

Consultative Draft Interim Local Housing Strategy 2010-2013 Main Issues Report

Introduction

The Council has decided to develop an interim Local Housing Strategy to be published in April 2010.

We have made an assessment of Moray's housing market which is attached to this document at Annex 1. This assessment has helped us to form a view of the problems local people have with Moray's housing market. We have organised these problems into 4 themes. We have listed what we think are the main issues. We have listed the main actions we plan to take, to make the housing system work better.

We need to know if you agree with our assessment

We need to know if you think we have missed anything

**Theme 1:
Access to housing
(including increasing the supply of affordable housing)**

We think the main issues are:

- Recent house price rises and low pay in Moray means many households cannot afford housing.
- The credit crunch has led to fewer houses for sale, and mortgage credit is more difficult to come by.
- Large numbers of households present to the Council as homeless and we do not have enough permanent or temporary accommodation for them.
- More than half of Council housing has been sold through Right to Buy.
- It is difficult to assess demand for housing in rural areas and it is difficult to find housing solutions in rural areas.
- The need to ensure equal opportunities to affordable housing.
- The need to provide housing which is suitably adapted for people with disabilities.

**Do you agree that these are the main issues?
Have we missed anything?**

What could we do about it?

- Build more affordable rented housing and increase the supply of good quality temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Make an accurate assessment of the number of affordable rented homes required.
- Ensure that Scottish Government funding is used to develop housing of an appropriate type, size and location to meet identified need.
- Apply for pressured area status for settlements in Speyside and Cairngorms and consider the case for an extension to Pressured Area Status our other designations.
- Regularly monitor the impact of Right to Buy and Pressured Area Status designation(s).
- Consider to what extent the private rented sector can provide housing options for homeless households or households on the housing list.
- Evaluate the Rural Housing Enabler project.
- Consider ways to improve information on housing options for disabled people.
- Assess the need for adaptations in all tenures, and the need for purpose built wheelchair accessible and amenity housing through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2010.
- Review the effects of the interim changes to the Allocations Policy and to carry out a fuller review of the wider Allocations Policy.

**Are these the right things to do?
Have we missed anything?**

**Theme 2:
Improving Housing Quality and addressing fuel poverty**

We think the main issues are:

- Some private sector properties are in poor condition, and their owners have difficulty carrying out necessary repairs.
- We do not have enough information on property conditions in the private sector in order to plan appropriate services.
- Some private sector properties do not meet the Tolerable Standard.
- Many people live in fuel inefficient homes.
- Many people need access to free, confidential, accurate and impartial advice on fuel efficiency issues.
- While social rented property is generally in good condition, we need to ensure that we meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015, and meets the aspirations of our tenants.

**Do you agree that these are the main issues?
Have we missed anything?**

What could we do about it?

- Continue to implement and monitor our plan to bring houses up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- Provide help to owner/occupiers and private renters through the Council's Scheme of Assistance.
- Develop an approach to improve our knowledge on property condition in the private rented sector.
- 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.
- Bid for Fairer Scotland funding for a fuel poverty project to provide an Energy Advisor for Moray who will offer an enhancement to the service available from the Energy Saving Trust and who will facilitate low cost loans for improvements through a Credit Union.

**Are these the right things to do?
Have we missed anything?**

Theme 3: Improving Housing Support and Community Care

We think the main issues are:

- The need to provide appropriate housing for the increasing elderly population, especially people aged over 75.
- The need to provide housing for the increasing numbers of people living with long term illness or chronic medical conditions.
- The need to provide services to the increasing numbers of people preferring to remain in their own home, over moving into supported housing, residential care or nursing care.
- The need to achieve Best Value in the provision of housing support and community care services.
- There is reducing demand for sheltered housing and an increasing demand for very sheltered housing (i.e. sheltered housing that also provides care)
- Insufficient information about the need and demand for housing support services and specialist housing, to ensure adequate provision.
- Incomplete information on the need for adaptations in all tenures, and the need for purpose built wheelchair accessible and amenity housing.
- Ensuring the availability of new technology is fully utilised to enable people to remain in their home.
- The difficulty in providing services for people with multiple and complex needs.

**Do you agree that these are the main issues?
Have we missed anything?**

What could we do about it?

- Act on the recommendations of the Sheltered Housing Review report, with our partners.
- Include demand for housing support services and specialist housing across all tenures in the forthcoming Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2010.
- Ensure adequate provision of specialist housing and support to meet assessed need.
- Continue to fund disabled adaptations in all tenures and work with partners to ensure efficiency in the provision of disabled adaptations in all tenures.
- Continue to provide a Care and Repair service to assist older people and people with disabilities to repair and maintain their home.
- Expand and promote the use of telecare.
- Ensure a multi agency approach to meet complex needs.

**Are these the right things to do?
Have we missed anything?**

**Theme 4:
Sustainable Communities and Social Inclusion**

We think the main issues are:

- Large numbers of households living in poverty or debt.
- Many people experience difficulty paying their fuel bills.
- Small areas of Moray experience multiple social problems and deprivation.
- Ensuring Council tenants are happy with the landlord services provided and have opportunities to contribute to designing the services provided.
- Encouraging the involvement of Housing Association tenants in Moray in tenant participation.
- The relative lack of Wider Role funding spent in Moray by Housing Associations.
- The end of Wider Role funding to Housing Associations in 2011.

**Do you agree that these are the main issues?
Have we missed anything?**

What could we do about it?

- 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.
- Develop “wider role” activities, this means providing volunteer schemes and training opportunities associated with affordable housing providers and housing developments.
- Ensure that Moray initiatives are in place to benefit from any replacement of wider role funding.
- Review the Council Housing Service Customer Feedback Policy to improve and expand the opportunities tenants have to tell the Council what they think about Housing Services.
- Continue to operate the Housing Sub Committee which has tenants sitting on it.
- Encourage local and national tenant involvement and participation generally.

**Are these the right things to do?
Have we missed anything?**