



REPORT TO SOCIAL WORK & HOUSING COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE

Access to Housing

Strategic Objectives:

1	Objective 1 - To ensure a minimum of 350 new affordable homes (300 in priority areas plus 50 in rural areas) are developed to meet identified need per year
2	Objective 2 - To maximise the effectiveness of existing housing stock to reduce the number of households in housing need by 200 per year
3	Objective 3 - To develop a package of high quality information to assist households seeking any tenure or type of housing by 2007

Progress to Date:

- £17.2m Communities Scotland development spending across Aberdeenshire amounting to 108 additional affordable homes. A total of 87 units were developed in the priority areas and 29 units in other areas to sustain existing communities. Of the 108 units 37 were developed as a consequence of a S75 agreement with private developers. A further 24 units were approved and started on site.
- Planning gain contributions received from private developers contributed a further 8 units without any additional public subsidy.
- The Council agreed to identify Council owned land to be acquired by Communities Scotland for future developments. This will provide an additional 300 units in the future.
- Right to Buy sales for 2006/2007 is 215. As this is more than new stock built there is a continuing decline in the number of available affordable homes for rent.
- Priority Areas reviewed to inform investment priorities for Communities Scotland funding but not excluding small developments to sustain existing communities.

Banff & Buchan	Fraserburgh
	Banff
	Macduff
	Portsoy
Buchan	Peterhead
	Mintlaw
	Strichen
	Longside
	Boddam
	Cruden Bay
Formartine	Ellon
	Turriff
	Balmedie
	Oldmeldrum
	Newburgh
	Fyvie
Garioch	Inverurie
	Westhill
	Kintore
	Insch
	Newmachar
	Kemnay
	Blackburn
Kincardine & Mearns	Stonehaven
	Portlethen
	Drumoak
	Laurencekirk
	Inverbervie
Marr	Huntly
	Alford
	Aboyne
	Banchory
	Tarland
	Ballater

- The five RSL partners in Devanha, AHP, Castlehill, Grampian, Langstane and Tenants First, have now floated Devanha as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Devanha programme has been agreed and will provide approx 685 additional units over the next 3 years. Of these 685 units 405 will be provided as a consequence of developer contributions.
- Developer Contributions have provided £1.4m, which will allow additional sites to be developed for affordable housing across Aberdeenshire.
- 2nd Homes Council Tax funds collected is approx £1m per year. This will provide an additional 36 units over the next two years.
- The Council has agreed to progress an application for Pressured Area Designation.
- Rural Housing Enabler now in post.

- Agreed interim target for abolition of priority need as any person age less than 26 years.
- Agreed to appoint experts to prepare a Temporary Accommodation Strategy.
- Continuous Improvement Plan produced for the delivery of the Council's Housing Service.

What still needs to happen:

- Investigate alternative ways of delivering Affordable Housing for sale without public subsidy.
- Private Sector Housing Strategy Officer to be appointed. The post has been advertised and interviews will be held in September 2007.
- To finalise strategy for the private sector and implement action plan.
- Land supply issues - engage with the land use planning system to facilitate an appropriate supply of land for new affordable housing.
- Continue to make the case for substantial additional funding to meet the need for affordable housing.
- To review Homelessness Strategy and develop an updated strategy.

Quality of Housing

Strategic Objectives:

4	Objective 4 - To ensure 14,825 houses by 2009 (9,250 council houses, 2,000 RSL houses and 3,575 private houses) are targeted to provide good quality housing, which is fit for purpose.
5	Objective 5 - To improve standards of energy efficiency in all homes allowing 85% Aberdeenshire residents being able to afford to heat their own homes by 2009
6	Objective 6 - To support a sustainable building industry through new activities which will employ a minimum of 150 apprenticeships by 2009

Progress to date:

- The Private Sector Housing Strategy is in final draft form and will be completed shortly. It has set out 6 Strategic Objectives:
 - Assist 50 households per annum in need secure access to private rented or owner occupied housing by 2011.

- o Over 50% of vulnerable homeowners live in satisfactory housing by 2011.
- o Ensure that all private rented housing meets statutory standards by 2009/2010.
- o Increase the range and provision of property related services to support independent living that older people can choose from by 2011.
- o Improve private tenants' (including migrant workers) access to advice and assistance to resolve housing problems before they reach crisis point by 2009/2010.
- o Enhance the evidence base used to target available resources and the 'Scheme of Assistance' in support of sustaining communities by 2010.

