

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 29 JANUARY 2003

HOUSING SCOTLAND ACT 2001 – COMMON HOUSING REGISTER

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To inform members on the authority's successful bid for Scottish Executive funding to test a possible computer based solution for a Common Housing Register (CHR).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Part 1, Section 8 requires local authorities, when required to do so by the Scottish Ministers, to prepare and submit to the Scottish Ministers proposals to establish and maintain a Common Housing Register.
- 2.2** A Common Housing Register is defined by the Executive as a register to be kept jointly by a group of landlords devising a single application form through which anyone seeking housing in their area can register their need and specify their housing preferences. Participating landlords then prioritise and select applicants from the single pool of applicants according to their own allocations policy.
- 2.3** While a few authorities have Common Housing Registers in place, most, like East Ayrshire are still at the investigation stage.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1** Analysis by the Executive of the current state of play, among those authorities investigating a Common Housing Register, has indicated that information technology can be an obstacle to progress. All authorities and Registered Social Landlords are heavily dependant on their housing management information technology and unless these various systems can easily communicate with each other then the goal of a Common Housing Register will be made more difficult.
- 3.2** To help overcome that obstacle the Executive wrote to authorities on 23 August 2002 asking authorities, who were currently investigating Common Housing Register, to apply for a small grant (maximum £30,000) to take forward investigation of an appropriate IT solution.
- 3.3** The criteria for applying was that the authority was working in partnership with its locally based RSLs and that a recognised housing software developer was involved. East Ayrshire met those criteria and a bid was submitted.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The bid was successful and on 19 November 2002 the Department was informed that it had been granted £24,000.

4.2 A preliminary meeting took place on 13 December 2002 between the various partners i.e.

- East Ayrshire Homes and Technical Services
- East Ayrshire Corporate IT
- Cunninghame Housing Association
- Shire Housing Association
- Orchard Information Systems

With the involvement of two of the “generalist” housing associations, it will ensure that any prototype information technology solution developed will be tested against several Allocation Policies.

4.3 A project team has been established and a preliminary work plan agreed. The team is working to a deadline of 20 March 2003 for the production of a working prototype.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no immediate policy implications for the authority at this stage.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications, as all current costs will be met from the Scottish Executive grant.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications. The Council is however, obliged to comply with the terms of Section 8 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in respect of the preparation of a Common Housing Register.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the committee;

- (i) Notes the content of this up-date report and that further up-dates be presented in due course.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
JC/
6 January 2003

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
2. Letter from Scottish Executive, 23 August 2002
3. Letter from Scottish Executive, 19 November 2002

Anyone wishing further information or to inspect the background papers should contact Joseph Cassidy, Policy Manager, on 01563 576617.