

Housing in Scotland

Issues for elected council members



ACCOUNTS COMMISSION



AUDITOR GENERAL

Prepared by Audit Scotland
July 2013

Introduction

1. Audit Scotland published its national report, *Housing in Scotland*, on 11 July 2013. This paper accompanies that report and sets out some issues that elected council members may wish to consider in relation to the planning and delivery of housing in their area. It also aims to help them pose questions they may want to ask of officers to seek assurance about current services and plans to help identify what actions need to be taken forward.
2. Copies of the national report can be downloaded from our website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

Page references to main report	Issue	Questions for elected council members and NHS board non-executive members to consider
Part 2: Funding		
Page 25	There is scope to make local financial reporting clearer. The reporting of spend on homeless services is complicated. Some spend on homelessness is recorded through the HRA and some through the general fund. This split means it can be difficult to see total spending on homelessness and the true position of the HRA. Tenants are concerned that it is not always clear what the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is used to fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council ensure it's recording of spend through the Housing Revenue Account and the general fund for housing is transparent to tenants? • Does the council ensure it's recording of spend through the Housing Revenue Account and the general fund for housing provides a clear picture of council spending on homelessness services?
Pages 27-28	Councils have a duty to ensure that all public and private properties are safe and well maintained. Although there is information on the quality of private housing stock across Scotland, detailed up-to-date information on the level of investment required is not available across the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the council developed a clear understanding of the condition of private sector housing in its area and of the investment required in the future?
Part 3: Planning and management		
Pages 34-36	Councils have a long-standing responsibility for assessing and responding to housing need in their area. To be effective councils must work with planners, house builders, RSLs, the private rented sector and local residents. As housing investment decisions have long-term implications, it is important that they are based on full, reliable information about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council ensure that housing strategies and the associated plans and investment decisions are clearly based on evidence of local housing needs? • Does the council ensure that housing strategies and the associated plans and investment decisions are developed in conjunction with all relevant partners including RSLs and

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	the housing market, housing need and demand.	tenants?
Pages 36	Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) have a role to play in bringing partners together to consider issues relating to housing. The role of CPPs in housing should be considered in light of councils' new responsibilities for deciding on the distribution of funding for new homes. CPPs should also work to ensure housing is linked to other policy areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council ensure that their CPP's role in housing is clear and that the CPP is effective in bringing partners together?
Pages 36	Between 2010/11 and 2011/12, the number of households assessed as homeless fell by 17 per cent to 34,300. This reduction is likely to be due to councils' new 'housing options approach'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the council reviewed the way housing services are designed and delivered in light of any reductions in the number of people assessed as homeless services?
Pages 37 (For councils with housing stock).	Scotland's council and RSL housing stock is a significant national asset. Its value must be protected by managing, maintaining and investing in it properly. In some cases, income and expenditure will need to be addressed if the condition and value of stock is to be maintained and services to tenants continued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the council reviewed the performance and long-term financial position of their housing stock? • Has the council developed strategies, including rent strategies, to address any future liabilities and maintain the value of their asset?

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