Details of how each of these is to be achieved are set out in the action plan within the draft Private Sector Housing Strategy and will be brought to Committee for consideration early in 2008.

- A Private Sector Housing Grant of £721k provided a total of 144 grants. Care & Repair provided 105 grants and non Care & Repair 39 grants. Improved 67 BTS properties with Improvement and Repair Grants.
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The Council received confirmation from Communities Scotland in February 2006 that the SDP was acceptable. Three milestones have been identified along with detailed targets. These will be reported as we reach each one. A large number of properties are still failing under the Healthy, Safe and Secure criteria. This is mainly due to electrical testing and smoke detectors. These areas are to be addressed and information updated where necessary, which will reduce the percentage of non-compliant dwellings.
- Rolling programme established to provide 30 surveys across Aberdeenshire Council housing to inform the SHQS Delivery Plan.
- All RSLs indicating that the standard will be met by 2015. Grampian HA, Langstane HA and Castlehill HA carried out self-assessments and they have indicated that their stock meets the standard. Both Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership and Tenants First have submitted Delivery Plans.
- Warm Deal – funding of £196,800 improved 615 properties.
- HECA - Energy Efficiency Improvement in 1997 to 2005 - 9.33%, an improvement in 2003 to 2005 - 1.87%.
- SHQS Delivery Plan aims to achieve SAP rating of 50 for gas-fuelled properties by 2015 and SAP of 60 for other fuels by 2015. 54% of Council stock meets target SAP rating at June 2007 (93% of those with gas and 23% with other fuels).
- Extension of mains gas - completed 80 council and 75 private, approved for 2007/2008 - 39 Council and 44 Private, likely for 2007/2008 243 council and

319 Private and future projects 650 mixed tenure. It is estimated this will prevent 1450 households from fuel poverty.

- Council Energy Efficiency Project made 396 referrals to both programmes and also advised on Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) grants and offers for private householders. Energy Savings Trust (EST) Fuel Poverty Renewables Pilot (completion 2008) will install 10 renewable heating systems in the private sector across Aberdeenshire. Aberdeenshire Energy Efficiency Advice Project (AEEAP) dealt with 353 renewable energy enquiries.
- The continuous SHCS will not report on Fuel Poverty at LA level until 2008. The information available on Scottish fuel poverty statistics is from a Communities Scotland survey of 2004/2005. 293,000 households in fuel poverty in 2002, 419,000 households in 2004/2005. This is an increase to 18.2%, from 13% in 2002, 5.2% of households are now in extreme fuel poverty - spending 20% or more of income on home fuel use. It is not possible to access the extent to which improved energy efficiency has offset the impact of fuel price increases. Across tenures, the private housing sector reports the highest number of fuel poor households.
- Council Energy Efficiency Advice Project had 305 new cases and dealt with 8164 enquiries of which a high proportion was fuel poor households. SCARF Cosy Homes Project targeting fuel poor had 51% of its referrals from Aberdeenshire and installed 121 energy efficiency measures. EST Fuel Poverty Renewable Pilot funded the installation of 7 renewable energy heating replacements in the social sector and 10 households have been put forward for the private sector of the pilot.
- Fuel Poverty Strategy Update completed.
- 120+ Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) licensed with 30 pending aiming for 200 by the end of 2007.
- Estimated that there are 5000 - 6000 private landlords in Aberdeenshire who own/manage 8,000 - 9,000 properties. 600 Landlords currently registered.
- Aberdeenshire Council has employed a further 10 apprentices.

What still needs to happen:

- Private Sector Housing Strategy Officer to be appointed.
- The Private Sector Housing Strategy to be finalised including further work to estimate the level of finance required for implementation of specific actions.
- Implications from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to be considered. Awaiting guidance from Scottish Executive on key areas.
- IT system in relation to Landlord Registration has to be reviewed, as Landlords are unable to update the system.

- Energy Efficiency Commitment. A guiding standard to be developed for Sustainability using research methods adopted by the 'Aalborg agreement' to establish a baseline and action plan.
- Consider implications of Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Review.
- Framework agreement with Aberdeen City to be investigated in relation to joint procurement for capital investment.
- Review the Council's Business Plan – update report planned for Committee for December 2007.

