



REPORT TO SOCIAL WORK & HOUSING COMMITTEE – 6 NOVEMBER 2008

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight progress made during the fourth year of implementation and to draw attention to challenges facing us in the future.

2 Background and Discussion

- 2.1 The Local Housing Strategy was launched in May 2004. The Strategy's Action Plan contains 144 actions, with the Housing Service being the lead partner for the majority of these actions.
- 2.2 The Local Housing Strategy has been assessed by Scottish Government (formerly Communities Scotland) and has been rated as overall "good".
- 2.3 New Guidance for the next round of Local Housing Strategies has been issued by Scottish Government. This guidance, which has been agreed between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and issued jointly, sets out key changes to the format and detail of local housing strategies in accordance with the new relationship between central and local government established through the Concordat and in line with proposed changes in national policy direction.
- 2.4 The production of separate strategies for homelessness, housing support and fuel poverty will no longer need to be submitted to Scottish Ministers, although there remains a statutory duty on local authorities under the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act to address these areas. The scope of the Local Housing Strategy will be broadened and the strategy will now address the prevention and alleviation of homelessness, meeting housing support needs and fuel poverty issues.
- 2.5 Other key policy areas which will impact on the Local Housing Strategy are the new statutory requirements set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 on private sector house conditions, a stronger focus on the role of the private rented sector in meeting housing need and demand, a commitment to achieving sustainable mixed communities and the challenge of climate change.
- 2.6 In order to facilitate integration of Local Housing Strategies and development plans, submission of Local Housing Strategies will now be linked to the submission dates of Strategic Development Plans. It will be important for the Local Housing Strategy and Main Issues Reports of Strategic Development Plans to be prepared in tandem, with both informed by the outcomes of the housing need and demand assessment. The local authority can choose to submit their Local Housing Strategy at any point between the conclusion of consultation on the Main Issues Report and submission of the Proposed Plan

to Scottish Ministers. It is expected the Local Housing Strategy will be submitted towards the end of 2011, in line with the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Main Issues Report.

2.7 The current Local Housing Strategy will be reviewed and progress reports provided on annual basis until the next Local Housing Strategy is prepared. This in turn will input to the Local Development Plan that is currently being worked up.

2.8 In the interim period Strategic Outcome Statements will be prepared, in line with the Strategic Planning Kaizen, on Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Scottish Housing Quality Standard, Private Sector Housing, Older People's Housing and Support, Particular Needs Households' Housing and Support and Regeneration. It will be particularly important to ensure appropriate links to other Strategies and Outcome Statements being prepared within the Service.

2.9 Progress Update

This section considers progress and performance against the strategic objectives listed below. Rather than commenting on each action, the following provides a summary of progress on a number of key actions. Further details are contained in Appendix 1.

2.10 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

- £9.2million Communities Scotland development spending across Aberdeenshire amounting to 148 additional affordable homes. A total of 138 units were developed in the priority areas and 10 units in other areas to sustain existing communities. Of the 148 units 136 were developed as a consequence of a S75 agreement with private developers. A further 184 units were approved and started on site.
- Planning gain contributions received from private developers approved a further 22 units without any additional public subsidy. These are now on site. In terms of completions and site starts this amounts to a total of 354 units. To reflect the volatile nature of housing development the target is to be amended to deliver 1050 new affordable homes over a 3 year period rather than 350 on an annual basis.

- Right to Buy sales for 2007/08 is 246. As this is more than new stock built there is a continuing decline in the number of available affordable homes for rent.

