

REPORT ON: STRUCTURE & DELIVERY OF LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGIES

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 693-2002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report will explain the context of the new housing planning system. It will also set out a plan of action which the Housing Department will implement to ensure that relevant stakeholders are involved and a strategic, measurable plan is produced.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that:
- i. The Director of Housing contributes to and brings forward the development of a Group of Tayside Authorities to liaise on inter-authority issues (as detailed in Paragraphs 6.11 and 6.12).
 - ii. Arrangements for preparing the Local Housing Strategy and the proposed workplan at Appendix 1 (as detailed in Paragraphs 6.14 – 6.18) are agreed.
 - iii. Committee notes the checks and balances identified in Appendix 2.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. In 2001 a grant of £10,000 was received from Communities Scotland to facilitate the development of Dundee City Council's Local Housing Strategy. A bid for an additional £58,500 was submitted in August 2002. The outcome of this submission is awaited.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The production of a Local Housing Strategy will facilitate the identification of housing need in Dundee within a wide range of special needs, e.g. Physical Disability, Learning Difficulties and Mental Illness and Black, Ethnic Minority Communities.

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. A Local Housing Strategy will allow Dundee City Council to identify housing proposals and plans which will enable citizens to lead full, active lives, in a healthy and safe environment, free from crime and the fear of crime. This will be done in partnership with other housing providers and stakeholders.

6. BACKGROUND

Local Housing Strategies in Context

- 6.1. The Housing (Scotland) Act makes it a requirement for all Local Authorities to produce strategies to tackle the housing problems in their areas.

Draft guidance on preparing local Housing Strategies was issued on 23 July 2001, final guidance is still awaited.

- 6.2. Local Housing Strategies (LHS) should take cognisance of national housing objectives:

- Tackling homelessness.
- Promoting the comprehensive renewal of social rented housing through community ownership and empowering tenants.
- Reducing the number of households in Scotland that live in fuel poverty.

Strategies should also demonstrate the fit between national priorities and local requirements.

- 6.3. LHS must also demonstrate consistency with corporate strategies, other relevant strategic plans and reflect community planning processes.

- 6.4. Guidance has suggested that information sharing and collation should take place through Regional Housing Information Partnership involving:

- LA Housing Departments
- LA Planning Departments
- LA Social Work Departments
- LA Environmental Health Departments
- Neighbouring LAs
- The Enterprise Network
- Health Boards
- Regulated Social Landlords
- Communities Scotland
- Voluntary Sector bodies
- Housing Researchers/Academic
- Community Safety
- Environmental Agencies
- Water Authorities
- Private Developers
- Tayside Solicitors Property Centre
- Tayside Police

Many of these organisations are already heavily involved in community planning in Dundee through the Dundee Partnership. This cross sectoral group has been responsible for developing the themes forming the basis of Dundee's Community Plan.

- 6.5. Allied to the LHS, Communities Scotland have prepared a Tayside Housing Market Context Statement (HMCS). This HMCS sets the context of the local housing market and will be reviewed in consultation with local authorities.

- 6.6. Local authorities will be instructed to produce LHS by April 2004.

- 6.7. A liaison forum has been established between the Tayside Local Authorities, Directors of Housing and Communities Scotland and a number of meetings held to discuss pre-planning arrangements. On the back of these meetings a framework has been developed which now seeks formal recognition.
Before we go on to describe how this framework will operate, there must be understanding of what the framework will see to achieve.

What We Want a Local Housing**Strategy to Achieve**

- 6.8. Though HMCS have been produced by Communities Scotland prior to the preparation of LHS, it will be the plans of the local authority which have local primacy.

HMCS are statements of context and fact which also give guidance on national policy objectives – HMCS does not set policy for LHS to follow.

- 6.9. The new planning system arguably has greater scope than the previous one. All sectors of the housing market should be considered and LHS will provide a structure and direction for housing investment by all sectors. The development funding which Communities Scotland currently administers may, in certain cases, pass directly to Local Authorities under certain conditions (*see Appendix 2 detailing checks and balances*). DCC would wish to begin early discussions with Communities Scotland re the transfer of the Development Funding. This would be subject to submitting an agreed LHS in September 2003.

- 6.10. It is important that through our proposed structure we can:

- Focus investment on the Councils' priorities as well as on national priorities.
- Ensure that proposed actions are developed and prioritised after proper consultation with all relevant interests.
- Ensure that issues of regional significance are established jointly by local authorities in partnership with Communities Scotland.

