



**THE MORAY COUNCIL
LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY
MONITORING STATEMENT
2004 - 2009**

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INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of the Moray Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is:

“To ensure that good quality, affordable housing is available to meet the needs of people living in or requiring housing in Moray”

This document provides the final review of actions against objectives in the Local Housing Strategy 2004 – 2009.

The Housing Service has reviewed the LHS annually for 5 years and has submitted these review documents to Communities Scotland and then the Scottish Government. These reviews have been published on the Council’s website¹ along with their revised Action Plans.

In June 2008 the Scottish Government issued new Guidance for future Local Housing Strategies, which indicates that the Moray Council should introduce its new Local Housing Strategy along with its new Development Plan. This will mean that a new LHS will not be required until 2013. In December 2008 the Housing Strategy Group agreed that the Council should develop an Interim LHS to cover the period between the current LHS (2004 – 2009) and the new LHS from 2012. Any actions remaining from this 5 year review, which are still relevant will be included in the Interim LHS 2010 – 2013.

Section 1 – provides an overview of the work that has been done over the past 5 years.

Section 2 – provides an overview of proposed future actions relating to strategic planning for housing, including implementation of the Interim LHS 2010 – 2013 in April 2010.

¹ Moray Council’s housing strategies available at http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1917.html

SECTION 1 - SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

This section considers progress and performance against the strategic objectives listed below. There is a summary of progress on the identified actions with the updated action plan for 2008/9 at the end of the summary.

ACCESS TO HOUSING

Strategic Objective 1

To widen and facilitate access to housing in Moray by making the housing system work more effectively

We developed and published our Housing Options Guide in 2003, prior to the term of the LHS. The Guide contains information intended to assist householders seeking accommodation, covering all tenures and has been updated and republished annually. The information covers the numbers of stock owned by the Council and Housing Associations operating in the areas as well as information on private renting and owner occupation. The Guide is available on the Council's website² and is available at all Moray Council Libraries and public offices as well as voluntary groups.

With the introduction of a new content management system, we were able to dramatically expand and improve the information on the Housing pages of the Council's website throughout 2004 and 2005. We have kept it up to date.

Our Allocations Policy was approved in 2004 and became effective in April 2005. In 2005, changes were made which allowed applicants seeking a 4-bedroomed house to receive offers of 4 and 3 bedroomed properties. This allowed larger households to have the opportunity to reduce their overcrowding, bearing in mind the scarcity of 4 bedroomed properties available for relet.

Further interim changes were approved in 2008 with the introduction of a third housing list. From 1 September 2008, applicants who have been assessed as homeless are placed on a Homeless Priority housing list and are housed in chronological order. Our intention is to reduce the average time households need to spend in temporary accommodation.

We are developing a Common Housing Register in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council and it will be implemented in November 2009. The Common Housing Register will benefit applicants in that they may choose to be placed on the waiting list of many social housing providers but will only have to fill in one application form.

We have registered 1901 private landlords in our Landlord Registration Scheme, as required by the Scottish Government. We use the Scheme to distribute information to landlords, most recently on the Local Housing Allowance and Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs).

² Moray's Housing Options Guide is available at:
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_41349.html

Strategic Objective 2
To prevent and alleviate Homelessness

We published our Homelessness Strategy in 2003. The overall aim of the Homelessness Strategy is

“to prevent homelessness and end its incidence in Moray”.

Key Achievements are:

- The Local Outcome Agreement was submitted to the Scottish Government in 2004/5.
- The Homelessness Policy was approved on 10 August 2005 and published along with a suite of information leaflets for the public.
- A Best Value Review was completed in February 2005.
- A mid-term review of the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 was completed in 2006/7.
- Homepoint accreditation for homelessness Information and Advice services achieved in March 2009, and Homepoint standard training delivered to staff by Shelter.
- Moray Keyfund introduced in 2005.

