

**Interim Local Housing Strategy 2010 – 2013
Executive Summary**

1. Introduction

1.1 Local Housing Strategies were introduced as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to widen the strategic and enabling role for local authorities in relation to housing in their area. The Strategy provides an assessment of Moray's housing system as well as details of the major priorities and strategic actions the Council will take to address housing need for the next 3 years.

1.2 The overall aim of the Moray Local Housing Strategy is:

To ensure that good quality, affordable housing is available to meet the needs of people living in or requiring housing in Moray.

2. Developing the Interim LHS

2.1 The Scottish Government and COSLA have published revised guidance that requires housing and planning authorities to develop, publish and review the LHS and Local Plan in tandem. Because the current Local Plan was adopted in December 2009 and the next Local Plan is not required until 2013, the next LHS will not be required until 2013. Because the term of the current LHS ended in 2009 the Council has decided to develop an Interim LHS 2010 – 2013, to include an assessment of housing need based on the Housing Need and Market Study 2007 and to update housing system information.

2.2 This Interim LHS 2010 – 2013 will:

- continue the aim of the previous LHS;
- align its strategic objectives and outcomes to the Council's Single Outcome Agreement;
- have regard for updated Scottish Government guidance;
- include and mainstream the Council's actions to address fuel poverty; and
- assess housing need based on the Housing Needs and Market Study 2007

3. Moray's Housing System

3.1 Moray Council has carried out a review of Moray's housing system and market. The results of this review are in Annex 1 to this Interim LHS. The results of the review have contributed to the actions the Council will take to address problems in the housing system over the term of this Interim LHS.

4. Addressing Moray's Housing Need

4.1 This section has been arranged under four themes:

**Theme: Access to housing
(including increasing the supply of affordable housing)**

Access and Information

4.2 The Council will implement a Common Housing Register in 2010. The Common Housing Register will benefit applicants in that they may choose to be placed on the waiting list of many social housing providers but will only have to fill in one application form. The Council will continue to update and publish a Housing Options Guide and plans to improve the guide with the addition of information on housing options for disabled people.

4.3 The Council has agreed to continue the Rural Housing Enabler project for a 3rd and final year (2010/11). The Rural Housing Enabler has carried out housing needs studies in rural communities in Speyside and around Forres and Buckie.

Homelessness

4.4 The Scottish Government Local Housing Strategy Guidance suggests that homelessness issues should be integrated into the LHS. The Council has decided that tackling homelessness is sufficiently important to justify consulting on a separate Homelessness Strategy 2010-2014.

4.5 The Strategy proposes the objectives that sit within the themes of:

Prevention

- The Council continues to use a comprehensive tenancy sign-up process and routine visits to its new tenants, and comprehensive assessment prior to eviction as means to prevent homelessness occurring.

Provision of accommodation (temporary and permanent)

- The Council will develop a Temporary Accommodation Strategy that will aim to increase supply of temporary accommodation, improve quality and reduce reliance on bed and breakfast.

Support and sustainable solutions

- The Council will seek to improve access to housing support and reduce repeat homelessness.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing

4.6 The Council will prioritise the delivery of new affordable housing projects through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP), which includes an estimate of the number of units of affordable housing required in Moray, currently 238 units per year for the next 5 years.

4.7 The Council has prepared an indicative housing mix for affordable housing developments in Moray. This housing mix is intended as a guide for use by

developers and Registered Social Landlords. More information on the Affordable Housing Mix is available at Appendix 5.

- 4.8 The Council will continue to review the case for pressured area status throughout the term of the Interim LHS.

Gypsy/ Travellers

- 4.9 In 2008/9 Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council commissioned joint research into the accommodation needs of Gypsies/Travellers in Grampian. The Council and partner agencies are considering the implications of the research both within Moray and across Grampian.

Disabled Adaptations

- 4.10 The Council has published a Scheme of Assistance that details the services available to owner occupiers and privately renting households to help them with the cost of disabled adaptations.
- 4.11 The Council continues to invest in adaptations for its own tenants, referred via Occupational Therapists. A significant budget for Disabled Adaptations for RSL tenants has been included in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).
- 4.12 The Council will continue to provide purpose built wheelchair accessible and amenity housing as required, delivered through the SHIP.

