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**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**SUBJECT: LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW 2015-16**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of progress on the outcomes of the Local Housing Strategy 2013-2018.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III F (10) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the implementation of the Council's strategic housing plan.

**2. BACKGROUND**

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

- (i) **considers and notes the progress made on achieving the planned outcomes and actions of the Local Housing Strategy 2013-2018;**
- (ii) **approves the updated Local Housing Strategy Action Plan as set out in APPENDIX I; and**
- (iii) **approves the proposed change to the presentation of analysis of the operation of the Allocations Policy detailed at Para 4.4.5.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 On 23 April 2013, this Committee approved the Local Housing Strategy 2013-2018 (LHS) for publication and implementation (paragraph 8 of the minute refers). The LHS aims to "ensure that sufficient good quality, affordable housing is available to meet the needs of people living in or requiring housing in Moray". The LHS uses the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) 2011 as its key evidence base.
- 3.2 On 18 August 2015, this Committee considered the progress at that time, and approved an updated LHS Action Plan for 2015-16 (paragraph 9 of the minute refers).

#### 4. **LHS PROGRESS**

##### 4.1 The LHS is structured around 6 Priorities:-

- Priority 1: To address housing need and improve access to housing
- Priority 2: To meet our legal duties to homeless households
- Priority 3: To assist people with particular housing needs
- Priority 4: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and address fuel poverty and climate change
- Priority 5: To improve the condition of Moray's housing stock
- Priority 6: To promote successful, safe, sustainable communities and social inclusion

##### 4.2 Each LHS Priority details the LHS outcomes, the current legislative and policy context, what the key issues and drivers are and the planned actions. The LHS Performance Framework lists key performance indicators (KPIs), pertinent to the delivery of the LHS Outcomes. These indicators predominantly use publicly available data sources. To avoid duplication, the indicators predominantly match those currently used for other purposes within the Council.

##### 4.3 A commentary on progress on each LHS Priority is provided below. Progress on the planned actions is provided in the updated Action Plan at **APPENDIX I**. The actions have been identified on the basis that they will contribute towards the achievement of the LHS outcomes. Full details of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are available at **APPENDIX II**. The KPIs provide a measure of progress towards achieving the outcomes.

##### 4.4 **Priority 1: To address housing need and improve access to housing**

###### **Outcome: There is an adequate supply of affordable housing**

##### 4.4.1 During 2013/14, the Council agreed to a future programme of Council house building that will deliver 500 houses over the next 10 years

##### 4.4.2 New affordable housing supply in Moray is delivered through the Moray Strategic Local Programme. The affordable housing programme is the subject of a detailed report elsewhere on this agenda. The Scottish Government's Grant Planning Target for 2015/16 allowed for a total programme spend of £5.664m, with an outturn spend of £5.337m, which represented 94% of the target. 96 new affordable houses were completed during 2015/16. These were all Council houses.

##### 4.4.3 During 2015/16, the Council and its Common Housing Register partners have implemented an online register for households interested in mid-market rent properties<sup>1</sup>. This register has been publicised via email, on a phased and

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<sup>1</sup> The Register is available online at

<https://liveforms.homeconnections.org.uk/HomeConnections/QuestionnaireStart.aspx?gid=316>

targeted basis, to housing list applicants. To date 400 emails have been sent, and approximately 25% have gone on to register. Although there are no mid-market rent properties in Moray at present, the Register provides valuable insights into the size, type and location of demand for this tenure, which will inform the next Housing Need and Demand Assessment and LHS.

**Outcome: Social rented housing is allocated equitably**

4.4.4 The Council's Allocations Policy aims to allocate available social housing in a manner which is proportionate to current housing need, and make best use of Council housing stock. The operation of the Allocations Policy is reviewed annually. The allocations quotas to the Homeless, Waiting and Transfer lists are also reviewed annually. A detailed analysis of the operation of the Allocations Policy, including quotas for 2016/17 was considered by this Committee on 21 June 2016 (paragraph 8 of minute refers).

4.4.5 Housing and Property propose a change to the way the operation of the Allocations Policy is presented to Communities Committee. From summer 2017, it is proposed that a reduced annual analysis of the operation of the Allocations Policy is included in the LHS Review from summer 2017. Detailed analysis of the housing needs of Housing List applicants and availability of social housing will be key influences on the findings of the Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2017.

**4.5 Priority 2: To meet our legal duties to homeless households**

**Outcome: People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness**

4.5.1 A report on the progress of the Homelessness Strategy 2015-2018 is presented elsewhere on this agenda, along with the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for September 2016 – August 2017.

