ABSTRACT: This report seeks Members’ approval of a specific approach to the allocation of new build Council housing to maximise the impact new housing can make to meet local housing needs.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that Members:-

(i) agree the approach to the allocation of new build properties;

(ii) authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to discuss the adoption of this approach with all registered landlords;

(iii) seek an impact report on each of the schemes 6 months after the initial allocations occur.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Angus Council has embarked in a new build housing programme across all areas of the County. The normal approach to allocations is set out in Report No. 743/08. Through this approach, around 750 homes are allocated each year through a series of priority groups. In early 2011, Members were briefed on the use of local Community Based Letting Plans (CBLPs) which have been developed with the tenants’ movement to meet a more balanced portfolio of housing needs and in line with the “reasonable preference” criteria of the Social Housing Allocations Guidance. This has resulted in the establishment of a 60% target of allocations to the highest priority groups, but has also provided other waiting list groups with an opportunity to be rehoused e.g. applicants who are overcrowded or under-occupying accommodation. Members are asked to note that this target will be reviewed for 2012/13 and again with tenants, in the light of the housing options approach adopted by Members in Report No. 144/11 and this report, if approved.

2.2 In addition to this, Members have approved a Downsizing Scheme to encourage moves from those under occupying properties. This drive to meeting housing needs has further been augmented through the adoption of a web enabled mutual exchange scheme for social tenants.

2.3 It is clear that Angus Council and the Neighbourhood Services Committee have taken all reasonable steps to try to meet unmet housing needs and consider the reasonable preference criteria within the Social Housing Allocations guidance. Members are also aware of, and concerned about, the impending changes to the welfare system, most notably, the proposed reduction in housing benefit payable of 10 - 15% for those under occupying a socially rented home by one room and by 20 - 25% for those under occupying by two or more rooms. These steps will assist these applicants to a greater degree than previous and have the option to move to smaller accommodation should they apply.

2.4 In addition to this, Members are aware that there is newly arising unmet housing need of between 190 and 330 homes/tenancies per year as set out in the Council’s Housing Needs and Demand Assessment - Report No. 19/10 refers. Finally Members are reminded that Angus Council was the first Council in Scotland to have met the requirements of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, and, as a result not only does the Council have the capacity to develop new initiatives to deliver housing needs, it is actively pursuing an approach to designed the ensure those needs are balanced towards all housing groups.
3. **PROPOSAL**

3.1 The release of the new build homes creates a unique opportunity to manage allocations in a strategic manner and create a chain of allocations seeking to both make best use of housing stock by increasing turnover and creating sustainable tenancies, as well as tackling under occupation and overcrowding, and offering additional housing options to those who would otherwise have expected to wait a considerable time for an offer of a new tenancy.

3.2 Angus Council is aware that building new houses alone, either by Angus Council, RSL's or the private sector will not meet the level of housing needs identified in Angus. The use of reasonable preference within the allocations will be targeted to those in recognised housing need. The basis of the approach will be the existing housing allocations system and by default, the current housing legislation and guidance which form the statutory backdrop for the existing approach to allocations.

3.3 Through this approach it is hoped that each initial move will lead to at least one additional move within the housing stock and at the very least the number of new tenancies will be double the number of new build houses.

3.4 Members are asked to agree that the following principles are applied:-

- All allocations will be made in accordance with housing need, the Council's allocation policy and the CBLPs and made from the Common Housing Register;
- Initial allocations will be made to existing Angus Council/Hillcrest tenants in housing need (the partners of the Common Allocations System);
- Allocations will only be made to those with no housing related debt or other debt to Angus Council and Hillcrest Housing Association (subject to the statutory 1/12th of the annual rent criteria);
- Those with a track record of anti-social behaviour will not be prioritised (i.e. those with ASBO's or not complying with ABA's);
- The final allocation in any chain will be to someone off the Common Housing Register;
- The downsizing scheme will not apply to the new build houses and subsequent moves. The new houses represent a significant upgrade and an additional financial incentive is not considered necessary to encourage moves. Subsequent moves (in the chain) will not be considered for the Downsizing Scheme;
- To encourage and speed up the moves, it is proposed to offer a £100 incentive to all tenants to leave the house and garden of the house they exit in a clean and tidy condition and without any rechargeable repairs.

4. **RISKS**

4.1 An assessment has been undertaken of these projects and due to the nature of the works a detailed risk assessment is not considered to be required. Other than the normal risks inherent in carrying out projects of this size and complexity, no other significant risks have been identified. The Housing Division has extensive experience of allocating housing in an effective manner and every measure will be taken to ensure that through effective management of the allocations, all will be delivered on time and on budget.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no material financial implications associated with this report. The costs of the £100 incentive offer are anticipated to be no more than £5,000 overall and these costs will be met from the Housing Revenue Account's change of tenancy budget.

6. **HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no human rights implications for the Council arising from this report.
7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Issues dealt with in this report have been subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8. ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement 2011-14:-

- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced;
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services;
- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manner;
- Our natural and built environment is protected and enjoyed; and

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Infrastructure Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The release of the first Council new build properties affords Members with the opportunity to meet a wider range and number of housing needs and families in housing need than the number of houses being built. In adopting this approach, Members are meeting housing needs, rewarding good tenancy behaviours and making best use of housing stock.

RON ASHTON
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), that were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:-

- Report No. 743/08
- Report No. 19/10
- Report No. 144/11

Hsg/NS/RA/AMcK