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<h1>REPORT TO EXECUTIVE</h1>	
PORTFOLIO AREA: HEALTH & WELL BEING	
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Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework	

Title: COUNTY HOUSING CORPORATION INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Report of: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICES

Report reference: EPS 20/2003

Summary:

This report provides an agreed initial statement on behalf of all Cumbrian Housing Authorities in relation to the Housing Corporation proposals for investment within the County.

Recommendations:

That draft statement attached (Appendix 1) be approved.

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1. The Housing Corporation, as the funder for all registered social landlords such as Carlisle Housing Association, has moved to a system of regional investment and distribution of funds. The basis for investment is on agreed regional and sub-regional housing and social priorities.
2. Following an approach by the Housing Corporation (HC) in July 2002, the Cumbria Sub-Regional Housing Group (CSRHG) commenced discussions

on formulating an inaugural 'bottom-up' countywide housing investment plan in October 2002.

The CSRHG comprises Members and Officers from each district council and representatives from each of the major Social Landlords operating in Cumbria.

3. The resultant draft statement attached as Appendix 1 represents a consensus of views from both Cumbria local authorities and the registered social landlords whose funding is derived directly from the Housing Corporation. As this is a first attempt to produce such a strategy the priorities have been based purely on areas of greatest housing need and do not therefore represent an equal division of funding across Cumbria. Members will note that specific mention is made of the significant need for regeneration in the most socially deprived areas of Carlisle. The general problems of housing availability within rural settlements is also prioritised, with specific mention of Foot and Mouth affected areas such as Longtown.
4. The prioritisation of funding has minimal direct impact on the Council as Housing Corporation funding is directed to Social Landlords Schemes and not local authorities. The recognition of priority for urban renewal in Carlisle as well as rural settlements such as Longtown are likely to be of benefit to Carlisle Housing Association and the other Social landlords operating in the district.
5. The Investment Strategy is reviewed on an annual basis and consequently areas for priority will change in the light of both perceived needs and the availability of Housing Corporation funding.

Members and officers representing Carlisle on the CSRHG will continue to promote the investment of Housing Corporation funding in the Carlisle area however the Corporation must base its allocations on the basis of greatest known need within the Region.

6. Forthcoming meetings of the CSRHG will be reviewing the initial draft and Members in receiving this report are invited to comment on the proposed areas for prioritisation.

2. CONSULTATION

1. Consultation on the statement has been carried out over the last few months with stakeholders and organisations within the County.

3. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

N/A

4. HEAD OF FINANCE'S COMMENTS

N/A

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

N/A

6. CORPORATE COMMENTS

N/A

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

N/A

8. EQUALITY ISSUES

The identification of the Carlisle deprived wards and rural settlements such as Longtown as priority areas will be of benefit.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

As 8. above.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

As 8. above.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the draft initial statement attached (Appendix 1) be approved.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To maximise the investment from the Housing Corporation within the County.

APPENDIX 1

CUMBRIA HOUSING INVESTMENT STRATEGY

STATEMENT ON HOUSING CORPORATION PROPOSALS

Priority Themes in Cumbria

As a starting point CSRHG identifies its priority areas for housing investment – ranked in order of importance – as follows

- Affordable Housing in the two National Park (NP) /fringe areas;
- West Coast/Furness Regeneration
- Small Rural settlements
- Supported housing initiatives across the county (that do not otherwise feature above)

At this stage – and given our shared knowledge base – the Group believes that this as much prioritisation that it can achieve at present, but is anxious to move to a more

sophisticated approach as soon as possible.

Therefore over time CSRHG would aim to move to a system which allocates indicative proportions of resources to the categories set out above. The Group would hope to be able to process such an approach by 2004/05.

CSRHG are of the view that such an approach is perfectly achievable *provided that* investment programmes remain both

- Flexible within and between categories to reflect real-world (deliverability) circumstances, and;
- Programme resources and allocated on a multi-year basis with the ability to roll/pull resources between years.

The sections below explore each of the priority areas in more details.

Affordable Housing

CSRHG has previously provided very detailed analysis of both the severe affordable housing shortages in selected key areas and of the inadequacy of present mechanisms to deliver an adequate solution

While the issue is particularly pronounced in and around the NP areas, it is not exclusive to these areas. Consequently in coming forward with investment area priorities, while CSRHG has weighted its support in favour of NP/fringe areas, we also recognise that other areas are also in need of this form of investment.

Our proposed priority settlements are (alpha order within each category)

1. National Park

- Bowness/Windermere
- Keswick

1. Other

- Appleby
- Cockermouth
- Grange-over-Sands
- Kendal
- Kirby Stephen
- Penrith
- Ulverston

The selection of priority areas follows discussion between all 6 authorities in Cumbria plus the input of developing RSLs and is backed here by the work previously submitted to the HC over the summer of 2002 in particular on the issues of affordability, grant rates and TCIs.