4.5.2 Housing and Property has implemented a restructure of its strategy, policy and information services, and as part of this restructure, there are plans to integrate homelessness strategic planning activity into the next Local Housing Strategy 2018-2023.

**Outcome: People have access to a range of housing options**

4.5.3 In October 2010, the Council introduced a Housing Options Team to provide information and advice to those who are in housing need. This "Housing Options" approach considers an individual's options and choices in the widest sense. In 2015/16, 56% of housing options service users chose not to complete a homeless application. Of those, 246 (22.2%) households remained in their current accommodation, 104 (9.2%) secured accommodation with families and friends, 69 (6.1%) secured private rented accommodation and 53 (4.7%) secured social housing, 16 (1.4%) becoming a lodger and only 3 (0.27%) embarking on home ownership. The service is continuing to engage with the private rented sector to develop it as a viable housing option.

**Outcome: There is an adequate and appropriate supply of temporary accommodation for homeless households**

- 4.5.4 Since October 2011, the Council has been annually reconfiguring its supply of temporary accommodation to reflect the changing context of homelessness in Moray. This aims to meet current demand and keep expenditure within the temporary accommodation budget. Ongoing reconfiguration of temporary accommodation has been achieved to ensure there is a sufficient supply of good quality and appropriate temporary accommodation that meets the needs of homeless households. A detailed analysis of the Council's temporary accommodation needs is presented to Committee elsewhere on this agenda.

**Outcome: There is an adequate and appropriate provision of housing support for homeless households**

- 4.5.5 The Council's transitional support and tenancy sustainment team provide ongoing support for vulnerable households who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness or who need support to live independently and maintain a tenancy. The team also works closely with the supported accommodation team to help those who have become statutorily homeless. A detailed analysis of the Council's housing support service will be presented to Committee in November 2016.

**4.6 Priority 3: To assist people with particular housing needs**

**Outcome: There is an adequate supply of appropriate housing for older people**

- 4.6.1 Moray's population is ageing, and as a result the ratio of older people on the Housing List to amenity/sheltered relets remains steady at 3:1 in 2015/16. The Moray Strategic Local Programme continues to include a high proportion of amenity housing (30-40%) The ratio of households aged 75+ to extra care/very sheltered housing stock continues to increase year on year, due to the ageing population, but it is likely that this will reduce in 2015-18 when two planned new build extra care developments are completed (approx. 60 units).
- 4.6.2 On 24 June 2015 the new Accessible Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance became a material consideration for planning applications. The Guidance aims to increase the supply of accessible housing in the private sector. Consultation on a revised Accessible Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance ended on 1 June 2016, the outcome of the consultation will be considered by Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 6 September 2016.

**Outcome: There is an adequate supply of appropriate housing for people with disabilities**

- 4.6.3 In 2011/12 there were 29 applicants for every relet of wheelchair accessible housing, in 2015/16 the ratio has reduced to 15:1, but remains double the

ratio for all applicants. The SHIP/SLP will continue to include new build wheelchair accessible housing in each of its developments to address this.

4.6.4 Demand for major disabled adaptations in Council housing continues to reduce. It is possible that the Council's new build programme, providing increased opportunity to move to adapted housing, is contributing to this reduction. The length of time taken to complete adaptation works also continues to reduce. The Integrated Joint Board and Moray Council have initiated a project to identify any potential to reduce delivery times. The key recommendations from this project will be available by March 2017.

4.6.5 The number of private sector grants for disabled adaptations has reduced. During 2011/12, 77 adaptations were completed taking an average of 202 days. In 2015/16, 66 adaptations were completed taking an average of 110 days, a significant reduction in delivery time.

**4.7 Priority 4: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and address fuel poverty and climate change**

**Outcome: People live in energy efficient housing that minimises greenhouse gas emissions**

**Outcome: People live in housing that they can afford to heat**

These outcomes are closely linked so activity and progress have been presented together.

4.7.1 With the support of Scottish Government grant and funding provided by utility companies under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), the Moray Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland (HEEPS) aims to deliver energy efficiency improvements to the homes of fuel poor households across Moray. In February 2016, the Council completed the programme of measures funded by the Government's 2014/15 grant allocation. A total of 207 households received measures, which included mainly external wall insulation and heating upgrades. Outturn spend of £1.083m was achieved against the 2014/15 funding allocation of £1.102m. Total programme spend was £1.587m, taking account of ECO funding of £243k and Council capital programme spend on insulating Council houses.

