

## **REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 7 SEPTEMBER 2023**

### **Aberdeenshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) Update**

#### **1 Executive Summary/Recommendations**

**1.1** To update Committee on the progress being made by the Housing Service on the actions identified in the Aberdeenshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024.

#### **1.2 The Committee is recommended to:**

**1.2.1 Discuss and acknowledge the activities being undertaken jointly by Aberdeenshire Council Housing Service and partners to deliver the actions identified within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-24.**

**1.2.2 Consider new temporary accommodation charges as detailed in Appendix 4 and agree these should be reported to full council for agreement.**

**1.2.3 Agree to place the RRTP member officer group on hold until the new housing act is in place and detail around the homeless prevention duty is known.**

**1.2.4 Agree to a further update on progress in twelve months.**

#### **2 Decision Making Route**

**2.1** On 21 February 2019 Communities Committee agreed the submission of the Aberdeenshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024 to the Scottish Government.

Previously, on the 6 September 2018, Communities Committee had been briefed on the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), and the requirement to prepare a 5-year costed Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. On the 20 December 2019, they considered an update on the work of the RRTP Member Officer Working Group.

On 5 September 2019, members were advised of the progress that had been made during the first six months of the RRTP and requested that a further update be provided in six months. The report to have been provided in March 2020 was delayed due to the impact of Covid 19 but provided on 3 September 2020.

Further update reports were provided on 3 June 2021 and on 8 September 2022. Members agreed to receive a further update in 12 months.

This report provides an update on the implementation of Year 4 of the Aberdeenshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019-2024, in terms of developing a rapid rehousing approach to meeting the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness.

### 3 Discussion

- 3.1 The requirement to produce an RRTP arose from the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG), set up by the Scottish Government in October 2017 to produce both short and long term solutions to end homelessness and rough sleeping. The recommendations of the group provided a vision of a whole system approach with prevention of homelessness paramount and responsibility lying with all parts of the public sector. Their recommendations together with the outcomes of an inquiry into homelessness undertaken by the Local Government and Communities Committee of the Scottish Parliament resulted in the development of the Ending Homelessness Together high level action plan published in November 2018 and updated in October 2020, following HARSAG having been reconvened to provide further recommendations on action needed during the global pandemic and in the future to end homelessness.
- 3.2 Rapid Rehousing requires that where homelessness cannot be prevented it should be brief, with households accessing settled accommodation quickly and stays in temporary accommodation minimised. Move on accommodation should be sustainable to ensure that homelessness does not recur and that the cycle of homelessness is ended.
- 3.3 In the Aberdeenshire RRTP and Action Plan agreed by Communities Committee in February 2019 and submitted to the Scottish Government, a wide range of actions were identified across four main areas including homeless prevention, supply and access to permanent accommodation, temporary accommodation and support.
- 3.4 Since July 2019, as part of the distribution of the £24M Ending Homelessness Together Fund we have been awarded £1,422,000 to enable delivery of RRTP actions.

	RRTP Funding 2019-2024
2019/20 (Yr. 1)	£261,000
2020/21	£249,000
2021/22	£252,000
2022/23	£243,000
2023/24 (Yr. 5)	£227,000
Total	£1,232,000

- 3.5 In previous years we have produced a monitoring report for the Scottish Government using a template that focussed on activity and spend. This has been replaced for 2022/23 with a request for qualitative information to capture an overview of RRTP progress and challenges between 2019-2023.

The monitoring report, attached as **Appendix 1**, provides members with information on the progress made during Year 4 of the RRTP in the format that has been used previously while **Appendix 2** is the update requested by the Scottish Government.

- 3.6 Despite challenges which include the global pandemic, cost of living crisis and resettlement schemes, excellent progress has been made towards key rapid rehousing monitoring indicators during Year 4 of the plan.

These include:

- Homeless journey time reduced to 85 days.
- Homeless backlog (open homeless cases not under offer) reduced from a peak of 198 in October 2022 to 141 at March 2023 despite a 10% increase in homeless presentations during 2022/23.
- Average number of days spent in all temporary accommodation reduced to 83 days from 131 days in 2020.
- 128 households in temporary accommodation in March 2023 compared with 286 at March 2020.
- No breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order was recorded.
- Further 28 temporary properties flipped – providing a permanent tenancy and aiding resettlement by maintaining support networks and avoiding additional costs of moving.
- 70% of approaches for housing advice (426 households) resulted in positive housing outcomes being identified including homelessness being prevented.
- The Housing First team are supporting 100 tenancies with team at full capacity. Positive outcomes being achieved and excellent partnership working recognised.

Throughout 2022/23 we monitored homeless demand carefully, responded to changing legislation and built on existing partnerships to prevent homelessness where we could and identify appropriate sustainable housing options where that was not possible.

