
**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL EMPLOYEES JOINT
CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING &
SOCIAL WORK**

FRIDAY 23 AUGUST 2002

HOUSING STOCK TRANSFER FEASIBILITY STUDY AND TIMETABLE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Building on the option appraisal exercise that was concluded in June 2001, the firm of DTZ Pineda Consulting have recently been commissioned to undertake the Council's Housing Stock Transfer Feasibility Study.
- 1.2 This report briefly outlines the background to their work. It also sets out its principal constituent elements. The overall process and timetable is annexed to this paper.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Colleagues are asked to note:
 - (a) The timetable that has been set for the conduct of the feasibility study.
 - (b) The constituent elements of the Feasibility Study, including the arrangements for full stakeholder consultation.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 **Background:** Members considered a report on the key findings of the Housing Stock Option Appraisal Study at the Council meeting that was held on 28 June 2001. Arising from this, it was agreed that further progress should be made towards a **full stock transfer**. It was further agreed that this process should be overseen by a Steering Group comprising of Councillors MacKinlay, Freeman, Walsh, McIntosh and Thompson with support from the Director of Housing and Social Work and Heads of Service. A trade union

representative was also invited to participate in the group. Councillor McKinlay's place on the Steering Committee has now been taken by the Leader of the Council, and Brian Murphy is the UNISON representative.

3.2 **Feasibility Study:** The firm of DTZ Piedad Consulting was engaged in February 2002 to carry out a feasibility study into full stock transfer. Their work is dictated by a brief that was produced in collaboration with Communities Scotland. This is made up of the following elements:

- An updated assessment of housing needs
- An appraisal of possible transfer vehicles
- A detailed investigation of the impact of stock transfer on the Council's General Fund, together with the subsequent impact on directly and indirectly employed staff
- The generation of a stock disposal strategy and action plan for implementation
- The formulation and implementation of an ongoing tenant and stakeholder consultation strategy

3.3 **Study Management:** The management of the Feasibility Study is being overseen by the Steering Group but on a day to day basis, this is delegated to the Head of Development & Client Services, working under my direction. The Steering Group has met on three occasions since the work was commissioned, with the timing of meetings being influenced largely by the project timetable.

3.4 Arrangements have also been made for periodic briefing meetings with senior staff from other affected Council services. This has helped to ensure that the overall progress of the work is maintained and that the input required from other services is fully co-ordinated.

3.5 **Timetable:** The Steering Group has endorsed the timetable annexed to this paper for conclusion of the feasibility work. This will run until the end of the year 2002. It should be noted, however, that while every effort will be made to comply with this timetable, the process may be slowed down due to new requirements recently outlined by the Scottish Executive. These basically oblige the Council to reach agreement with the Executive on the valuation of our housing stock as a pre-requisite to further stock transfer development work being undertaken.

3.6 Once the Feasibility Study has been completed, with the approval of the Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland, the Council

will require to enter an implementation phase should they wish to make further progress on stock transfer. It is estimated that this could take a further 18 months to complete.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Stock transfer is an exceedingly complicated process that will have major implications for the Council, its staff and a range of other stakeholders including tenants and partner agencies. While this is the case, in view of the condition of our housing stock and our limited financial resources, we have no option but to look on the process as an extremely urgent priority.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Legal – Preparatory work will be necessary to shorten the implementation phase that follows the conclusion of the feasibility study.
- 5.2 Financial – The Scottish Executive have agreed to finance the Housing Stock Transfer Feasibility Study through the payment of a New Housing Partnership grant.
- 5.3 Personnel – Stock transfer will have a major impact on directly and indirectly employed staff so the feasibility study will include full consultation with trade unions.
- 5.4 Equal opportunities – Nil
- 5.5 Policy – The feasibility study will be conducted within the context set by national policy directives, together with the Council's Corporate and Housing objectives.

Douglas Hendry, Director of Housing & Social Work
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