Temporary Accommodation

In 2007 we commissioned research to assess the Council’s ability to meet its statutory obligations under the Homelessness (etc.) (Scotland) Act 2003 to abolish the priority need test for homeless applicants on a phased basis by 2012. This research found that the Council needed to increase supply of temporary accommodation by 211 additional units over the 7 years to 2012, 30 units annually. The Council had already identified that it had an under-supply of temporary accommodation and over reliance on use of Bed and Breakfast but the Scottish Housing Regulator also identified this. Our Homelessness Improvement Plan includes actions to address these issues and has been approved by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Council has been increasing supply of temporary accommodation and now has 145 units available for use as temporary accommodation (as at 31 March 2009)

These are made up of:

Landlord	Type	Number
The Moray Council	Dispersed Houses	25
Moray Housing Partnership	Dispersed Houses	19
Grampian Housing Association	Dispersed Houses	2
Defence Housing Executive	Dispersed Houses	4
Private Sector Leasing	Dispersed Houses	7
Moray Womens Aid	Dispersed Houses	4
Langstane Housing Association	SIPS	7
The Moray Council	Hostel	21
Private Sector	Hostel	35
Turning Point	Hostel	10
Aberlour Childcare Trust	Hostel	10
Moray Womens Aid	Hostel	7
Total		151

Strategic Objective 3

To guarantee equality of access to housing opportunities in Moray with respect to age, gender, ethnicity and disability

We have taken a number of steps towards achieving this Strategic Objective:

- We have delivered several rounds of equalities awareness training for Housing Service staff, covering most of the equalities strands, during the term of the LHS.
- We have developed a suite of information leaflets that are written in plain language, many have a Crystal Mark of approval from the Plain English Campaign.
- We subscribe to the “Happy to Translate” service, as part of a pilot project involving some other Council services. This Scheme provides staff with the tools they need to help communication with people with different needs e.g. people with a disability or people who do not speak English fluently.

Service users should see this logo at every Council Access Point and on every letter they receive from the Housing Service. Communities Scotland (now the Scottish Government) invited us to participate in a Thematic Study on Openness and Access to Information³. Happy to Translate was mentioned in the report as an example of positive practice.



- We gather information on equalities issues from our service users and use it to monitor how well we are preventing discrimination
- As part of implementing discrimination legislation we completed Equality Impact Assessments on all housing services and policies. The results have formed an Action Plan that will be implemented over the term of the Interim LHS.

Research into the current accommodation and the support needs of Gypsy/Travellers and their future housing needs was commissioned in 2007. The results will be available in August 2009.

Through Scottish Government funding, the Moray Women’s Aid hostel was reprovisioned in 2005/6 to a specially designed building providing accommodation and support for women and their children fleeing domestic abuse. This represented a significant improvement in the standard of service available.

In 2000 Moray Youthstart, a social inclusion partnership organisation made a successful themed bid to the Scottish Government for £2.5M SIP funding. Some of this funding was used to purchase 6 SIP flats and the Covesea Road supported housing project for young people aged 16-14 with support provided by Aberlour Childcare Trust. This housing has continued to provide supported housing for young vulnerable homeless people throughout the term of the LHS.

In partnership with the Scottish Government, we have consistently included a range of house types that meet the needs of disabled persons in our affordable housing developments.

³ Open and Accessible?, Communities Scotland, 2007 available at http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/shr_openandaccessible_.pdf

QUALITY OF HOUSING

Strategic Objective 4

To improve and maintain the quality of existing housing in Moray, including energy efficiency to HECA requirements

We have worked in partnership with SCARF throughout the term of the LHS to provide information and advice to householders in Moray on energy efficiency, fuel costs and income maximisation.

We have worked towards reducing the number of properties below tolerable standard (BTS) throughout the term of the LHS, by providing grants to homeowners through the Private Sector Housing Grant budget (PSHG). Over the 5-year period we have assisted 175 owners to upgrade their homes to an acceptable standard with a grant investment of £1.90m. We consistently meet our target of spending all of the PSHG funding available from the Scottish Government. We have also re-surveyed known BTS properties and removed from our list those that have been improved, demolished or are no longer used as houses. The known number of BTS houses now stands at 330, down from over 700. Measures are now in place to tackle these properties in a more proactive way.

