
COMMITTEE: Housing and Environment

DATE: 13 April 2010

DIRECTOR: Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT: Temporary Accommodation Strategy Update Report

REPORT NUMBER: H&E/10/028

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

On 26 August 2009 the Housing and Environment Committee approved the Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan 2009 – 2012 and requested that officers submit updates on a six monthly basis with an annual report detailing progress on key issues.

This report provides an update on the strategy's Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Committee:

- Note the progress being made on the outcomes identified within the Action Plan
- Agree that officers carry out a full review of the Strategy and report to Committee in April 2011 and present reports to Committee on aspects of the Strategy in the intervening period.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The strategy and action plan set the priorities for the expenditure of the Homeless Strategy and associated funding which will have to be within the resources available which may impact on the pace of delivery.

The report "Housing Access Centre – Homeless Options" was submitted to Committee on 16 February 2010 which provided the financial implications on the proposed hostel accommodation at Aberdon House and the development of Victoria House as a Housing Access Centre. Committee agreed provision for Aberdon House through the Housing Capital Programme 2010/11.

A detailed report will be provided to Committee on 25 May 2010 on the proposed development and costs for the Victoria House site.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Community Plan sets out our vision for the future of the city. Our vision is a city which is vibrant dynamic and forward looking, an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high quality services that meet their needs.

The delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan will support the following challenge in the community plan:

- ◆ Homes Challenge – improving the quality of housing and environment for individuals and the community and eradicating homelessness by 2011.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy will have a positive impact on equalities, human rights and social inclusion for this vulnerable section of the community.

A failure to provide appropriate temporary accommodation for homeless people may result in households without accommodation, sleeping rough or living in unsuitable accommodation longer, facing increased risk to their health and safety.

There are no direct Legal implications arising from the report.

There are no direct Personnel issues arising from this report.

There are no direct Equipment implications arising from the report.

There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from the report.

There are no direct Resource issues arising from this report.

There are no direct Property implications arising from the report.

6. REPORT

Since the strategy was written a number of changes have taken place within the Homelessness Service. The Homelessness Manager and Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Leasing Manager joined the service in November 2009. Roles and responsibilities have been realigned and proposals for future service developments were presented and approved by Committee in January 2010.

Lead officers identified in the Temporary Accommodation Action Plan and target dates have been revised to reflect these changes and it is proposed

that officers carry out a full review of the Strategy and report to Committee in April 2011. Officers will present reports to Committee on aspects of the Strategy in the intervening period.

A Strategy Operations Group is being re-established and will be responsible for taking forward some of the actions within the Temporary Accommodation and the Homelessness and Resettlement Strategy Action Plans. The first meeting of this group will be held on 23 March 2010 which will involve representatives from various sectors within the Council, RSL's, NHS Grampian and the voluntary sector.

Appendix 1 to this report provides an update on the Temporary Accommodation Action Plan and the progress being made on the following six outcomes:

- Increased access to mainstream permanent accommodation
- Appropriate use of SSST's where legislation permits, for homeless families or families threatened with homelessness
- Improved timescales for the turnover of temporary accommodation
- Appropriate support systems are in place for people in temporary accommodation and for those who have moved onto permanent accommodation
- Increase access to mainstream temporary accommodation for homeless households
- Address the varying needs of homeless households through the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Homelessness and Resettlement Strategy and Action Plan 2009 – 2013
- Homelessness Temporary Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan 2009 – 2012
- Homelessness Service Performance and Developments Towards the 2012 Target: Report to Committee 11 January 2010 and Full Council on 10 February 2010.
- Housing Access Centre – Homelessness Options: Report to Committee 16 February 2010.

8. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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Outcome 1: Increased access to mainstream permanent accommodation

Lets to homeless households:

The Strategy showed that the average number of lets to homeless households during 2008/09 was 44%. Since then, in the period April to January 2010 the average dipped to 43%, two percent below the target set for the year.

In order to alleviate the pressures on temporary accommodation and increase access to mainstream permanent accommodation, Full Council agreed in February to allocate 75% of all Council lets to homeless households for a three month period from April to June 2010. This will allow approximately 190 additional lets to homeless households which will make a significant impact on the blockages in temporary accommodation. A review of the annual targets for houses let to homeless households will be carried out over the next couple of months.

Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme:

The Housing and Environment Committee on 26 August 2009 agreed the commissioning of a Private Sector Leasing Scheme. Talks commenced with Aberdeenshire Council to take forward a joint procurement exercise for this service, however in November Aberdeenshire Council decided to withdraw from this. The specification for the PSL scheme is now nearing completion and will be going out to tender soon. It is expected that a contractor will be appointed in the summer 2010.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

The report Commissioning Homelessness Services was agreed at Housing and Environment Committee of 26 August 2009. Within this report it was recommended and agreed to proceed with a rent guarantee or rent deposit scheme which would be incorporated within the private sector leasing scheme. The Homelessness Service Manager has proposed that this scheme is not progressed and that it is replaced by a prevention fund.

