

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
11 January 2012

Subject: West Dunbartonshire Common Housing Register “Homesearch” Progress Report

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, Environmental 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 local RSL’s established a CHR Project Board to facilitate the development of a CHR in West Dunbartonshire. This group met regularly on a monthly basis until December 2010.
- 2.3** In addition, at the meeting of the Project Board in May 2010, the partners agreed to form an additional sub group to prepare a specification that would be used to tender for an ICT solution.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** In November 2011, an important milestone was achieved with all partners signing up to the CHR joint working agreement. This agreement sets out how the Homesearch partners will work together in partnership to achieve their aims. The Agreement demonstrates the commitment of the HOMEsearch partners to making this a successful and sustainable joint working venture.
- 3.2** The CHR IT sub group has now reconvened and will continue to meet on a monthly basis to drive forward a common IT solution. The group are working on updating the specification for the tender in order that it goes out to tender in February/March 2012.

- 3.3** A CHR consultation sub group will also be established and will again meet on a monthly basis to organise a common consultation/communication strategy between all Homesearch partners. There will be community representation within this sub group.
- 3.4** In early December, the CHR project board met with representatives of North Ayrshire Council to gain knowledge as to how their CHR and Common Allocation Policy (CAP) was developed and implemented. The North Ayrshire CHR and CAP has been implemented successfully and has high levels of customer satisfaction. The North Ayrshire model is a groups plus points system similar to preference of the partners.
- 3.5** A draft action plan has now been produced and includes the following key milestones:-
- Selection of a preferred provider for an IT solution for West Dunbartonshire CHR (March 2012)
 - The Common Allocations Policy and Common Housing Allocation Application Form will go out to consultation (between April and June 2012)
 - A fully functioning CHR up and running in West Dunbartonshire (by the end of March 2013)

4. People Implications

- 4.1** A staff resource has been identified to ensure that all aspects of the project are progressed within the agreed timescales.
- 4.2** Additional support is being provided by the partner RSLs and from officers within the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development department.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** An indicative cost of £100,000 has been identified to develop a shared ICT solution. 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 tender returns are fully evaluated and resourcing and training needs to take the project forward are identified.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The development of a fully functioning CHR will improve access to housing across West Dunbartonshire. Beyond this, given the Council's commitment to transfer a proportion of its housing stock, the creation of a CHR will be an important component in streamlining service delivery.
- 6.2** The development of the CHR has been identified as a key element in the drive for continuous improvement in the housing service. Maintaining the momentum in achieving a successful outcome on this project is therefore critical.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

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

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** A strategic assessment will be undertaken on the development of a CHR and associated actions and will be presented as part of reports to be considered.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** The development of a comprehensive CHR facilitates ease of access to all social rented housing within the area.
- 9.2** It is recommended that the Committee note:
- (i) the progress to date in the development of the CHR for West Dunbartonshire;
 - (ii) the key milestone that all partners have signed up to the Joint working agreement; and
 - (iii) that a further report will be brought forward setting out the timescales for the implementation of a CHR in West Dunbartonshire to the March Housing, Environment and Economic Development committee.

Elaine Melrose
Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development
Date: 8 December 2011

Persons to Contact: Jennifer MacMahon - Policy Officer, Council Offices,
Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU, telephone: 01389
737721, e-mail: jennifer.macmahon@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

John Kerr - Housing Strategy Manager, Council Offices,
Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU, telephone: 01389
737889, e-mail: john.kerr2@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: 1. Common Housing Register Action Plan

Background Papers: Joint Working Agreement, November 2012

Wards Affected: All