**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

**Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 3 March 2010**
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**Subject:** **West Dunbartonshire Common Housing Register 'HomeSearch'**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on progress in the development of the Common Housing Register (CHR) in partnership with local Registered Social landlords (RSLs).

**2. Background**

2.1 At Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on 2 September 2009, it was agreed that progress on the development of the CHR would be a standing agenda item for future Committees.

2.2 Representatives from the Council and the RSLs meet on a monthly basis. Sub groups have been established to take forward particular tasks.

2.3 At Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on 4 November 2009, members were advised of the strategic issues to be elevated to Director or Chief Executives of the RSLs in consultation with the Executive Director for Housing, Environment and Economic Development. These issues were formalising of the joint working agreement, a common IT solution, apportionment of costs and current and future funding commitment.

**3. Main Issues**

3.1 In order to progress and scope the project, the Manager of Housing Operations in West Dunbartonshire Council is providing the role of Project Manager for the CHR for an initial period of 3 months.

3.2 In order to assess and scope the CHR project, Project Board meetings have been taking place on a fortnightly basis.

3.3 The project has been scoped and defined in agreement with partners. The Project Definition Form is attached at Appendix 1.

3.4 The apportionment of cost for the CHR has been agreed in principle with partners on the basis of the number of rented stock owned by each partner. The breakdown of cost apportionment across the partners is included within the Project Definition Form.

**3.5** The ICT solution is a major component of the CHR. In order to progress this area of work the Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN) were invited to facilitate a workshop with the Project Board. The workshop took place on 29 January 2010 and took the form of various exercise sessions and group discussions. The SHBVN will provide a report to the Project Board on the outcomes from the workshops which will be discussed at the next meeting of the Board scheduled to take place on 12 February 2010. Details of the outcomes will be reported to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee.

**4. Personnel Issues**

**4.1** At present the development of the CHR is being managed within current resources. However, as the project progresses, dedicated resources are likely to be required.

**5. Financial Implications**

**5.1** Funding will be required to develop a shared ICT system. An indicative cost of £100,000 has been included within the scoping of the project. This is based on the costs incurred by other Local Authority areas who have implemented a CHR. The likely costs for the West Dunbartonshire CHR will be reported to a future Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee once the scoping of the ICT solution is complete and resourcing and training needs to take the project forward are identified.

**6. Risk Analysis**

**6.1** Progress in relation to establishing a CHR for West Dunbartonshire is important in developing cohesive services for the communities of West Dunbartonshire to facilitate improvements in accessibility to housing across the area. Beyond this, given the Council's commitment to transfer a proportion of its housing stock as determined in the Standard Delivery Plan, the creation of a CHR will be an important component of supporting access and will aid minimising the risk of fragmented services in the future.

**6.2** Securing the creation of the CHR has been identified as a key element in the drive for continuous improvement in housing services. Maintaining the momentum in achieving a successful outcome on this project is therefore critical.

**7. Equalities Impact**

**7.1** An impact assessment is not required at this stage but will be required as the project develops.

**8.    Conclusions and Recommendations**

**8.1**    The development of a comprehensive CHR facilitates ease of access to all social rented housing within the area.

**8.2**    The workshop facilitated by the SHBVN on 29 January 2010 for assisting with progressing the CHR in West Dunbartonshire and the SHBVN report on the outcomes will be discussed at the next meeting of the Project Board and reported to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee.

**8.3**    It is recommended that the Committee note:

(i) the progress to date in the development of the CHR and the outline project plan; and

(ii) note that a further report on specific issues for decision, including funding, will be brought to a future meeting.


**Elaine Melrose**
**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**
**Date: 3 February 2010**
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**Appendix:**    Appendix 1 - Project Definition Form

**Background Papers:**    West Dunbartonshire Common Housing Register "HomeSearch", Environment and Economic Development Committee, 2 September 2009.

West Dunbartonshire Common Housing Register "HomeSearch", Environment and Economic Development Committee, 4 November 2009.

**Wards Affected:**    All


**Appendix 1**

| *Project Definition Form [or PID]* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Title**: | HomeSearch | **Sponsor:** West Dunbartonshire Council | Jim McAloon, Head of Housing & Regeneration |

**West Dunbartonshire Council, Corporate Plan, Theme Six: An Improving Council – Promote Continuous Improvement**
**RSL's Business Plans – relevant sections regarding partnership working**

Establishing a Common Housing Register (CHR) is important in the development of cohesive services for the communities of West Dunbartonshire. In addition to promoting collaborative working between West Dunbartonshire Council, local, regional and national Housing Associations, it will facilitate improvements in accessibility to social rented housing across the area. Given the Council's commitment to transfer a proportion of its housing stock as determined in the Standard Delivery Plan, the creation of a CHR will be an important component in supporting access to housing.  It will maximise access to housing opportunities.

| **Project Background:** | The Scottish Government encourages all local authorities to develop CHRs in partnership with their local Registered Social Landlords (RSL)s. The possibility of developing a CHR in West Dunbartonshire was first discussed in 2003. At that time a Project Board was established and following a successful grant application in August 2004, funding was obtained from the then Scottish Executive to appoint a Project Officer for an initial 1 year period. The officer was appointed in August 2004. After the Project officer left, there was limited progress made until January 2008, in terms of formally taking the project forward. At that time, with the support of the Scottish Housing Best Value Network, the Council and the local RSLs again agreed to work in partnership with a view to developing a functioning CHR.

