



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 1 DECEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: HOUSING INSPECTION – IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 Following the Scottish Housing Regulator's inspection of the Council's housing services in 2008 and publication of the inspection report in January 2009, the Committee agreed an Improvement Plan in response to the issues raised. This report presents the first six monthly progress report on the plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the management of housing.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) considers this progress report;**
- (ii) agrees that timescales within the Homelessness Improvement Plan are reviewed and that discussion is initiated with the Scottish Housing Regulator on proposed changes;**
- (iii) notes that this report is to be considered by the Housing Sub Committee and Audit and Performance Review Committee in December 2009; and**
- (ii) notes that a further progress report will be presented to this Committee in June 2010.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) carried out an inspection of the Council's housing services during September/October 2008. Following the inspection, the Regulator published its inspection report in January 2009. The Committee will recall that the Council achieved gradings for Housing Management (A); Asset Management (B) and Homelessness (C). For any C graded service, the SHR requires that an Improvement Plan is agreed and implemented. The Regulator requires that a report on the Improvement Plan is submitted no later than April 2011.

- 3.2 At its meeting on 24 March 2009, the Committee agreed improvement plans for wider service issues, housing management and asset management (paragraph 16 of the Minute refers). The Homelessness Improvement Plan was subject to comment by the Regulator. The final agreed Homelessness Improvement Plan was subsequently presented to the Committee on 19 May 2009 (paragraph 16 of the Minute refers). At that time, it was agreed that the first progress report would be presented to Committee in December 2009.
- 3.3 The full Improvement Plan is detailed in the appendices to this report. **APPENDIX I** covers service wide issues, housing management and asset management. There are a limited number of improvement actions arising from inspection for housing management and asset management. Progress on these elements of the plan is not formally monitored by the Regulator.
- 3.4 **APPENDIX II** details the Homelessness Improvement Plan, which is subject to formal monitoring by the Regulator.

4. **PROGRESS**

- 4.1 The detail provided in the appendices provides a commentary on progress achieved. For each of the sections of the Improvement Plan, progress can be broadly assessed as follows:-

Service wide issues

- 4.2 Progress is generally positive although it is acknowledged that some of the original timescales have not been met. In relation to the development of the Common Housing Register, completion of the software development is projected for November/December 2009. It would thereafter be for the Council to implement the revised approach. In light of the additional workload as a result of the flooding in Moray in September 2009, it is not felt feasible to implement the CHR at the present time. A further report will be presented on this in February 2010.

Housing Management

- 4.3 Again, progress is generally positive although original timescales have not been met.

Asset Management

- 4.3 Progress is generally positive although it is acknowledged that in some cases, the original timescales have not been met. In particular, current work to develop a revised repairs policy and to draw together a Housing Asset Management Strategy has been affected by the additional workload caused by the recent flooding. Nonetheless, it is projected that progress can be achieved within the next six months to complete these actions.

Homelessness

- 4.4 While progress is being achieved, the Housing Needs Section continues to work under extreme pressure. This situation has been exacerbated by the flooding in Moray and the resultant additional workload for the section.

Officers are urgently addressing how these pressures can be met, within the existing budget resources.

- 4.5 In view of these pressures, it is proposed that the Improvement Plan is revised to reflect realistic completion dates for specific actions. Contact will be made with the Scottish Housing Regulator to discuss how these can be accommodated within the agreed Improvement Plan.
- 4.6 Monitoring of the plan will continue to be carried out on a monthly basis.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan**

Improving the quality of service provision is identified as a priority within the Service Improvement Plan.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

The Council is required to implement the Improvement Plan agreed by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

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

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The report highlights that there are resource issues arising from the additional flood related workload being dealt with by the Housing Service.

(d) **Consultations**

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Director of Community Services, the Principal Accountant (Deborah Bosworth) and Senior Managers in the Housing Service.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 **This progress report has identified that progress in implementing the SHR Improvement Plan has been achieved since April 2009. It recognises that in some instances the timescales originally agreed have not been met. Pressures arising from flood related workload are identified in both the report and the Appendices.**

Author of Report: Jill Stewart, Chief Housing Officer
Background Papers: Held by CHO and lead officers
Ref: CC/JS/TS – SHR Improvement Plan – 1 December 2009

Signature: Jill Stewart Date : 20 November 2009

Designation: Chief Housing Officer Name: Jill Stewart