Housing for Particular Needs

Strategic Objectives:

7	Objective 7 - To ensure a minimum of 30% of new affordable homes (15% for older people, 7% for physical disabilities, 5% for learning disabilities & other care groups and 3% for homelessness) are developed to meet identified particular needs per year.
8	Objective 8 - To maximise the effectiveness of existing housing stock to reduce the number of households with an unmet particular housing need by 2,310 (1,550 in the private sector and 760 in the public sector) per year.

Progress to date:

- A total of 29 new affordable homes were provided for particular needs. This equates to 25% of all new affordable housing. The split within each client group is Physical Disabled 4 units (3% of total), Older People 17 units (15%) and Learning Disability 8 units (7%).
- Priority areas for very sheltered housing are Mintlaw and Banff.
- Priority areas for new Care Homes are Inverurie and Stonehaven.
- Draft Protocol prepared and agreed by Disabled Persons Housing Service Aberdeenshire (DPHSA) and Aberdeenshire Council to clarify working arrangements between the two organisations.
- Report on homelessness and employability in a rural context has been written up by Aberdeen Foyer. Recommendations currently being considered.
- Pilot for Single Shared Assessment (SSA) agreed - to focus on sheltered and homelessness applicants. Date of commencement to be 1 August 2007. Pilot to run for 6 months and to be reviewed after 3 months. Pilot to take place in each of the six administration areas for both projects.
- Data base for adaptations held by the Council and all RSLs.
- Adaptations to Council houses were 72 major and 511 minor, 72 to RSL houses and 67 major adaptations and 796 minor adaptations given to Private houses.
- Developer contributions provided £164,000 to fund 35 major adaptations to allow families to remain in their own homes.

- Care Home Review complete, implementation plan being developed and implemented.
- Care and Repair Scheme successfully rolled out across Aberdeenshire. Service Level Agreement has been signed.
- Research on the Housing and Support Needs of Older People has been completed. Older Person Housing Strategy being developed.
- Research on the Housing and Support Needs of People with a Physical Disability and/or Sensory Impairment now complete. Seminar held December 2006 to disseminate findings.
- A Model of Care for Older People has been agreed.
- A survey of Council Sheltered Housing Complexes has been undertaken. This information will then be used inform a review of the 'Future use of sheltered housing'.

What still needs to happen:

- Finalise Strategy based on recommendations from the research on Housing and Support Needs of Older People.
- To produce an Assistive Technology Strategy. A group is developing this strategy in line with the emerging Grampian model.
- Identify policy implications from research on physical disabilities.
- To map the future trends of housing and support needs within all community care groups.
- To identify future research priorities.
- To review the Supporting People Strategy.

Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

Strategic Objectives:

9	Objective 9 - To provide a range of quality, affordable housing in a high quality environment for all sections of the community provided through sensitive mixed-use regeneration of areas in Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Banff/Macduff.
10	Objective 10 - To help develop thriving communities through a range of opportunities for community safety and community participation by 2009.

Progress to date:

- Housing Strategies produced for Peterhead, Banff/ Macduff, Fraserburgh, Ellon, Inverurie, Stonehaven and Huntly.
- Fraserburgh Implementation Plan agreed. Langstane HA and Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership progressing both Denmark Street and Marconi Road projects.
- Peterhead Project 3 year plan has been reviewed (2007/2010); priority is focused on the regeneration of the town centre.

- Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership (ATP) Special Housing Meetings now to be held through the Affordable Housing Working Groups, to broaden the discussion to include towns and areas outwith the ATP towns.
- Aberdeenshire Community Mediation Service available to all tenures free of charge. Anti Social Behaviour funding is confirmed until 2008.
- All RSL developments now compliant with Secure By Design criteria, good working relationship continue with the Architectural Liaison Officer (Grampian Police), evaluation on-going.
- Community Safety Annual Report submitted to Scottish Executive April 2007.
- Rural Housing Enabler appointed. Works continue to progress the priority areas with housing needs surveys being carried out and the investigation of the possible use of Communities Scotland grants.
- Research complete to examine the housing and support needs of Migrant Workers. Recommendations to be considered.
- Service Level Agreement in place with Travellers Education and Information Project to provide liaison and support.
- Home Zone principles now being established throughout developments in Aberdeenshire - Portsoy, Oldmeldrum, Peterhead.
- Tenants First have secured funding for an Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker for the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Area - to enable minority groups to articulate their requirements and to promote housing options.
- An equal opportunities statement has been agreed to be included in all policies. All members of the H & SW equalities group have completed training in June 2007 on "How to carry out an Impact Assessment".
- Gender Equality Working Group now set up to progress each service with their duty in relation to Gender Equality. Consultation with employees and the wider community has taken place and a draft scheme is now being finalised with the results forming the priorities for the Corporate scheme.

