

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 17 JANUARY 2012

SUBJECT: COUNCIL NEW BUILD PHASE 1 – POST OCCUPATION SURVEY

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises the Committee of the results of a survey of tenants occupying Council New Build properties let in March 2011.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the development and implementation of the Council's Strategic Housing Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-**
 - (i) **considers the results of the post occupation survey of tenants occupying Council New Build properties let in March 2011;**
 - (ii) **notes that similar feedback will be sought from tenants occupying future Council New Build properties.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 1 March 2011, Communities Committee noted that Phase 1 Council New Build properties (48 houses in Elgin) would be let on a phased basis between 7 March and 28 March 2011. Communities Committee was also advised of progress on Phase 2. (Paragraph 9 of Minute refers)

4. POST OCCUPATION SURVEY

- 4.1 Phase 1 included a mix of house types ranging from 1 bed flats to 4 bed houses, and including disabled adaptations and special features intended to meet the needs of particular households. The Council is progressing further phases of housing developments. With this in mind, officers have sought feedback from Phase 1 tenants, seeking their views on the design and features of their home, including space standards and kitchen layout, heating systems and controls, the repairs service, security, disabled adaptations etc.
- 4.2 On 15 November 2011, a survey form was posted to each tenant occupying Phase 1 properties (48 no.), along with a post-paid envelope. Entry into a prize draw to win £20 in vouchers was offered in an attempt to encourage responses.
- 4.3 13 responses were received, a response rate of 27%. The prize draw was drawn by Councillor McGillivray on 20 December 2011. Due to the small number of responses, the results have not been presented in tabular form to prevent the risk of identification of individuals. Responses are summarised in the following paragraphs:-

- 4.3.1 **Repairs Service:** Of those tenants who had reported a repair, 78% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the repair service. The majority of repairs are dealt with by the contractor under the defects liability period which lasts for one year. After cross referencing with reported in-defects repairs recorded, the repair issues highlighted by some respondents were followed up either through a visit from the Clerk of Works or by officers reporting the repair, via the Contact Centre, on the tenants' behalf.
- 4.3.2 **Heating:** The Council successfully bid for funding which allowed inclusion of underfloor heating in Phase 1 properties. These are the first Council properties to have underfloor heating installed. In acknowledgement that tenants may be unfamiliar with the operation of underfloor heating, tenants were offered detailed instruction on the operation of their heating system at the start of their tenancy. Despite this, 38% of respondents reported that they "don't know how to use it efficiently" or they "don't know how to use it at all". In response to this, the Clerk of Works has offered further advice to respondents reporting problems operating and controlling their heating system.
- 4.3.3 The heating supplier has installed monitoring equipment in 6 houses in Phase 1, in different house types for comparison. This equipment will monitor the energy usage and the heating output of the heating system, to provide a complete assessment of the efficiency of the system. This monitoring exercise will be carried out over a full year, with results expected in the summer of 2012.
- 4.3.4 **Storage:** The majority of respondents reported that the storage space provided was "about right", with the exception of those occupying a 2 bed bungalow who reported "too little". The 2 bed bungalow design was based on a house type developed by Registered Social Landlords through the Moray Volume Procurement. Although this house type has been included in Phase 2, the design has been altered to include improved internal and external storage.
- 4.3.5 **Features particularly liked:** 10 out of 13 respondents commented on one or more features of their home that they particularly like. Respondents frequently commented on the spacious room sizes, the kitchen layout and provision of kitchen/diners.
- 4.3.6 **Features particularly disliked:** 9 out of 13 respondents commented on one or more features of their home that they particularly dislike. These comments predominantly relate to the lack of storage space.
- 4.4 Officers will use this feedback to influence the design of houses included in future Council New Build developments.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan**

The Moray Council's priorities for National Outcome 10 of the Single Outcome agreement include:

- The volume and quality of housing throughout Moray will increase
- People assessed as homeless will be provided appropriate accommodation.

The Local Housing Strategy will focus on a set of outcomes that contribute to the achievement of Single Outcome Agreement priorities.

(b) Policy and Legal

It is a requirement of the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act that local authorities have a Local Housing Strategy.

(c) Financial implications

There are no direct resourcing implications associated with this report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

(f) Property

There are no property requirements/implications arising directly from this report.

(g) Equalities

There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

(h) Consultations

The Head of Housing and Property, the Strategy and Development Manager and the Housing Services Manager have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility and any comments were incorporated as appropriate within the report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report has provided a summary of the results of a post-occupation satisfaction survey of tenants occupying Phase 1 Council New Build properties (48 in Elgin) in November 2011. The report also details follow up actions carried out by officers, and how this feedback has influenced the design of future Council New Build properties.**

Author of Report: Fiona Geddes, Housing Strategy Officer
Background Papers: Held by author
Ref: FG/MC48