

**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 1 MARCH 2011**

**SUBJECT: TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2010/11**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides information to Committee on the progress of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to homelessness.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-**

- i) notes the progress on implementing the Temporary Accommodation Strategy;
- ii) agrees the proposed standards for temporary accommodation; and
- iii) agrees the targets for 2011/12.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council's homelessness services were inspected by the Scottish Housing Regulator in 2008 and the Inspection Report published in January 2009. An Action Plan was developed to address the issues raised in the Inspection report. One of the key actions in the Action Plan was to develop a Temporary Accommodation Strategy to improve the management and supply of temporary homeless accommodation.
- 3.2 On 24 March 2009, the Communities Committee agreed the Temporary Accommodation Strategy (Paragraph 6 of the Minute refers). The key aims of the strategy were:-
  - to ensure provision of a range of temporary accommodation options in Moray to meet the needs of homeless households

- to ensure that temporary accommodation is of an appropriate quality to meet the needs of homeless households
- to ensure effective management of temporary accommodation, reflecting service users views
- to ensure that appropriate support and contact is provided to homeless households in temporary accommodation

#### 4. **PROGRESS MADE DURING 2010/11**

##### Range of temporary accommodation options

- 4.1 On 13 April 2010, the Committee agreed to increase the number of temporary accommodation units from 189 to 207 – an increase of 18 on the previous year (paragraph 7 of the minute refers). This increase was to be targeted at accommodation suitable for single people. Although, the target was achieved during the year, a problem with some of the existing temporary accommodation units and the need to rotate older properties has temporarily reduced the overall number of units available to 203. Current provision is as follows:

| Landlord                        | 31 March 2010 | March 2011 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Council                         | 54            | 63         |
| RSLs                            | 34            | 37         |
| Private Rented Sector           | 46            | 49         |
| Defence Housing Executive (DHE) | 16            | 16         |
| Supported Accommodation*        | 39            | 38         |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>189</b>    | <b>203</b> |

\*Moray Women's Aid, Turning Point, Moray Youth Action

- 4.2 The profile of the accommodation shows:

| Landlord                        | Bedsit    | 1 bed     | 2 bed     | 3 bed     | Total      |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Council                         | 13        | 25        | 19        | 6         | <b>63</b>  |
| RSLs                            |           | 11        | 15        | 11        | <b>37</b>  |
| Private Rented Sector           | 35        | 4         | 9         | 1         | <b>49</b>  |
| Defence Housing Executive (DHE) |           |           |           | 16        | <b>16</b>  |
| Supported                       | 23        | 8         | 5         | 2         | <b>38</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>71</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>203</b> |

Temporary accommodation is of an appropriate quality

- 4.3 In 2008 the Chartered Institute of Housing in Scotland (CIH) produced an “Action Plan: A Standard for Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households” which made the case and demonstrated support for standards in temporary accommodation. In 2009 Shelter Scotland produced a briefing paper “Raising the standards of temporary accommodation” which argued for the consolidation of existing standards and the development of new ones to ensure a consistent quality of housing and services for households placed in temporary accommodation.
- 4.4 Draft standards for temporary accommodation were developed in 2009 and service users were consulted on the draft standards in 2010. In November 2010, the CIH and Shelter issued “Guidance on Standards for Temporary Accommodation”. The guidance is not statutory but is intended as a good practice tool for temporary accommodation which complements the self assessment and performance standards set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. A copy of the Guidance has been placed in the Members Library.
- 4.5 The Guidance on standards for temporary accommodation is intended to apply to all types of temporary accommodation including:
- Stock owned and managed by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) (including furnished temporary tenancies).
  - Self contained flats or hotels including bed and breakfast accommodation.
  - All local authority and non-local authority hostels, including those managed by external agencies (e.g. specialist accommodation for young people).
  - Private owned self contained housing.
  - Private rented sector housing including that is accessed and managed via private sector leasing schemes.
  - Interim accommodation provided under the Homeless Person Interim Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2002.
  - Refuge accommodation including those for women and children.
- 4.6 The Council’s standards relating to temporary accommodation have been reviewed and updated in terms of the Guidance published in November 2010 and feedback gathered from service users. The draft standards have been revised and are now attached as **APPENDIX I**.