2.11 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

- A Private Sector Housing Grant of £976K provided a total of 253 grants. Care & Repair provided 216 grants and non Care & Repair 37 grants. 81 Below Tolerable Standard (the lowest acceptable standard of housing in any tenure that anyone should be expected to occupy, eg structurally stable, heating and ventilation etc.) properties were improved with Improvement and Repair Grants. This is an increase of 109 grants based on 2006/2007's figures.
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Progress towards meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard has improved greatly over the last 12 months as arrangements are now in place for electrically testing, upgrading of hard wired smoke and CO Detectors and improved loft insulation to 300mm in all council housing by 2010. Significant progress has been made and will continue over the next 2 years on these issues, which will dramatically improve the percentage of council housing meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. There are now 3500 Council Houses with 300mm loft insulation, 3,000 Council houses which have been electrically tested and 3,000 that have had upgraded smoke detectors. These contracts will ensure that the Council achieve the targets set out in the Standard Delivery Plan and meet the Scottish housing Quality Standard by 2015.
- The continuous Scottish House Condition Survey reported on Fuel Poverty at LA level in February 2008. According to this information, 24.24% of households in Aberdeenshire are in fuel poverty. At a national level 7.5% of households are now in extreme fuel poverty - spending 20% or more of income on home fuel use compared with 5.2% of households in 2004/5. It is not possible to access the extent to which improved energy efficiency has offset the impact of fuel price increases.
- Given the increasing costs of fuel and current economic climate a fuller update on the Fuel Poverty Strategy for 2008 is attached at Appendix 2. Officers are also currently reviewing services available to increase the

uptake of benefits by individuals and in particular vulnerable groups. Various options are being considered and it is intended that a further report will go to Committee in December.

2.12 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 148 affordable houses completed with an allocation for particular needs (Housing for rent) - 8 By Registered Social Landlords. Physical Disabled 2 Units (2% of total) and 6 for Older Persons (6% of total).
- Adaptations to Council houses were 150 major and 843 minor, 83 to Registered Social Landlords houses and 216 major adaptations and 710 minor adaptations given to Private houses.
- Care Home review complete, implementation plan being developed and implemented.
- Single Shared Assessment Aberdeenshire will be commencing a pilot for Older People's Teams. Mintlaw, Stonehaven and 2 other areas will be involved in the pilot.
- A further grant of £125,000 from the Scottish Government for 2008-2009 has been offered to continue the work of the Aberdeenshire Telecare project, with the possibility of further grant in 2009-2010, and SMTE have agreed to support the creation of a two-year project manager post to develop the mainstreaming of telecare across services.

2.13 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

- Fraserburgh Implementation Plan progressing with works started on site at Marconi Road and planning approved for Denmark Street.
 - Strategic assessment to identify the key issues and priorities has been carried out in terms of Anti-Social Behaviour which will inform the development of a new strategy that will cover the next three years. Anti Social Behaviour funding is confirmed until 2009 with report to be made November 2008 for permanent funding.
 - Craigforth have been commissioned to develop a strategy for Gypsy/ Travellers across Grampian. Anticipated completion date of research December 2008.
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- Work has commenced in terms of developing an accommodation strategy for key workers; discussions have taken place with the Registered Social Landlords with regards to the possible development of mid market rent properties.

2.14 Overall Progress Summary

			No of Actions
Year Actions	Green	Target met	55
	Amber	Work in progress	39
	Red	No progress	0
Annual Actions	Green	Target met	26
	Amber	Work in progress	8
	Red	No progress	0
Other Actions	Green	Target met	6
	Amber	Work in progress	8
	Red	No progress	0
New Actions			4
Deleted Actions			1

2.15 Consultation on Local Housing Strategy

- As agreed in the Consultation Strategy there will be on going consultation with partners and the community in general.
- The Housing Strategy Group continued to meet quarterly with update reports on progress presented for discussion. The Group have also agreed to the progress and changes in the Local Housing Strategy Action Plan.
- Events have been organised with Area Committees on the outcome of this update. This will include particular discussion on homelessness and fuel poverty issues.
- 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.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Committee comment on and acknowledge the progress made in addressing the Local Housing Strategy objectives during the last year.

4 Area Implications

- 4.1 The Local Housing Strategy complies with the objectives of each of the Area Plans.

5 Policy Implications

- 5.1 The Local Housing Strategy, through the 10 strategic objectives, have identified the key policies to be taken forward. A number of these objectives also feature as one of the Council's strategic priorities, and are included in Aberdeenshire's Single Outcome Agreement.

6 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 The staffing requirements relating to this report will be met from within existing arrangements.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are none directly arising from this report, however any action arising from the Local Housing Strategy with a significant financial implication for the Council will be brought back to Social Work & Housing Committee as necessary.

