

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

Homeless and Rough Sleeping Action Group Recommendations

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider the further recommendations of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) set up by the Scottish Government;**
- 1.2 Agree to extend the Housing First Pilot due to HARSAG recommendations and to await outcomes from the consortium detailed in 2.9.**
- 1.3 Consider a future report detailing progress on the rapid rehousing plan and the changes this will bring to the homelessness service and the strategic action plan.**

2. Background/Discussion

- 2.1 A report was provided to the Communities Committee on the 31st May 2018. This provided information about the work of The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG). Communities Committee asked for an update report to be provided to the next committee meeting.
- 2.2 As agreed at the Communities Committee meeting of 31st May 2018 a letter was sent to the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning raising concerns about the potential impacts on rural authorities of implementing HARSAG recommendations.
- 2.3 Since the previous committee there has been 2 further sets of recommendations from HARSAG. The final recommendations were published on the 27th June and can be seen [here](#). The Scottish Government have advised that they are accepting the recommendations, however it is still unclear how these will be implemented and if legislation will be required.
- 2.4 A meeting was held on the 24th July, attended by the heads of service (Housing and equivalent) of the Northern and Islands Hub authorities. In attendance alongside Aberdeenshire Council were Highland Council, The Moray Council, Western Isles Council, Orkney Council and Shetland Council. All authorities had the same concerns about the impacts of the recommendations in rural areas. All authorities plan to write to the Minister to raise their concerns. Some of the authorities present are concerned about unintended consequences and the potential for homelessness to be exacerbated due to applicants feeling this is the only route into social housing.

- 2.5 To comply with the recommendations the authority now need to develop a 5 year rapid rehousing transition plan (RRTP). This has to be completed in draft form by the end of December 2018 with a final costed plan being in place by March 2019. The RRTP needs to take account of anyone who is at risk of rough sleeping and how they can be rehoused permanently as quickly as possible. This is not something that can be done by housing in isolation and will impact on the local development plan and require close involvement from the Health & Social Care Partnership and Education colleagues, amongst others. The plan will also touch on the housing first model and the provision of supported accommodation for those with very high needs.
- 2.6 Aberdeenshire Council will receive funding of £877k in the current financial year from the Scottish Government. This funding is to be used for homelessness and temporary accommodation. As this funding is being received in this financial year, for this financial year, homelessness service plans are already in place to ensure the funding is utilised, where possible, to deal with some of the recommendations from HARSAG and other preventative measures. These include a homeless prevention fund, instant access to funds for frontline staff and an increase in the housing first project to deal with cuckooing, which is when drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person. The funding will enable a number of positive, preventative activities to be undertaken during the financial year to ensure favourable outcomes for individuals and families utilising the homeless service.
- 2.7 It is unclear at this stage what implications there may be for authorities if they fail to produce a RRTP. The documentation to be completed can be seen [here](#). The development of a rapid rehousing plan will be a major piece of work and it is planned to use some of the Scottish Government funding to second someone to carry out this task which cannot be carried out within current resources.
- 2.8 The Scottish Government have also announced a £21 million fund to assist authorities in moving to a long term rapid rehousing approach. It is still unclear at this stage how this will be distributed, however it is thought that authorities will need to bid for the funding. It is likely Aberdeenshire Council would require significant funding to comply due to the complexities of a rural location. Should the RRTP suggest a need for more funding than is available it is unknown how this would be dealt with. Having a fully developed RRTP will ensure we are in a position to make a bid for funding.
- 2.9 One of the HARSAG recommendations is for all authorities to have a Housing First scheme. Aberdeenshire Council have had a pilot scheme in place for over a year and the initial outcomes from this scheme are very promising with significant changes in behaviours and financial savings made to partners. Social Bite have recently announced funding for housing first also. This funding will come to a consortium including Aberdeen Cyrenians, The Foyer, Turning Point, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council. This project will dovetail alongside our own project for an initial period of 2 years and will commence from October 2018. Although the pilot was initially for 12 months with this recent announcement it is proposed the pilot is extended until October 2019 to assess how both projects fit alongside each other and how RRTP's influence the housing first projects in the area.

- 2.10 Homelessness is included within the council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS). Leading from the LHS the Options and Homelessness team have 4 detailed action plans looking at the operational planning around the strategic objectives. The Homelessness Action Plan is monitored by a group including internal and external partners who meet quarterly and is a very detailed plan.
- 2.11 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3. Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider and take decision on this item in terms of Section D. 3.3.1a of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance for a decision on any Housing policy issue and resource matter (within agreed budgets).

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommendations are for information at this stage and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics. The RRTP will require an EIA and this will be included in a future report.
- 4.2 There are staffing and financial implications. To be able to develop a meaningful fully costed RRTP by March an additional person would need to be seconded to do this although additional funding is being provided by the Scottish Government to develop RRTP's. Depending on the outcomes of the RRTP it is likely that significant funding would need to be invested into new housing to supply the demand. Further implications will be identified and fed back via the RRTP report once completed.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level - Changes in government policy, legislation and regulation – As discussed throughout the report these changes could have significant implications if they progress. The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level – Affordable Housing – The recommendations would mean a requirement to have additional social housing across the area.

Stephen Archer
Director Infrastructure Services

Report Prepared by: Allan Jones, Housing Manager (Options and Homelessness)

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