What still needs to happen:

- The current Anti Social Behaviour strategy covers the period up to March 2008, preparatory work for the 2008 - 2011 strategy will begin shortly, the availability of funding after March 2008 will obviously have an impact.
- Approval now in place to the recruitment of a part-time Researcher/analyst to analyse statistics on anti-social behaviour and community safety for all partner organisations focusing on 'hotspots' and emerging trends.
- Identify policy implications from the research into the needs of migrant workers.
- Develop a strategy to accommodate housing needs of key workers.
- Produce a strategy for identifying transit sites for Gypsy/Travellers. Brief produced to commission research to develop a strategy across the Grampian area.
- Consultation exercise with Gypsy/Travellers commissioned by the Tenant Participation Promotion Team (TPPT) is in progress. Once report complete the results will be presented to TPPT.
- Corporate Consultation Toolkit still to be reviewed as a consequence of the Corporate Communication Strategy.

- Corporate Equalities Scheme to be developed for all strands of equalities with each service having their own Equalities group to progress.

Consultation on LHS

- As agreed in the Consultation Strategy there will be on going consultation with partners and the community in general.
- The Housing Strategy Group continues to meet quarterly with update reports on progress presented for discussion. The Group have also agreed to the progress and changes in the LHS Action Plan.
- A series of presentations were held across Aberdeenshire. This gave the opportunity for input to the evolving policies and actions within the LHS. Main topics discussed were the Affordable Housing, Local Town Strategies, Developer Contributions for affordable housing, private sector housing strategy, Fuel Poverty Strategy and the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- Events have been organised with Area Committees on the outcome of the update.
- Presentations and questionnaires have also been organised with Rural Partnerships across Aberdeenshire.
- A Housing Strategy Newsletter has been produced which will be made available to staff and the community for information and as an opportunity to feedback comments.

The Citizen's Panel was consulted during 2007. The outcome is as follows:

- Overall, understanding of the LHS was relatively high, with 51% of respondents indicating that they wholly understand each of the themes. There is some evidence that understanding of the key themes varies across geographic and demographic groups. Respondents from the Garioch area reported a better level of understanding in relation to all themes, while those in Banff & Buchan and Buchan areas were less comfortable with the LHS themes. Those aged 35 - 64 years were most likely to wholly understand the strategy themes, while those aged less than 35 years and 65+ were most likely to understand them in part or not at all. Any future consultation will have to take this into consideration.
- When asked about a preferred option for affordable housing, 47% of respondents preferred a new house at a low-/discounted price, 23% a home to rent and 20% would prefer a discounted self-build plot. Respondents from Garioch and Kincardine & Mearns areas were most likely to state a preference for a new home available at a low/discounted price. Respondents from the Buchan area preferred a rental property while those from the Formartine area were most likely to indicate a preference for a self-build plot. This result is indicative of the information we have in terms of SIMD and incomes.
- When asked to consider an affordable price for a property, 47% felt that a price of £90,000 or less would be affordable. However, 20% felt that a price of more than £110,000 would be affordable. When asked they would best like

information communicated to them in relation to affordable housing, 55% preferred local newspapers and 54% preferred accessing information in person at local Council offices. In addition, 46% expressed an interest of accessing information on the Internet.

- When asked about the use of renewable energy technology, for example through solar panels and biomass heating systems, 77% thought that this would be a "very good idea". Only 2% of respondents felt it would be a bad idea. However, only 34% thought that the use of renewable energy would be "entirely" practical and the remainder either believing it would fairly practical or practical to a degree.
- The outcome from this consultation will be taken into consideration as part of the mid term review of the LHS.