

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

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

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
7 March 2012

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

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a regular 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 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 established a CHR Project Board to facilitate the development of a CHR in West Dunbartonshire. This group meets regularly on a monthly basis and has representation from West Dunbartonshire Council and all local registered social landlords (RSLs).
- 2.3 The partners have agreed to establish three sub groups to consider the different elements to ensure the successful delivery of the project:-
- CHR IT Sub Group
 - Common Allocation Policy Sub Group
 - Communications Sub Group
- 2.4 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 (the name for West Dunbartonshire’s CHR) 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. Main Issues

- 3.1** The CHR IT sub group has now completed the specification for tender for a CHR IT solution which is scheduled to go out to tender in March 2012 in line with agreed timescales.
- 3.2** The Common Allocations Policy sub group has been developing a Common Allocation Policy which is approaching draft form which will enable all partners to begin consultation in April 2012. This group will continue to meet on at least a monthly basis.
- 3.3** A communications plan is being developed by West Dunbartonshire's Corporate Communications team and it is expected to be agreed and signed off by all partners in March 2012.
- 3.4** An action plan has been developed for the project and is attached as an appendix.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** Staff resources have 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 within the HRA Capital Programme to ensure that the project is delivered successfully and within timescales. This indicative cost will be matched by all participating RSLs on a pro-rata basis based on stock sizes. 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 a Common Allocation Policy and a Common Housing Register within West Dunbartonshire and;
- (ii) that a further progress report will be submitted to the next Housing, Environment and Economic Development committee.

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Date: 6 February 2012

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Appendix: 1. Common Housing Register Action Plan

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All