The Moray Care and Repair scheme was established in 2003 with an aim of assisting elderly owner-occupiers and private tenants whose homes were in disrepair. The Care and Repair scheme offers independent advice and assistance and acts as agent for its applicants to identify works required and to ensure it is carried out. This service has proved to be very popular and in 2006 it was expanded to include applicants wishing to carry out disabled adaptations to their home. Over the term of the LHS we have assisted 450 home owners/private tenants to repair or adapt their homes with an investment of £1.80m. The service is reviewed annually.

Through continued capital investment in Council stock over the years we are confident that we can meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2012⁴. At 31 March 2009 69.3% of Council properties met the SHQS. Most of our failures are single element failures. RSL partners have stated a similar position. They also have mostly single element failures and expect to attain the Standard by 2015.

We have submitted a HECA monitoring report to the Scottish Government each year and it shows that carbon emissions from domestic properties reduced in Moray by 21.6% between 1997 and 2007, similar to reductions in other local authority areas. The biggest contributor to this reduction was the Council's own stock where Capital and Planned Maintenance Programmes have realised direct reductions of over 42% in energy use, and 44% in CO₂ emissions during the period of the act to date.

We aimed to raise the average NHER rating of the Council's housing stock to a minimum of 5.0 by 2007. This was achieved and the average NHER of Council houses was at 31 March 2009 was 6.3.

⁴ The Scottish Government require that the SHQS is met by 2015

Strategic Objective 5

To seek to improve the quality of new build housing in Moray across all tenures and to encourage housing that is built to Lifetime Homes standard and environmentally friendly principles

The Scottish Government continues to improve the quality of new build housing across all tenures through increasing the standards required to meet Building Standards.

We encourage housing that is built to Lifetime Homes standards by providing housing built in accordance with “Housing for Varying Needs”⁵ standards. Affordable housing funded by the Scottish Government is always to “Housing for Varying Needs”⁶ standards. Through the Housing Investment Programme the Scottish Government provides funding for adaptations to meet the specific housing needs of disabled and elderly clients. As well as new housing provision, the Council has maintained an annual budget for disabled adaptations to its own stock funded from the Housing Revenue Account (also Strategic Objective 6).

In meeting its sustainable housing objective the Council recognises that all housing funded by the Scottish Government must be constructed to rigorous sustainable compliance standards.

The Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership has been developing an Older Persons Strategy “Living Longer, Living Better” 2009 – 2014. This strategy seeks to “*to shift the balance of care from Acute to Community based care*”. To contribute to the Strategy’s vision we have been developing plans to include telecare into forthcoming new build affordable housing in Elgin, Buckie and Forres.

In addition there are 1040 households (at 31 March 2009) who have a community alarm in their home, which can be used to give a greater sense of independence and security to vulnerable persons and can help them to continue to live in their own home as long a possible.

⁵ Housing for Varying Needs, a design guide 2002 available at:
<http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/deps/cs/HousingOutput/start.htm>

⁶ Housing for Varying Needs, a design guide 2002 available at:
<http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/deps/cs/HousingOutput/start.htm>

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY CARE

Strategic Objective 6

Maximise the choice of housing, support and care combinations for all special needs groups and, in particular, enable all those wishing to stay at home to do so with the appropriate support, where practicable

The removal of the ring fenced Supporting People budgets enabled the Council to more effectively align housing support and care services to people with a mental health problem or learning disability. As a result housing support services for these groups are now strategically planned through the relevant strategies for those client groups.

Housing support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are addressed in the homelessness strategy.

Sheltered housing warden services are also within the scope of the LHS. Following on from consultant's review provision is currently being assessed on a locality basis. These reviews consider needs and all the available services in the area.