4.7.2 The Council secured Scottish Government funding of £991k for the 2015/16 Moray HEEPS programme, which delivered measures to 178 homes. The Council had until 31 May 2016 to spend the 2015/16 allocation. A report providing programme final outturns was presented to this Committee on 21 June 2016 (paragraph 6 of minute refers). Total spend of the 2016/17 programme, taking account of ECO funding and contributions from the Council's capital programme, was £1.440m. The Government has allocated a further £906k to the Council for the 2016/17 programme, which aims to deliver measures to 164 homes.

4.7.3 All houses included in the 2015-18 Moray Affordable Housing Programme will be built to "Silver" level of the Building Standards and will achieve a minimum B rated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

- 4.7.4 A locally-based energy advice service, Warmer Moray, became operational in December 2013. 88 households accessed the home visit service during 2015/16. REAP, one of the Council's partners in the Warmer Moray group, provided energy advice to a further 127 households at roadshows events and workshops. During 2015/16, 903 customers from Moray contacted the Home Energy Scotland telephone helpline for energy advice.
- 4.7.5 New Supplementary Planning Guidance on Climate Change forms part of the Moray Local Development Plan which was adopted on 31 July 2015.
- 4.7.6 The key indicator of fuel poverty is provided by the Scottish House Condition Survey (SCHS) and the prevalence of fuel poverty in Moray is amongst the highest in Scotland. Due to a time-delay in publishing SCHS data, the impact of LHS actions on fuel poverty will not be known for at least 2/3 years after they have been implemented. However, it is anticipated that fuel poverty actions such as the delivery of energy efficiency measures by HEEPS will have an immediate impact in reducing the energy costs of those households participating in the programme.

#### **4.8 Priority 5: To improve the condition of Moray's housing stock**

##### **Outcome: People live in housing of good quality**

- 4.8.1 The proportion of Council housing passing the Scottish Housing Quality Standard has increased from 90% to 96% between 2013/14 and 2015/16. Standards are equally high in Registered Social Landlord (RSL) stock. As at 31 March 2016, 49.8% of Council properties met the EESSH standard.
- 4.8.1 As at 31 March 2016, 75.76% of Council houses met the Moray Housing Standard. The Council's 2015/16 target for compliance with this standard was 75%. Officers are confident that good progress is being made towards achieving this standard and have increased the compliance target to 85% in 2016/17.
- 4.8.2 However, the LHS identified that disrepair and poor housing condition are more likely to be found in the private housing sector. The key indicators of stock condition for the private sector are provided by the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS). The time-lag associated with publication of SHCS data means that the impact of LHS actions on the key indicators will not be known until at least 3 years after implementation.

### **Empty Homes**

- 4.8.3 The Council's Empty Homes Strategy, implemented on 1 April 2015, aims to bring empty homes back into use. The Council Tax Register is the primary data source for empty homes strategic activity. Since October 2015, the Housing and Property Service have sent targeted letters, in batches, to owners of properties which fall within the scope of the Empty Homes Strategy or the Empty Homes Loan Fund i.e. empty more than 6 months and located within a settlement/rural community boundary. The letters offer the assistance of the Empty Homes Officer to bring properties back into use. Therefore, properties not defined as "residential" for Council Tax purposes are excluded from this publicity activity. Officers have been monitoring the response rates to each batch of letters, and have modified the target groups slightly over time, to improve the response rates.
- 4.8.4 Analysis of residential properties identified as unoccupied on the Council Tax Register has shown that although the numbers of properties remains fairly constant, there is significant "churn" on the register i.e. many properties change status relatively quickly without the Council's intervention. During the period 24 June 2015 to 30 June 2016, 497 letters have been sent, and 275 owners have responded. Of those, 170 required no further action, but 105 owners will require further support and assistance from the Empty Homes Officer.
- 4.8.5 The number of properties falling within the scope of the Strategy has reduced by 5% during 2015/16. It is likely that the introduction of the Council Tax Levy has also had an impact on the number of long term empty homes.
- 4.8.6 Moray Council's Empty Homes Loan Fund is available but to date no applications have been received. However, the Empty Homes Officer's advice and assistance has resulted in one property being brought back into use.
- 4.8.7 The Council has provided support to 2 bids for the Scottish Government's Town Centre Empty Homes Fund, both in Elgin Town Centre. One bid was successful and has resulted in planning proposals to renovate 6 properties at 211 and 211a-f High Street, Elgin (Victoria Bar Close).

