

REPORT TO: SAFER AND STRONGER STRATEGIC GROUP ON 3 DECEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

BY: CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Homelessness Strategy 2010 - 2015 to the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group:-

- (i) notes that the draft Homelessness Strategy will be issued for consultation;
- (ii) considers any comments that it wishes to make on the draft Strategy; and
- (iii) notes that the final strategy will be presented to the Communities Committee in April 2010.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Executive required local authorities to submit a Homelessness Strategy in 2003. The first Homelessness Strategy was agreed at Community Services Committee on 9 April 2003 (para 7 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 The Homelessness Strategy set out the key challenges in tackling homelessness in Moray for the five year period 2003 to 2008 and developed a strategy action plan.
- 3.3 The Council and partner organisations worked to progress the actions detailed within the strategy action plan, key actions fully implemented from the original strategy are as follows:

Prevention

- The Scottish Churches Housing Action “Gathering the Threads” training programme for staff, partners and the voluntary sector on understanding homelessness, funding, relationships and partnerships;
- The development of Moray Fresh Start and the “starter pack” initiative for new tenants who have experienced homelessness. This resulted from the partnership work of Scottish Churches Housing Action with the ecumenical steering group of Church organisations;
- Development of referrals and protocols with other agencies e.g. support services, partner organisations etc;
- Review of the operation of the previous rent deposit guarantee scheme and the launch of the Moray Keyfund;
- Development and implementation of the Furniture with Rent Scheme;
- Review of the Allocations Policy and the introduction of three lists (waiting, transfer and homelessness) with annual targets identified for each list;

Information and Advice

- Homepoint Audit and Accreditation of Information and Advice Service;
- Development and ongoing review of a range of posters and leaflets;
- Development and annual update of the Housing Options Guide for Moray;
- Homepoint training for staff involved in the delivery of information and advice;
- Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau for the delivery of independent information and advice;
- Ongoing development and improvements of the in-house Advice and Information Service;
- ‘Happy to translate’ toolkit;
- All leaflets and appropriate information in “Plain English” and crystal marked.

Accommodation

- Modelling exercise to assist in identifying the Council's approach to the 2009 and 2012 target for the abolition of priority need;
- Development and implementation of a Private Sector Leasing Scheme;
- The development of a Temporary Accommodation Strategy;
- Re-provision of Cluny Annexe, Buckie;

4. REVISED REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 As a result of the Spending Review completed by the Scottish Government in November 2007 a Concordat was proposed between the devolved Scottish Government and local authorities. The proposal which has been agreed involves local authorities reporting outcomes in a Single Outcome Agreement removal of ring fencing from a variety of funding streams.
- 4.2 Included within these arrangements are the funding and reporting arrangements for homelessness strategies. The Scottish Government has removed the ring fencing from the Homelessness Task Force grant and as of 2009/10 reporting of homelessness strategy activity will be included in the Single Outcome Agreement.
- 4.3 As part of revised reporting arrangements it was also suggested that the Local Housing Strategy becomes the single overarching document which will address strategic activity related to homelessness, housing support, and the private sector, rather than requiring separate strategies. Local authorities could continue to produce separate strategies for internal purposes they will not be required to submit them to the Scottish Government.
- 4.4 In recognising the importance of tackling homelessness in Moray, the Communities Committee agreed to the development of a revised Homelessness Strategy on 19 August 2008 (para 8 of the Minute refers).

5. THE DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

- 5.1 The process of developing the draft Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015 has now been completed. This has involved meetings with members of the Homelessness Straggly Group for comment. Comments have been received and the Homelessness Strategy has been amended. The revised draft is now attached as **APPENDIX I**.
- 5.2 The overall aim of the Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015 is:
- “to prevent homelessness where possible, but when it does arise, to ensure appropriate assistance and support is provided”.
- 5.3 The objectives of the strategy will continue to focus on:

- prevention
- provision of accommodation
- support services and sustaining solutions

5.4 **Consultation**

- 5.4.1 The draft Homelessness Strategy has been circulated to members of the Homelessness Strategy Group. Members of this group include representatives from the following partner agencies:

Moray Council

Housing Services,
Social Work (Community Care/Children and Families/Criminal Justice)
Educational Services
Environmental Health Services

NHS Grampian
Moray Women's Aid
Turning Point Scotland
Action for Children
Aberlour Childcare Trust
Grampian Police
Langstane Housing Association
Moray Housing Partnership
Grampian Housing Association
Moray Citizen's Advice Bureau

- 5.4.2 Following approval of the draft strategy by Committee, further consultation with service users will be undertaken.
- 5.4.3 The consultation process will end on 31 January 2010 and the final strategy will be presented to the Communities Committee in April 2010.

6. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

The Single Outcome Agreement and service Improvement Plan both have priorities regarding the shortage of affordable housing and tackling homelessness. The Homelessness Strategy has been developed to assist with these priorities.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

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

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the grant previously received from the Scottish Executive to assist in the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy has had its "ring fencing"

removed and is now part of the Council's overall Revenue Support grant settlement received from the Scottish Government.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services, Chief Housing Officer, Housing Programmes Manager, Head of Financial Services, Head of Children and Families, Head of Community Care, Community Planning and Development Manager, Senior Area Housing Manager and managers within the Housing Service, who agree with the contents of this report. The draft Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015 has been circulated to members of the Homelessness Strategy Group. Following any amendments to the draft strategy proposed by Committee, it is proposed that further consultations be carried out with service users.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report presents the draft Homelessness Strategy to the Safer and Stronger Strategic Group for comment and to note that the final strategy will be presented to the Committee in April 2010.**

Author of Report:	June Shennan, Homelessness Strategy and Development Manager
Background Papers:	Held on file by June Shennan
Ref:	