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 19 AUGUST 2008

SUBJECT: LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE 2008

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report summarises the 2008 Local Housing Strategy update. This reviews the actions for 2007/08 and sets out the actions for 2008/09.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to strategic housing matters.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Communities Committee notes this report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Moray Council's current Local Housing Strategy (LHS) runs from 2004 until 2009. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires local authorities to keep their LHS under review, and to provide Scottish Ministers with information about the implementation of the Strategy. This was achieved through submission of an LHS Annual Monitoring Statement to Communities Scotland.
- 3.2 Earlier Annual Monitoring Statements were presented to Committee and submitted to Communities Scotland in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The last annual monitoring report was submitted to Committee on 29 August 2007 (paragraph 34 of the minute refers) The Annual Monitoring Statements were published on the Council's website following assessment and agreement with Communities Scotland. These statements provide a review of the actions carried out during the previous year, together with a revised action plan for the current year. A copy of the latest Annual Monitoring Statement has been placed in the Members' Library.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government has introduced new LHS Guidance, which indicates that in the future the LHS should be produced along with the Council's Development Plan. This means that the next LHS will be due for publication in 2011. Officers are currently considering the approach to the period 2009 to 2011. A report on this subject will be presented to a future Committee after discussion with our strategic partners.
- 3.4 The Scottish Government also indicated that although the Council needs to report on annual progress there is no longer any need to submit a formal written annual report. However the Housing Service has a commitment to report to Committee and provide a public annual update. In view of this, the review arrangements have been continued for this year. This enables the LHS to be monitored in a consistent manner throughout its life.

4. PROGRESS 2007/2008

- 4.1 The LHS update for 2008 set out progress against the actions in 2007/08. The actions are categorised in the main themes of Access to Housing, Quality of Housing, Housing and Community Care, and Sustainable Communities and Social Inclusion.
- 4.2 There were 70 actions for the year. Of these 36 were fully completed, there was significant progress with 18 of them, and 16 were not achieved. During the year there were staffing shortages in the Housing Strategy Section and this contributed to some actions not being achieved. The Section is now fully staffed.
- 4.3 The significant achievements during the year include:-
- Record Investment levels in new affordable housing in Moray.
 - Special Needs Housing developed.
 - Final HECA monitoring report submitted to the Scottish Government.
 - The first Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) was submitted to the Government.
 - The new Tenant Participation Strategy was introduced.
 - The Moray Council ahead of schedule to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.
 - The continued success of Care and Repair

5. ACTIONS 2008/2009

- 5.1 The LHS Update for 2008/09 continues most of the actions from previous years. The outstanding actions from 2007/08 are timetabled to be completed this year.
- 5.2 The main action of the LHS update is continues to be to maximise the opportunities for new affordable housing. The update reflects the finding of the Housing Needs Study that there is a requirement for 219 new affordable houses every year. How this may be achieved will primarily be set out in the SHIP, and pursued through the Development Programme. Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes will be monitored. In addition, an initial report will be presented to Committee in October assessing the feasibility of a Council housing new build programme.
- 5.3 The update reflects new actions in relation to reviewing the Rural Housing Enabler Pilot and applying for Pressured Area Status for Forres.
- 5.4 Actions around Energy Efficiency have had to be modified, whilst further guidance is awaited from the Scottish Government, following the submission of the final HECA monitoring report. Energy efficiency and fuel poverty continue to be high priorities of the LHS.

- 5.5 With the removal of the Supporting People “ring fenced” budget and accompanying guidance, the Council awaits further guidance from the Government before finalising future arrangements for Housing Support services.
- 5.6 The Council has begun planning its actions in relation to private sector housing following the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. Final Guidance from the Scottish Government is expected later this year.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The Local Housing Strategy covers all the main housing and related issues within the Community Plan and the Service Development Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

The production of the LHS is a legal requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

The LHS update does not directly allocate resources for the year but sets out the strategic priorities for the year.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services and Senior Managers within the Housing Service in the preparation of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report provides the last annual update for the 2004 to 2009 LHS and highlights achievements for 2007/08. It also presents the main actions for 2008/09. A report will be presented to a future Committee proposing future arrangements for the LHS following changes in the Scottish Government Guidance.**

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Background Papers: with author

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