8 Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 The Local Housing Strategy seeks to promote sustainable communities as well as encourage sustainable solutions in respect of housing design and use of materials.
- 8.2 The affordable housing developments will retain the quality control standards already in place through Communities Scotland's requirements in terms of sustainability of design and construction methods. These requirements mean that housing association developments are generally of a higher design standard in terms of sustainability than most other house builders and a number of housing association schemes within Aberdeenshire have received awards in recognition of this.
- 8.3 Every effort will be made to ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account in terms of energy conservation, renewable resources, sustainable communities and stock improvement works.

9 Consultations

- 9.1 Key strategic partners have been consulted through the Housing Strategy Group. Colleagues from the Planning and Environmental, Law and Admin, and Finance Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

10 Recommendations

The Social Work & Housing Committee is recommended to:-

- 1 Comment on and acknowledge the progress of the Local Housing Strategy.**
- 2 Receive further progress reports as part of future Local Housing Strategy updates.**
- 3 Receive a further report regarding increasing benefits uptake for residents across Aberdeenshire.**

Colin D Mackenzie
Director of Housing & Social Work

Report prepared by:- Janelle Clark, Strategic Development Manager (Housing).
29 October 2008 Final Version

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1 Access to Housing.

Strategic Objectives

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3	Obj 3. To develop a package of high quality information to assist households seeking any tenure or type of housing by 2007

Progress to Date

- £9.2million Communities Scotland development spending across Aberdeenshire amounting to 148 additional affordable homes. A total of 138 units were developed in the priority areas and 10 units in other areas to sustain existing communities. Of the 148 units 136 were developed as a consequence of a S75 agreement with private developers. A further 184 units were approved and started on site.
- Planning gain contributions received from private developers approved a further 22 units without any additional public subsidy. These units are now on site.
- Right to Buy sales for 2007/08 is 246. 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
	Cruden Bay
	Boddam
	Strichen
Formartine	Ellon
	Turriff
	Oldmeldrum
	Balmedie
Garioch	Inverurie
	Westhill
	Kemnay

	Kintore
	Blackburn
	Newmachar
Kincardine & Mearns	Stonehaven
	Portlethen
	Laurencekirk
	Newtonhill
	Gourdon
Marr	Huntly
	Banchory
	Ballater
	Aboyne
	Alford
	Torphins

- The five RSL partners in Devanha, AHP, Castlehill, Grampian Langstane and Tenants First are now in year 2 of the Devanha programme and will provide approx 685 additional units over the next 2 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 pursue Pressured Area Designation and have submitted a bid to Scottish Government.
- Rural Housing Enabler now in post.
- Agreed an alternative way of delivering Affordable Housing for sale without public subsidy. It takes the form of a fixed shared equity scheme.
- Private Sector Housing Strategy Officer has been appointed. Work is ongoing in finalising Outcome Statements in relation to private sector housing.
- Land supply issues - engaged with the land use planning system in the Cairngorms National Park which will facilitate an appropriate supply of land for new affordable housing. Their Local Plan is now on deposit.

What still needs to happen

- Land supply issues - engage with the land use planning system to facilitate an appropriate supply of land for new affordable housing. This will happen over the next two years in the preparation of the Council's Local Development plan.
- Continue to make the case for substantial additional funding to meet the need for affordable housing.

- To review Homelessness Strategy and incorporate within the LHS as an Outcome Statement.

2 Quality of Housing

Strategic Objectives

4	Obj 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	Obj 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	Obj 6. To support a sustainable building industry through new activities which will employ a minimum of 150 apprenticeships by 2009

Progress to date

- A Private Sector Strategic Development Officer was appointed and started in November 2007.
- The Private Sector Housing Strategic Outcome Statements are in final draft form and will be completed shortly. They are:
 - To improve the quality of private housing by 5% on an annual basis;
 - To maximise the use of private sector housing to meet housing need – to increase the number of private sector homes in use by 250 per year.

Details of how each of these is to be achieved are set out in the action plans within the Private Sector Housing Strategic Outcome Statements.

- A Private Sector Housing Grant of £976K provided a total of 253 grants. Care & Repair provided 216 grants and non Care & Repair 37 grants. 81 BTS properties were improved with Improvement and Repair Grants. This is an increase of 109 grants based on 2006/2007's figures.
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Progress towards meeting the SHQS has improved greatly over the last 12 months as arrangements are now in place to electrically test, install smoke and CO Detectors and upgrade loft insulation to 300mm in all council housing by 2010. Significant progress has been made and will continue over the next couple of years on these issues, which will dramatically improve the percentage of council housing meeting the SHQS. There are now 3500 Council Houses with 300mm loft insulation, 3,000 Council houses which have had the electrical testing and 3,000 that have had smoke detectors fitted which is a 95% failure. The contracts in these areas and the vast improvements that have been achieved will bring us back in line with our target set in the SHQS Delivery Plan for 2010. In 2009 the pass rate should be 44%, 2010 - 71% and 2011 - 97%.