Key milestones linked to the administration processes and a Common Allocations Policy has been achieved, however an integrated software package is being investigated to the mutual satisfaction of all partners.

The purpose of the project is to explore options to introduce a new streamlined, customer focussed approach that balances the needs and aspirations of housing applicants with improved efficiencies for all stakeholders involved. |
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| Project Benefits: | <ul><li>Simplify and speed up application process for applicants</li><li>Improve access to housing for all applicants</li><li>Improve information and advice on housing options</li><li>Help to introduce organisational efficiencies by reducing duplication (across the board)</li><li>Reduce carbon footprint</li><li>Enhanced understanding of housing need in order to improve planning for future housing investment</li><li>Assist WDC to achieve the 2012 Homelessness target</li><li>Assisting to increase demand for difficult to let areas/properties</li><li>Reduce void turnaround periods</li><li>Harmonised policies and procedures</li><li>Facilitating the *real time* demand through an accurate integrated housing list within the local authority area</li><li>Identify opportunities that could be generated through closer working relationships and shared services between participating organisations.</li></ul> |
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| Project Objectives: | The Project Board to agree a Project Management Plan which will allow the project partners to introduce a fully functioning CHR. The Plan should take account of the following: -<ul><li>Minimise business as usual disruption throughout development and implementation.</li><li>Agree a realistic and achievable project life cycle.</li><li>Undertake a stakeholder analysis in order to keep the relevant stakeholders fully informed.</li><li>The development of a project communication plan.</li><li>Overall project risk to be understood and managed proactively, optimising project success by minimising threats and maximising opportunities.</li><li>Agree an I.T solution.</li></ul> |
| Project Deliverables: | A fully functioning CHR within West Dunbartonshire. |

| This project will include: | This project will not include: |
|---|---|
| Common Allocations Policy<br>Common Application Form<br>Common Medical Assessment<br>Common Pointing System<br>Shared ICT system<br>Shared Administration processes<br>Joint Working Agreement<br>Information & Advice Provision<br>Service Standards & SLAs | Other aspects of the allocations and housing management processes |

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| **Success Criteria:** | Implementation stage<br><br>• Introducing CHR within agreed budget including staff costs, IT and consultancy.<br>• Achievement of key milestones as per the project life cycle.<br><br>Post implemention<br><br>• Enhanced customer satisfaction (on the assumption that all participants measure housing list applicants' satisfaction?)<br>• Realisation of organisational efficiencies via shared approach. |
| **Constraints:** | • Inability of Project Board to compromise and agree on key milestones, including an I.T package and budget costs.<br>• Partial stock transfer to a non participating organisation will could undermine the aims, objectives and assumptions of the CHR. |
| **Key Assumptions:** | Project development  from January 2010<br>Budget cost of £100,000, based on cost sharing apportionment (see Resource Costs)<br>West Dunbartonshire Council to act as Project Sponsor and Project Manager. |
| **Project Manager:** | Margaret Caldwell, Manager of Housing Operations.  As Project Manager, Margaret is responsible for project deliverables and accountable for the successful delivery of the project. |
| **Project Sponsor:** | As the lead organisation, main funder and key strategic partner, it is appropriate, Jim McAloon, Head of Housing & Rengeneration, is the Project Sponsor. |

| Project Board: | Cordale Housing Association<br>Dunbritton Housing Association<br>Faifley Housing Association<br>Knowes housing Association<br>Trafalgar Housing Association<br>Clydebank Housing Association<br>Dalmuir Park Housing Association<br>Bellsmyre Housing Association<br>West Dunbartonshire Council | Project Team Members: | Louise Percy, CHA<br>Anne Marie Arthur, DHA<br>Janette Doak, FHA<br>Paul McVey, KHA<br>Margaret Livingstone, THA<br>Joe Farrell, Clydebank HA<br>Joe McNichol, DPHA<br>Karen Byrne, BHA<br>Margaret Caldwell, WDC<br>Janice Lockhart, WDC<br>Barry Sheridan, WDC<br>Lorraine Kay, WDC<br><br>*In the absence of the above officers, representatives from the organisations may attend meetings.* |
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| **Budget** | | | |
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| **Resource Costs:** | | **Other Costs:** | |
| A budget cost of £100,000 (including consultant's fees, training and outlays) has been identified. This will be split pro rata in accordance with the number of units managed in West | | Ongoing staff training and system development costs. No budget cost has been identified for these items. | |
| Total costs (breakdown costs) | | | |
| **Start Date:** | January 2010 | **Completion Date:** | In accordance with Project Life Cycle once agreed. |
| **Signature of Project Manager:** | | **Date:** | |
| **Approval from Sponsor:** | | **Date:** | |

**BREAKDOWN COSTS**

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|---|---|---|
| Bellsmyre Housing Association Ltd | 601 | 3.7% |
| Clydebank Housing Association Ltd | 1,018 | 6.3% |
| Cordale Housing Association Ltd | 408 | 2.5% |
| Dalmuir Park Housing Association Ltd | 654 | 4.1% |
| Dunbritton Housing Association Ltd | 290 | 1.8% |
| Faifley Housing Association Ltd | 336 | 2.1% |
| Knowes Housing Association Ltd | 1,005 | 6.3% |
| Trafalgar Housing Association Ltd | 300 | 1.9% |
| West Dunbartonshire Council | 11,446 | 71.3% |

Apportionment for Development and ongoing running costs based on stock numbers.

Will be updated annually to take account of changing stock figures.