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Press Release

19 January 2009

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IRVINE HOUSING ASSOCIATION DISPELS MYTHS

Irvine Housing Association is pleased to announce that a series of public meetings on its potential constitutional partnership with Riverside have been very productive. The meetings were held in Drongan, Dumfries, Kilwinning and Irvine over a two week period in January, and attracted around 100 attendees from the local community, despite the adverse weather conditions.

The purpose of these meetings was to explain why the Association is considering a partnership, to provide further information about Riverside, to explain how the tenants and communities will benefit and to give details on how to become involved in the process. Representatives from both organisations answered questions and addressed concerns. Detailed discussions took place regarding local priorities for the 4 communities. Assurances were given that the proposal would have no direct impact on specific issues relating to the Right to Buy, the setting of rents and tenancy conditions. Attendees also questioned how a partnership would affect the Association's services. Service delivery is paramount to Irvine Housing Association and it was re-iterated that all local offices would remain and that frontline services would remain largely unchanged by the proposal. The Association is currently undergoing a customer service review to further enhance its current service level. The Association confirmed that should the partnership go ahead, how the

Association runs its frontline services would be decided locally, in discussion with local communities.

Association tenants were able to meet with their peers as Riverside brought along tenant members, who explained what it's like to be part of the Riverside Group from a community perspective. Concerns and rumours within the communities regarding loss of local control were allayed when it was confirmed that the Association would remain as Landlord, retain its local Board and independence and that tenants' rights would remain unchanged.

The benefits of the proposed partnership were discussed in further detail and with the backing and expertise of Riverside, the Association would be able to make rents go further, increase community investment, provide the community with a greater voice, protect local services and build new homes – currently at risk due to limited Scottish Government funding.

To fully engage with its communities, the Association will appoint an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) who will be managed by a team of tenant and community representatives. The ITA will help safeguard the views, priorities and concerns of the communities and ensure that these are addressed throughout the negotiations with Riverside. The ITA will provide impartial information and advice to tenants and residents about the partnership proposals, support communities in taking an active role in the process and provide feedback on the opinion of local communities on the proposals and their current and future priorities.

Speaking after the consultations, Nicola Thom, Executive Director (Operations) at Irvine Housing Association said, ***“We are extremely pleased with the positive feedback following the consultations. By meeting with our tenants and***

residents, any concerns and fears raised by recent myths have been put to rest. Our communities asked informative and useful questions and we are delighted to have engaged the interest and enthusiasm of the local community and recognise that there is strong support for the Association. This is only the start of the consultation process and we will continue to engage with our communities with the assistance of the ITA to ensure that they get the information they require and that their priorities are addressed by the Association in future proposal discussions.”

At the Pennyburn meeting, tenant Mr McPherson made comment about the Association’s existing services, in particular it’s response during the recent bad weather, ***“My wife and I were delighted and amazed that Association staff took the time to check that elderly and vulnerable residents were okay during the cold spell. IHA do a very good job, particularly for the older population.”***

Shareholding members will have the right to vote on the partnership proposal. All attendees were informed of the shareholder application process and the Association would like to encourage applications from both tenant and community members. Riverside extended an invitation to anyone interested in visiting their local communities to see for themselves what Riverside can offer. Visits will take place in the Spring of this year.

The Association greatly appreciates efforts made by tenants and residents to attend the consultations in such adverse weather conditions.

For further information on the proposed constitutional partnership please contact Pamela Johnstone or Janice Quinn anytime on 01294 271128 or visit the Association’s website www.irvineha.co.uk