- 3.7 The Unsuitable Accommodation Order (UAO) was extended to all households in September 2021. Any placement of a homeless household in accommodation that is considered unsuitable, mainly bed and breakfast or hotel, for more than 7 days is considered a breach of the order. Temporary accommodation use is closely monitored to prevent breach of the UAO. This means the service retains 2 emergency housing residential units and has a number of council properties that are kept as temporary emergency accommodation to ensure we have places available to avoid the use of bed and breakfasts or hotels. Aberdeenshire Council are one of very few authorities that are avoiding breaching the UAO because of this approach. Providing this service comes at high void costs and in addition temporary accommodation rents are low in comparison to our neighbouring authorities. Due to the successful impact of the RRTP this has led to less use of temporary accommodation and shorter stays and although this is very positive this has led to a drop in income for the homeless service. Finally, the current charges are complex in the way they are set out which can lead to confusion for our customers. The service is therefore proposing some changes to charges to simplify them and to ensure the current service provision can be sustained. These changes are detailed in **Appendix 3**. Housing charges are reserved to full council and would need to be agreed there.
- 3.8 On 29 November 2022 the Homeless Persons (Suspension of Referrals between Local Authorities) (Scotland) Order 2022 was passed. Homeless households cannot be referred to another local authority in Scotland on the basis of their local connection status however the power to refer applicants to an authority in England and Wales remains. The impact of this change is being monitored and we are part of a national solutions group set up by the Scottish Government to consider and mitigate the impact of the change.
- 3.9 The Prevention Review Group, set up to progress work on preventing homelessness identified by HARSAG and in the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan outlined recommendations for legal duties to prevent homelessness in its report of February 2021. Aimed at reforming the homeless system and bringing together a wide range of public bodies with a focus on homeless prevention, it included a duty to “ask” and “act” where there is a risk of homelessness. The Scottish Government and COSLA consulted on the full raft of recommendations during December 2021 and April 2022. In January 2023, the Cabinet Secretary announced that the forthcoming Housing Bill to be introduced later this year would include new prevention of homelessness duties for public bodies. Workshops were held in March and June 2023 to raise awareness of these forthcoming duties and to guide future homeless prevention activity within refreshed RRTP activity beyond 2024.
- 3.10 There has been no indication from the Scottish Government whether RRTP funding will continue or whether there will be an ongoing requirement to have an RRTP. In addition the new Housing Bill has been delayed which in turn will delay the implementation of the Homeless Prevention Duty. At the RRTP Member Officer Working Group in May it was proposed the group is put on hold until there is further understanding on these issues. The group agreed with this

recommendation and the team will continue working operationally to get positive outcomes in the meantime.

#### 4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 This Report helps to deliver the Council Priority of Health & Wellbeing within the pillar “Our People” and the principle of “right people, right places, right time.” and the Council Priorities of Infrastructure and Resilient Communities within the pillar “Our Environment” and the principle tackling poverty and inequalities.

4.2 Implications

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Children and Young People`s Rights and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Climate Change and Sustainability		X	
Health and Wellbeing	IIA attached as Appendix 4		
Town Centre First		X	

4.3 There are no staffing or financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

4.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is included as **Appendix 4**. The following impact has been identified which can be mitigated as described :-

The experience of homelessness can have negative effects on the life chances of young people experiencing it directly or within households. Preventing homelessness or a speedy resolution minimises the negative effects.

- 4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level;

ACORP001 – Budget Pressures – mitigated by changes to temporary accommodation costs.

ACORP002 – Changes in Government Policy, Legislation and Regulation – mitigated by regular monitoring and review.

ACORP005 – Working with other Organisations – mitigated by adhering to procurement guidance and contract monitoring

ACORP006 - reputation management (including social media) – mitigated by checking performance and costs at other authorities.

ACORP007 - social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty & social inequality, demographic changes, crime, antisocial behaviour) – mitigated by ongoing monitoring of direct changes in demand for service and through multi agency partnership working and sharing information about trends.

- 4.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

ISR014 – Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness – The RRTP sets out to ensure we provide the best support possible.

ISR016 - Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required. Help deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy in relation to affordable housing supply

ISR017 - Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled – Ensure there are robust housing support services available.

## **5 Scheme of Governance**

- 5.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 5.2 The committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section D 7.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as this relates to a decision on policy and resource matters.

### **Alan Wood, Director Environment & Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by Allan Jones Housing Manager (Options and Homelessness) and Lorraine Stewart Team Leader (Change and Voids)

DATE : 4<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – RRTP Monitoring Report (Old Format)

Appendix 2 - Proposed RRTP return to Scottish Gov for 2022/23

Appendix 3 – Temporary Accommodation Charging

Appendix 4 – Integrated Impact Assessment