

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### SPECIAL HOUSING COMMITTEE – 21 APRIL 2004

#### PROPOSED HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME 2004/2005

##### Report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the anticipated financial allocation for 2004/05 and advise of the actions required to direct the Improvements Programme towards the objectives of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS).

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 4 February 2004 the Minister for Communities introduced the new Scottish Housing Quality Standard and set a target date of April 2015 by which date all local authorities and registered social landlords are expected to achieve full compliance.
- 2.2 To meet the Standard, houses must be:
- Compliant with the tolerable standard
  - Free from serious disrepair
  - Energy efficient
  - Provided with modern facilities and services
  - Healthy, safe and secure
- 2.3 The implications arising from the first two requirements are not expected to be significant as there are no B.T.S. houses within the Council housing stock and serious disrepair issues are largely resolved under the existing housing maintenance arrangements.
- 2.4 In terms of “Energy efficiency” the standard relates to the heating and thermal properties of the Council’s housing stock, and although the Council’s heating and insulation programmes have tackled these elements in the past, the new standard sets levels of efficiency, maximum age of system and insulation that will require the Council to continue programmes to address these issues at similar levels as at present.
- 2.5 “Provision of modern facilities” refers to modern kitchens and bathrooms with suitable ventilation and extraction systems. The Council’s existing programmes are working towards this standard although there is no current linkage between kitchens, bathrooms and ventilation. The number of bathrooms fitted each year needs to be increased to match the current

number of kitchens renewed each year to achieve and maintain the new Quality Standard by 2015.

- 2.6 The standard for accommodation to be “Healthy, safe and secure” includes current programme elements such as safety of wiring, security of doors and windows, door entry systems, door viewing systems, smoke/CO<sub>2</sub> monitors and lead pipe replacement. Noise insulation against sources such as traffic and factories is included under the new Standard and this will have to be addressed in future programmes where the need is identified.
- 2.7 With effect from 1 April 2004 the existing capital control mechanism whereby annual consent to incur capital expenses was issued by the Scottish Ministers will be abolished and replaced by The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (“the Code”). This is a professional code of practice that sets out a framework for self-regulation of capital spending, in effect allowing councils to invest in capital projects without any limit as long as they are demonstrated as being affordable, prudent and sustainable in the medium to long term.
- 2.8 The introduction of these new arrangements has implications for the nature and direction of the housing improvement programme as the Council aims to achieve the 2015 target.

A measurable increase in the value of the stock and its useful life can be achieved by grouping works under new headings that use economy of scale and more effective links between elements while at the same time, reducing disturbance and upset to tenants. Further details on the approach proposed for 2004/2005 follow later in this report. The Council is required to submit its plan to deliver the SHQS in East Ayrshire by the 2015 target to the Scottish Executive in March 2005. This plan will be informed by data on the condition of the housing stock held within the Department and, if funding is approved by Communities Scotland, by the outcome of any future Housing Stock Option Appraisal exercise.

### **3. FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS**

- 3.1 To inform the decision making process and support capital investment decisions the Prudential Code requires the Council to agree and monitor a number of mandatory prudential indicators; these are required to be separately calculated for the HRA and General Services capital investment strategies. The indicators cover affordability, prudence, capital expenditure, external debt and treasury management. The Council has considered the prudential indicators for the 3 year period commencing 1 April 2004 as presented to the Policy & Resources Committee of 12 February 2004. These indicated a gross Housing investment programme of £11.702M, the revenue implications of which are contained within the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2004/05.

3.2 Details of the proposed improvements programme for 2004/05 are provided in paragraph 4 of this report. It should be noted that the figures given at this time are based on known historic costs but should be regarded as provisional only at this time pending completion of the usual procurement and tendering exercises. Any necessary modifications to the housing improvement programme will be reported for Members consideration in the usual way.

#### **4. PROPOSED HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME 2004/05**

##### **4.1 Asbestos**

###### **i) Asbestos Removal**

Significant progress has been made to identify and remove asbestos from the Council's housing stock. However, this is expected to remain a problem in future years, and it is proposed to set aside £0.108M during 2004/2005 to deal with sampling and asbestos removal where identified as necessary during the various works programmes.

##### **4.2 Energy Efficiency**

###### **i) Installation of thermal and noise insulated windows**

Under the "healthy, safe and secure" criteria, the SQHS requires that noise issues related to traffic/factory issues be addressed and although this is not considered to be a major issue, it is proposed to undertake an initial programme to 50 houses to provide suitably insulated windows and external doors where significant problems have been identified at a cost of £0.200M.

###### **ii) Replacement doors and screens**

The replacement of doors and screens with UPVC in recent years continues to prove very successful in terms of both reducing the need for "demand repairs" and addressing tenants expectations. It is proposed to continue these works at the current level of 1400 units per annum at a projected cost of £1.060M.

##### **4.3 Efficient Heating**

###### **i) Central Heating – provision of efficient systems**

Continued investment is required to address the problem of obsolete and inefficient systems generally installed 15+ years ago. This requirement is

mirrored in the SHQS and it is estimated that replacement of 600 units per annum is necessary to reach and maintain the standard by 2015.

The renewal of heating systems with grade "A" boilers allied to a full energy audit and provision of a thermal insulation package provided through the ILM project will require funding of £2.363M in 2004/05.

#### **4.4 External Envelope Enhancement**

##### **i) External Wall Over-Cladding and Thermal Improvement**

It is proposed to continue the ongoing programme of works to non-traditional BISF houses to stabilise the external envelope and improve thermal efficiency at a cost of £0.137M in 2004/2005.

