

## **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND COSLA**

### **Local Housing Strategies – Supporting Improvement**

#### **Introduction**

1. Guidance on preparing local housing strategies was published jointly with COSLA in June 2008. This highlighted the Scottish Government's and COSLA's joint commitment to ensuring that robust local housing strategies are in place across Scotland and to working in partnership with local authorities to achieve this. This will be critically important given the enhanced status of local housing strategies. These are now a key local authority corporate and partnership strategy and are at the heart of the reformed housing and planning framework, both through their link to development plans and in terms of their influence on the direction of local housing investment.

2. This paper sets out the Scottish Government's and COSLA's new approach to supporting the development and improvement of local housing strategies. The approach has been endorsed by both the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) and reflects a primary focus on promoting good practice and supporting improvement, a strong emphasis on partnership working given the new relationship between central and local government and a commitment to streamlining of processes.

#### **Training and dissemination programme**

3. The first element of the improvement process involves the delivery of a comprehensive training and dissemination programme to support the implementation of the reformed housing and planning delivery framework, and specifically to support local authorities to undertake housing need and demand assessments and develop new style local housing strategies. It has been developed in conjunction with COSLA and the Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN), who have consulted their members widely on training priorities. The programme will be delivered jointly with SHBVN as part of the ongoing support provided by the new Centre for Housing Market Analysis, whose work plan is overseen by a joint Scottish Government/local government steering group.

4. The programme will address a wide variety of topics including the use of Scottish Government data, development of Housing Market Partnerships, defining outcomes, integrating new strategic areas with the local housing strategy (specifically homelessness, housing support and fuel poverty), new linkages with the land use planning system and climate change and sustainability. There will be the scope to add extra topics to the programme as it is rolled out and we are committed to reflecting on and disseminating the experience of those local authorities whose local housing strategies are to be submitted first.

## Reviewing the local housing strategy

5. Reviewing the local housing strategy against a small number of key criteria is the second element of the improvement process<sup>1</sup>. Criteria are included in Annex A. The Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN) – in association with the Scottish Government and COSLA – is committed to developing a self-assessment tool to help local authorities prepare and review their local housing strategies. This will dovetail closely with the review criteria set out in Annex A and is expected to be available in Summer 2009.

6. The key aim of the review process is to promote best practice and support improvement. In addition it will:

- Help ensure that the enhanced status of local housing strategies is reinforced and widely recognised
- Allow the local housing strategy to inform future investment in housing
- Assist the Scottish Government and local government to understand local and regional contributions to the delivery of national housing policy objectives and
- Ensure there is a necessary balance in the way in which other elements of the reformed housing and planning delivery framework (housing need and demand assessment and development plans) are reviewed.

7. Local housing strategies will not be graded. The review process will allow the identification of areas of good practice and those areas which are a priority for further action and development. Feedback letters will provide advice on any actions needed to achieve a robust strategy and along with a face to face meeting with the review group will form the basis of any follow-up action or improvement plan and associated timetable, to be agreed with the local authority.

8. To reflect the new relationship between central and local government the Scottish Government, COSLA and ALACHO are committed to jointly reviewing local housing strategies. This type of approach has been used in the past in relation to Homelessness Strategies (where a joint review process was facilitated by the Scottish Government on behalf of the Homelessness Monitoring Group in partnership with COSLA, a number of local authorities and a small number of expert agencies.)

9. Local government involvement at both local housing strategy practitioner and senior management level will bring new insights and benefits associated with peer review and consolidate the working relationship with the Scottish Government.

10. Further detailed work is now taking place with COSLA, ALACHO and SHBVN to set out detailed implementation plans for the joint review process, including quality assurance arrangements to ensure consistency of approach.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the review process which will take place following submission of the local housing strategy to Scottish Ministers, not the programme of annual reviews which most local authorities undertake to monitor ongoing progress.

## **Follow-up action after the review process**

11. The third key element of the improvement process focuses on new approaches to supportive partnership working with local government to which the Scottish Government and COSLA are committed.

12. There are a number of ways in which local housing strategy improvement work will be supported:

1. A strengthened role for ALACHO and SHBVN to provide peer support and mentoring.
2. The provision of advice and support from the Scottish Government, both from the Scottish Government's regionally based staff and the new Centre for Housing Market Analysis
3. Potential future involvement of other organisations to support local housing strategy improvement, for example SOLACE, reflecting the enhanced status of local housing strategies, and the Improvement Service for Scottish Local Government.
4. The dissemination of good practice examples identified through the review process, potentially via a web based system.

13. We believe that all elements of the improvement process will play an important part in ensuring that robust housing strategies are in place across Scotland.

14. The Scottish Government is available to provide advice, support and guidance to local authorities and partners involved in the development of the local housing strategy. Contact details are as follows:

### **East Region**

Tayside and Forth Valley Team – Gordon Paterson 01382 427500

Edinburgh and Lothians Team – Donald Bain 0131 313 3700

### **North Region**

Grampian Team – Elaine Crawford 01224 332978

Highlands and Islands Team – Ralph Throp 01463 711272

### **West Region**

Glasgow Team – Margaret Moore 0141 305 4111

North Clyde Team – David Dowie 0141 567 3180

South Clyde Team – Anne Marie Thomson 0141 567 3162

Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway Team – Pauline Gilroy 01698 420042

Ayrshire Team – Stephen Youd 01292 653307

## Annex A

	<b>Review criteria for local housing strategies</b>
1	The extent to which the key findings from a housing need and demand assessment have been addressed within the local housing strategy.
2	Evidence that housing supply targets have been informed by a robust and credible housing need and demand assessment; have been agreed corporately and contribute appropriately to the government's goal of increasing housing supply.
3	Evidence that in setting housing supply targets the local authority, through the housing market partnership, has fully considered how housing need and demand can best be met over the whole market area and across all tenures.
4	The extent to which outcomes are consistent with the national performance framework and the local authority's Single Outcome Agreement and meet statutory targets (2012 target for homelessness and 2016 target for fuel poverty <sup>2</sup> ).
5	The extent to which outcomes are aligned to the local authority's Development Plan, as well as other key strategic documents, including, Regeneration Plans, Community Care Plan and the Health Improvement Plan.
6	The extent to which requirements of the 2006 Housing (Scotland) Act have been addressed, specifically: a) a strategy for dealing with Below Tolerable Standard dwellings b) policy for identifying housing renewal areas c) a strategy for improving the condition of houses by providing or arranging the provision of assistance.
7	The extent to which the following issues have been addressed within the local housing strategy: a) preventing and alleviating homelessness b) meeting housing support needs c) fuel poverty, energy efficiency and climate change.
8	Evidence that equalities issues have been addressed through the local housing strategy.
9	Evidence that the local authority has consulted widely on its proposed strategy.
10	Evidence that commitments have been made by the Council, Community Planning Partners and other key partners to enable delivery of the outcomes as shared priorities.

<sup>2</sup> Targets to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard are being monitored separately from the local housing strategy.