- Warm Deal – From 2005-2007, 787 properties were improved.
- HECA - Energy Efficiency Improvement in 2003 to 2007 – 4.88%.
- Extension of mains gas – Series of road shows have been held to promote private sector take up. Connection fee has been fixed for 20 years which will allow owners to participate in the scheme at a future date at the same cost.
- The continuous SHCS reported on Fuel Poverty at LA level in February 2008. According to this information, 24.24% of households in Aberdeenshire are in fuel poverty. At a national level 7.5% of households are now in extreme fuel poverty - spending 20% or more of income on home fuel use compared with 5.2% of households in 2004/5. It is not possible to access the extent to which improved energy efficiency has offset the impact of fuel price increases.
- AC Energy Efficiency Advice Project had 174 new cases who received in depth advice. 190 home visits were carried out and a 102 community sessions were held to promote their services and raise awareness. 4,500 occupiers received a report on energy efficiency measures. Innovative heating - 6 heat pumps and 4 wood pellet boilers installed in the private sector through the EST Renewables and Fuel Poverty Pilot.
- 129 HMO's licensed with 14 pending. Joint meetings to be held with Fire Brigade, Police and Council to raise awareness across Aberdeenshire.
- 4182 applications from private landlords have been received. 3400 covering 4855 properties have been approved. Over 80% of all landlords have now been approved.
- Aberdeenshire Council have employed a further 10 apprentices, and across the Grampian area a further 694 have been appointed.

What still needs to happen:

- The Private Sector Housing Strategic Outcome Statements to be finalised to ensure that figures set are realistic and achievable. Further work to estimate the level of finance required for implementation of specific actions is required.
- Fuel Poverty Strategic Outcome Statements to be written and agreed. This should be completed by autumn 2009. Further work to estimate the level of finance required for implementation of specific actions is required.
- Implications from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to be considered and policies written. Guidance from the Scottish Government is to be finalised in autumn 2008. Aberdeenshire Council are working towards an implementation date of April 2009 and have indicated to the Scottish Government that they are keen to be involved in the initial pilots.

- 270 paired surveys to be carried out over a three year period to “boost” the number of surveys carried out in the private sector by the SHCS. The surveys are due to commence in January 2009. This should help evidence the areas of greatest need and allow resources to be utilised effectively in the private sector.

3 Housing for Particular Needs

Strategic Objectives

7	Obj 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	Obj 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 148 projects completed with an allocation for particular needs (Housing for rent) - 8 By RSL: Physical Disabled 2 Units (2% of total) and 6 for Older Persons (6% of total).
- Priority areas for very sheltered housing are Mintlaw and Banff.
- Priority areas for new Care Homes are Inverurie and Stonehaven.
- Protocol prepared, agreed and signed off by Disabled Person’s Housing Service Aberdeenshire and Aberdeenshire Council in order to clarify the working arrangements between the two organisations.
- The Employability agenda was taken to the Community Planning Executive through a report presented by Community Learning and Development. The purpose was to seek approval to develop and implement an employability strategy for Aberdeenshire in order to achieve the outcomes for National Outcome 2 and 7 in the SOA. Homelessness would be one of the client groups covered within the proposed strategy. The report was well received, with recommendations being agreed upon. Economic Development are now to identify a lead officer to take the agenda forward.
- SSA Aberdeenshire will be commencing a pilot for Older People’s Teams. Mintlaw, Stonehaven and 2 other areas will be involved in the pilot. SDO for Particular Needs will join the group for the duration of the pilot.
- A system to alert of planning applications for older people’s housing/care homes has been agreed upon between planning and Strategic Development.
- Adaptations to Council houses were 150 major and 843 minor, 83 to RSL houses and 216 major adaptations and 710 minor adaptations given to Private houses.
- Care Home review complete, implementation plan being developed and implemented.
- Research carried out by Craigforth fed into developing a draft Older Person’s Housing Strategy, which has since been consulted on with

councillors and local communities and is due to go to H&SW and SMTe committees in October 08 to be signed off.

