

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

AGENDA ITEM No. 2

To: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: COWBOY BUILDERS CONSTRUCTION & THE CONSUMER
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 6 May 1998	Ref: AGC/LMcW	

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to advise members of the formation of a Task Group set up by the Local Government Association Public Protection Committee (LGAPPC) and the Local Authority Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards (LACOTS).

Background

2. At the meeting on 21 January 1997 of the Environmental Services Committee (Agenda Item 8) reference was made to a report published at the end of 1996 by the National Consumer Council - **Controlling the Cowboys, A Consumer Review of the Home Improvements and Repairs Market**. This report highlighted the opportunities for local authorities to exert an influence on the situation through their responsibilities for planning, building control, housing, environmental health and trading standards.
3. A Task Group has now been set up by LGAPAC and LACOTS in response to the report.
4. The remit of the Task Group is to prepare a report outlining recommendations and a course of action for consideration by National and Local Government to address the issues raised in the National Consumer Council's report. This will enhance the effectiveness of local authorities in the provision of protection to vulnerable consumers in this area.
5. COSLA have been requested to provide a representative for the Task Group to overview the Scottish dimension in the project. This has been delegated to the Scottish Building Control Organisation, the building control policy advisory body of COSLA and at a recent meeting, Mr A G Cowie, Building Control Service Manager in this Department, was proposed as the Scottish advisor.

Implications/

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6. It is pleasing to note that yet again, North Lanarkshire Council is recognised as having particular expertise to offer to a national body. We should also welcome the opportunity of having a direct influence on the development of a national policy which will have benefits for the citizens of North Lanarkshire. While the way the group will operate has yet to be finalised, the exercise will have finite timescale but it is expected that there might be up to four meetings in London to attend in a year. Participation on the Task Group will therefore have implications for the Department in terms of staff time, travelling expenses and subsistence involved in visits to London. The Department will seek to meet these costs from within the Building Control budget for travelling expenses and courses.

Recommendations

7. In view of the potential benefits to North Lanarkshire, it is recommended that the Committee:-
- a) approve the nomination of Mr A G Cowie to the Task Force on behalf of the Council and COSLA.
 - b) refer this report to the Environmental Services Committee for their interest

I G Lawson

W Stanley C. Cook
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

17 April 1998

For further information please contact Archie Cowie on 01236 616213.