

Docherty Consulting Ltd has prepared this paper in conjunction with David Adamson and Partners in order to help inform the Local Housing Strategy update process and progress the implementation of the Standard Delivery Plan.

## 2. Local Housing Strategies: All Tenure Information Requirements

### Falkirk Council's Current Position

Falkirk Council recognises that it requires over-arching all tenure housing and socio – economic information to inform the development of its Local Housing Strategy. It is proposed that the Council commissions a cross tenure Local House Condition Survey (LHCS) during 2005, with a particular focus on a stratified sample survey stratified design, which facilitates collection of data relevant to Private Tenure housing that will assist the Authority in:

- engaging private sector housing owners, through community bodies and interest groups,
- discussing issues such as household security, energy efficiency and other areas of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).

Encouraging Private Sector house owners to ensure that their property meets the requirements of the SHQS by way of raising their understanding and raising their awareness of potential grant assistance, where applicable, is a challenge that is best embraced through a community approach. The Authority may also consider the relevance of an associated Housing Needs study to further support its Local Housing Strategy.

### A Typical Research Approach

Housing information, including housing in private tenure, is required to support the Council's strategic planning role at both national and local levels. At the National level, this survey information will help fulfil the Council's requirements within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Home Energy Conservation Act

respectively. Locally, the collected survey data will facilitate the objective allocation of resources for private sector investment and support. Findings from the survey will be set in both a national and local context using for example the national house condition survey programme outputs.

The Council research objectives are expected to include identifying:-

- The Investment required meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- The current position regarding the level of BTS housing and presence of standard amenities.
- The current levels of disrepair in the various tenure sectors , types of disrepair and estimated cost of carrying out repairs and improvements.
- The energy efficiency of housing showing comparisons across all house types, ages and tenures.
- The potential or possible links between health and housing condition, for example specific age, tenures and types of dwellings that are more likely to contain people in fuel poverty; the impact of dampness and condensation on particular households; and the number of households potentially at risk from concentrations of lead in the water supply.
- The current suitability of private housing in relation to people with a range of mobility requirements.
- The relationships between stock condition, energy and occupier circumstances.

The best practice approach within these objectives is one of nationally approved techniques for house condition appraisal tailored to operate within local housing circumstances and to meet local planning requirements.

The conclusion of this approach is a flexible house condition, energy and socio-economic database capable of application at strategic

funding and local planning levels and of being updated as a continuing source of information on Council wide housing conditions over time.

### **Survey Design and Development Issues**

The implementation of a major house condition survey occurs within a national policy context, which is set, for example by the criteria driving the preparation of the Council's Local Housing Strategy and guidance provided for the preparation of the Standard Delivery Plan.

This context is especially relevant where physical house condition survey data could be used in support of strategic funding bids by a Local Authority. It is accordingly assumed that national policy and best practice guidance should form a central component of survey programme design. In particular, the Council's approach should recognise the following issues:

1. The rapid development of national survey techniques and their embodiment as local approaches through the work of Communities Scotland and the Scottish Executive for Scottish Local Authorities. Significant deviation from these approaches could jeopardise the acceptability of survey findings for forward planning and funding bids; although the tailoring of national techniques to local circumstances is also recommended.
2. The availability of results from the 2002 Scottish House Condition Survey and the obvious advantages of data comparability at a local level.
3. The supervisory role of Communities Scotland on LHCS implementation and the need to involve this LHCS Team in determining overall survey methods and measurement standards.

**Locally** a number of other design issues also apply. These include a need to report survey findings not only for the Council as a whole but

by sub-area, tenure and house type. This is fully consistent with the Council's move to an asset management based approach and linking these local factors with national guidelines provides a framework of central Principles for survey implementation:-

The Council's local house condition survey should therefore:

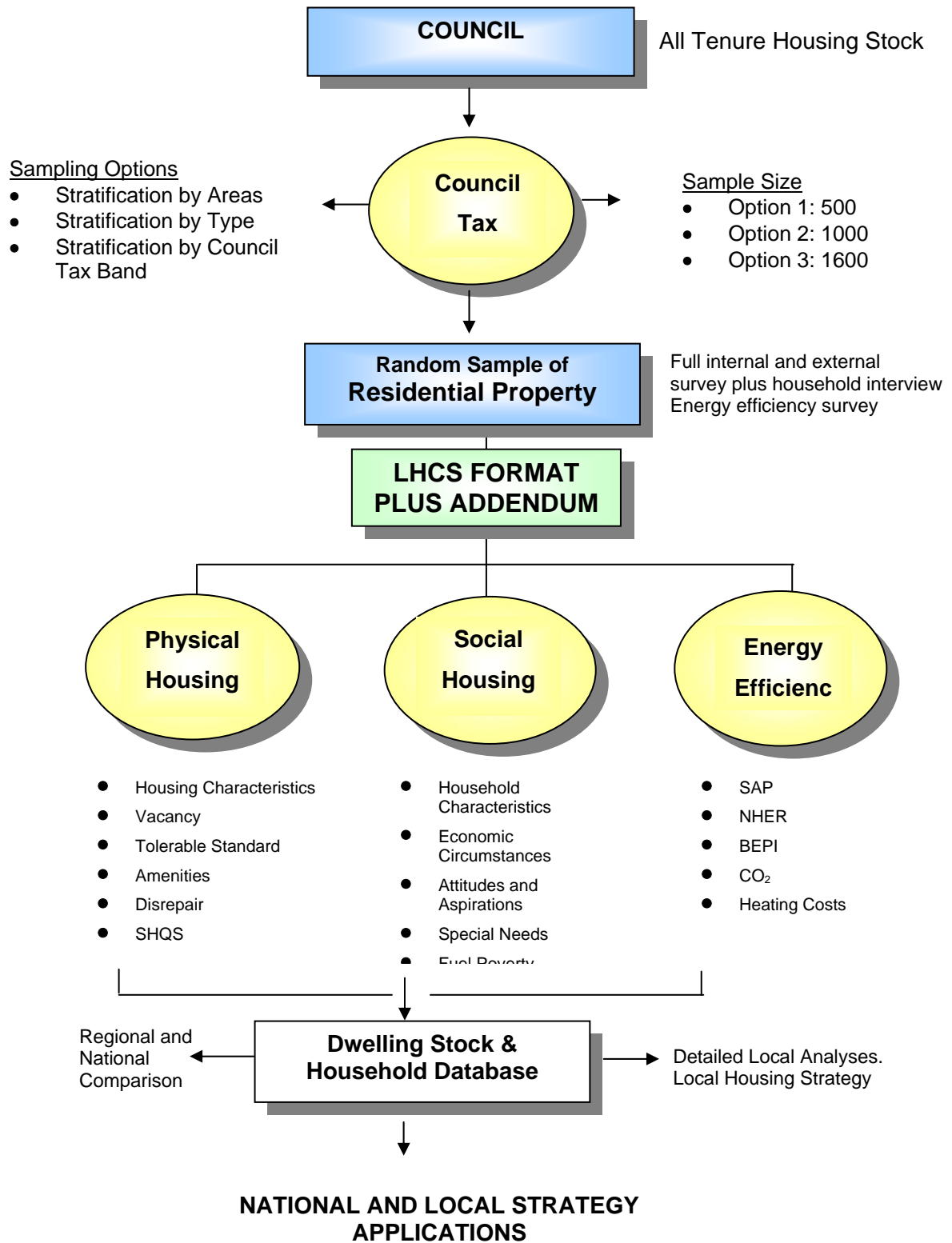
- Measure current housing conditions against accepted standards of tolerability, amenity, repair and housing quality and present information on these standards at the level of the designated housing sub-areas within the Council.
- Provide, where methodologically feasible, comparative data to be evaluated against the Scottish National House Condition Surveys 1996 and 2002, to previous Council-based housing surveys, and to other data relating to housing conditions and needs in the Region.
- Analyse and present housing information in a form suitable for use and development in housing strategy terms bearing in mind local housing strategies, the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and emerging national housing standards. Survey data should also permit ongoing planning within the Home Energy Conservation Act.
- Be implemented using approaches and techniques acceptable to Communities Scotland and be capable of external examination and approval.

