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**REPORT TO: HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE ON 21 JUNE 2022**

**SUBJECT: ALLOCATIONS POLICY ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the Council's Allocations Policy during 2021/22.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III G (11) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the preparation and implementation of strategic housing plans.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- (i) considers and notes the performance identified within the report;**
- (ii) agrees the allocations quotas for 2022/23 detailed at Paragraph 5.4 of this report; and**
- (iii) agrees the service developments of £41k per annum detailed at paragraph 7.4.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council has considered performance monitoring information on the operation of its Housing Allocation Policy annually since 2005. The most recent report was presented to Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee on 8 June 2021 (Paragraph 16 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 The Communities Committee approved the Moray Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2019-2024 on 2 April 2019 (Paragraph 8 of the Minute refers). The LHS sets out the Council's approach to addressing housing need and homelessness, property condition and fuel poverty. The operation of the Allocations Policy is a key factor in the delivery of LHS outcomes.

3.3 The Communities Committee approved a revised Allocations Policy on 5 February 2019 (Paragraph 9 of the Minute refers) for implementation from 1 May 2019. A further review of the Allocations Policy is included in the Local Housing Strategy Action Plan 2022-24 presented elsewhere on this agenda.

#### 4. **ANALYSIS OF HOUSING LIST ALLOCATION AND DEMAND TRENDS**

4.1 Statistical information on the operation of the policy is presented in **APPENDIX I**. The statistics for 2020/21 and 2021/22 should be viewed in the context of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions in activity.

4.2 **Table 1** provides details of the housing list for the last 5 years. This shows that the Transfer List and Waiting List have increased but there has been a reduction in the Homeless List over the last 5 years. However, these reductions may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, it is possible that persons in shielding categories may have been deterred from making an application during the pandemic. With the exception of 2020/21, the Transfer List has been increasing consistently since 2013/14 and this has been attributed to the new build housing programme with its emphasis on accessible housing and larger family-sized accommodation. Housing List trends were considered in depth as part of the development of Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) 2017 and the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2019-2024, and were reflected in the revised Allocations Policy implemented on 1 May 2019.

4.3 **Table 2** details the size and type of housing required by applicants on the housing list. Over the past 5 years, there have been significant increases in demand for larger 4+ bed family sized housing and also amenity/accessible housing. The latter is consistent with the projected demographic changes in Moray and the ageing population. Demand for sheltered housing has reduced despite demographic changes.

4.4 **Table 3** provides summarised information on the 1st area preferences of current housing list applicants. It shows that area preferences are broadly in proportion to the number of dwellings (all tenures) in each Housing Market Area.

4.5 Applicants who apply for housing are able to state where they want to live. This allows them the choice of any, or all, of the 62 lettings areas across Moray. These choices can be driven by urgency and availability, rather than a desire to live in a particular area, settlement or town. To support strategic planning for affordable housing, applicants are asked separately to state their 1st, 2nd and 3rd areas of preference (i.e. where they would ideally choose to live). This second, strategic question is the source used to inform the Council's approach to delivery of new affordable housing across geographical areas, and is reflected in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).

4.6 **Table 4** provides details of the number of re-lets from Council stock in 2021/22. When this is compared to the housing list as at 31 March 2022, it shows that there were 8 applicants on the list per re-let (8:1) during 2021/22. However this pressure varies greatly across house types and sizes:

- 1 bed general needs (27:1);
- 2 bed general needs (4:1); and
- 4 bed (69:1).

4.7 The table also shows that there is no evidence of significant migration between Housing Market Areas (HMA).

4.8 **Table 5** shows that there is an increasing trend in re-let rates, as intended, with the introduction of the revised Allocations Policy in May 2019. Increasing the numbers of vacancies from existing stock will assist the Council to successfully deliver the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Although the number of relets reduced in 2020/21, this can be attributed to the COVID-19 restrictions on house-moves in all tenures for part of 2020.

## **5. ALLOCATIONS QUOTAS FOR THE HOUSING LIST**

5.1 The housing list consists of three separate lists (waiting, transfer and homelessness). The Homeless List includes those who have been assessed as statutorily homeless, the Waiting List consists of applicants who are waiting for a council house, and includes current RSL tenants; and the Transfer List of those who are current Council tenants and who need or want to move. The proportion of allocations to be made to each list is determined annually by Committee.

5.2 **Table 6** shows the proportion of allocations made to applicants from the 3 housing lists, over the last 5 years.

