

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010

SUBJECT: FLOODING IMPACT ON RESIDENTS AND HOUSING

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Communities Committee of the consequences of the recent flooding in Moray for the Council's housing stock in affected areas and for the Council's wider responsibilities in relation to housing affected. As this report has been finalised as at 1 February 2010, it is suggested that a verbal update can be provided to the Committee.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's housing stock and to its homelessness functions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) welcomes the progress achieved in remedial works and the projected completion periods for remedial works;**
- (ii) agrees the approach described for tenants seeking permanent moves; and**
- (iii) agrees that a further progress report will be presented to the next Communities Committee meeting.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 4 September 2009, severe flooding affected parts of Elgin, Fochabers, Rothes and other areas, causing damage to Council and private housing. More recently, flooding affected a number of households in the Newmill and Buckie areas over Sunday 1 November 2009.
- 3.2 Reports on the impact of flooding have been considered by the Committee at its meetings on 6 October 2009 and 1 December 2009 (paragraph 5 and 11 respectively of the Minute refers).

4. PROGRESS OF REMEDIAL WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSES

- 4.1 The earlier report to the Committee outlined the sequence of work required to enable the reinstatement of flood affected properties. Since then, significant progress has been achieved by the Building Services DLO.
- 4.2 Projected completion dates for properties have been agreed with the DLO. A total of 25 properties were completed in December 2009. Handovers of completed properties will continue on a weekly basis throughout January and February 2010. As at 1 February 2010, 47 properties are completed, with a further 18 properties to be completed.
- 4.3 The Council's Building Service is also carrying out reinstatement to the flood damaged War Veteran Cottages in Elgin.
- 4.4 Staff from Housing Services continue to liaise with tenants to keep them informed of timescales and to arrange removals etc to their homes.

5. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

- 5.1 As at 1 February 2010, the total number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation as a result of the flooding were:-

Bishopmill House	13 households
Temporary furnished accommodation	18 households

- 5.2 During the course of the response to the flood, 32 properties were equipped and used as temporary accommodation. Officers propose to review the use of these properties as they become vacant. However, there is clearly an opportunity to add to the Council's stock of temporary accommodation available for homeless households. The Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy set a target for the expansion of temporary accommodation units in 2009/10 by 49 properties. Further expansion in 2010/11 will be required and therefore use of a number of these properties will assist in meeting the needs for 2010/11. The Committee will also recall that a number of properties were leased from the Defence Estates Executive. Officers will examine the potential to extend the leases.
- 5.3 Bishopmill House will be required as temporary accommodation for flood victims until at least the end of March 2010. Officers are currently reviewing the longer term options for Bishopmill House to determine its suitability for longer term use as temporary accommodation and whether this might reduce expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation.

6. COMMUNICATING WITH TENANTS

- 6.1 Since the earlier report to the Committee, four newsletter updates have been produced and distributed to Council tenants affected by flooding, the most

recent being issued in mid January 2010. In addition, all local Elected Members have been provided with regular reports on the progress of reinstatement works.

- 6.2 Staff have continued to keep in regular contact with those tenants displaced from their homes. Surgeries in Bishopmill House have been continued, although the frequency and length has been reduced, given the reducing numbers resident in Bishopmill House and the level of approaches received.

7. TENANTS SEEKING PERMANENT MOVES

- 7.1 The earlier report to Committee identified that a number of tenants did not wish to return to their homes. The proposed approach to this was verbally outlined to the Committee on 6 October 2009. Since then, all vacancies arising in areas sought by flood affected tenants have been scrutinised for their potential suitability for any flood affected tenants, prior to being relet.
- 7.2 Progress has been made in rehousing those tenants who did not wish to return to the flood affected area. In total, 17 tenants have now been rehoused, with offers pending for a further 2. A total of 4 tenants are still seeking a move and are currently in temporary accommodation. An analysis of the Housing List suggests that 2 of these households could be reached for offers within the next three months. As indicated in earlier reports, the main difficulty that the Council will have in securing alternative permanent accommodation will be for the 2 households requiring 3 bedroomed ground floor accommodation.
- 7.3 In view of the small number of tenants remaining in temporary accommodation and seeking a permanent move, it is proposed that these tenants are not asked to return to their homes once these are completed. This will require the Council to continue the use of temporary accommodation for these tenants until a permanent transfer can be effected.
- 7.4 Officers will examine whether it will be possible to end these tenants' tenancies in the flood affected areas prior to a transfer being effected. This would enable the Council to relet the tenants' original homes and thus reduce the impact of rent loss for the Council.

8. ALLOCATION OF EMPTY PROPERTIES

- 8.1 There are a number of properties in the flood affected area which will become available for relet as a result of the measures taken to enable tenants who did not wish to return to their homes being allocated alternative properties.
- 8.2 As was the case after the 2002 floods, any applicants for housing in the area affected will be clearly informed of the flood background of the area. Any offer letter will clearly identify the potential difficulty that prospective tenants may encounter in obtaining contents insurance cover for flooding and that refusal of an offer of housing in the flood affected area will not count as a reasonable offer in terms of the Council's Allocations Policy and therefore the applicant will not be penalised should they choose not to accept the offer of housing.

9. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

The Single Outcome Agreement and Service Improvement Plan both have priorities regarding the condition of housing in Moray. As a result of the increased workload for the Housing Service over the next few months, it is likely that some of the targets for completion of other work detailed in both the Single Outcome Agreement and the Service Improvement Plan will be adversely affected. Staff will work to ensure that this is minimised.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

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

The cost of responding to and dealing with the aftermath of the flooding will be borne by the Council's Flood Reserve Fund, to which the Housing Revenue Account has contributed since 2002. As stated above, it is projected that these contributions will meet the costs of temporary accommodation and reinstatement works to properties. As at 31 December 2009, expenditure incurred amounted to £0.350m.

(d) Consultations

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Community Services, the Property Services Manager and Managers within the Housing Service.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 This report outlines the progress achieved in responding to flooding in Moray.

Author of Report: Jill Stewart, Chief Housing Officer
Background Papers: Held by CHO
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