The ability to disaggregate survey data is subject to sample size controls and advisory guidelines are issued by Communities Scotland. These entail a minimum sample size of 250 units per analytical cell for key indicator reporting and 400 units per analytical cell for full disaggregated reporting. Three sample options are available to the Council in respect of these advisory guidelines:

- (a) Option 1: 500 no. sample supporting detailed Council-wide analysis and permitting key indicator reporting at a limited settlement level
  
- (b) Option 2: 1000 no. sample supporting detailed Council-wide analysis and permitting key indicator reporting at four sub-areas.
  
- (c) Option 3: 1600 no. sample supporting detailed Council-wide analysis and permitting detailed sub-settlement reporting at four further sub-areas.

Each of the above sample options will permit equivalent reporting by tenure and house type.

The general framework for project implementation is illustrated as follows:



### **3.0 Local Housing Strategy: Council Housing Information Requirements**

#### ***Falkirk Councils Current Position:***

The Council possesses housing data sufficient to support statistical analysis required for estimations of total stock probable investment requirements to meet and maintain compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). This is reported in detail in the Council's Standard Delivery Plan.

The current data does not provide a basis to inform dwelling specific reporting and/or programming of works activity to satisfy SHQS. In order to achieve this Falkirk Council requires a 100% housing stock database within an operating system capable of reporting SHQS status and costed works requirements against individual or groups of properties and building components.

#### ***Collecting The 100% Dataset:***

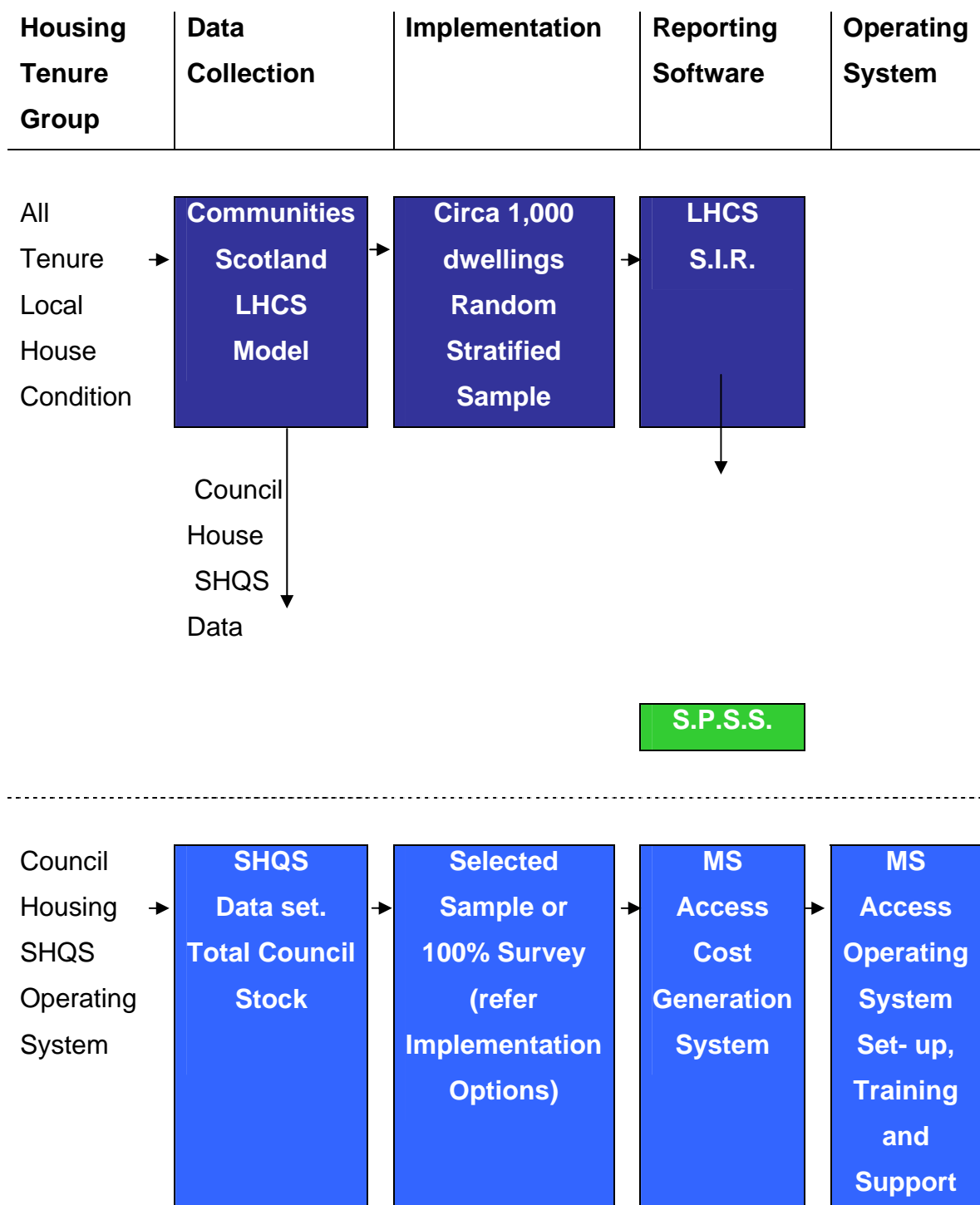
The Council's internal capacity and budget will drive the manner and duration of data collection within the external policy context. The ideal (i.e. resourcing chartered housing professionals to inspect all properties and deliver data within a six month duration) is considered out with the Council's project budget. Accordingly, alternatives are considered including rolling 5 year survey programmes, resourcing in-house fieldwork personnel where available and as an interim measure, "data cloning".