5.3 The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan aims to minimise the use of temporary accommodation and provide permanent housing options to homeless households as quickly as possible. The Homeless List quota proposed below is intended to strike an appropriate balance between the need to implement the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and the need to minimise any unintended consequences of increased quota i.e. that the Homeless List would be seen by applicants as the quickest route into permanent housing, and would significantly increase as a result.

5.4 Historically the Council has taken a pragmatic view and agreed quotas intended to strike an acceptable balance between all lists. The quotas proposed for 2022/23 remain unchanged from the 2020/21 targets and are:

<b>List</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>
Homeless List	50%	+/-5%
Waiting List	32%	+/-5%
Transfer List	18%	+/-5%

## **6. NEW BUILD LETTINGS PLAN**

6.1 The new build lettings plan was introduced in 2015. A revised Lettings Plan was approved by Housing and Community Safety Committee on 8 February 2022 (Para 7 of the draft Minute refers). The Plan sets out how the Council will deviate from the Allocations Policy in identifying the first tenant in new

build properties, with the aim of establishing successful, sustainable new communities, and this includes deviation from Housing List quotas.

- 6.2 **Table 7** shows there were 57 Council new lets during 2021/22. There were new build handovers at the end of 2020/21 which were not let until the start of 2021/22.
- 6.3 **Table 8** shows the proportions of allocations from each List, and that 47% of new lets were allocated to Transfer List applicants.

## **7. HOUSING INFORMATION SYSTEMS ASSISTANT**

- 7.1 The housing management system, supplied by Northgate, comprises various modules specific to our business areas. The system is central to the day to day operations of the Housing and Property service. Northgate invest in the system on an on-going basis, to take account of statutory duties, legislative changes and the need for reporting and measuring performance. Consequently, two product releases are made each year which include new modules and enhancements. Northgate will continue to provide produce support whilst we continue to install product releases and keep the system up to date.
- 7.2 The Housing Online module was introduced in June 2021. Housing Online allows Housing List applicants to complete and maintain their application online. This module has the potential to be further developed to provide a wider range of online services to applicants and tenants.
- 7.3 The review of the Council's Allocations Policy referred to in Paragraph 3.3 above will require changes to be made to the Northgate system. This will involve scenario testing as the new policy interventions evolve as well as system changes required to implement any new policy. Since May 2019, the Housing Information Systems Officer has been the only staff member with the skills and experience to complete these client role tasks, and this has already been identified as a business continuity risk.
- 7.4 The HRA budget set in February 2022 included provision for service developments, which included recruitment of a 1.0 FTE Housing Information Systems Assistant. Officers seek approval to progress recruitment to this post. This would mitigate the business continuity risk and would provide the resource required to develop and implement ICT related service enhancements for housing list applicants and tenants, potentially increasing efficiency, as well as delivery of training to system users and facilitating knowledge transfer.

## 8. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

Moray 2027 and the Service Plan identify the need to address the shortage of affordable housing and tackle homelessness. The Allocations Policy seeks to make the best use of the Council's housing stock and promote healthier citizens and more people living well in their communities.

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

The primary legislation governing allocations of Council housing is contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. This legislation provides the Council with the discretion to develop allocation and local letting policies in line with local priorities.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out standards against which the Scottish Housing Regulator will assess local authorities as part of its inspection regime.

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

The financial implications of this report were included in the HRA Budget monitoring report considered by Housing and Community Safety Committee on 22 March 2022 (para 9 of the Minute refers). This cost of this post will be up to £13,622 from the 2022/23 budget and £40,865 per annum from 2023/24 onward.

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

Recruitment to the post detailed in Para 7.4 would mitigate a previously identified business continuity risk.

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

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

### **(f) Property**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

### **(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no impacts in relation to equal opportunities or the socio-economic duty as the purpose of the report is to inform Committee on performance.

### **(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts**

There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

### **(i) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning and Infrastructure), the Head of Housing and Property, Housing Needs Manager, Housing Services Manager, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Equal Opportunities Officer,

Legal Services Manager, and Lindsey Robinson (Committee Services Officer).

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 This report presents the annual review of the operation of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. It presents proposed allocations quotas for 2022/23, unchanged from 2021/22. The quotas proposed are intended to complement implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.**
- 9.2 The report also seeks approval to recruit a 1.0 FTE Housing Information Systems Assistant to mitigate the existing business continuity risk and facilitate ICT related service improvements.**

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