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From: ACPOS Secretariat [Secretariat@acpos.pnn.police.uk]
Sent: 16 January 2008 09:46
To: Housing Consultation 2007
Subject: Firm Foundations: The Future of Housing in Scotland

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Please find attached correspondence from ACPOS re the above.

Regards

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Your Ref:

Our Ref: 2055/EG/VR/07

Date: 15 January 2008

Dr Andrew Scott
Head of Social Housing Division
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Scottish Government
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Regent Road
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By email: housingconsultation2007@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Dr Scott,

**FIRM FOUNDATIONS: THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN SCOTLAND
A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT**

I refer to your correspondence dated 31 October 2007 in connection with the above subject, which has been considered by members of the Crime Business Area, and can now offer the following by way of comment.

The document outlines the vision for the future of housing in Scotland and the delivery of such a strategy has clear implications for the Scottish Police Service, particularly in terms of crime prevention.

Within the context of social housing, a great deal of success has already been achieved in terms of physical crime prevention. The inclusion of the requirement to apply for 'Secured by Design' accreditation as a prerequisite to receiving Housing Association Grant (HAG) funding from Communities Scotland has led to the widespread proliferation of this initiative in new and modernised social housing. Despite the abolition of Communities Scotland, this requirement will continue and the new arrangements will present the opportunity to establish a robust audit process to ensure that initial application is seen through to final inspection. A weakness of the current system is that some developments can make a successful application for funding, of up to 60% of the total cost, but then fail to achieve the full accreditation that was a key criteria of the award. In this regard, public money must be used as efficiently as possible and for the purpose it was intended.

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In respect of private housing, an anomaly exists whereby HAG funding has led to social housing having better quality 'Secured by Design' approved windows and doors than new privately owned accommodation, with a clear benefit experienced in terms of the reduced number of Theft by Housebreakings occurring at such properties across Scotland. It is imperative that security is recognised as a fundamental requirement of a homeowner and therefore it seems reasonable to implement 'Secured by Design' into the private housing market. The relevant enhanced security standards, BS PAS24 and BS7950, should be considered as the minimum permitted in all new properties which will be constructed as part of the proposed increase in house building in Scotland.

The consultation makes reference to the Prince's Foundation 'Valuing Sustainable Urbanism' report, the three elements of which are Environmental, Social and Economic sustainability. Whilst commending this approach the document focuses on the former when all 3 elements should be considered equally in order to realise the benefits of sustainable urbanism. There is clearly a role for Police Architectural Liaison Officers to highlight the importance of social sustainability through early involvement in developments that reduce criminal opportunity and incorporate facilities for young people. The launch of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative and the commitment to avoid the design problems inherent in many existing housing areas is positive progress.

The increased use of the private rented sector to house low income and homeless persons is also considered with a request that issues resulting from this be identified with the recognition that groups such as migrant workers are disproportionately represented in this area. As the number of workers from EU accession states increases, there is a need to ensure that any new housing strategy reacts to avoid the creation of ghettos. Such areas inevitably heighten community tensions and indigenous residents can become alarmed at a large influx of a particular minority group or nationality which can lead to services and facilities struggling to cope with demand. This can then act as a further barrier to future integration of the migrants themselves and reduce the incentive to learn English. Such groups are also at increased risk of exploitation by unscrupulous landlords and the introduction of local authority Private Landlord Registration Units, although in their infancy, can provide a valuable link between the public and private sectors and provide a defence to vulnerable tenants.

With regard to the homeless, an issue to be considered is that many such persons have chaotic lifestyles that may include alcohol and drug misuse, and the provision of appropriate support and managed tenancies will have to be considered. Such services will also serve to protect private landlords whose participation is a key part of this strategy.

In general terms the expected increase in single and elderly households presents a clear challenge to the police, and indeed all public services, in terms of the possible increase in demand and victimisation that these groups introduce.

I trust that the foregoing is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely



Harry Bunch
General Secretary

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