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**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 26 MAY 2015**

**SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2010 - 2015**

**BY: ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECOMONIC DEVELOPMENT,  
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 This report advises the Committee of the actions achieved during the term of the Homelessness Strategy 2010 - 2015 and seeks approval for the development of a new strategy for 2015 - 2018.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (4) and (9) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to homelessness and the preparation of housing quality plans and other such housing related plans as may be required to ensure effective implementation of strategic housing matters.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

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

- (i) considers and notes the progress achieved during the Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015;**
- (ii) agrees the development of a further strategy for 2015-2018; and**
- (iii) agrees that a further report be presented to Committee in August 2015.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015 was approved by the Communities Committee on 13 April 2010 (paragraph 6 of the Minute refers). The overall aim of the Strategy was “to prevent homelessness where possible, but when it does arise, to ensure that appropriate assistance and support is provided”. The Communities Committee has monitored the progress of the homelessness strategy and agreed the strategic direction of the strategy on an annual basis.

3.2 The strategic objectives set out in the strategy focussed on prevention, providing accommodation and providing support through sustainable solutions. The following strategic objectives were identified to help achieve the delivery of the strategy:

- Maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness;
- Develop accommodation needs for a range of needs;
- Design services which reduce repeat homelessness; and
- Increase opportunities to access support.

3.3 On 29 April 2014, Committee considered the progress made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy during 2013/14 and agreed an action plan for 2014/15 (paragraph 9 of the minute refers).

#### **4. PROGRESS ACHIEVED - 2014/15**

4.1 The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2014/15 is provided as **APPENDIX I**. A total of 26 actions were identified for completion during the year. The main achievements in 2014/15 include:

- Review of the Housing Support Services Policy;
- Development and implementation of Housing Options Procedures;
- Development and implementation of Housing Support Procedures;
- Review of Housing Options Guide;
- Accessible housing options information;
- Implementation of a revised charging policy for temporary accommodation;
- Development of a website to advertise private rented sector properties;

4.2 A total of 3 actions remain outstanding and will be carried forward to 2015/16;

- Identify actions for 2015/16. This will be considered as part of a new strategy for 2015-18;
- Review of Supported Accommodation Team will be completed in 2015/16;
- Transferring temporary accommodation data to i/world delayed due to technical issues and consultancy availability. This will be progressed in 2015/16.

#### **5. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS 2010/15**

5.1 Over the life time of the strategy, significant improvements in relation to the Council's homelessness services have been achieved. Some of the main achievements include:-

##### **5.2 2010/11**

- Review of housing support services;
- Homeless prevention model agreed;
- Homeless prevention team in place; and
- Reliance on bed and breakfast reduced to zero.

### 5.3 2011/12

- Full implementation of in-house/external housing support services;
- Implementation of the information and advice module;
- 100% compliance with the abolition of priority need target;
- Training programme delivered to increase awareness of homelessness;
- Improved housing options information for disabled people; and
- A pre-tenancy “living skills toolkit” developed for vulnerable people.

### 5.4 2012/13

- Review of the Service User Framework completed;
- Revised Section 11 procedures implemented to assist in preventing evictions/repossessions within the private sector;
- Completion of revised drafts for all external protocols;
- Review and implementation of housing options interview checklist;
- Multi-agency planning to improve outcomes for chaotic homeless people;
- Improved case management and recording of data; and
- Review of housing needs team.

### 5.5 2013/14

- Implementation of a revised Homelessness Policy and procedures;
- Protocols for armed services; prisons; and hospitals updated;
- Appraisal of a web-based housing options model;
- Completion of review into lost contacts and repeat homelessness cases;
- Financial appraisal of temporary accommodation completed;
- Implementation of the Scottish Government’s Housing Support guidance;
- Revised housing needs staff structure implemented; and
- Monitoring of the impact of welfare reform.

### 5.6 Recurring annual achievements

- Ongoing development of housing options and homelessness prevention;
- Promotion of tenancy sustainment options;
- Appraisal and reconfiguration of temporary accommodation; and
- Increasing the supply of affordable new build housing stock;

## **6. IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY**

### 6.1 The main impacts of the strategy 2010 -15 are detailed below:

- Homelessness has reduced by 41.8% since 2010;
- A total of 310 new Council houses have been built in the period;
- Heavy reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation eradicated;
- Significant budget savings achieved;
- Temporary accommodation stock reduced from 189 to 159;
- 91.5% of new tenancies sustained for more than 12 months by 2014/15;
- Housing support offered to all homeless people;
- Housing support extended to all vulnerable housing options cases;

- Repeat homelessness reduced to 3.7%, lower than the national average of 5.8%

6.2 The introduction of the revised charging policy for temporary accommodation will be appraised during 2015/16 and the impact will be reported back to this Committee later in 2016/17.

## **7. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015-18**

7.1 The Council continues to face a number of challenges in relation to homelessness. It must continue to improve its housing options activities particularly for single people aged 25 to 59; it will need to continue to reconfigure its supply of temporary accommodation; it has seen a small increase in the number of homeless applications during 2014/15; and the impact from the introduction of Universal Credit. Universal Credit will be rolled out in Moray in September 2015 so the impact is not yet known.

7.2 Although the completion of a Homelessness Strategy is now optional for local authorities, this Council has seen real benefits from having such a strategy in place. For that reason, it is recommended that the Council develops a further Homelessness Strategy from 2015 to 2018 that will run concurrently with the Local Housing Strategy.

7.3 If agreed it is proposed to present a draft Homelessness Strategy, that builds on the success of the 2010-2015 strategy, to this Committee in August 2015.

## **8. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Moray 2023 A Plan for the Future/ Service Plan**

Moray 2023, the Council's corporate plan and the Housing and Property Service Plan (Priority 2) identify the need to tackle homelessness. The actions contained within the homelessness strategy action plan seek to improve the outcomes for homeless people. This promotes healthier citizens and adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm.

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

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### **(c) Financial implications**

None arising from this report.

### **(d) Risk Implications**

There may be risks to the Council if it fails to tackle the root causes of homelessness and does not seek to prevent homelessness where possible. Any increase in homelessness could have budget implications for the Council, particularly in the provision of temporary accommodation.

**(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 Head of Housing and Property, Legal Services Manager – Property and Contracts (Aileen Scott), the Principal Accountant (Deborah O’Shea), the Committee Services Officer (Lissa Rowan) and Managers within the Housing Service who agreed the content of this report.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 This report advises the Committee of progress made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy 2010/15. It also seeks Committee approval to progress a new Homelessness Strategy for 2015 - 2018.**

Author of Report: Emma Armit, Homelessness Strategy Officer  
Background Papers: With author  
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