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**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 17 DECEMBER 2019**

**SUBJECT: RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of progress on development of Moray's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III G (10) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the implementation of the Council's strategic housing plan.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

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

- (i) **considers and notes the level of funding made available by the Scottish Government to deliver the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP);**
- (ii) **consider and agrees the revisions to the RRTP Action Plan, as detailed at Section 4 of the report;**
- (iii) **agrees that officers can prepare a revised RRTP for submission to the Scottish Government;**
- (iv) **agrees that the revised RRTP can be presented to this Committee at its meeting on 3 March 2020; and**
- (v) **notes that progress on the RRTP will be reported to this Committee as part of the review of the Local Housing Strategy.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up by Scottish Government in October 2017 to produce short and long-term solutions to end homelessness and rough sleeping. HARSAG recommended that "Each local authority area to develop and cost a 5-year 'Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan' by December 2018."

- 3.2 The Scottish Government asked that Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTP) aim to end rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation and end homelessness in Scotland in a 5 year period.
- 3.3 The Government initially announced investment in support of rapid rehousing transition following the publication of the HARSAG recommendations in June 2018. An initial £2m was made available to local authorities to support production of the plans. In June 2019, following discussions between the Scottish Government and COSLA, funding for rapid rehousing was increased from £15m to £24m over the first three years of rapid rehousing (£8m per annum from 2019/20). Funding will be paid through the Local Government General Revenue Grant in March 2021 for RRTP implementation undertaken in 2020/21.
- 3.4 The Scottish Government has indicated that whilst the use of RRTP funding will not be ring-fenced, it should not be used to backfill any funding requirements in running homelessness services. Local authorities will be expected to use the funding for the intended purpose of supporting the implementation of transformational change.
- 3.5 The RRTP is part of the suite of strategic documents which form the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2019-24. The Council's approach to rapid rehousing is reflected in the LHS and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). It will also be reflected in Health and Social Care Moray's Strategic Plan and Housing Contribution Statement.
- 3.6 On 20 November 2018, this Committee approved a draft RRTP (paragraph 5 of the Minute refers), which was subsequently submitted to the Scottish Government by the required deadline of 31 December 2018.
- 3.7 In February 2019, the Council received a feedback report from the Scottish Government on its RRTP, which made suggestions for improvement including provision of costings for the measures proposed in the plan, and clarification of mitigation actions included in the Equality Impact Assessment. The RRTP was amended in the light of this feedback.
- 3.8 In March 2019, the Council submitted an updated version of the RRTP to the Scottish Government. The revised version included a fully costed Action Plan setting the funding required to deliver the plan over a 5 year period. Details of the funding sought are provided below:

| <b>Implementation Year</b> | <b>Financial year</b> | <b>Bid submission</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| YEAR 1                     | 2019/20               | £182,657              |
| YEAR 2                     | 2020/21               | £597,037              |
| YEAR 3                     | 2021/22               | £598,051              |
| YEAR 4                     | 2022/23               | £597,037              |
| YEAR 5                     | 2023/24               | £597,037              |
| <b>Total</b>               |                       | <b>£2,571,819</b>     |

- 3.9 The Bid submission included funding for an additional Housing Occupational Therapist, additional housing support workers, a Homelessness Policy Officer,

an enhanced family mediation service, a basic furniture service and compensation to the Housing Revenue Account for void rent loss associated with holding lets for 'Housing First' clients. Officers believed this funding bid to be modest and proportionate.

- 3.10 In July 2019, the Scottish Government notified councils of their RRTP allocations for the first year 2019/20. The Council's allocation was only £97,000, significantly lower than the £182,657 identified in its Action Plan. On 2 December 2019, the Scottish Government confirmed that the Council's allocation for 2020/21 would be £93,000, again significantly lower than the £597,037 sought. In considering the level of the gap, it should be noted that a substantial proportion of the funding detailed in the original proposals were recurring costs.
- 3.11 The Scottish Government has advised that the 2019/20 and 2020/21 distributions of funding to local authorities did not take account of the costs and proposals set out in their RRTPs but rather was calculated on the basis of a three year average of homelessness assessments from published national homelessness statistics (HL1). The Scottish Government has advised that its approach to allocating funding has been a response to the significantly higher level of resources set out in local authorities' RRTPs than available for rapid rehousing and also to the wide variation in approaches and costings within plans.
- 3.12 Further Scottish Government funding of £8m for RRTPs remains to be allocated for 2021/22 but it is possible that it could be allocated on a plan-based approach. If this approach is adopted, officers would expect that the Council would receive a higher level of funding than the previous two years. However, assuming that there is no change, the Council would receive the same allocation for 2021/22 as the previous year and this would result in a total allocation for the first three years of the plan of **£283,000**. The decision to allocate funding over only a 3 year period whilst RRTPs have been developed for a 5 year period will create a further challenge to delivery and will require careful management. There is no indication at this stage of the level of funding expected for 2022/23 and 2023/24. It is now evident that the Council will not receive the level of funding it needs to deliver its RRTP and that meeting the initial ambitions of the plan will not be possible.

