

REPORT TO: POLICY COMMITTEE ON 5 MARCH 2008

SUBJECT: SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – HOUSING – 2007/08

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a progress report on the achievement of priorities identified within the Community Services Improvement Plan as it relates to the Council's Housing Service.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section A(60) - A(70) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the Council's housing functions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Policy Committee:-

- (i) notes this report; and**
- (ii) agrees the revised timescales detailed in APPENDIX I.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Service Improvement Plan relating to the Housing Service is part of the Community Services Department's Improvement Plan. With the introduction of the revised Committee arrangements in May 2007, housing matters now report to the Policy Committee, while Social Work matters are reported to the Education and Social Services Committee.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 29 August 2007 and 24 October 2007, the Policy Committee agreed revised timescales for a number of projects (paragraph 43 and 51 respectively of the Minute refers).

4. COMMENT ON PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN QUARTER 3 2007/08

- 4.1 **APPENDIX I** details progress achieved to the end of December 2007.
- 4.2 Within the priority 'Increasing the supply of affordable housing', a number of significant targets have been achieved. Work has commenced on the review of the Affordable Housing Guidelines, with the aim of presenting revisions to the Committee during 2008/09. The Common Housing Register project in which the Council is working with Aberdeenshire Council and Registered Social Landlords in Moray and Aberdeenshire is progressing, albeit on a longer timescale than initially envisaged due to technical issues. It is intended that a more detailed report on this project be presented to a future Policy Committee.

- 4.3 Within the priority 'Tackling homelessness', the report to the Policy Committee on the approach to the reduction of non priority need by 2009 is a separate item on the Committee's agenda. The development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategy is progressing with consultants assisting in the development of the strategy. The final report from the consultants will be received at the end of February 2008. Following this, it is anticipated that the draft strategy can be presented to the Committee in the first half of 2008/09. The Homelessness Strategy also requires revision and updating. Due to staff absences during 2007 and work pressures, it has not yet been possible to start this process. A project plan is to be drafted by the end of February 2008 and timescales will be reflected in the Improvement Plan for 2008/09.
- 4.4 Within the priority 'Improving housing quality', work to develop improvement grant policies is ongoing. Progress has been hampered by staff sickness within a small section over the past quarter. Progress in future will also be affected by the retiral of the Private Sector Housing Officer in Q4. As a result, it is inevitable that completion of Improvement Grant Policies will not be achieved until 2008/09. The Project Plan to develop the Council's approach to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 has been agreed but progress in implementation has been affected as the Council awaits detailed Guidance from the Scottish Government. The Project Plan will require revision in the light of this and will therefore feature in the Service Improvement Priorities for 2008/09.
- 4.5 Within the priority 'Improving housing service quality', reports are being finalised for the review of housing service delivery arrangements and the out of hours review.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The priorities identified within the Service Improvement Plan for housing broadly reflect priorities identified within the Community Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and related strategies.

(b) Policy and Legal

Various housing legislation sets out expectations for housing authorities. There are no policy or legal implications arising from this report.

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

There are no resource issues arising from this report.

(d) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Director of Community Services and Lead Officers identified within the Improvement Plan. All agree the content of this report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Significant progress has been achieved on actions to progress the Council's agreed priorities for Housing in 2007/08. This report provides details of the progress achieved, with a more detailed commentary on the areas where progress has not met targets agreed in April 2007. In these cases, revised targets are proposed.**

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Background Papers: Held by CHO
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