Housing Needs Studies were carried out for elderly people and people with a physical or sensory disability during the period of the LHS. We have focused on discussing new build requirements for special needs housing with the relevant Community Care Managers and reflecting this in the SHIP e.g. re-provisioning of learning disability units at Buckie and Elgin, and SAMH units at Elgin. We recognise that for most Community Care Groups housing support and care provision are closely aligned; as should be future needs assessments.

Given the aim of supporting people within their own home whenever possible the main emphasis has been on adaptations.

The Housing Service invests in disabled adaptations to its own stock on an ongoing basis. At 31 March 2009 there were 689⁷ mainstream Council properties which have had at least one disabled adaptation, more than 10% of the total Council stock. The Council has improved its recording of these adaptations. This means that Housing Needs staff have access to information on adaptations and so can allocate housing to make best use of the existing adaptations.

RSL tenants can access disabled adaptations through their landlord and Scottish Government Funding. These funding requirements are included in the SHIP.

Households in the private sector also have access to disabled adaptations funded through the Private Sector Housing Grant. Over the term of the LHS grants have been approved for adaptations to approximately 340 private sector properties⁸, the vast majority for bathroom alterations e.g. level access showers, and for stairlifts.

Householders normally access adaptations through their Occupational Therapist (OT). A multi-agency Adaptations Partnership has been established to continuously improve the disabled adaptations service and an Action Plan has been developed.

A housing information and advice service for those with a physical and sensory disability needs to be developed and this will be included in the Interim LHS.

⁷ Scottish Government S1B return

⁸ Private Sector Housing Grants database, Moray Council

Strategic Objective 7

To meet requirements for special needs housing within communities for those not wishing or able to remain in their own home but who wish to remain in their community

The need for special needs housing is assessed on an individual site by site basis, in consultation with Community Care Managers and other partners. Housing solutions for special needs groups are included in larger housing developments, as part of the developers contribution towards affordable housing. Where a household has an individual or complex need, we consider all options to meet that need with a “person centred” approach, which may include a specially designed property.

This process is part of the implementation of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)⁹. The targets within the SHIP are based on the Housing Need and Market Study More information is available under Strategic Objective 8.

⁹ Morays Strategic Housing Investment Plan is available at http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1917.html

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Strategic Objective 8

Maximise the investment in and the provision of affordable housing to meet the housing need requirement in Moray

Housing Need and Market Study 2007

This study was completed in 2007. The main findings and recommendations were:

- There will be a shortfall of 219 units of affordable housing each year for the next 5 years (this has since been updated and is now 255 units each year for 5 years).
- Consider revising the Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance.
- Consider further restrictions on the right to buy and consider a further application for Pressured Area Status for Forres

Pressured Area Status

In March 2006 the Scottish Government approved a Pressured Area Status¹⁰ designation suspending the right to buy for Council tenants in Elgin, Lossiemouth and the rural communities around Forres. In February 2009 a further designation was approved for Forres. These designations suspend the right to buy for Council tenants in these areas until March 2011 and February 2014 respectively, and will help to retain social housing to meet demand.

Local Plan

The Government issued SPP3 in June 2008 that requires greater liaison between Council housing and planning services when developing the LHS and the Development Plan. Morays Local Plan was adopted in December 2009. Over the term of the Interim LHS, we will continue to liaise with planning colleagues over the design of developments. During 2008 we have been consulting on revised Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance which increases the developers contribution to affordable housing from 20% to 25% of all units for developments of more than 10 units, in line with Government recommendations and with recommendations in the Housing Need and Market Study 2007. The relevant committees approved this in May 2009.

Strategic Housing Investment Plan

As previously stated affordable housing is prioritised through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP)⁹. The SHIP includes a target number of affordable housing units to be delivered. This target is updated annually to reflect RTB sales, increases in affordable housing supply and fluctuations in turnover.

Moray is one of a small number of authorities which has had its AHIP enhanced as a result of the Scottish Government's and CoSLA's agreement to target resources to Council areas where housing shortfalls are recognised at local authority level or where the greatest homelessness pressures exist. As a result, the AHIP has been increased from its 2007/08 level of £9.525m, whereas neighbouring authorities have seen their AHIPs either maintained at that level, or reduced.