Effective management of temporary accommodation

- 4.7 The management of temporary accommodation has significantly improved during 2010/11. A new database has been developed that enables Officers to track and analyse key data relating to temporary accommodation. It is able to:

- Identify all current temporary accommodation used for homeless households by size, type, landlord, rental charges, rent arrears, voids, etc.
- Identify and record any known risk factors relating to people who have been placed in temporary accommodation
- Highlight at an early stage which household has been placed in unsuitable accommodation and which may breach the Unsuitable Accommodation Order if they are not moved out within a given date.
- Record cases where households have not been accommodated and the reason for them not being accommodated.
- Record all contact that staff have with homeless people who are placed in temporary accommodation.
- Plan more appropriate moves within the different types of temporary accommodation where this may be necessary.

4.8 During 2010/11, in conjunction with the Council's Procurement Section, the service has agreed two contracts with external providers to further enhance the management arrangements for temporary accommodation. Details of these are as follows:

Contract 1 – This is for 35 units of single persons accommodation and covers the period 1 November 2010 to 31 October 2013.

Contract 2 – In partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and a number of local RSL's, the Council has entered into a framework agreement for the supply and delivery of furniture, flooring, white goods and other households items. The contract is with CF Services and is from 10 May 2010 covering a 3 year period. Any goods supplied from this contract will be purchased, as and when required, and expenditure will be in line with existing budget provision.

#### Support and Contact

4.9 The Supported Accommodation Team are now in regular contact with homeless people who are placed in temporary accommodation. Contact is logged and issues are addressed when these are raised.

### **5. HOMELESSNESS DURING 2010/11**

5.1 The main focus within the service during 2010/11 has been to tackle and reduce homelessness where possible and to reduce the financial pressures being faced by the Council within its temporary accommodation budget.

### Tackle and Reduce Homelessness

- 5.2 Following a review of the Council's Housing Support Services in 2009/10, the Committee agreed on 8 June 2010 to set up a new homeless prevention team as part of this service (paragraph 8 of the minute refers). The new team has been in place since 4 October 2010. It is responsible for ensuring that those at risk of homelessness have the opportunity to avert homelessness where this is possible. To date, the main thrust of the team has been to work with single people who are at risk of homelessness and to prevent them from losing their accommodation.
- 5.3 In Quarter 3 (October to December 2010), the Homeless Prevention Team has been able to help prevent 107 households from becoming homeless (47.6%). This has led to a significant drop in the number of homeless applications as detailed below:

| Contact Description                                             | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Households who presented as homeless or at risk of homelessness | 60  | 105 | 64  |
| Households where homelessness has been prevented                | 19  | 47  | 41  |
| Households where homelessness could not be prevented            | 40  | 56  | 21  |
| Households who lost contact with the Council                    | 1   | 2   | 2   |

- 5.4 A further analysis of those households who were prevented from becoming homeless (107) reveals that 86% were single people and 57% had been asked to leave by family and friends. Those prevented from becoming homeless were mostly in the age group of 18 to 59.
- 5.5 As the homeless prevention service has only been operational since October 2010, it is proposed that a more detailed report on this area of work is presented to Committee in June 2011.

### Abolition of priority need

- 5.6 The Council target set for 2010/11 is that 86% of all homeless applicants should be found to be in priority need. As at the end of Quarter 3, the Council only achieved 69.2% compared to 71.3% the previous year.
- 5.7 The profile of homelessness during the year has clearly started to change and at the time of this report, it remains an evolving picture. If however, during the year, the Council had achieved the 2012 target, it would have been required to provide permanent accommodation to an additional 85 households. This remains a significant concern for the Council given that the work of the homeless prevention service has already been factored into this projection.

Reducing the Council's reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation

- 5.8 During 2010/11, Officers have continued to seek to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. Further improvements in the management of void temporary accommodation and the linking of both internal and external provision has helped to identify vacancies earlier and move people quicker. This has resulted in a month on month reduction in the use of bed & breakfast from 74 households in April 2010 to 11 at the time of preparing this report. There are no children currently being accommodated in bed and breakfast establishments.

Breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order

- 5.9 The target of no breaches in the Unsuitable Accommodation Order for 2010/11 has not been achieved to date. However the Council did make significant progress in reducing the number of breaches in comparison to the previous year. There have been no new breaches since 1 October 2010. A total of 44 new breaches were recorded in 2009/10 compared to the projected full year figure of 21 for 2010/11 – a projected reduction of 48%.
- 5.10 The reduction in use of bed and breakfast accommodation is likely to result in the Council spending £190k less than budgeted for in 2010/11.

**6. TARGETS FOR 2011/12**Increasing the supply of temporary accommodation

- 6.1 It was projected that the Council would have 207 units of accommodation by the end of this financial year. Although the increased target of 18 units was achieved, the need to repair and rotate properties has reduced the number of units available to 203 – a shortfall of 4.
- 6.2 The Homeless Modelling exercise completed in 2007 projected that the Council would require to increase the number of homeless unit by an average of 20 per annum. This figure did not however factor in any homeless prevention measures which the Council now has in place. Once homeless prevention work is factored into the original projected need for 2011/12, this reduces the projected need to 11 properties, plus the shortfall of 4 from 2010/1.
- 6.3 Based on the above projections it is proposed that the target of 15 additional temporary accommodation units be agreed for 2011/12. The additional units should be suitable mainly for use by single people and be sourced from the Council (8), RSLs (5) and the private rented sector (2).

Breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order

- 6.5 The target for new breaches in the Unsuitable Accommodation Order should remain at zero for 2011/12.

## **7. FUTURE ACTIONS**

- 7.1 The Council planned to repeat the homelessness modelling exercise carried out in 2007 by Consultants. This work was originally planned for October 2010 but due to other competing priorities, it could not be carried out. It is now proposed to complete the exercise between April and June 2011 and present a further report to Committee in August 2011.
- 7.2 The proposed target for additional units of temporary accommodation may need to be amended based on the outcome of this modelling exercise. The size and type of temporary accommodation may also need to be considered.
- 7.3 The feasibility study relating to the potential use of Bishopmill House as temporary accommodation has been completed and considered by the Corporate Management Team. CMT has deferred further consideration pending the completion of the homelessness modelling exercise referred to above, in recognition of the changing context of homelessness.
- 7.4 There are significant changes currently being phased in by Government relating to welfare benefits. These may have an impact in some areas of service delivery and costs/charges involved in these services. It is intended that each change will be investigated and analysed as the service becomes aware of them and any significant issues will be reported to Committee. The first changes are proposed for April 2011 with the main impact of these being a reduction in the Local Housing Allowance for any new tenants. This may have implications for the Council in terms of its homeless prevention agenda as this will impact on the majority of lower income households who may have previously secured accommodation in the private rented sector to meet their housing need.

## **8. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

This proposal relates to:

- (i) Local Priority 4 – Housing/Homelessness; and
- (ii) Service Improvement Plan Priority 2.2 – Preventing Homelessness

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### **(c) Financial Implications**

There is an anticipated under-spend within the temporary accommodation budget of £190k for 2010/11. This is directly linked to the decreasing number of households being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. The need to increase the number of households found to be in priority during 2011/12 will place further duties on the Council to accommodate homeless households

for longer periods and may create future budget pressures within this area of activity.

**(d) Risk Implications**

None arising from this report.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

None arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

None arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities**

There are no equalities issues in this case.

**(h) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Director of Community Services, the Head of Housing and Property, the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea), and the Principal Solicitor (Aileen Scott) who agreed the content of this report.

**9. CONCLUSION**

**9.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress made in implementing the Temporary Accommodation Strategy, agree the revised standards for temporary accommodation and agree the new targets for 2011/12.**

|                    |                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Author of Report:  | Richard Anderson, Housing Needs Manager<br>June Shennan, Homelessness Strategy and<br>Development Manager |
| Background Papers: | Held on file by June Shennan                                                                              |
| Ref:               | Committee – Temporary Accommodation – 1 March 2011                                                        |