

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 30 JANUARY 2002

REPORT ON THE SINGLE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the proposals and to note the Action Plan attached as Appendix One to this report drawn up to respond to the requirements of both the Single Regulatory Framework Performance Standards and the specific provisions the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, with regard to the inspection of housing accommodation and related services.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduces the new Single Regulatory Framework with effect from 1st November 2001. Inspections of Local Authorities will commence on 1st April 2002. At that stage, no further Performance Management and Planning (PMP) Audits will be undertaken by Audit Scotland with regard to housing accommodation and related services. It should be noted that the inspection will apply to what is generally understood as the *housing function* and therefore will cut across departmental boundaries following the function, involving the Finance Department and Elected Members, as part of the democratic process.

3.0 SUMMARY OF THE SINGLE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- 3.1 The Single Regulatory Framework Performance Standards have been developed by Communities Scotland in consultation with a wide range of housing providers and representative organisations to promote co-operation and the improvement of housing and related services. The framework supports self-assessment and external scrutiny arising out of inspection, so as to improve the quality and delivery of services for current and future tenants and service users.
- 3.2 In support of these standards, a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with the Accounts Commission, and a Regulatory Code of Practice has also been developed with the Scottish Executive.
- 3.3 The Performance Standards detailed within the Framework are divided between twenty Guiding and thirty-three Activity Standards. The Guiding Standards (GS) cover Management Systems, Social Inclusion, Service Delivery and Communication and RSL Governance and Financial Management. The Activity Standards (AS) cover Housing Management, Property Management, Property Development, Homelessness, Services for Owners, Services for Gypsy Travellers and Wider Action.

4.0 INSPECTIONS

- 4.1** Communities Scotland, appointed by Scottish Ministers, will undertake the inspection and will have the right to access, at all reasonable times, any local authority premises and any document relating to the authority which appears to the inspector to be necessary for the purpose of the inspection.
- 4.2** Following completion of the inspection, a report will be published and a copy issued to the local authority, and any registered tenant organisation. The report will identify any areas within the local authority functions, which were found to be unsatisfactory, in relation to the provision of housing accommodation and related services.
- 4.3** If required by Communities Scotland, a draft remedial plan must be prepared by the authority and submitted to Communities Scotland's Regulation and Inspection Division. This plan should set out the authority's proposals to address the areas of concern identified in the report.
- 4.5** To date, a pilot inspection has been carried out within one Local Authority, South Lanarkshire Council, as well as one Registered Social Landlord (RSL), Ochil View Housing Association. The findings of these pilot inspections have been published by Communities Scotland, and will help develop the regulator's experience in the delivery of future inspections, and Local Authorities and RSLs to prepare for regulation.

5.0 OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Department of Homes and Technical Services has established an officer group led by the Head of Homes to steer progress within the Council. It has co-ordinated the production of Position Statements from staff, both within and outwith the Department, to assist in assessing the Council's current activity with regard to each of the Guiding and Activity Standards.
- 5.2** From this, a three-year draft Action Plan has been drawn up for the Department. The Action Plan details each Activity, the proposed timescale within which the work required to satisfy the Standard is to be undertaken, and reviewed, and a Glossary of other related work which will impact on the development of each Standard. A copy of the draft Action Plan is contained in Appendix One.
- 5.3** Work Groups are now being established to take forward the work required to satisfy the Guiding and Activity Standards, and to provide regular reports on progress against the Action Plan timescales identified. In this way, the Steering Group may monitor the overall progress of the Department in both achieving the standards set out in the Framework, and more significantly, in translating these actions into better service delivery to current and future tenants and service users.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** With the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the authority's housing accommodation and related services will be subject to inspection on behalf of Scottish Ministers by Communities Scotland. The three-year draft Action Plan sets out a forward work-plan to be developed and implemented so that the Department may respond to the requirements of both The Single Regulatory Framework Guiding and Activity Standards, and commence preparations for the initial inspection, the date of which has yet to be determined.
- 6.2** The Steering Group will continue to monitor the progress of the groups identified to take forward the work required to satisfy each of the Guiding and Activity Standards contained in The Single Regulatory Framework.

7.0 LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no legal or financial implications attached to the implementation of the Action Plan at this stage. The Council is however obliged to comply with the statutory requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The implementation of the Action Plan will assist the Council in satisfying the standards specified in the Single Regulatory Framework Performance standards and in satisfying Communities Scotland's Regulation and Inspection Division that services are being provided in a satisfactory manner.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the contents of this Report,
- (ii) Note the contents of the Action Plan attached as Appendix One to this report; and
- (iii) Note that further reports on progress will be brought to future Housing Committee meetings.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
11 January 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
2. The Single Regulatory Framework - Setting the Standard, Performance Standards, 1st November 2001.

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AGENDA