¹⁰ Information on Pressured Area Status designations in Moray are available at:
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_44662.html

Year	AHIP outturn spend £M	No of units completed
2004/5	5.300	13
2005/6	9.360	143
2006/7	11.262	87
2007/8	14.744	100
2008/9	5.508	111

Source: The Scottish Government, Housing Investment Division

In 2007/08 Grampian Housing Association, acting as lead developer, purchased three key sites in Elgin, Forres and Buckie, funded by the Scottish Government. The Council bought another key site in Buckie. Together these sites will provide 310 units of affordable housing, on a phased basis over the next 2-4 years. These developments will include a range of house sizes and types and will include specialist housing for Community Care groups, and wheelchair adapted housing as per demand.

In December 2008 the Council successfully bid for funding from the Scottish Government's accelerated Funding Programme to build 40 new Council houses in Elgin. We are considering proposals for a further bid to help fund a Phase 2 Council new build.

Rural Housing Enabler

Moray's pilot Rural Housing Enabler Service began in April 2008. A part-time Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) was employed, initially for one year but this has since been extended for a second year. The main aims of the Rural Housing Enabling Service are to identify housing needs and to facilitate solutions to meet them in rural areas. Needs in rural areas cannot be accurately assessed by the normal methodologies of large housing needs surveys or referring to housing waiting lists.

In the first year the RHE concentrated effort on the Speyside area, carrying out 5 housing needs surveys in various settlements as well as providing information on various affordable housing solutions including Low-cost Initiative for First-time Buyers (LIFT), Rural Homes for Rent Grant and Rural Home Ownership Grant (RHOG).

Key achievements in 2008/9 were:

- 1 open market LIFT
- 1 Rural Home Ownership Grant
- 3 applications for Rural Homes for Rent grant

In the second year the RHE will continue with similar work but concentrating on the rural settlements around Forres and Buckie.

The work of the RHE contributes to our increased understanding of housing need and demand in rural areas and will contribute to the Interim LHS and each SHIP.

Strategic Objective 9

To help create and sustain neighbourhoods that are safe, socially mixed and supportive Sustainable Communities

The Council published its Safer Communities Strategy 2008

Joint working and information sharing

The Council works closely with partner agencies such as the Police to share information in relation to crime and serious breaches of tenancy. This enables the Police and the Council to take co-ordinated action to bring about improvements in each geographical area. The Housing Service is represented on the Anti Social Behaviour Panel and contributes information to assist decision-making.

Community Wardens

Community Wardens were introduced to the Moray Council area in July 2004. They are line managed by the antisocial behaviour co-ordinator and are briefed on a daily basis by Grampian Police. The Community Wardens are responsible for investigating any antisocial behaviour committed by an owner-occupier (whereas any antisocial behaviour committed by Council tenants or housing association tenants is dealt with by their landlord).

Estate Caretakers

The Council published its Estate Management Policy¹¹ in February 2005. The Council has appointed 5 no Estate Caretakers whose role is to work with local Housing Officers, Community Wardens, the Police and residents to keep up the appearance and standard of neighbourhoods. They are able to do this mainly by working with local residents and communities and by ensuring a quick response to matters that might otherwise bring the appearance down. These matters range from removing graffiti abandoned cars and litter. Also dealing with untidy gardens, communal repairs and inspecting close cleaning.

Sustaining Tenancies

We support new Council tenants with Tenancy Sign Up Interview which includes comprehensive information on their new home. We also carry out Settling In Visits to new tenants to provide an opportunity to answer any queries and resolve any problems. This has resulted in consistently high levels of tenancies being maintained for at least 1 year.