While we have adopted the HC investment classification of 'Affordable Housing', in our

view this poses three fundamental questions:

- *Why is it that classification needs to be separated from that of 'Rural Housing'? This only serves to reduce the investment flexibility that we are all seeking to achieve.*
- *What is 'Affordable'? The Group sees the need to develop previous and current local work on this aspect to work toward agreed local definitions of this.*
- *Is there an imperative to be settlement-specific? – This has implications for potential deliverability.*

Regeneration

Under this heading the overriding priority is to support the economic and social regeneration of the West Coast/Furness area. This priority will be supported by the development of a joint housing strategy for housing market renewal being jointly prepared between Allerdale, Barrow and Copeland councils.

In area terms the priority settlements are initially identified as (alpha order):

- Barrow/Furness
- Cleator Moor
- Maryport
- Millom
- Whitehaven
- Workington

In identifying these settlements, while we may view them as the geographical centre of action/investment there must be a recognition that regeneration does not respect town boundaries and that in many areas of the West Coast/Furness the fortunes of small settlements in the hinterland of these larger towns are inextricably bound to their fortunes. We are therefore promoting an area – rather than town-based approach to regeneration here.

While the West Coast/Furness rim is identified as the clear priority, smaller scale investment in selected isolated and/or FMD recovery areas are also supported on the following settlement (alpha order):

- Alston
- Kirkby Thore
- Longtown
- Tebay

Finally in the largest urban settlement in the County, Carlisle, the issue of regeneration is more neighbourhood-specific and priority would be concentrated in the southern urban wards comprising the City's most deprived areas.

The selection of priority areas follows discussion between all 6 authorities in Cumbria plus the input of developing RSLs and is backed here by partnership work/funding

through the umbrella of the emerging Local Strategic partnerships (LSPs) and either HAZ, New Deal, RAZ, NRF and/or SRB programmes.

Rural Housing

The CSRHG's comments on the provision of rural housing very much mirror those above both in points 5.1,5.2 plus the questions posed in 5.5.

Here particularly we do not view the strict prioritisation of individual settlements to be a productive approach when issues of site availability and planning opportunity are often the predominant factors.

For example one might reasonably adopt an approach which identifies all settlements in 'Eden Valley' as potential priorities rather than a lengthy listing of many villages where the realistic prospects of development cannot be readily predicted site-to-site.

For now however CSRHG has chosen to start by 'long-listing' priority settlements which would particularly benefit from the provision of small-scale development. We would therefore propose to the HC that following discussion we progress a number of these sites on a menu basis aggregated over a rolling approval period (alpha order within category):

National Park

- Ambleside
- Bassenthwaite
- Bootle
- Coniston
- Dacre
- Gosforth
- Grasmere
- Sedbergh
- Waberthwaite

Other

- Arnside
- Askam-in-Furness
- Greystoke
- Hesket
- Kirkby Lonsdale
- Langwathby
- Skelton
- Temple Sowerby

The selection of priority areas follows discussion between all 6 authorities in Cumbria plus the input of developing RSLs and is backed here by the work previously submitted to the HC over the summer of 2002 in particular on the issues of affordability, grant rates and Tics.

Supported Housing

With the exception of a handful of the most significant site-specific proposals that may arise from time to time, CSRHG views the development of supported housing initiatives as a cross-county priority categories above.

We are clear that all supported initiatives must clearly demonstrate a place within – and support from – the county’s framework strategy for Supporting People and have a sustainable funding regime whenever attached to capital investment.

In this context Extra Care housing is the top priority, but with the three-year rolling Supporting People review process we need further clarification of how the HC will determine capital investment priorities if (all) revenue support is by its very nature time-limited.

We also remain somewhat unclear on the approach to be adopted under the new investment priority system for the remodelling of obsolete sheltered housing which is an issue across the county.

Nevertheless we have identified the following overall priorities for capital investment in conjunction with the County’s Supporting People team:

- Victims of Domestic Abuse
- People with Learning Disabilities
- People with Mental Health problems
- People with Physical or Sensory Disabilities
- Offenders and those at risk of Offending
- Older People with Support Needs
- Vulnerable Young People with Support needs
- People with Drug & Alcohol problems
- Homeless People with Support needs
- Teenage Pregnancy & Parenting

Schemes that meet these priorities will be supported in principle by CSRHG and area-based prioritisation will then be undertaken in conjunction with the County’s Supporting People team.

The selection of priority areas follows discussion between all 6 authorities in Cumbria the input of developing RSLs and is backed here by the work done among the authorities and RSLs in the preparation of the County’s Supporting People strategy.