

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 22 MAY 2002

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY – HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2001

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members about the new duty placed on East Ayrshire Council as the Strategic Housing Authority to produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) as required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 makes it a requirement for the Council to make a comprehensive assessment of housing needs and conditions in its area, and to produce strategies to deal with those identified needs. The strategy is to cover all housing tenures and requires to be in place by the initial deadline of April 2003.
- 2.2 Draft guidance on the production of a Local Housing Strategy has been produced by Communities Scotland and this can be viewed on their web site at www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk

3. A LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

- 3.1 According to the draft guidance, it is envisaged that the Local Housing Strategy will be to assess the current and future balance of housing supply and demand in East Ayrshire, the impact of local housing conditions on local people's lives and on the achievement of other social goals, and to plan effective intervention. The Local Housing Strategy will therefore be the primary housing document from a planning and strategic perspective. Moreover the council will wish to use the Local Housing Strategy to promote and reinforce the argument that East Ayrshire Council should take from Communities Scotland the responsibility for determining Development Funding priorities within East Ayrshire.
- 3.2 A Local Housing Strategy should :-
- Look at the whole housing system
 - Be a strategy to guide the future actions of the Council
 - Emphasise consultation
 - Link to land use planning and the Local Plan
 - Be based on the understanding of housing system in East Ayrshire
 - Be short, sharp, focused

- Be based on a comprehensive local housing system analysis
 - Provide a broad picture of investment needs
 - State the fundamental aims and strategic objectives
 - State the monitoring and evaluation framework
- 3.3 To meet these objectives in preparing the Strategy, the Council will have to;
- Carry out research and analysis, to identify the key housing issues
 - Identify the broad aims of the strategy, with key stakeholders
 - Identify and appraise the options, look at resources and risks, to deliver the strategy and aims
 - Implement the Strategy
 - Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, to inform future action
- 3.4 The development of the East Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy will be greatly informed by the East Ayrshire Local Housing Systems Analysis which was carried out in 2001 by the Council, Scottish Homes and other partners to promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to housing planning
- 3.5 While the lead in producing the LHS will be undertaken by appropriate staff in Homes and Technical Services, the necessary joint working will be progressed by way of the established links with Health, Social Work and Planning. The Local Housing Forum, recently established by the Council and led by Homes and Technical Services will provide the link with Communities Scotland, Registered Social Landlords and the other private housing providers operational in East Ayrshire. These links will ensure that the Local Housing Strategy properly dovetails with the various other plans that are either in place or are in development. These include, inter alia, the Council's Community Plan, Community Care Plan, Children's Service Plan, Homeless Strategy, Fuel Poverty Strategy, Health Improvement Plan, , East Ayrshire Local Plan, Registered Social Landlords Business Plans etc.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Unlike other new or expanded duties being introduced because of the new housing act, there is as yet no indication from the Executive that additional monies will be available, although research is being undertaken on behalf of the Executive into the implications for local authorities in carrying out this task.
- 4.2 Nevertheless, in view of the current time-scales for introduction of the Local Housing Strategy, it is necessary for preparatory work to begin without further delay and consideration has been given to the resource implications of this new project for the Council.

- 4.3 It is proposed that two vacant posts within the Policy team – policy assistant and housing trainee - be deleted from the establishment and replaced with a single post tasked with the preliminary preparation of the Local Housing Strategy.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The costs of this proposal can be contained within the agreed budgets and will result in a modest saving in salary costs.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to produce a Local Housing Strategy in accordance with the guidance issued by Communities Scotland.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the requirement for the Council to produce a Local Housing Strategy for East Ayrshire by the initial deadline of April 2003.
- ii. Approve the staffing proposal as detailed in Para. 4.3 and that the Director submit an appropriate report, after due consultation with the Head of Personnel, to the Corporate Sub-Committee;
- iii. Authorise the Director to enter into appropriate consultations with the trade unions in due course; and
- iv. Otherwise not the contents of the report.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
May 2002

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
2. Local Housing Strategy Guidance, Communities Scotland

(Members wishing further information on any of the above should contact Joseph Cassidy, Policy Manager, on 01563 576617)

Implementation Officer: Joseph Cassidy

AGENDA