Neighbour Disputes and Antisocial Behaviour Policy

The Council has a comprehensive Neighbour Disputes and Antisocial Behaviour Policy¹². Accompanying procedures set out a range of methods to investigate and take preventative action to de-escalate disputes. This ranges from simple breaches of tenancy to more complex and high risk cases where a multi agency approach may be required. Where appropriate the housing service staff work with other departments and agencies such as the Police to share information and take co-ordinated action to resolve disputes. From time to time specialist services such as trained mediation is used to resolve more complex cases. The outcomes from these processes are carefully monitored through the performance management framework to ensure that improvements from a tenants perspective.

¹¹ Moray's Estate Management Policy is available at:
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_42534.html

¹² Neighbour Disputes and Antisocial Behaviour Policy is available at
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_41553.html

Strategic Objective 10

To support and encourage wider role activities which contribute to social inclusion and community regeneration

Community Planning

Local Registered Social Landlords have become involved in Community Planning, particularly as part of the Safer and Stronger theme group contributing to Antisocial Behaviour Operational Group, Housing Strategy Group and Community Warden Multi Agency Group

The Housing Service contributes to meeting the priorities of the Fairer Scotland Fund and the Moray Community Planning Partnership by supporting wider role projects and by tackling poverty in Moray by providing employment and training opportunities through the Affordable Housing Investment Programme.

Members of Moray Council Tenant Forums regularly attend Neighbourhood Forum meetings that affect their geographical area. More information on tenant participation activities is available under Strategic Objective 12.

Grampian Housing Association Money Advice

Grampian Housing Association established a Money Advice project for the Buckie area in November 2008, based at Ardach Medical Centre, Buckie, and in January 2009 began a regular money advice surgery at The Well. This project provides an alternative money advice service to that offered by Moray Council Trading Standards but closer to clients, allowing them to save transport costs e.g. bus fares.

Moray Housing Partnership Handyman Scheme

Moray Housing Partnership has introduced a scheme whereby their tenants can become volunteers in the Handyman Scheme.

Strategic Objective 11

To eradicate fuel poverty from all vulnerable groups by 2016

The Council published its Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004 – 2009 and reviewed it in March 2009.

The main achievements of this strategy are:

Improvements to Moray Council stock:

Nearly all Moray Council housing is double-glazed and fitted with full central heating. All houses have at least 100mm loft insulation to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard but many of our houses have more than 150mm. All our houses have been cavity filled where possible. The Council is nearing completion of a major programme of door replacement, replacing older style doors with more energy efficient double glazed, solid core doors.

Using funding from the Energy Saving Trust, the Council has completed a successful trial fit of a small number of air source heat pumps to properties where energy efficiency improvements are likely to be impractical, in Garmouth, Elgin and Forres. The outcome of these trials was impressive, with fuel savings for the tenants of up to 40%. The Council is now implementing a programme of similar heating system upgrades to Provost Christie Drive, Rothes, as an alternative solution to providing mains gas, which proved to be too costly, despite grant assistance.

The council has begun a trial programme of insulation to “hard to treat” properties located in Keith and Cullen that are of non-traditional and stone construction. The outcome of these trials will be used to decide on a future programme of insulation works to comply with SHQS requirements.

Through the requirements of the Home Energy Conservation Action 2007, the Council aimed to raise the average NHER of its own stock to a minimum of 5.0 by 2007. This was achieved and the current average NHER is 6.3.

The Scottish Government and COSLA have published new guidance for local authorities on fuel poverty. This guidance suggests that measures to address fuel poverty should be mainstreamed throughout all the Housing Services activities and that there will no longer be a requirement to publish a stand alone Fuel Poverty Strategy.

Improvements to Private Sector Housing

The Council does encourage and contribute to improving fuel efficiency in the private sector by providing Private Sector Housing Grants. Over the term of the Strategy, 150 grants were approved on properties defined as Below Tolerable Standard (BTS), the majority of these works included insulation, central heating or double glazing.

In addition, 331 grants were approved through the Care and Repair scheme. The majority of these works include roof repairs, window and door replacement, heating system upgrades and eradication of damp – all of which contribute to minimising the risk of fuel poverty.

Advice and Information

Throughout the term of the Strategy we have worked in partnership with SCARF¹³ who provide the Energy Advice Centre for Grampian for the Energy Saving Trust. SCARF provides free, independent and impartial advice on the sustainable use of energy.