##### **ii) Masonry Paint and Roughcast Repair**

There are approximately 5500 houses with coloured or repainted external finishes and/or damaged roughcast throughout the Council area and it is proposed to set aside funding of £0.421M to repair and repaint 300 houses during 2004/05.

##### **iii) Improvement to Roof Structure, Design and Coverings**

In line with previous decisions it is proposed to continue with selection of roofs where work is required either to address structural design problems or to deal with problems related to the breakdown of existing roofing materials.

The proposed budget for 2004/2005 is £1.014M to be directed towards general re-roofing and to redesign felted flat roofs to sloping roofs while making use of modern materials to enhance performance and thermal efficiency.

#### **4.5 Information Technology**

##### **i) Ongoing Systems Development**

It is estimated that £0.150M will be required during 2004/2005 to support the ongoing development of the departmental I.T. based systems including Orchard, fund software licences and to replace and upgrade hardware necessary for service delivery.

#### **4.6 Modern Facilities and Services**

##### **i) Upgrade of Internal Facilities and Services**

It is proposed to establish a multi-work contract to provide renewal of major internal facilities and services thereby reducing the number of contract visits required for significant internal refurbishment.

The works proposed include full re-wiring, kitchen and bathroom renewal and redesign, internal plumber work renewal and replacement of lead piping feeds. A reduction in the overall cost is anticipated from the economy of scale achieved by packaging these works.

It is anticipated that some elements will not require replacement due to recent renewal within repair or replacement contracts and that complete take-up of all elements will not occur at every address.

Modern facilities and services are a principal requirement of the SHQS and it is proposed to carry out the necessary works to 950 properties during 2004/2005 at an estimated costs of £4.203M.

#### **4.7 Neighbourhood Improvements**

##### **i) Area Initiatives**

For several years, area initiatives have been funded and directed to areas where there is low demand. These schemes are widely considered to give value to the areas concerned. It is proposed that a budget of £0.300M be set aside for this work during 2004/2005.

##### **ii) Tenement Upgrading**

A number of the tenement properties throughout the district have benefited from both common entry decoration and improvement works to the balconies and external features. These works enhance the access areas and external appearance of the properties and it is proposed to continue the programme to the value of £0.100M during 2004/2005.

##### **iii) Demolitions**

Members have previously agreed to carry out a programme of selective demolition of unoccupied properties in low demand areas.

Progress in some areas has been delayed due to lack of available funds and it is proposed to set aside a budget of £0.130M to continue these works during 2004/2005.

##### **iv) Environmental Works**

A programme to carry out environmental works was initiated in 2000/2001 to provide funding for fencing renewal, path reinstatement, retaining walls, road adoption and other schemes. Again, these schemes are widely considered to

give value to the areas concerned. Therefore, it is proposed to set aside a further £0.200M in 2004/05 for these works.

v) Timber Clad Houses

There are some 115 timber clad properties within the area which still require external decoration and timber preservation works as part of the cyclic maintenance programme to maintain the exterior envelope in sound condition. It is proposed to continue the painting programme to 50 of these properties at an estimated cost of £0.066M during 2004/2005.

#### 4.8 Office Accommodation (Disability Discrimination Act)

i) Housing Offices

A contingency sum of £0.100M is proposed to address the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and provide refurbishment to district offices based on the surveys currently being compiled by Technical Services.

#### 4.9 Safe and Secure Neighbourhood

i) Door Entry Systems and Security

It is proposed to continue replacement of existing systems that are nearing obsolescence and continue with the provision of metal security doors where necessary at an estimated cost of £0.310M during 2004/2005.

ii) ILM Project (Energy efficiency, safety and home security)

This project is jointly funded by the Council and Heatwise Limited (through ESF funding). The project provides an Energy Auditing, Draught proofing and Insulation Service with the insulation now extending to cavity fill and expansion to personal home security initiatives in the form of door overview cameras.

The costs of the energy efficiency package are incorporated within the Efficient Heating budgets. It is proposed to set aside a budget of £0.240M during 2004/2005 to meet the costs associated with the provision of safety and security initiatives.

This joint project has benefited many workers transferring from this intermediate labour market initiative to full time employment as a result of the training opportunity provided.

#### 4.10 Sheltered Housing Safety and Improvement Initiative

ii) Sheltered Housing Modernisation

Following the successful completion of works to Afton Court, New Cumnock, and Ross Court, Galston, it is proposed to upgrade the works to 21 units in Hamilton Gardens, Stewarton during the 2004/05 programme at a projected cost of £0.600M.

The works comprise the provision of: new gas central heating system, full re-wiring, an automatic fire fighting sprinkler system to domestic and communal areas, improved fire detection and warden call systems and redecoration and refurbishment of communal areas and access corridors. Full redecoration and renewal of kitchens and bathrooms is also undertaken within the individual homes.

The works to this particular sheltered housing unit will also include a full pitched roof redesign to address recurring problems with the original flat roofing.

## **5. FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications are as detailed in paragraph 3.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report .

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Consider and approve the proposals for the 2004/2005 housing improvements programme.
- (ii) Note that details of properties to be included in the programme will be circulated to elected members in respect of their own ward interests.
- (iii) Note that regular reports on progress in delivering the programme will be submitted to members during the 2004/2005 financial year.

**William Stafford**  
**Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

WS/CMCA/LA  
13 April 2004

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Capital programme records and reports 1999 –2004
2. House attributes survey 2000/2001

Any person wishing further information should contact Jim Clark, Senior Project Planning Officer, Homes and Technical Services on (01563-576658).

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