A Structure for the New Planning System in Tayside

- 6.11. Draft guidance has suggested that membership of Regional Housing Information Partnerships (RHIPs) should be comprehensive (see Para 6.4).

However, it is considered that a single forum for all interests across Tayside would be unwieldy and lack focus.

- 6.12. It is proposed that a formal group consisting of a representative of each Housing Department in the local housing market area is set up. Other members will be co-opted as required.

The role of this group will be:

Discuss inter-authority housing issues in Tayside

- i. To share and consider policy and targets as developed by each member authority.
- ii. Agree information requirements.
- iii. Discuss the transfer of development funding to local authorities.
- iv. Discuss Items i-iv with Communities Scotland.

Local Arrangements

- 6.13. So far we have concentrated on liaison arrangements across local authorities and with the Communities Scotland. More detailed arrangements need to be agreed to set out how we will involve all stakeholders locally and how we will mesh the LHS with other plans.

- 6.14. With regard to Community Planning, the preparation of the LHS will comply with and augment the clear framework of strategic themes identified in Dundee's Community Plan, each of which has links with the L.H.S.. These themes are:

- Working and Learning
- Health and Care
- Community Safety
- Environment
- Building Stronger Communities

Appendix 3 identifies some of the housing issues which might fall within each of these themes.

- 6.15. It is proposed that the Housing Department leads on production of the LHS. An editorial group chaired by Housing but also including staff from: Planning and Transportation; Social Work; NHS Tayside; should be set up to synchronise scope and production of the plan and its main elements.
- 6.16. In addition to this, awareness of the new planning system, collection of information and initial consultation on drafts of the LHS should occur in 2 ways:
- i. Through existing networks (e.g. Dundee Community Care Housing Forum, liaison meetings with DFTA, Community Care Strategic Planning Group Chairs Meeting, Strategic Information and Monitoring Group etc.).
 - ii. Through a series of special meetings (involving the key information providers/interest groups).

Progress To Date

- 6.17. Because the LHS is a wide-ranging document, many of its component parts are already in place or are in progress. For example, a Homelessness Strategy is nearing completion as is a Supporting People Strategy. A lot of joint research and assessment of need has been completed for the HMCS and further work on Minority Ethnic Needs and Gypsy Travellers is in the pipeline.

The draft Local Plan and Community Care Plan are also available.

Future Work Programme

- 6.18. The latest guidance from the Scottish Executive has set out milestones for the production of the LHS. These milestones have been accommodated in our own suggested workplan which can be seen at Appendix 1.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. Consultation on the LHS has taken place, with other Tayside Local Authorities and Communities Scotland, within the liaison forum identified in 6.7. This consultation will continue and consultation and participation will be expanded as indicated in Appendix 1.
- 7.2. The Chief Executive and all Directors have been consulted on the content of this report.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- a. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- b. Assessing Requirements for the Preparation of Local Housing Strategies: Scottish Executive/Communities Scotland, June 2002.
- c. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 – Local Housing Strategies, Scottish Executive Circular, July 2002.

- d. Transfer of Development Funding from Communities Scotland to Local Authorities: Memorandum of Understanding and Operational Criteria: COSLA/SFHA/Communities Scotland 2002.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY TIMETABLE

September 2002

Steering Group set up. Content and format of LHS agreed.

October 2002

Planning partners and forums briefed on requirements of LHS. Gaps where forums do not exist identified, new forums set up and briefed.

October 2002 - January 2003

Audit of available information completed. Initial market analysis underway. Information gaps identified and strategies for addressing these identified with necessary resources. Surveys and research commissioned and completed. Consultation and participation strategy established. Draft objectives, options, and monitoring and evaluation framework agreed. Progress agreed with Communities Scotland.

February – March 2003

Produce first draft LHS and circulate to stakeholders.

March – April 2003

Undertake consultation and participation. Analyse and evaluate responses.

May 2002

Produce final draft.

July – August 2003

Committee process and approval.

September 2003

Submission to Ministers.

TRANSFER OF THE MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FROM COMMUNITIES SCOTLAND TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 has made possible the transfer of development funding from Communities Scotland to Local Authorities. A framework has been drawn up by COSLA, SFHA and Communities Scotland to ensure that checks and balances are in place which will ensure that a Local Authority is organised and has the necessary resources to enable speedy decision making and effective and efficient allocation of such funding. The pre-requisites for development funding transfer are summarised under.

