



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 13 OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT: MORAY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015 – 2018

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

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 This report seeks the approval of Communities Committee to implement the Council's Homelessness Strategy for 2015 – 2018 following the consultation exercise undertaken with service users and key stakeholders.

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:-

- (i) considers the feedback received during the consultation period and the findings provided within the Equalities Impact Assessment; and**
- (i) agrees the Moray Homelessness Strategy for 2015 – 2018, as set out in APPENDIX I, for implementation following Committee.**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 18 August 2015 Committee were updated on the achievements of the Homelessness Strategy 2010 – 2015 and of the continued challenges that the Council face in relation to homelessness (paragraph 11 of the Minute refers). The Committee agreed to a wider consultation of the draft Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018.

3.2 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.

- 3.3. It is also proposed that the Homelessness Strategy will be merged with the Local Housing Strategy in 2018.

4. CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 4.1 The consultation period ran from 19 August to 18 September 2015. The following consultation took place:-
- a web-based survey was developed to seek feedback. This was published along with the draft Strategy on the Council website and was publicised via the Council's newsroom;
 - one to one surveys and feedback sessions with service users were undertaken;
 - feedback was sought from the Moray Tenant's Forum, Community Councils and TSI Moray (Third Sector Interface);
 - Officers within the Council were consulted;
 - key stakeholders were consulted via the Homelessness Strategy Group; and
 - feedback from equalities groups was sought through the Moray Equalities Forum.
- 4.2 The survey asked key questions relating to the draft Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018. These were:
- (i) Do you agree with the aim of the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018?
 - (ii) Do you agree with the objectives of the Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018?
 - (iii) Did you find the draft Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018 easy to read and understand?
 - (iv) Is there a section that you would like to see reworded?
 - (v) Is there something that we've missed that you think should be included?
 - (vi) Is there anything you think should be removed?
 - (vii) Do you agree with the actions contained in the action plan?
 - (viii) Is there anything that has been missed from the action plan?
 - (ix) Is there anything that you think should be removed from the action plan?

5. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 5.1 A total of 40 responses were received (9 from the online survey and 31 from face to face surveys with service users). The rate of response from service users constituted nearly 27% of all households currently registered as homeless with the Council.
- 5.2 The feedback received is supportive of the draft strategy with all respondents in agreement with its aims and objectives.

5.3 There were very few comments returned as part of the consultation process. Those received can be summarised as follows:

- 50% of respondents stated that they found the strategy easy to read and understand. To assist those who did not (40%), the Council will develop an “easy to read” summary version, using plain language.
- One respondent requested that the valuable role of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) be recognised within the homelessness strategy. One of the priorities set out within the strategy is to recognise and build upon the various partnerships that the Council has in place to tackle homelessness in Moray. Whilst SWF is not specifically mentioned, it is acknowledged that they (along with many of our other partners) continue to play an important role in meeting the Council’s wider legislative requirements.
- One respondent suggested that the homelessness strategy should be more explicit in terms of setting out the Council’s role as a corporate parent. The Council’s role as corporate parent has already been set out in a report to Children and Young People’s Services Committee on 19 November 2014 (paragraph 8 of the Minute refers). Accommodation options and preventing homelessness are able to be referred for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Group of which Housing is an active participant. It is therefore not deemed necessary to include an explicit reference in relation to corporate parenting within the main body of the homelessness strategy. However, it has been added as an ongoing action in the action plan for 2015-16.

5.4 No changes have been made to the draft Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018, other than editing corrections. A final draft is provided as **APPENDIX I** for Committees approval.

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 or 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 Equality Act 2010 supersedes all previous equalities legislation. An equality impact assessment for the revised policy has been completed and is provided as **APPENDIX II**. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Head of Housing and Property, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Integrated Children's Services, Senior Solicitor – Property and Contracts (Paul Nevin), the Principal Accountant (Lorraine Paisey), Equal Opportunities Officer (Don Toonen), 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 Communities Committee with the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken on the draft Moray Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018 and seeks Committee approval to implement the Strategy.**

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Background Papers: With author
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