Assuming the "ideal" is financially prohibitive in terms of achieving the "Project Roll Out" depicted at the following Figure 1., the following strategy is proposed:

1. Appointment of a Lead Consultant adopting a partnering approach.
2. Joint development of a project resourcing profile and specification.
3. Survey of dwelling archetypes and main variants, including visual data sheets.
4. 100% Stock External Photograph (Street/Front elevation)
5. Cloned 100% Database resourcing Surveys and photographs
6. Internal data improved utilising capital works records.

7. Rolling Council personnel dwelling inspection and capital works database over-write.
8. Database managed as a controlled record.

**Figure 1.** All Tenure Housing Research & Council Housing SHQS Operating System Delivery: Project Roll – Out



### ***A Typical Approach, And Operating System***

Three core project areas are required to be addressed in order to realise an effective SHQS works programming and reporting operating system, namely:

- Reliable source data for all dwellings
- A data monitoring and updating capability
- Client “ownership” of a transparent computer platform

#### Reliable Source Data For All Dwellings

Survey data collected on a mass appraisal basis generally falls into one of two classifications, being,

- Datasets where levels of error and tolerances are negligible
- and
- Datasets where such precise data integrity standards are not specified, although usual best practice quality control measures are stated.

Generally, the former of these two is not adopted, being price prohibitive. The latter is almost exclusively deployed. Against this background we set out the most salient aspects of a typical quality plan to ensure that the source data is fully “fit for purpose”:

- **Consultant compliance with the Quality Assurance System, and Quality Assurance accreditation.**
- **Appointment of suitably qualified and experienced surveyors/ interviewers to undertake surveys.**
- **appoint appropriate professional personnel as designated monitors.**
- **Formal structured pre-survey briefing of interviewers with issue of a survey manual.**

- **Monitors to accompany surveyors and interviewers for half day, at survey commencement.**
- **A random 'back check' survey (Up to 5% of sample, key questions only).**
- **All completed surveys shall be subject to a technical check, undertaken by our Administration Unit.**
- **Pre-data input clerical checking is provided by our support staff.**
- **Referral systems to be put in place so that interviewers might request advice, or confirmation on difficult issues, from senior staff.**
- **Field staff will be required to provide Monitors with progress reports, on a weekly basis.**

#### Assessing Data Monitoring And Updating Capability

The Councils resources are typically assessed to determine likely capacity for and commitment to data maintenance and improvement over time. Thereafter, the operational dataset and longitudinal procedures are defined.

As a minimum, the dataset will include all SHQS data fields. It should also be recognised that SHQS definition of terms may change over time, materially affecting SHQS modelling.

Undertaking periodic external audit of adherence to procedures and dataset integrity is recommended, being especially relevant over the 100% database development and medium term database maintenance periods.

### Operating System: The Computer Platform

We typically recommend MS Access as the operating system's main computer platform. This can generally be managed and maintained by the Client, without the need for annual licensing and ongoing consultants time.

Data file compatibility to Integrated Housing Systems and transfer files to other analytical software (e.g. SPSS) are readily facilitated. This is indicated in the I.T. Framework shown overleaf.

I.T. FRAMEWORK

