



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 18 AUGUST 2015

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015 - 2018

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 This report presents to Committee the new draft Homelessness 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 Scheme of Administration 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 agrees:-

- (i) the draft Homelessness Strategy for 2015 - 2018;**
- (ii) that a consultation on the draft strategy is undertaken with service users and key stakeholders; and**
- (iii) that a further report will be presented to the Communities Committee in October 2015 following the consultation exercise.**

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

3.3 On 26 May 2015, Committee considered the progress made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy during 2014/15 (paragraph 10 of the draft Minute refers). A total of 3 actions remain outstanding and have been carried forward to the 2015/16 action plan. These are:

- identify actions for 2015/16;
- review of supported accommodation team; and
- transfer the records for temporary accommodation on to the housing ICT system.

4. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015 – 2018

4.1 The Council continues to face a number of challenges in relation to homelessness including:

- the continued requirement to improve its housing options activities particularly for single people aged 25 to 59;
- the need to continue to reconfigure its supply of temporary accommodation;
- a small increase in the number of homeless applications during 2014/15 which requires continued monitoring and where possible intervention to address issues; and
- the introduction of Universal Credit. Universal Credit will be rolled out in Moray in September 2015 and the impact is not yet known.

4.2 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. It is proposed that when the Homelessness Strategy ends in 2018, it is merged with the Local Housing Strategy.

4.3 The main objectives of the new strategy for 2015/16 mirror the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) outcomes in relation to homelessness. These are broadly similar to the previous objectives and will help retain a focus on:

- housing options and homeless prevention;
- provision of temporary and permanent accommodation; and
- housing support and tenancy sustainment.

5. FUTURE ACTIONS

5.1 Appendix II of the Strategy presents the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan which details the actions for 2015/16. The actions focus on delivering the strategic objectives combined with issues that have been highlighted from annual data trends for housing options, homelessness, housing support and temporary accommodation. Actions include ensuring that:

- people looking for housing receive information that assists them to make informed choices and decisions at an early stage, about the range of housing options available to them;
- homeless people receive prompt and easy access to help and advice;
- homeless people are provided with suitable good quality temporary or emergency accommodation when this is needed and are offered support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to; and
- appropriate housing support services are available to all who need it to prevent homelessness and to break the cycle of repeat homelessness.

5.2 This Committee is asked to agree the draft Homelessness Strategy 2015 - 2018 (**APPENDIX I**) and to approve a wider consultation on the draft with service users and other key stakeholders. A report on the outcome of the consultation will be presented to this Committee in October 2015.

6. **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 policy and legal implications arising from this report.

(c) Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications 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

The strategy will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment which will be undertaken during the consultation period.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Head of Housing and Property, Senior Solicitor – Property and Contracts (Paul Nevin), 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.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 This report presents the draft Homelessness Strategy for 2015 – 2018 for approval prior to public consultation. A report on the consultation outcomes will be presented to committee in October 2015.

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Background Papers:
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