

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:  
4 November 2009**

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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** The CHR is being developed in tandem with the ongoing review of West Dunbartonshire Council's own Allocations policy.
- 2.3** Representatives from the Council and the RSLs meet on a monthly basis. Sub groups have been established to take forward particular tasks.
- 2.4** The development of the CHR has been discussed with the Tenants & Residents Organisations and other stakeholder groups as part of the ongoing consultation in relation to the review of West Dunbartonshire Council's own Allocations Policy. To date, the principles of streamlining access to social housing by way of a CHR have been well received.

#### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** At the project Board meeting on 9 October 2009, the partners agreed the Common Allocations Policy 'in principle'.
- 3.2** Some further work is required around the points framework and this will be discussed at the next meeting.
- 3.3** Due to time constraints, discussions on the Joint Working Agreement have been carried forward to the next meeting on 11 November, 2009.
- 3.4** A revised Project Plan is also on the agenda for the next meeting on 11 November, 2009.

- 3.5 The development of an appropriate ICT system is a crucial element in the future delivery of a comprehensive CHR.
- 3.6 Discussions have taken place with the Scottish Housing Best Value Network in relation to the use of a web based collaborative tool. A collaborative tool allows each partners own IT platforms to come together to share information. Whilst this would facilitate information sharing across the partner agencies, the system is manual and would involve staff in double inputting on to both it and the existing in house systems used at present within each organisation.
- 3.7 The RSL partners are in principal supportive of the collaborative software. This would be a resource intensive process particularly for the Council given the number of applications processed and allocations made on an annual basis. Therefore discussions are ongoing in this regard.
- 3.8 There are computer software companies who have developed bespoke CHR management systems. A benchmarking exercise will be carried out to evaluate these systems, costs and resource implications.
- 3.9 Formalising of the joint working agreement, a common IT solution, apportionment of costs and current and future funding commitment have been identified as 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 for discussion at the RSL Forum on 20 October 2009. A verbal update on the outcomes of this meeting will be provided at the 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. Costs will be provided to the next Committee on the development of the web based collaborative tool, the development of a comprehensive ICT system and other associated resource implications.

#### **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 regarding facilitating 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. Progress in this area is important in respect of the Council's improvement plans and will be assessed through the inspection process in November/ December, 2009. Maintaining the momentum in achieving a successful outcome on this project is therefore critical.

## **7. Conclusions & Officers' Recommendations**

- 7.1** The development of a comprehensive CHR facilitates ease of access to all social rented housing within the area.
- 7.2** Positive partnership working arrangements are in place with the local RSLs
- 7.3** The Common Allocations Policy has been agreed 'in principle'
- 7.4** Further work is being carried out in relation to an IT solution
- 7.5** It is recommended that the Committee note the progress to date in the development of the CHR and that a further report outlining ICT options, costs and resource implications be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Elaine Melrose**

**Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development**

**13 October 2009**

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**Appendices:** None

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

**Wards Affected:** All