### **4.9 Priority 6: To promote successful, safe, sustainable communities and social inclusion**

- Outcome: People live in attractive, socially balanced neighbourhoods, with good access to services**
- Outcome: Communities play an active role in setting and delivering local priorities**

- 4.9.1 During 2014/15, the Council reviewed the progress made on the Tenant Participation Strategy. The Strategy is supported by an action plan which monitors progress towards meeting three key objectives. These objectives help the Council to ensure the standards and outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter are met.

- 4.9.2 On 1 April 2014, all tenant organisations in Moray folded and were replaced by a new Moray-wide group (the Moray Tenant Forum) on the recommendation of an external review by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). With the new structure in place it is expected that many of the key actions in relation to tenant scrutiny will be delivered in 2015/16. The Housing Service is committed to involving tenants and other customers in the design and delivery of services to make sure they meet customers' needs and expectations.
- 4.9.3 The Moray Tenants Forum has recently formed a partnership with the Moray and Aberdeen Housing Partnership Tenants Association, with the aim of representing tenant interests and promoting tenant participation in Moray. The Moray Tenants Partnership will improve collaborative working and provide opportunities for joint scrutiny, peer review and access to training.
- 4.9.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance on Urban Design is included in the Moray Local Development Plan. The Moray Local Development Plan has identified a number of large key sites that will be subject to a master planning process that will seek to incorporate the principles of the Urban Design Guidance to create safe, well-designed and attractive neighbourhoods.

## **5. SUMMARY OF LHS PROGRESS**

- 5.1 During 2015/16, the Council and its partners made good progress in achieving the planned actions. Whilst the shortage of affordable housing remains acute, increased Scottish Government funding and ending the RTB will help meet need to address this. However, ensuring that there is an adequate supply of affordable housing will continue to be a major challenge throughout the life of the LHS and the Council's efforts in responding to this challenge will be focussed on making the best use of the available resources to deliver as many houses as possible.
- 5.2 Approximately 40% of the affordable houses completed are specially adapted to meet the needs of older people and those with physical disabilities. This proportion will be maintained in 2016/17. This investment is intended to rebalance supply with current and future demand and contribute to the Integration of Health and Social Care agenda.
- 5.3 The revised Supplementary Planning Guidance on Accessible Housing has the potential to increase the supply of amenity housing for sale on the open market.
- 5.4 The Council's Housing Options Team continues to prevent and alleviate homelessness by providing advice and assistance to individuals who approach the Council because they are in housing need.
- 5.5 Although the two key drivers of fuel poverty – energy prices and household income – are outwith the Council's control, the energy efficiency advice service and measures delivered by the HEEPS programme will go some way to alleviating fuel poverty.



## **6. LHS ACTION PLAN**

- 6.1 The LHS Action Plan has been updated for 2016/17 but the changes are minimal, as most of the actions will continue throughout the term of the LHS. A new action has been added to Priority 5 regarding implementation of new Third Party Reporting Guidance associated with Landlord Registration, which aims to improve property conditions in the private rented sector.

## **7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015-17 Plan**

The Local Housing Strategy focuses a set of outcomes that contribute to the achievement of Moray 2026 priorities, in particular:

- A growing, diverse and sustainable economy
- Adults living healthier, sustainable, independent lives safeguarded from harm

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

It is a requirement of the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act that local authorities have a Local Housing Strategy. Detailed guidance has been produced by the Scottish Government.

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

There are no direct resourcing implications associated with this report. Any financial implications arising from the action plan will be met within existing resources.

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

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

### **(e) Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

### **(f) Property**

There are no property requirements/implications arising directly from this report.

### **(g) Equalities**

It is a statutory requirement that equality issues should be addressed in the LHS. Data and evidence about the particular housing and support needs of equalities groups has been gathered as part of the Council's Housing Need and Demand Assessment. The LHS sets out how the Council intends to address these needs. The LHS includes an Equalities Impact Assessment. Equality groups were consulted as part of the preparation of the LHS.

### **(h) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Corporate Director (Environmental Services), Head of Housing and Property, Head of Development Services, Gary Templeton (Principal Planning Officer), the Head

of Community Care, Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), Legal Services Manager (Property and Contracts), Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer), Corporate Policy Unit Manager, the Community Planning and Development Manager, Equal Opportunities Officer and senior managers within Housing and Property and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 This report presents an assessment of progress on delivery of the Outcomes within the Local Housing Strategy 2013-2018, during 2015/16. This report presents the Key Performance Indicators associated with these Outcomes and an updated LHS Action Plan for 2016/17. This report also proposes a change to the way the analysis of the operation of the Allocations Policy is presented in future.**

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Background Papers: with author  
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