WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 4 August 2010
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Subject: Housing: Fresh Thinking, New Ideas

1.   Purpose

1.1   This report advises members of the Government's new discussion paper "Housing: Fresh Thinking, New Ideas" and to note how contributions can be made to the discussion.

2.   Background

2.1   The Scottish Government published this discussion paper on 24 May 2010. A full copy of the paper has been placed in the Members lounge. This is not seen as a formal consultation but is considered to be the starting point for a broad discussion over housing policy direction to take place over the summer period. There is no stated closing date for contributions to the debate, but it is expected that at the end of the process a Housing Policy Statement will be published, around November 2010.

2.2   The introduction to the paper notes that the Scottish housing system is facing unprecedented challenges, with the economic crisis putting pressure on all elements and tenures. Demand for social housing remains high and is expected to rise, whilst meeting the homelessness target. Radical thinking and action is required and the status quo is not an option.

3.   Main Issues

3.1   The discussion paper outlines five main themes:

- Scottish Housing Need: examines the evidence about housing need and asks where the Government's priorities should lie.
- Increasing the supply of Affordable Housing: examines some new and emerging ways of generating investment in new affordable housing and asks which of these methods have most potential for the future.
- Choice, Fairness and making better use of housing: focuses on the existing stock, and asks how we might make more flexible use of these assets to support greater choice and better housing outcomes for all.
- Sustainable Quality Houses and Places: raises the key issue of the quality of our homes and of the places we create, including the major challenge of reducing carbon emissions.
- Excellence across the Housing System: Considers how each of the main players can play a part in addressing the challenges.

3.2 The paper sets out some questions at the end of every themed chapter but it is stressed that the responses need not be restricted to the questions posed.

3.3 Written contributions are invited directly to the Scottish Government or through the on-line discussion forum at:
www.scotland.gov.uk/housingpolicydiscussion

In addition, the views of Leaders and Members of the Community Wellbeing and Safety Committee will be sought to formulate a COSLA response to the paper.

3.4 It is proposed that the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development response is delegated to provide the response on behalf of the Council taking into account any views of members and officers.

4. People implications

4.1 There are no implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There is a risk that without a response the opportunity to influence national housing policy will be missed.

7. Equalities Impact

7.1 No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is asked to:

(i) note the publication of this discussion paper and the response process outlined above; and

(ii) agree the delegated authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development in consultation with the Convenor to provide the response on behalf of the Council.

Elaine Melrose
Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development
Date: 2 July 2010

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Appendix:	None
Background Papers:	None
Wards Affected:	All