Theme: Improving Housing Quality and addressing fuel poverty

- 4.13 The Council has published a Scheme of Assistance that sets out the services available to owner occupiers and provides renting households to help them with the cost of improving their home. This will be supported by the use of new enforcement powers where it is justified. A limited amount of grant funding will continue to be available for certain priority house condition works. However, a move away from the grant subsidised approach to a loan based system will develop. The Council will continue to provide a Care and Repair service and its funding arrangements will be reviewed during 2010/11.
- 4.14 The Council has developed an approach to helping owners improve properties that are below tolerable standard, and to the identification of Housing Renewal Areas.
- 4.15 The achievement of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 is required of all RSLs and is a prime objective of the Council. The Council has prepared an Asset Management Strategy to do this.
- 4.16 All new HAG funded affordable housing provision is expected to meet Housing for Varying Needs standards and this helps address the needs of older people and people with mild physical and sensory disabilities.

- 4.17 The Council should encourage local developers to build properties to Housing for Varying Needs standards to minimise the need for adaptations in the future. In addition, Housing Needs Study 2007 states “an increase in the number of private properties built to barrier free standards could help reduce the number of older owner occupiers applying for social rented housing”.
- 4.18 The SHIP promotes homezones and “secure by design” standards to developing RSLs. Colleagues in the Environmental Services Department plan to develop guidance to assist developers in the design of housing schemes

Fuel Poverty

- 4.19 Private sector households are most likely to live in fuel poverty, particularly private rented sector households. Private owners and private landlords are currently under no statutory obligation to bring their properties up to a standard that meets the SHQS. The Council has set out the help it can provide to households in its Scheme of Assistance. The Council will continue to work in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust who provide free, confidential, accurate and impartial advice on fuel poverty issues, include advice on income maximisation and fuel cost issues.
- 4.20 By implementing the Asset Management Strategy the Council will meet the SHQS by 2015. The SHQS includes energy efficiency criteria. The Asset Management Strategy includes programmes for fitting insulation, renewable energy generation equipment and overbath showers to Council houses as a means to reduce the risk of fuel poverty to its tenants.

Theme: Housing Support and Community Care

- 4.21 The Housing Service has begun a review of housing support services, which at the time of writing was nearing completion. The Housing Service will consult with partner agencies on the findings of the review when it is complete. The Housing Service will implement the outcomes during the term of this LHS.
- 4.22 The Council’s research into the housing needs of those with physical and sensory disabilities in 2004 states that there is evidence that Smart technology can be very effective in enabling disabled people to remain in their own home and that this can reduce the need for home care services. The Housing Service will support the aims of the Moray Health and Social Care Partnership by publicising and promoting the use of telecare.
- 4.23 The Council has reprovisioned housing with support schemes for people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems delivered through the SHIP. We are aware that there is an increasing demand for new special needs housing to be built. At present we are dealing with this need for new social housing at an individual site level at the planning stage.
- 4.24 A review is currently taking place of the sheltered housing provided by the Moray Council and its partner Housing Associations. It is clear that an increasing number of elderly people wish to remain in their own homes and

that the average age of admission to sheltered housing is increasing. The findings of the review will be implemented during the term of this Interim LHS.

Theme: Sustainable Communities and Social Inclusion

- 4.25 The Housing Service co-operates with other Council Services and with Community Planning partners in the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy that aims to tackle deprivation.
- 4.26 The Council has a Money/Debt Advice Service that aims to help clients deal with their debt problems and promote the availability of free independent money advice in Moray. The Council also has a Welfare Benefits team who provide an advocacy service for claimants who have been refused benefits and will provide representation at dispute hearings. Both these services are members of the Moray Financial Inclusion Network, which will develop a long term approach to financial service provision in Moray through the delivery of the priorities of the Moray Financial Inclusion Strategy.
- 4.27 The Housing Strategy Group has agreed the need for the Council to have a strategic overview of the development of wider role projects, to maximise the impact of any projects.
- 4.28 The Housing Service has a role in ensuring that its tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhoods and in taking the appropriate action to continue its successful approach to encouraging tenant involvement. The Council will consider appropriate ways to expand methods of consulting with tenants, seeking their feedback and encouraging tenant involvement through the term of this LHS.
- 4.29 Moray Council tenants have represented all Moray tenants in the National Engagement structure since its inception in February 2008. The group is called "The Northern Lights Regional Network", named by the tenants themselves.
- 4.30 The Council and its partners will continue to encourage, support and facilitate participation of all tenants through implementation of its Tenant Participation Strategy.