- Research was carried out by Craigforth Consulting in relation to Understanding the Housing and Support Needs of those with physical disability and sensory impairment. This research will contribute towards the development of a joint outcome statement for those with physical and learning disabilities. Other information required to develop baseline measures and evidence in relation to demand and supply of housing and services will be sought by the SDO for Particular Needs.
- SSA Aberdeenshire will be commencing a pilot for Older People's Teams. Mintlaw, Stonehaven and 2 other areas will be involved in the pilot. SDO for Particular Needs will join the group for the duration of the pilot.
- A further grant of £125,000 from the Scottish Government for 2008-2009 has been offered to continue the work of the Aberdeenshire Telecare project, with the possibility of further grant in 2009-2010, and SMT have agreed to support the creation of a two-year project manager post to develop the mainstreaming of telecare across services.
- The Telecare project has also secured an agreement for an additional 21 hours of OT time to be made available for telecare assessment and installation over the next three months and thereafter reviewed on a month-by-month basis. Allowing for holidays and training, this will probably commence in early July.
- Telecare Evaluation report is being finalised, which will provide an analysis of the whole project, is due to be completed by early week in August.
- Draft allocations criteria have been created with regards to Sheltered Housing and Very Sheltered Housing. The aim is to focus scarce resources on a target group in light of changing demographics and the increased numbers of clients requiring care and specialist housing.

What still needs to happen

- Outcome Statements to be written and signed off for Assistive Technology, Older Person's Housing and Physical/learning Disabilities.
- To map the future trends of housing and support needs within all community care groups, which will feed into the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment.
- To identify future research priorities.
- To have a single shared assessment (SSA) and joint action plan for community care needs, health needs, type of housing required and housing support needs linked to Joint Future.
- To review alternative models of care such as peripatetic model.

4 Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

Strategic Objectives

9	Obj 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.
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10	Obj 10. To help develop thriving communities through a range of opportunities for community safety and community participation by 2009.
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Progress to date

- Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Banff/Macduff ATP groups examining and identifying the way forward in terms of the groups' structure.
- Fraserburgh Implementation Plan progressing with works started on site at Marconi Road and planning approved for Denmark Street.
- Strategic assessment to identify the key issues and priorities has been carried out in terms of Anti-Social Behaviour which will inform the development of a new strategy that will cover the next three years. Anti Social Behaviour funding is confirmed until 2009 with report to be made November 2008 for permanent funding.
- Analyst now in place to analyse statistics on Anti-Social Behaviour and community safety for all partner organisations.
- Pilot Neighbourhood Caretaker Service now to be made permanent with a view to extending the service to other areas with communal entrance flats.
- Community Safety strategic assessment is now complete which will drive forward the strategy for the next three years.
- Local Community Plans are being progressed for all six administrative areas within Aberdeenshire.
- Ethnic Minorities Housing Worker for the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City area now in post and funding has been secured for 2008/2009.
- Mapping exercise of services available to Migrant Workers currently being carried out; this will inform the "Welcome to Aberdeenshire" pack.
- Rural Housing Enabler continues to progress the priority areas with housing needs surveys being carried out, for example Tarland and Ballater.
- Home Zone principles continue to be adopted throughout Aberdeenshire – Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Mintlaw and Rothienorman.
- Consultation commissioned by TPPT in terms of consultation with Gypsy/Travellers complete; links now established between TPPT and Gypsy/Travellers group with TIGRHA now pursuing funding for a Gypsy/Travellers Advocate supported by TPPT.
- Craigforth have been commissioned to develop a strategy for Gypsy/Travellers across Grampian. Anticipated completion date of research December 2008.
- Work has commenced in terms of developing an accommodation strategy for key workers; discussions have taken place with the RSLs with regards to the possible development of mid market rent properties.

What still needs to happen

- Examine the possible expansion of the Neighbourhood Caretaker Service.
 - Affordable Housing Working Groups still to hold Special Housing Meetings which will broaden the discussion to include towns and areas outwith the ATP towns.
 - Report to committee in November 2008 to seek permanent funding in terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety strategies.
 - Ethnic Minorities Housing Worker to progress regular 'housing surgeries' throughout Aberdeenshire.
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- Integrate Aberdeenshire Forum (formerly Welcome to Aberdeenshire and Racist Incidence Monitoring groups) still to identify policy implications from the research into the needs of migrant workers.

Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy 2005

Progress Report – July 2008

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- 6 Future Challenges & Opportunities**

Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy - Progress Report

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an update following on from the first annual progress report
- Provide an action plan update
- Draw attention to future challenges and opportunities

2 Aims of the Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy

2.1 The overarching aim of the Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy is to meet the Scottish Government's target to eradicate fuel poverty, as far as reasonably practical, by 2016. However, the Scottish Government accepts that the prognosis for achieving this commitment is not good.

2.2 The Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out six strategic objectives which reflect the main challenges identified for the relief of fuel poverty in Aberdeenshire. These are:

2.2.1 To identify households and properties vulnerable to fuel poverty

2.2.2 To improve the energy performance of housing in all tenures

2.2.3 To encourage housing providers to take action to reduce heating costs

2.2.4 To ensure households have access to advice and representation in relation to benefits and related issues

2.2.5 To raise awareness of energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues among Local Authority and partner agency staff

2.2.6 To provide free and impartial energy efficiency advice and information

2.3 The strategic objectives of the Fuel Poverty Strategy are to be reviewed in line with the Kaizen that was carried out on Strategic Planning. The Fuel Poverty Strategic Outcome Statement is currently in draft form. The action plan will be updated to reflect this.

3 Baseline data & targeting resources/Government initiatives

3.1 Baseline

The difficulties in measuring and monitoring the number of households experiencing fuel poverty are well documented. Given that both fuel prices and income are subject to volatility it is difficult to obtain anything other than a snapshot of the extent of fuel poverty at a given point in time.

The continuous SHCS reported on Fuel Poverty at LA level in February 2008 based on figures collated from 2003 - 2006. According to this information, 24.24% of households in Aberdeenshire are in fuel poverty. This is

compared with 19% across Scotland as a whole. There are no figures available for extreme fuel poverty at a local authority level, however, at a national level 7.5% of households are now in extreme fuel poverty - spending 20% or more of income on home fuel use compared with 5.2% of households in 2004/5.

Fuel Poverty will have furthered increased in Aberdeenshire as the impact of installing energy efficiency measures will be overshadowed by the substantial increase in fuel costs over the last two years.

3.2 Scottish Fuel Poverty Indicator & Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Indicator

The Scottish Fuel Poverty Indicator 2005 has provided useful data identifying the risk of households being in fuel poverty on a ward-by-ward basis. However, in light of the recent increase in fuel prices this needs to be updated. The information used to produce the indicator was gathered from the Census in 2001, therefore it is not possible to update this until the next Census is carried out in 2011. However, the Scottish Government's Scottish House Condition Survey team are looking at more accurate representations regarding fuel poverty on a local authority basis. This information should be available in November 2008.

3.3 Targeting Resources

The data provided by the Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Indicator enabled specific areas to be targeted for intervention to address fuel poverty across all housing sectors. Due to the dramatic increase in fuel prices it is anticipated that the fuel poverty figures have increased substantially. This may mean that there is no longer the requirement to know detailed information regarding small areas within Aberdeenshire as the problem is going to be much more wide spread. Resources will need to be used to tackle a much wider range of people than previously.

3.4 Scottish Government Initiatives - Central Heating Programme (CHP) and Warm Deal

The Scottish Government recognises in their Fuel Poverty Review, May 2008 that fuel poverty is an issue for thousands of people. The bulk of the Scottish Government's investment is directed through the CHP. Studies have shown that approximately half of the pensioners that were helped under the CHP were not actually fuel poor which has meant that Government resources have not been targeted effectively. For example, young households who are in fuel poverty, receive no help under the CHP. However, this will still have had an impact on the reduction of carbon emissions and will have reduced bills as older heating systems are far less efficient and cost more to run than newer systems.

The Warm Deal programme improves the energy efficiency of the homes of low income families. It is generally felt that this is better value for money in energy efficiency terms than the CHP. At a national level, Warm Deal is not well integrated with UK programmes such as Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT), which may mean Scottish Government resources are displacing those that could be taken up from the fuel companies. However,

Aberdeenshire Council maximise CERT funding and then use Warm Deal funding to install energy efficiency measures in its properties. This ensures Best Value and means that Housing has maximised all grants available before using funding from the Capital Programme.