Local Housing Strategy

- Must have full Council approval.
- Meet requirements of Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (*Sect 89*).
- Comply with Communities Scotland best practice guidance.
- Developed in consultation with key stakeholders including Housing Associations (HAs).
- Include action plans, targets and monitoring arrangements on eg social justice, sustainability, equalities.

Allocation Methodology

- Clear framework for allocation of resources to HAs on basis of local need and Value for Money.
- Formal Council approval of Committee, departmental and officer responsibilities, etc which support prompt decision making.
- Consultation protocols in place with wider alliances, SIPS, HAs and other relevant partnerships.

Skills and Resources

- Programme and performance management skills which include:
 - Management of budgets and commitments within prescribed levels.
 - Delivery of wide-ranging Ministerial targets.
 - Systems for setting challenging targets, reporting and disseminating results and commitment to continuous improvement.
- Project appraisal skills and practices which include:
 - Communities Scotland guidance and procedures on managing development funding.
 - Communication of annual benchmarks for grant appraisal consistent with national procedures.
 - Financial, technical and strategic project appraisal skills.
 - Standard grant approval skills consistent with national guidance but reflecting Council's legal status.
 - Post project appraisal skills.

- Monitoring and evaluation arrangements including:
 - Sample post-completion project review.
 - Monitoring systems and procedures to support in-house assessment or independent evaluation.
- Commitment, capacity, skills and technology to operate fully, national programme monitoring, management and reporting system and commitment to electronic communication with grant recipients.
- Appropriate system for grant payment which:
 - Is linked to national system.
 - Is fully secure re potential overpayment.
 - Enables prompt and electronic payment.
 - Complies with Resource Account and Budgeting requirements.
- Internal audit system and skills which at least match current Communities Scotland arrangements and satisfy Audit Scotland.

Separate Budgets

- Transparent arrangements to show any retained stock not benefiting from development funding.
- Should account for development funding separately from other Council expenditure and be able to report regularly on actual development funding expenditure.
- Where stock is transferred, development funding cannot be used on this stock without Ministerial approval.

RSLs and Funders Support

- Council should have confidence and general support of RSLs in area and local concerns must have been addressed.
- General RSL support indicated by:
 - Inclusion of all RSLs in formal consultation.
 - Existence of formal consultation mechanisms.
 - Opportunity for RSLs to comment in writing on draft RSL.
 - LHS reference to nature and extent of consultation and how comments addressed.
- RSLs able to submit views on consultation process which will be taken into account when assessing Council's performance on development funding.
- Council must be able to demonstrate general support of lenders, other funders and other organisations working to promote community regeneration and neighbourhood and economic renewal.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY PLAN THEMES

1. **Working and Learning**

- Identification of opportunities to develop projects linking accommodation and training.
- Creation of local employment through RSL use of Wider Action Funding and community business involvement in community regeneration.

2. **Health and Care**

- Identification of accommodation needs required to facilitate implementation of Tayside Health and Homelessness Action Plan.
- Identification of accommodation needs resulting from Hospital Resettlement Programmes, e.g. Liff and Strathmartine.
- Identification of accommodation needs of individuals with Learning Difficulties living with older carers in the community.
- Provision of accommodation input into Joint Future Strategy.
- Identification of requirements for and ensuring provision of housing support in the City.

3. **Community Safety**

- Continuing development of Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.
- Ensuring that built form and design of housing development facilitates a reduction in vulnerability to crime and is child friendly.
- Participation in Dundee Community Safety Partnership.
- Continued participation in strategies and at eliminating domestic abuse and racial harassment.

4. **Environment**

- Ensuring that housing developments are energy efficient and comply with waste guidelines and strategies.
- Encourage the full consideration of bio-diversity issues in housing development.
- Continue to identify housing needs and aspirations by type, location and tenure, and ensure housing development is targeted accordingly.
- Encourage the use of brownfield sites for housing development.

5. **Building Stronger Communities**

- Ensure that housing strategies are designed to facilitate the active participation of citizens of the City.
- Continue to develop tenant participation policies and practices.
- Identify areas of worst deprivation and develop housing policies which are designed to respond to this issue, while complementing other plans and strategies.