

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: FRESH THINKING, NEW IDEAS – HOUSING DISCUSSION PAPER
From: HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES		
Date: 5 AUGUST 2010	Ref: EMcH/PH	

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update committee on the discussion paper issued by the Scottish Government on 24th May 2010 and seek approval to submit a response, in consultation with the Convener, by the end of August 2010.

2. Background

2.1. The Scottish Government issued a Discussion paper on 24th May regarding future Housing Policy covering:

- Scottish Housing need – identifying the range of housing needs in Scotland; the impact of the recession and how best to target available resources to meet identified need.
- Increasing supply of affordable housing – recognising that with the reduction of public expenditure there is a need to look at new mechanisms for funding affordable housing to help increase housing supply and make best use of limited public resources.
- Choice, fairness and making better use of housing – consideration of options to improve housing choice, including flexible tenure options and increasing the role of the private rented sector. It also raises the issue of the disparity in social rented sector rent levels and suggests that some social rent levels could increase to help fund new supply. The expansion of Common Housing Registers (CHR) is promoted as well as a suggestion that there could be a national CHR.
- Sustainable, quality houses and places – highlights need to continue to improve housing quality and the challenges faced in meeting the Climate Change (Scotland) 2009 Act targets.
- Excellence across the housing system – outlines the role each stakeholder has in helping to meet the challenges faced in the housing sector

2.2. Following consultation on this paper over the summer, including a number of roadshow events, the Scottish Government intends to produce a Housing Policy paper towards the end of the year.

3. Proposals / Considerations

3.1. The Discussion Paper is quite wide ranging and for the most part highlights the issues and challenges facing the housing sector, rather than out-lining concrete proposals for change. However it is an important opportunity for the council to highlight what it considers are the key priorities to be addressed. Some of the issues that the council would want to highlight in its response include:

- In the allocation of housing investment, a recognition that some council areas have different housing markets with different level/ type of needs within their boundaries.
- The same subsidy levels should apply for both council and housing association new build
- The need for a balance between new supply and making current housing fit for purpose, including challenges within mixed tenure areas where owners prevent council investment programmes progressing.
- There should be more powers, under certain circumstances, for local authorities to undertake work within mixed tenure blocks, eg 'improvements'
- Stronger powers to address poor standards and poor management of private rented stock, while recognising that enforcement will be more challenging for councils at a time when resources are reducing.
- The need for more government assistance and co-ordination of funding streams if carbon reduction targets to be met, and recognition that any requirements to 'retro fit' existing stock to meet targets will reduce council investment available for new provision.

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy/ Equalities Implications

4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee approve the submission of a response to the Scottish Government in consultation with the Convener of Housing & Social Work Services.



Elaine McHugh
Head of Housing Services
8 June 2010

For further information on this report, or to obtain a copy of the Discussion paper, please contact Pamela Humphries on telephone 01698 274174