

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE – JULY '05 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The Local Housing Strategy recognised that more information is required in terms of the private housing market in the Falkirk area, particularly with regard to stock condition and the operation of the private rented sector. The following priority tasks were identified, the progress of which is noted in the attached action plan.

- Undertake a private sector housing stock condition survey by March 2005.
- Explore the establishment of a Private Sector Unit from April 2004.
- Establish mechanisms and procedures to operate and implement the new Repair and Improvement Grant regime.
- Prepare a programme of future investment priorities.
- Develop a forward Action Plan for Private Sector Housing which takes account of the work of the Housing Improvement Task Force and the new grants regime.

In ensuring that the Council's private sector housing objectives are delivered to provide improved housing conditions, the Local Housing Strategy identified a range of performance measures, identified as follows:

- Reduction in the number of dwellings vacant over specified periods of time e.g. 6 months, 1 year,
- Reduction in the number of properties unfit for habitation,
- Reduction in the numbers of BTS properties,
- Improvements in the energy efficiency ratings of private sector housing,
- Number of landlords who achieve Commended Landlord status,
- Number of licenses granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation,
- Reduction in the number of home owners whose homes are repossessed as a result of mortgage arrears,
- Reduction in the number of evictions from private sector tenancies.

It should be recognised that the usefulness of these performance measures is likely to be required on a phased basis as strategies are developed and implemented in each respective area.

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OBJECTIVE	ACTION	LEAD	PRIORITY / TIMESCALE
New Responsibilities	<p>To implement the provisions of the new Private Sector Housing Bill when enacted.</p> <p>Issues will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernising the powers of local authorities to address disrepair and maintenance issues in the private sector • Improving the operation of the housing market • Improving rights for private sector tenants 	Strategic Support Unit	To be determined/ dependant upon progress of Bill.
	Recruitment of two private sector service development officers to help develop the Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy.	Strategic Support Unit	Completed June '05

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<p>New Private Sector Housing Team LHS Priority Task</p>	<p>Establishment of Private Sector Housing Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of Private Sector Officers, Admin and clerical posts progressing. • Training, IT systems etc. 	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit</p>	<p>Completed June '05 Summer/autumn '05</p>
<p>Care & Repair Service</p>	<p>Managing / delivering the Care and Repair Service to facilitate repair and improvement work for elderly / disabled owners and private tenants.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit</p>	<p>On going</p>
	<p>Review of the Care and Repair Service including consideration of current remit, future direction, strategic guidance and inter-agency funding.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>April 2006</p>
<p>Advice & Assistance to Encourage Owners to Maintain Properties LHS Priority Task</p>	<p>The transfer of the administration of repair and improvement grants from Development Services to Housing Services. Identification of skills gaps, training requirements, short term support arrangements.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit</p>	<p>Responsibility will transfer July '05</p>
	<p>A review of the current range of repair and improvement grants offered, within the constraints of available funding.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>March 2006</p>
	<p>Development of a framework for the provision of financial advice and assistance to owners, e.g. accessing finance, equity based loans etc.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>March 2006</p>

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<p>Develop Management and Maintenance Strategies to Improve Private Sector Housing Conditions</p>	<p>To facilitate the implementation of mixed tenure communal works, by providing support to Neighbourhood Offices through advice and assistance, repair and improvement grant assistance. To formulate monitoring systems to ensure consistency of approach at local level.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit / Neighbourhood Offices</p>	<p>March 2006</p>
	<p>Review of the success of previous Housing Action Areas and Block Repair Schemes.</p>	<p>Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>March 2006</p>
	<p>Private Sector Housing Conditions / Scottish Housing Quality Standard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a phased private sector house condition survey – LHS Priority Task • Develop strategic approaches to improve quality of private sector housing, e.g. private sector landlords and mixed tenure estates. Ensure focus on lower end of market • Developing and monitoring systems to improve the quality of information held on private sector housing. 	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>Revised date of April '06</p> <p>Linked to enactment of Bill</p> <p>On going</p>
	<p>Identification and development of a programme of future investment priorities, including assessing the need for the establishment of new Housing Renewal Areas as a focus for future private sector investment. LHS Priority Task.</p>	<p>Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>Dependant on Private Sector survey outcomes</p>
	<p>Managing and co-ordinating future Housing Renewal Areas.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Unit</p>	<p>To develop over time following on from above</p>
	<p>Identification of vacant and derelict privately owned properties and the development of a Private Sector Empty House Strategy.</p>	<p>Strategic Support Unit</p>	<p>2006/07</p>

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Private Rented Sector	Production of better quality information/understanding of the private rented sector.	Private Sector Housing Unit	On going
	Development and implementation of regulations for the private rented sector, including development of a register of approved landlords / accommodation and an accreditation scheme to raise standards.	Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit	2006? (may depend on Scottish Executive timescales)
	Development of a landlord forum. (Linked to the above process).	Private Sector Housing Unit	2006? (may depend on Scottish Executive timescales)
	The provision of an information and advice service to private landlords and tenants, including training for landlords.	Private Sector Housing Unit	2006/07?
Property Management	Explore the feasibility of the Council acting as property managers / factors for owners of flatted / communally owned property – including RTB properties. Feasibility to be explored with Law & Admin / Finance.	Strategic Support Unit	2006/07
	Research and development of long term maintenance strategies , e.g. the creation of building reserve funds. This will require to take account of experience in relation to past joint venture projects.	Strategic Support Unit	Linked to enactment of Bill
	Development of arrangements to promote the establishment of Owners Associations and effective property management arrangements.	Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit	Linked to enactment of Bill
	Raising awareness of owner's responsibilities in relation to property management and maintenance.	Private Sector Housing Unit / Strategic Support Unit	March 2006

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Other	The maximisation of grant aid in respect of energy efficiency and sustainability to address issues of both house condition and fuel poverty.	Strategic Support Unit	On going
	General Fund Housing Investment Programme – Ensuring progress of projects, monitoring of expenditure and preparation of future years programmes.	Strategic Support Unit	On going
	General Fund Housing Revenue Budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor current years expenditure / progress • Prepare future years programmes 	Strategic Support Unit	On going
	Private Sector Housing Grant – Baseline and Bid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor expenditure / progress of projects • Prepare updates for Communities Scotland • Paperwork to be completed in respect of recent additional funding award. 	Strategic Support Unit	On going
	Initial overview of Housing and Social Work Services role in the management of HMOs including the ability to encourage owners to participate, and potential for involvement in future change.	Private Sector Housing Unit	2006/07
	Users Network Group – explore feasibility	Private Sector Housing Unit	2005/06