

## **COMMENTS ON THE FIRST REPORT OF THE HOUSING IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE.**

In general officers are in agreement with the conclusions of the Housing Improvement Task Force.

It is noted that the report is however no more than a summary of the issues currently affecting the condition and quality of private sector housing in Scotland and any recommendations made will require to be fully examined by the Scottish Executive.

The eradication of all below Tolerable Standard houses is still an important objective, and the recommendation that the minimum provisions of the Tolerable Standard is no longer appropriate and that a better understanding of housing quality is required is welcomed.

The removal of the Non HRA “ ring fence” has lead to a substantial reduction in available resources for Improvement and Repair grants. This not only removes the incentive to owners to carry out necessary improvements and repairs, but places constraints on local authorities to make use of their powers as the serving of notices trigger an entitlement to grant.

If local authorities are expected to make more use of the powers available to them to secure the necessary improvement and repairs, additional resources will be required.

The powers available to local authorities in the private rented sector are restricted and relate mainly to houses in multiple occupation. Legislation is required to allow local authorities to secure improvement and repairs to this section of housing.

The recommendation that consideration be given to “sellers packs” when it comes to buying and selling properties is also welcomed. This would put the onus on sellers to provide information e.g. defects in the property or potential problems, the age and running costs of heating systems, common liabilities etc., It would also hopefully eliminate the need for successive surveys/valuations.

Home Improvement Services  
MORAY COUNCIL