

REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 25 AUGUST 2008

REPORT ON: PROPOSED PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 382-2008

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To seek Committee's agreement to appoint consultants to undertake a Private Sector House Condition Survey within the City to help inform the Council's strategy for private sector housing and to facilitate the preparation of a section 72 statement as required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee:
 - a. Authorise the Director of Housing to invite bids from suitable consultants to undertake a survey to inform the Council on the nature and condition of private sector housing stock including relevant socio-economic information.
 - b. Agree to expenditure of up to £100,000 for the survey from the 2008/09 Private Sector Housing Grant budget.
 - c. Remits the Director of Housing to report back the findings of the survey and advise on any implications and actions relating to the preparation of a private sector housing strategy and section 72 statement

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The expenditure of £100,000 will be met from the 2008/09 Private Sector Housing Grant budget. The information gained from the survey will help inform the Council's Local Housing Strategy and specifically its section 72 statement. These will in turn determine the forms of assistance including financial assistance that will be delivered to owners to help and encourage repair and maintenance of their property.

4. MAIN TEXT

4.1. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

- 4.1.1. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 introduces fundamental changes to the repair and maintenance of private sector property. It recognises that the primary responsibility for repair and maintenance of private sector property lies with the individual owners.

It translates the recommendations of the Housing Improvement Task Force into local authority powers and duties which are designed to encourage and assist owners to carry out repairs and maintenance to their property. It moves away from the current approach of direct financial assistance, in the form of grants and looks to encourage owners to use their own resources. The findings of the survey will inform future strategies and help target appropriate assistance.

4.1.2. **Local Housing Strategy**

The Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is to include a strategy for private sector housing and in particular how the local authority intends to address Below Tolerable Standard (BTS) housing, identify areas for designation of Housing Renewal Areas and how it will utilise the scheme of assistance to improve the condition of private sector housing. This strategy is to be evidenced based and in this respect a Local House Condition Survey of the private sector will be essential in gathering that evidence.

4.1.3. **Section 72 Statement**

Local authorities are also required to produce a public statement describing the circumstances in which they will provide assistance and what form that assistance will take - i.e. advice, information, practical assistance or financial assistance in the form of standard loans, subsidised loans or grants. It is proposed that publication of the section 72 statement is the point at which the local authority should implement the new powers. The evidence and information gained from a condition survey of private sector housing will have a significant influence on the preparation of a section 72 statement.

4.2 **The Survey**

4.2.1 The aim of the survey is to assess the need for improvement, repair and maintenance within the private sector and will include gathering information in the following areas:

- Levels of disrepair
- Nature of disrepair
- Cost of disrepair
- Identification of BTS housing
- Compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Levels of disability
- Levels of deprivation

4.3 **Appointment of Consultants**

4.3.1 It is intended to issue a survey brief to a number of consultancies known to have expertise in undertaking house condition surveys and to invite their bids to carry out the survey. In order to ensure early progress it is suggested that the Director of Housing be authorised to proceed directly to appoint consultants following assessment of the bids.

4.3.2 A timescale of 6 months will be allowed for completion of the survey, commencing from the date of appointment of the consultant.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

5.2. There are no major issues at this time.

6. **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Head of Finance, Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards, Director of Planning and Transportation, Director of Social Work and the Director of Economic Development have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 - Draft guidance for local authorities, volumes 1 to 6.

Committee report 325-2008, Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, Response to draft Guidance and regulations

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