#### **4. REVISED MORAY RRTP**

- 4.1 The RRTP states that where homelessness cannot be prevented, the Council would implement its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan where appropriate. This means that homeless households would get:
- A settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible;
  - Time in any form of temporary accommodation kept to a minimum; and
  - Where temporary accommodation is required, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and within a community.
- 4.2 The RRTP strategic document sets out priorities for the next 5 years, which are:
- 1) Vulnerabilities/Support/Housing First/Housing Options
  - 2) Reconfiguring temporary Accommodation

### 3) Provision of permanent accommodation

- 4.3 Officers have reviewed the RRTP taking account of the resources available to deliver plan priorities. Understandably, this has necessitated a major scaling down of the level of transformational change in homelessness services set out in the original plan (available at [http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_1917.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1917.html)). Details of the amended RRTP Action Plan are provided at **APPENDIX I**. In revising the plan, officers have assumed that Council's funding allocation for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be £283,000. The revised plan covers only these 3 years and not the 5 year period of the original plan. It is anticipated that there will be no expenditure on the plan in 2019/20 and that the funding allocation will be carried forward to the next year.
- 4.4 The Housing Occupational Therapist post and the family mediation service have been omitted in the revised Action Plan. The Homeless Policy Officer is reduced from a full to a part-time post. The number of Housing Support staff working on Housing First has been reduced from 5 to 2 posts, supporting 10 tenancies per year instead of 15. The reduced resources will clearly impact the targets detailed in the RRTP, including those reducing homelessness in Moray, the use of temporary accommodation, additional tenancy sustainment and reduced evictions and the fast tracking of health/homelessness assessments.
- 4.5 It should be noted that a significant level of activity proposed in the Action Plan did not form part of the bid submission as there were no costs. This included:
- increasing the quota of housing allocations to homeless applicants to 50%;
  - working closely with partner housing providers and to review eviction policies to try and reduce the number of tenancy breakdowns/failures;
  - accessing specialist homeless prevention training for staff which will be funded through the North East, Highlands and Islands Hub Group; and
  - continuing to reconfigure the stock of temporary accommodation to ensure that the profile meets the service requirements.
- 4.6 It is proposed that, on the basis of the updated Action Plan, officers prepare a revised RRTP and associated performance indicators for submission to the Scottish Government. Whilst it is recognised that achieving the aims of the original RRTP was resource dependent, the revised plan will still seek to contribute to the transformation in homelessness services in Moray. The revised RRTP will be presented to this Committee at its meeting in March 2020.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The Local Housing Strategy focuses on a set of outcomes that contribute to the achievement of the Council's wider strategic aims and priorities, in particular meeting statutory obligations to homeless households.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

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 RRTP has been revised to take account of the resources made available by the Scottish Government to deliver the plan proposals in 2019/20 and 2020/21. An assumption has been that the Council will receive the same level of resources in 2020/21 and in 2021/22. Officers are confident that the Council can be expected to receive this level of resources.

Whilst not ring-fenced, the Scottish Government has advised local authorities that the funding allocation should be used for no other purpose than the delivery of RRTPs.

The RRTP Action Plan will be reviewed annually. This review will include a review of the financial implications at that time.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

Staffing proposals are included in the Action Plan (**APPENDIX I**). Staffing posts will be met from the Scottish Government's funding allocation. As the funding is for a fixed-term, any appointments made would also be made on a fixed term basis only. Human Resources will be consulted to agree appropriate contracts of employment. The RRTP Action Plan will be reviewed annually. This review will include a review of the staffing implications at that time.

**(f) Property**

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

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

The housing needs of equalities groups are identified in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS). A RRTP Equalities Impact Assessment has been developed and published.

The increase in the Allocations Policy quota for Homeless List applicants is necessary in order to meet the urgent housing needs of statutorily homeless people. The increase is modest to achieve an appropriate balance between the Homeless List and Waiting/Transfer List applicants, which include older people, people with a disability, and children living in overcrowded households.

**(h) Consultations**

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Acting Head of Housing and Property, the Chief Officer of Moray Integration Joint Board, the Acting Housing Strategy and Development Manager, the Housing Operations Manager, Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), Legal

Services Manager (Property and Contracts), Equal Opportunities Officer, Caroline Howie (Committee Services Officer) and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The Council's RRTP has been revised to take account of the resources made available by the Scottish Government to deliver it. This report asks the Communities Committee to agree the revisions of the plan prior to submission to the Scottish Government.**

Author of Report: Gordon McCluskey, Housing Needs Manager

Background Papers: with author

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