

**REPORT TO: AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE ON 23 JUNE 2010**

**SUBJECT: HOUSING INSPECTION – IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 Following the Scottish Housing Regulator's inspection of the Council's housing services in 2008 and publication of the inspection report in January 2009, the Communities Committee agreed an Improvement Plan in response to the issues raised. This report presents the second six monthly progress report on the plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the management of housing.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Audit and Performance Review Committee:-**
- (i) scrutinises this progress report; and**
  - (ii) notes that a further progress report will be presented to this Committee in January 2011.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) carried out an inspection of the Council's housing services during September/October 2008. Following the inspection, the Regulator published its inspection report in January 2009. The Committee will recall that the Council achieved gradings for Housing Management (A); Asset Management (B) and Homelessness (C). For any C graded service, the SHR requires that an Improvement Plan is agreed and implemented. The Regulator requires that a report on the Improvement Plan is submitted no later than April 2011.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 24 March 2009, the Communities Committee agreed improvement plans for wider service issues, housing management and asset management (paragraph 16 of the Minute refers). The Homelessness Improvement Plan was subject to comment by the Regulator. The final agreed Homelessness Improvement Plan was subsequently presented to the Committee on 19 May 2009 (paragraph 16 of the Minute refers). At that time, it was agreed that the first progress report would be presented to Committee in December 2009.
- 3.3 The full Improvement Plan is detailed in the appendices to this report. **APPENDIX I** covers service wide issues, housing management and asset management. There are a limited number of improvement actions arising from

inspection for housing management and asset management. Progress on these elements of the plan is not formally monitored by the Regulator.

- 3.4 **APPENDIX II** details the Homelessness Improvement Plan, which is subject to formal monitoring by the Regulator.
- 3.5 The first progress report was considered by the Communities Committee at its meeting on 1 December 2009 (paragraph 15 of the Minute refers). At that time, it was agreed that the timescales for certain actions should be reviewed in light of the additional workload falling to the Housing Service following the flooding in Moray in September 2009. It was also agreed that discussion be initiated with the Scottish Housing Regulator on proposed changes. Following the Communities Committee meeting, reviews were held on timescales which indicated that there were no material changes arising. On this basis, contact was not made with the Regulator at that time.

#### **4. PROGRESS**

- 4.1 The detail provided in the appendices provides a commentary on progress achieved. For each of the sections of the Improvement Plan, progress can be broadly assessed as follows:-

##### **4.2 Service wide issues**

- 4.2.1 Progress has been achieved across most actions since the earlier report to Committee. The decision to implement the Designing Better Services (DBS) programme in the housing service as Tranche 2 of the implementation programme does have some impact on the timescales projected for some actions. As an example, the tenant survey has been deferred from 2010 until 2011 to enable the changes envisaged through DBS to be implemented prior to seeking tenants' views on service quality. In addition, the participation of housing activities in the ongoing Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) initiative across the Council is deferred whilst DBS implementation is ongoing.

##### **4.3 Housing Management**

- 4.3.1 Progress since the last report has been positive with the agreement and implementation of feedback arrangements on anti social behaviour complaints.

#### 4.4 **Asset Management**

4.4.1 Progress since the last report has been positive with the completion of the Asset Management Strategy for the Council's housing stock.

4.4.2 At its meeting on 5 March 2010, the Housing Sub Committee agreed that the programmed repairs policy review be deferred until later in 2010 as the implementation of DBS is likely to impact on policy and procedural issues which would otherwise be considered as part of the review (paragraph 5 of the Minute refers).

#### 4.5 **Homelessness**

4.5.1 The most challenging area of the Improvement Plan is that of homelessness. It is also the key area of the Plan which will be formally reviewed by the Scottish Housing Regulator in April 2011, as the Council received a 'C' Grading for its homelessness services. The earlier progress report identified that the Housing Needs Team worked under extreme pressure, particularly following the flooding in Moray in September 2009.

4.5.2 As can be seen from the detail presented in **APPENDIX II**, considerable progress is being made with the Improvement Plan. In particular, the Council achieved its targets for increases in the supply of temporary accommodation in 2009/10. A number of process and monitoring improvements have been made in the management of temporary accommodation, enabling the Council to address earlier criticisms. While the Council continues to experience breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, these are much reduced and continued effort is being made to avoid future breaches.

4.6 Monitoring of the Improvement Plan will continue, with a further progress report to be presented to the Communities Committee on 7 December 2010 and thereafter to the Audit and Performance Review Committee.

### 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

Improving the quality of service provision is identified as a priority within the Service Improvement Plan.

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

The Council is required to implement the Improvement Plan agreed with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

#### **(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

**(d) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has been carried out with the Director of Community Services, the Principal Accountant (Lorraine Paisey) and senior Managers in the Housing Service.

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This progress report has identified the progress achieved in implementing the agreed Improvement Plan following the Scottish Housing Regulator's inspection of the Council's housing services.**

Author of Report:	Jill Stewart, Chief Housing Officer
Background Papers:	Held by CHO and lead officers
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