

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 19 AUGUST 2008

**SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW OF ACTIONS 2007/08
AND PROPOSED ACTIONS 2008/09**

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report to the Communities Committee seeks to inform members of the progress that has been made in implementing the actions arising from the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008. It also proposes actions to be progressed in 2008/09.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) notes the submission of the Local Outcome Agreement to the Scottish Government;**
- (ii) notes the progress achieved in 2007/08 in implementing the actions arising from the Moray Homelessness Strategy;**
- (iii) agrees the development of a new Homelessness Strategy for 2009-2012; and**
- (iv) notes that further reports will be presented as actions are progressed.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Executive required local authorities to submit a Homelessness Strategy in March 2003. The Council agreed its Homelessness Strategy at Community Services Committee on 9 April 2003 (paragraph 7 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 Since the submission of the strategy, the Council and partner organisations have been working to progress the actions detailed within the strategy action plan. This report updates the previous reviews of the strategy action plan submitted to the Community Services Committee on 2 June 2004 (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers), 25 May 2005 (paragraph 5 of the Minute refers), 31 May 2006 (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers) and 13 June 2007 (paragraph 32 of the Minute refers).

- 3.3 In December 2006, the Scottish Executive requested that local authorities submit a Local Outcome Agreement by 31 May 2007, and subsequently in May of each following year, to provide details of spend and activity to achieve the Homelessness Top Level Outcomes. Since this decision The Scottish Government has revised the process for reporting on Homelessness Strategy activity and has extended the submission date to the end of June 2008. However, the top level outcomes to be reported in the LOA are as follows:

Outcome 1 : No-one need sleep rough

Outcome 2 : Existing homelessness becomes more visible

Outcome 3 : Sustainable resettlement is secured for people who become homeless

Outcome 4 : Fewer people become homeless in the first place

Outcome 5 : The duration of homelessness is reduced

- 3.4 The Local Outcome Agreement also requires local authorities to provide details of progress towards the interim target for the abolition of priority need.
- 3.5 A copy of the Local Outcome Agreement submitted to the Scottish Government has been placed in the Members' Library.

4. **PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN 2007/08**

- 4.1 The progress review for 2007/08 builds on the achievements for 2006/07 and again indicates that there has been significant progress with the implementation of the strategic actions. Implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan can be identified as follows:

- Actions fully implemented during 2007/08
- Actions previously implemented and work ongoing
- Actions partially implemented during 2007/08
- Actions not progressed during 2007/08

4.2 **Actions fully implemented during 2007/08**

During 2007/08, 6 actions were fully implemented. These actions were:

- Homepoint Audit of Information and Advice Service;
- Modelling exercise to assist in identifying the Council's approach to the 2009 and 2012 targets for the abolition of priority need; and
- The Scottish Churches Housing Action "Gathering the Threads" training programme for staff, partners and the voluntary sector on understanding homelessness, funding, relationships and partnerships.
- Implementation of the revised HL1 (the Scottish Executive's electronic data reporting system) recording mechanism;
- Implementation of revised homelessness application to reflect the revised HL1;
- The development of Moray Fresh Start and the "starter pack" initiative for new tenants who have experienced homelessness. This resulted from the

partnership work of Scottish Churches Housing Action with the ecumenical steering group of Church organisations.

4.3 **Actions previously implemented and work ongoing**

19 actions have previously been implemented that require ongoing work to ensure they reflect the objectives of the Homelessness Strategy. These actions are:

- Integration of Health and Homelessness Action Plan with Homelessness Strategy;
- Implementation of Homelessness Strategy Theme Groups;
- Homelessness Strategy to be reflected within wider corporate strategies and plans and within those of partner organisations;
- Seek accreditation with Homepoint for information and advice services;
- Implementation of Common Housing Register for Moray;
- Monitor use of Bed and Breakfast on a quarterly basis – seek to achieve target of non-use for families;
- Further analysis to assess the impact of proposals in the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003;
- Carry out work to ensure data accuracy for homelessness statistics;
- Re-provision Cluny Annexe, Buckie;
- Review the use of Single Shared Assessment to identify support needs of homeless households and agree protocols for access to other agencies records.
- Review of “Out of Hours” service, reviewing crisis response arrangements.
- Integration of Homelessness Strategy within the Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership;
- Ensure Homelessness Strategy reflects Equalities Strategy;
- Implement annual review process and publish annual report
- Assist in the development and implementation of the NEET and Drug and Alcohol Strategies. Review of membership of Homelessness Strategy and Project Groups;
- Implement the action plan resulting from the Scottish Housing Best Value Peer Review of the Homelessness service;
- Care Commission inspections of Housing Support service;
- Homelessness awareness training to all agencies involved in dealing with homelessness;
- Increase in the supply of accommodation for temporary use;

