

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 4 August 2010

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 the meeting of 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. Recently, concerns have been expressed about the pace of progress particularly in relation to the ICT issues.
- 2.2** Representatives from the Council and the RSLs are continuing to meet on a monthly basis at a CHR Project Board. Sub-groups have been established to take forward particular tasks.
- 2.3** The project has been scoped and defined in agreement with the partners and the Project Definition Form was presented to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on 3 March 2010.
- 2.4** 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 was included with in the Project Definition Form.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** At the meeting of the Project Board on 27 May 2010, the partners agreed to form an additional sub-group to prepare a specification that will be used to tender for an ICT solution.
- 3.2** The ICT sub-group, responsible for shaping the specification, provided a progress report at the Project Board meeting on 24 June 2010.
- 3.3** The ICT sub-group advised that they have identified 20 key elements that they consider essential for the operation of the CHR.

- 3.4** The sub-group have also identified a number of 'highly desirable' elements. However, as the group believes that any system offering the essential key elements would be sufficient to operate the CHR, these desirable elements are being kept separate at the present time.
- 3.5** Discussions have taken place with the Council's ICT section and they have agreed to project manage the procurement and implementation of the CHR solution.
- 3.6** They have further agreed to prepare a standard tender document once the partners have agreed the specification of requirements and the scoring matrix.
- 3.7** ICT will use Prince methodology to manage the project. They will create a separate Project Initiation Document (PID) which will incorporate the following information:
- the business problem;
 - the project objectives;
 - the scope of the project;
 - the names of the Project Sponsor and Board;
 - the name of the Project Manager;
 - the names of the members of the Project Team; and
 - the issues/risks.
- 3.8** ICT will prepare a project plan with agreed tasks and timescales. Monthly reports on progress, issues and risks will be provided.
- 3.9** The final specification for the ICT solution will be reported to the next CHR Project Board Meeting on 29 July 2010. Once the specification has been agreed it will be incorporated into the tender documentation, which will be issued by late August 2010.
- 3.10** The Council will be responsible for ongoing ICT support, following the installation of the system.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** At present, the development of the CHR is being managed as part of the responsibility of the Section Head for Allocations & Homelessness. However, all partners have expressed concern that the lack of a dedicated resource could hamper progress at this critical stage.
- 4.2** To address this concern and accelerate progress, an officer from within the current allocations and homelessness team has been identified, who will work exclusively on this project for an initial period of 6 months. This individual will be supported by resources in kind from the RSL partners of 1 day per week.

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 will cover the software and implementation of the system. It may include specialist costs depending on which system is secured. 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 meeting of 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. The required funding can be accommodated from within the HRA capital budget.

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 ICT options will be fully discussed at the next meeting of the CHR Project Board and reported to the next 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
 - (ii) that a further report on the ICT options will be brought to a future meeting of Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee.

Elaine Melrose
Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development
Date: 6 July 2010

Person to Contact: Janice Lockhart - Section Head of Homeless and Allocations, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG, telephone: 01389 738033, e-mail: janice.lockhart@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All