

Housing Improvement Task Force Issues in Improving Quality in Private Housing

Please find below comments from Aberdeenshire Council on the above paper. Following consultation with officers from relevant services our comments are as follows:

PAGE	KEY CONCLUSION	COMMENT
58	47	Incentive comment – Can all work/materials used for refurbishment be VAT free, like New Build.
60	69	The production of our Local Housing Strategy will seek to address the issues concerning private sector housing. Aberdeenshire being one of the Local Authorities chosen as a pilot. Key Points are included in the section relating to the Quality of Housing within the Local Housing Strategy
60	70	Guidelines on how we assess standard, to ensure consistent results throughout
60	72	We cannot support the conclusion, as we believe that we will never be able to eradicate all BTS properties. Particularly in the rural area of Aberdeenshire, where a vast amount of properties have been built pre 1920's, and obviously older properties have increased problems. Aberdeenshire also has a high number of properties with private water supplies, which are susceptible to contamination thereby potentially making them BTS. The lack of financial means to tackle this being the big constraint.
60	74	We believe that as there is a restricted amount of funds available to offer grants, that as a Local Authority we would not always feel it appropriate to issue enforcement orders. Therefore, houses will continue to fall into disrepair
61	79	Comment – the powers of the Local Authority under the Housing (Scotland) Act in relation to HMO's can still be used

62	86	We believe that it is the seller's responsibility to provide a detailed survey. This could form part of a "Seller's Pack". The pack giving advice and information about issues relating to running costs, maintenance, etc.
62	91	We believe this information could be included in the seller's pack mentioned above. Suggestion – Central database, where by each time a property is sold the information on the condition of the house, is entered and this would keep all data relatively accurate. Specific to Aberdeenshire, we feel that information on Radon gas should be made available, along with any other Health & Safety or environmental issues.

General comment

We believe that the Housing Improvement Task Force should be co-ordinated to coincide with the Fuel Poverty Statement and Grants Consultation paper. Has provision been made for the review of the Grants Consultation Paper? As mentioned, Aberdeenshire Council are currently working on the production of its Local Housing Strategy and House Condition Survey, an overview from the Scottish Executive would be useful to ensure co-ordination.

We also believe that information on all of the schemes available to clients should be more readily available, i.e. Warm Deal, Aberdeenshire Energy Efficiency Project, NEEDS, Central Heating grants, EEC (Energy Efficiency in relation to utilities). Similarly co-ordination and simplification of this area is crucial and lacking at present.

On the whole the findings of the task force reinforce Aberdeenshire's understanding of issues in improving quality in private housing. We look forward to the next phase of the Task Force's work.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

**RITCHIE JOHNSON
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**