

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT: COMMON HOUSING REGISTER

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents progress in developing a Common Housing Register (CHR) for Moray.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the allocation of housing.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:–

- (i) notes this progress report;**
- (ii) notes the revised target date for implementation of the CHR; and**
- (iii) agrees that a further report will be presented to Committee on implementation of the CHR.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 14 February 2007, the Community Services Committee agreed a report dealing with the development of a Common Housing Register (CHR) for Moray (paragraph 10 of the Minute refers). As has been previously reported, the Council is working with Aberdeenshire Council and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Moray and Aberdeenshire on the development of this project.
- 3.2 Earlier reports have outlined the basis of the approach to CHR development in Moray and Aberdeenshire. The approach adopted is that of a web based 'intelligent application process' which envisages that applicants may apply online or have their application input online by a member of staff within any of the partner housing provider organisations. The online application process would allow the applicant to be prompted through a range of questions as the application process progresses. For example, an applicant would be asked to specify the areas in which housing was sought. The 'intelligent application process' would then inform the applicant of the range of housing and providers available in the areas specified. The process would also ensure that applicants are only asked necessary questions to progress their application.
- 3.3 The procurement process commenced in April 2006 and resulted in the identification of Scout Solutions Ltd as the preferred supplier. The contract

with Scout Solutions was finalised in October 2006. This contract has been entered into by Aberdeenshire Council, with a Service Level Agreement between Aberdeenshire Council and the partners to the project.

- 3.4 A project group comprising representatives from partner organisations was established to take forward the development of the CHR with Scout Solutions Ltd. The wider CHR Steering Group receives progress reports from the project group and resolves any issues referred to it by the project group. Aberdeenshire Council has provided the project management resources.

4. PROGRESS

- 4.1 The completion of the CHR Project has been delayed mainly due to software and other data transfer issues. Scout Solutions have recently made significant improvements in terms of the functionality of the CHR system and feedback gathered from all the Partners on the testing of the latest release has been encouraging.
- 4.2 The next phase of the project will involve testing of the integration systems that allow the information to be transferred from the CHR system to the individual partners' ICT systems. This is due to be completed by 30 April 2010.
- 4.3 At this stage, it is difficult to be precise about an actual implementation date for the CHR as this will depend of the success of the interface testing. Partners have however agreed to work towards a revised implementation date of June 2010.

5. COST AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

- 5.1 The capital costs of the CHR project are being borne by Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, with costs apportioned on the basis of housing stock. For Moray, this means that it will be responsible for approximately 34% of the total cost of the project. Since April 2007, the Council has spent £0.077m towards the project with staffing, ICT development and ongoing project management being the main areas of spend. The project management costs for 2009/10 are estimated to be in the region of £0.020m but these costs should reduce significantly in 2010/11 given the revised completion date of June 2010. The maintenance of the CHR will be in the region of £0.005m each year from 2010/11.
- 5.2 The Committee may wish to note the financial benefits of working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council. Had Moray Council been developing the CHR on its own, the costs falling to the Council would have been significantly higher, together with responsibility for project management arrangements.
- 5.3 The launch of the CHR will mark a significant change in processes etc for applicants for housing and will meet the Council's wider objectives within the Designing Better Services (DBS) programme, through the extension of self

service to the application process. It is difficult to assess the extent to which applicants will use this facility and also the impact of the CHR on current working practices.

- 5.4 A Council officer group has been established to consider the detailed approach to implementation, publicity etc and the impact on working practices. A further report will be presented to the Committee on implementation.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

The development of a CHR was identified in the Council's Local Housing Strategy in 2004 and has been reflected in the Community Services Improvement Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Scottish Government has powers within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to require local authorities to develop CHRs. To date, the approach adopted by the Government has been that of encouraging CHR development.

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

The HRA contains budgetary provision to fund the costs identified in paragraph 5.1 of this report.

(d) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Director of Community Services, the Chief Housing Officer and Deborah Bosworth, Principal Accountant.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report details progress towards the implementation of a Common Housing Register in Moray.**

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Background Papers: Held by CHO/HNM
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