In light of the Scottish Government's Review, the Scottish Fuel Poverty Forum has been reconvened and the CHP and Warm Deal programme are currently being overhauled; the proposals for reform are expected in late 2008.

4 Partnerships

4.1 Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy Implementation & Monitoring Group

The Aberdeenshire Fuel Poverty Strategy was developed by a core group comprising Council officers, representatives from SCARF (Save Cash and Reduce fuel), RSLs' (Registered Social Landlords) and the SRPBA (Scottish Rural Property and Business Association). Fuel Poverty issues have been identified as a priority and the core group will continue to have a key role in overseeing progress.

4.2 Established Partnerships: Aberdeenshire Energy Efficiency Advice Project (AEEAP)

This is a partnership between Aberdeenshire Council and SCARF, the Aberdeen based energy advice charity which manages the local Energy Savings Scotland Advice Centre (ESAAC). The Council provided accommodation and administration for the project until August 2004 when the project moved to the SCARF office in Aberdeen. From there, the project continued to provide energy efficiency advice services throughout Aberdeenshire. The Council provides funding for two full-time energy efficiency advisors to deliver free and impartial energy efficiency advice across all housing sectors. The project has management, administrative and logistical support from the Aberdeen office including telephone advice and the services of a Local Energy Support Programme Co-ordinator and Renewables Development Officer. Funding for the project was initially for three years and is now ongoing.

4.3 Aberdeenshire Care & Repair Project

This Project is funded by Aberdeenshire Council from Private Sector Housing Grant and is managed by Castlehill Housing Association. The project was rolled out across Aberdeenshire between August 2004 and January 2005 and now has the equivalent of 8 full-time staff. Year on year, more and more referrals are made and the project is constantly growing. Project officers act on all referrals from the private housing sector for housing repairs, improvements and disabled adaptations. In the course of this work they make referrals for home energy efficiency improvements to both the Warm Deal and the Central Heating Programme managed by Scottish Gas. ESSAC managed by Scarf and Aberdeenshire Care and Repair have a healthy cross referral system in place where all enquiries on home heating matters and energy efficiency are signposted to SCARF

energy advisors for follow-up.

4.4 Installers

Aberdeenshire Council, in partnership with local and national Warm Deal installers has implemented an insulation upgrade programme of works, targeting areas identified from the council's stock condition database. They are providing tenants with energy advice and where required are carrying out a property survey and installing loft, cavity wall insulation and draught proofing.

4.5 Aberdeenshire Advice Services Network

AASN is the umbrella body for voluntary advice services in Aberdeenshire and are critical to the success of actions relating to the delivery of income maximisation advice. They will also be involved in cross referrals whereby they refer clients seeking specialist fuel poverty advice to the appropriate agencies e.g. SCARF and in turn partners will refer clients in need of specialist income maximisation advice to AASN organisations.

5 Progress to Date and Future Actions

Key achievements included:

5.1 To identify households and properties vulnerable to fuel poverty

Progress to date:

- Data built up of social stock to identify hard to treat properties using an agreed methodology to agree house types from the Council's robust stock condition database.
- Information available from the continuous Scottish House Condition Survey at local authority level regarding fuel poverty.

What still needs to happen:

- Update the fuel poverty indicator map to reflect increase in fuel costs. More detailed information regarding fuel poverty to reflect increase in fuel costs.

5.2 To improve the energy performance of housing in all tenures

Progress to date:

- Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) Delivery Plan for Council stock approved and now being implemented. Progress towards meeting the SHQS has improved over the last 12 months and is online to meet target by 2010. There are now 3500 Council Houses with 300mm loft insulation. By 2009 the pass rate should be 44%, 2010 - 71% and 2011 - 97%. It is anticipated that there will be a dramatic improvement in the pass rate as the works start to cross over properties.