4.4 **Actions partially implemented during 2007/08**

During 2007/08 there were 9 actions that were partially implemented. These actions were:

- Implementation of improvement actions identified in the Best Value Review of Housing Support services;

- Implementation of improvement actions identified in the Care Commission inspections of the Housing Support services;
- Development of Private Sector Leasing Scheme;
- Development of a Private Rented Sector strategy;
- Review and update of homelessness data acquired in the mid term review;
- Analysis of data from the revised HL1 to establish the major causes of homelessness and to monitor the levels of applications from outwith Moray.
- Review of temporary accommodation;
- Development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategy including standards; and
- Review of Housing Support arrangements.

4.5 **Actions not progressed during 2007/08**

The only action not progressed during 2007/08 concerned the intention to hold a Health and Homelessness Awareness Day. Actions from the previous Health and Homelessness Awareness Day were included in the Health and Homelessness Strategy and the actions were ongoing. It was decided that if another Health and Homelessness Awareness Day were held in 2007/08 the actions would only reflect the actions of the previous event

5. **PROPOSED ACTIVITY AND ACTIONS 2008/09**

5.1 The current Homelessness Strategy for Moray ends in 2008. Therefore, it is intended to develop a new strategy and action plan during 2008. However, there are actions for 2008/09 influenced by previous activities, legislation, Scottish Government targets, the Homelessness Peer Review Improvement Plan, Care Commission reports, the Homepoint Audit of Information and Advice services and ongoing analysis of homelessness statistics.

5.2 In 2008/09, in addition to the ongoing work highlighted in paras 4.3 and 4.4, the following will be addressed -

- Conduct an options appraisal event to assist in the completion of the Temporary Accommodation strategy and standards;
- Complete the review of Housing Support arrangements;
- Implement the action plan arising from the Homepoint Audit of Information and Advice Services;
- Conduct further analysis of homelessness statistics to determine approaches to allow the Council to meet the 2009 and 2012 targets for the abolition of priority need;
- Health and Homelessness awareness event

6. REVISED REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1 As a result of the Spending Review completed by the Scottish Government in November 2007 a Concordat was proposed between the devolved Scottish Government and local authorities. The proposal which has been agreed involves local authorities reporting outcomes in a Single Outcome Agreement removal of ring fencing from a variety of funding streams.
- 6.2 Included within these arrangements are the funding and reporting arrangements for homelessness strategies. The Scottish Government has removed the ring fencing from the Homelessness Task Force grant and as of 2009-10 reporting of homelessness strategy activity will be included in the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 6.3 It has also been suggested by government officials that the Local Housing Strategy will become the single overarching document which will address strategic activity related to homelessness, housing support, and the private sector, rather than requiring separate strategies. Local authorities could continue to produce separate strategies for internal purposes but they will not be required to submit them to the Scottish Government.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

Tackling homelessness is a priority identified in the Moray Community Plan, the Council's Local Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy and the Community Services Department's Improvement and Development Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires local authorities to complete and implement a Homelessness Strategy for their area.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the grant previously received from the Scottish Executive to assist in the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy has had its "ring fencing" removed and is now part of the Council's overall Revenue Support grant settlement received from the Scottish Government.

The Housing Needs Team within the Housing Service deals with allocation of housing, homelessness applications, the homelessness strategy and the management of temporary accommodation. During 2007/08 the Team was under some pressure due to staff illness and the compulsory call-up of the

Housing Needs Manager, a Reservist. Interim arrangements were put in place to deal with these pressures.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services, Chief Housing Officer, Housing Programmes Manager, Head of Financial Services, Head of Children and Families, Head of Community Care, Community Planning and Development Manager, Senior Area Housing Manager and managers within the Housing Service, who agree with the contents of this report. The revised Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will be considered at the next Homelessness Strategy Group meeting.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The report informs the Communities Committee of the progress achieved in 2007/08 in implementing the actions arising from the Moray Homelessness Strategy and details the proposed activity and actions for implementation in 2008/09.

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Background Papers: Held on file by June Shennan
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