SCARF will signpost enquirers to grant funding sources e.g. Warm Deal (now replaced by the Energy Assistance Package)

¹³ Save Cash and Reduce Fuel (SCARF) <http://www.scarf.org.uk/>

Strategic Objective 12

To provide maximum opportunities for tenant participation and empowerment throughout the social rented sector

Tenant Participation Strategy

We have published our second Tenant Participation Strategy (2008 – 2012). We have a long established Tenant Participation structure that consists of area Tenant Forums. Each Forum is represented at the constituted Moray Tenants Core Group. We provide grant funding support to area forums and the Tenants Core Group.

Tenants Core Group members take are active in tenant participation activities on a local, regional and national level;

- as non- voting members of the Moray Council's Housing Sub Committee that considers all matters relating to the Council's landlord role.
- as members of the Housing Best Value Group which considers a range of issues including feedback and performance.
- as members of Region 2 National Engagement group – “the Northern Lights”
- as tenant inspectors for the Scottish Housing Regulator
- as peer review inspectors for Scottish Housing Best Value Network.

Annual Tenants Conference

For several years there has been an annual Tenants Conference. Over the years the Tenants Core Group has taken on a more and more active role in the Conference's organisation and have successfully bid for grants to fund the Tenants Conference, independent of the Council. The Tenants extend an invitation to tenants of other RSLs in the area, via their landlord, to attend.

Environmental Upgrades Budget

Tenants Forums have access to an Environmental Upgrades Budget from the Housing Service. They can use this money to fund projects they have identified as a priority in their area. Past projects have included fencing and parking area upgrades.

Forum Websites

The Tenants Core Group have also successfully bid for funding to develop their own website and a website for each Area Forum¹⁴.

¹⁴ <http://www.moraytenantscoregroup.co.uk/>

Section 2

Future Local Housing Strategy development

The Scottish Government published revised LHS guidance¹⁵ in June 2008 and Scottish Planning Policy SPP3: Planning for Homes¹⁶ in July 2008, which require closer liaison between the LHS and the Development Plan. Because Moray's Local Plan was adopted in December 2008, a new Local Plan will not be required until 2013. The Housing Strategy Group agreed the future direction of Moray's Local Housing Strategy in December 2008; that the Council should produce an Interim LHS 2010-2013, with a new LHS to be published in 2013.

The Fuel Poverty Strategy 2004-2009 has been reviewed. The Scottish Government issued revised guidance on Fuel Poverty Strategies in May 2009¹⁷, which suggests that fuel poverty issues should be mainstreamed throughout LHS activity and that there is no longer a requirement for local authorities to produce a stand-alone Fuel Poverty Strategy. We will incorporate actions relating to alleviating fuel poverty into the forthcoming Interim LHS 2010-2013 that will be available for public consultation in December 2009.

Strategic Priorities

The Council continues to face difficulties in meeting its statutory obligations to homeless households and in meeting housing need. The Council is unlikely to meet the milestones set by the Scottish Government in achieving the phased removal of the priority need test of homelessness by 2012, and has not met the 2009 interim target, due to the lack of affordable housing. The importance of these issues are reflected in the Council's Single Outcome Agreement, National Outcome 10 and Local Outcome 4¹⁸: We will align the strategic priorities of the Interim LHS to the priorities identified in the Single Outcome Agreement.

Interim Local Housing Strategy development timetable

Action	Timescale
Communities Committee	1 December 2009
Public consultation on Interim LHS	January – March 2010
Communities Committee	13 April 2010
Publish Interim LHS	April 2010

¹⁵ Revised LHS Guidance available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25093503/0>

¹⁶ Scottish Planning Policy SPP 3: Planning for Homes available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/25092557/0>

¹⁷ Guidance to Local Authorities on Fuel Poverty available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/28154359/0>

¹⁸ Moray Council's Single Outcome Agreement is available at:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_59351.html

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