- In excess of £400k of Warm Deal funding secured to allow energy efficiency measures to be carried out in Council properties.
 - Gas mains extensions to settlements that previously did not have gas have been extended to 1,200 households across Aberdeenshire.
 - 432 heating systems installed in Council properties. A whole house approach has been adopted - whenever new heating systems are installed the rest of the property is brought up to the Aberdeenshire insulation standard.
 - SHQS Delivery Plans for RSLs in place and being implemented.
 - Carbons Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) funding secured for installation of energy efficiency measures across all tenures.
 - Renewables Connection project launched. ESSAC advisor to carry out home surveys to promote renewable energy.
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What still needs to happen:

- To join Landlord Accreditation Scotland to promote best practice in the private rented sector. Training sessions to be held informing landlords of their legal responsibilities to have an Energy Performance Certificate from December 2008.
- Matrix of options for funding energy efficiency improvements in all tenures to be updated.
- Implement any changes that result from Scottish Government's Fuel Poverty Review.

5.3 To encourage housing providers to take action to reduce heating costs

Progress to date:

- Promoting take up of energy efficiency measures. Partnership working with Scarf to promote the extension of the gas mains network. Series of road shows have been held in Inverbervie, Banchory, Ellon, Fraserburgh and Mintlaw to promote private sector take up.

What still needs to happen:

- Continue to increase staff awareness through basic energy awareness training.
- Continue to promote the installations of renewable heating options.

5.4 To ensure households have access to advice and representation in relation to benefits and related issues

Progress to date:

- Income maximisation information continues to be provided by Aberdeenshire Advice Services Network, Scarf and Care & Repair.
- Updated list of Aberdeenshire Advice Services Network organisations providing services in Aberdeenshire

What still needs to happen:

- Continue to work in partnership with relevant agencies to promote the take up of income maximisation checks.

5.5 To raise awareness of energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues among Local Authority and partner agency staff

Progress to date:

- Basic energy awareness training for all Aberdeenshire Council housing staff to raise awareness with an aim to reduce energy consumption within Council properties.

What still needs to happen:

- Implement training for all Aberdeenshire Council housing staff. Develop training programme for partner agency staff.

5.6 To provide free and impartial energy efficiency advice and information

Progress to date:

AEEAP have continued to deliver free and impartial energy efficiency and fuel poverty advice and information. Highlights include:

- 110 advice sessions held in 46 locations across Aberdeenshire.
- Publicity for the advice sessions continues to attract cases and home visits which are widespread in areas and type with a clear increase in difficulties associated with high fuel bills. The advisors dealt with 173 individual clients, undertook 190 home visits and covered 4857 enquiries.
- The Press & Journal and Evening Express regularly publicise advice sessions and forthcoming events.
- 109 school talks held in various locations across Aberdeenshire.

What still needs to happen:

- Continue to work in partnership with relevant agencies to promote take up of energy efficiency measures.

6 Future Challenges

6.1 Fuel Price Increases

It is widely accepted that the price of fuel in the UK will continue to rise in the future. Aberdeenshire Council can do little to prevent fuel prices rising, but through our Fuel Poverty Strategy we will work in partnership with all relevant agencies to ensure that the residents of Aberdeenshire get access to the most cost effective ways of paying for their domestic fuel. We will also work to ensure that their homes are as energy efficient as possible, that fuel bills are kept as low as possible by maximising the uptake of insulation and

energy efficiency measures and where possible, encouraging the use of renewable energy. We will continue to progress the gas mains extensions to settlements that previously did not have gas, which will reduce fuel costs.

6.2 Meeting 2016 Target

Meeting the Scottish Government's target to eradicate fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable by 2016 is very challenging. Analysis indicates that those who are most fuel poor would require substantial increases in income and significant reductions in fuel prices or unrealistic improvements in energy efficiency before they no longer face fuel poverty. It is widely accepted that unless fuel prices and/or incomes change favourably, fuel poverty is unlikely to reduce in the foreseeable future. This is despite the improvements to housing energy efficiency that will continue to keep fuel bills lower than they would otherwise be. The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of fuel poverty and will put forward some of their proposals for reform in late 2008. Aberdeenshire Council will reflect the proposals within the Fuel Poverty Strategic Outcome Statement.

6.3 Benefits Uptake

Maximising incomes of households can offset the impact to some degree of rising fuel prices. Officers are currently reviewing services available to increase the uptake of benefits by individuals and in particular vulnerable groups. Various options are being considered and it is intended that a further report will go to Committee in December.