



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 1 DECEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SCHEME OF ASSISTANCE

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is presented to Committee to seek approval for the "Private Sector Housing Scheme of Assistance" (SofA) for implementation on 1st April 2010. This is to replace the existing Private Sector Housing Grant scheme.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to Private Sector Housing.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-
- (i) approves the "Scheme of Assistance" as detailed in APPENDIX I ;
 - (ii) notes comments received during consultation as detailed in APPENDIX II;
 - (iii) notes changes to the scheme following public consultation; (additions are shown in bold print and removals shown in italics)
 - (iv) notes that the "Scheme of Assistance" meets the Council's obligations under Section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006; and
 - (v) notes that further reports proposing supporting policy for the Scheme of Assistance will be presented to Communities Committee at a future meeting.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scheme of Assistance arose from the findings of the Housing Improvement Task Force which was set up by the Scottish Government in 2000, to undertake a comprehensive review of housing policy in regard to the condition of private sector housing. These findings led to the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and, in part, to the Scottish Government's strategy vision that there will be a cultural change in owners' attitudes towards repairs and maintenance of their homes.

- 3.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 has therefore reformed local authority powers in relation to the repair and improvement of private sector housing. The reforms also impact on adaptations for people suffering from a disability. Certain sections of the Act relative to Disabled Adaptations took effect on 1 April 2009 and the Scottish Government has proposed that the remaining sections come into operation no later than 1 April 2010.
- 3.3 Under section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, before a local authority can use any new powers, there must be a Scheme of Assistance in place.
- 3.4 The Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) funding is currently provided by ring fenced resources. From 01/04/10 it will be for the Council to fund this from the General Capital Grant but the PSHG element of this grant will continue to be separately identified until 2013/14.

4. PROPOSED SCHEME

- 4.1 The proposed Scheme of Assistance was presented to Communities Committee on the 11 August 2009 and thereafter released for public consultation. The document was circulated to Members, Community Councils, Area Forums, disability groups, Care & Repair, Officers in other departments and it was placed on the internet.
- 4.2 The consultation process suggested general agreement with the proposed scheme and along with information gleaned from other authorities, has resulted in only minor changes being identified. The Moray Council's proposed "Scheme of Assistance for Home Owners and Private Tenants in Moray" is attached as **APPENDIX I**. A full list of comments raised from consultation is attached as **APPENDIX II**.
- 4.3 The most notable changes under the "Scheme of Assistance" are:
 - (a) Removal of the Handyperson Service section as it is outwith the remit of the Scheme of Assistance as it is not a Moray Council service.
 - (b) Insertion of words and phrases on the advice of Legal Services to ensure clarity.

5. FUTURE CHANGES

- 5.1 The level of assistance reflects the current situation but due to indicated future restrictions to budget levels and the need to increase owners' awareness of their responsibilities, further amendments to the Scheme of Assistance and supporting policy may be required.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

The improvement of housing quality fits with National Priority 12 in relation to our built environment. Maintaining individuals with disabilities and the elderly within their communities with suitable facilities is a key element towards achieving Local Priorities 1 and 3 and National Outcomes 6 and 7. This also tackles significant inequalities in Scottish society, which are key elements of the Moray Community Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and the Community Services Improvement Plan.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The provision of a Scheme of Assistance is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.

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

From 1 April 2010 funding will be provided from the General Capital Grant, which will continue to identify the Private Sector Housing Grant allocation until 2013/14.

(d) **Consultations**

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services, the Chief Housing Officer, the Housing Programmes Manager, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Occupational Therapy Operational Support Manager, Moray Care & Repair Senior Project Officer and the Principal Trading Standards Officer, who all agree with the contents of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 **This report presents a proposed Scheme of Assistance to replace the existing Private Sector Housing Grants scheme.**

Author of Report: Ivor McIvor, Home Improvement Services Manager
Background Papers: with author
Ref: CC/IMcl/PSHG –

Signature: Jill Stewart

Date : 18 November 2009

Designation: Chief Housing Officer

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