Section 32A Housing (Scotland) Act 1987

On 7 January 2010 the Scottish Parliament agreed new regulations under Section 32A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 which allows greater use of the private rented sector for rehousing those made unintentionally homeless.

The Council will have the option to negotiate short assured tenancies with private landlords ensuring stringent conditions are met in terms of informed consent, housing support, and whether it is affordable to the tenant. At the conclusion of the tenancy between 6 and 12 months, should the landlord and tenant agree to a renewal of the tenancy for a period of no less than 12

months, then this constitutes a discharge of duty by the Council. These regulations came into force on 25 February 2010.

Section 5 Referrals and Nominations

Choice Based Lettings protocols have been agreed and an annual review will be carried out in March 2010. A combination of nominations and Section 5 referrals are being used by Homelessness Officers to discharge duty with RSL's.

Outcome 2: Appropriate use of SSST's where legislation permits, for homeless families or families threatened with homelessness

The Council allocates tenancies under the terms of Short Scottish Secure Tenancies (SSST's) following approval through the Tenancy Support Panel to individuals who are subject to an ASBO, a previous unsatisfactory tenancy or where they have been assessed as requiring a housing support service to sustain their tenancy.

There are currently 74 tenancies which are under the terms of a SSST, all are in receipt of an individually assessed package of housing support provided by a support provider.

Approximately 98 are on the waiting list for accommodation who will be subject to the terms of a SSST when they are provided a tenancy, this will include a tailored package of housing support to assist them in sustaining their tenancy.

Outcome 3: Improved timescales for the turnover of temporary accommodation

During 2009 improved monitoring systems were introduced for temporary accommodation. The information provided is reported each cycle to the Homelessness Strategy Working Group and the Homelessness Service Improvement Team. The Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Leasing Scheme Manager is now progressing a number of initiatives to improve this service.

Current statistics show the number of homeless applicants not offered temporary accommodation due to lack of capacity dropped from a peak of 120 in January 2009 to 34 in January 2010. The average during 2009 was 51 homeless applicants per month not being offered temporary accommodation.

New targets introduced during 2009 for temporary accommodation help monitor demand on the system. During 2009 an average of 49 households

per month stayed over 3 months which is the target timescale set for homeless flats. An average of 6 households per month stayed beyond the 3 month target set for the Accommodation Unit. A target of 2 months maximum stay was set for Bed and Breakfast accommodation and an average of 29 households per month stayed beyond that target time. The Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Leasing Scheme Manager is investigating ways of addressing the problems.

Outcome 4: Appropriate support systems are in place for people in temporary accommodation and for those who have moved onto permanent accommodation

The Temporary Accommodation and PSL Manager will be leading on the review of current support provision for households in temporary accommodation.

A review of current support provision to homeless households that have moved into permanent accommodation and families at risk of repeat homelessness will be taken forward by the Strategy Operations Group.

A full report incorporating all these issues will be submitted to Committee by September 2010.

Outcome 5: Increase access to mainstream temporary accommodation for homeless households

On 9 September 2009 the Licensing Committee refused the application for renewal of the HMO license to operate the homeless hostel at 165 Crown Street. This is currently going through the appeals process. The HMO licenses for 77/79 and 95 Bon Accord Street were renewed for a period of one year subject to works being done. The works and certification requirements at both hostels have now been met and both HMO licenses were granted on 2 February 2010 for a period of one year, subject to any objections being lodged.

The number of temporary flats has increased from 140 flats in August 2009 to 157 in February 2010. It is expected that 200 properties will be made available by June 2010. The strategy identified an increase to 300 properties by June 2011, however the need for this number will be dependant on the success of the private sector leasing scheme and other initiatives that are being taken forward.

It was agreed at Full Council in February 2010 to approve the use of Aberdon House on an interim basis for additional temporary accommodation for

homeless households. It is planned that the service will be in place in July 2010. This will provide 35 single rooms, one one-bedroomed flat and one two-bedroomed flat. Further work needs to be carried out into obtaining an HMO license, refurbishment and staffing of the accommodation.

A Housing Access Centre/Homelessness Accommodation Options Appraisal feasibility study was conducted by RLF Construction and Property Consultants and presented to Housing and Environment committee on 16 February 2010. Along with the proposals for Aberdon House, it also recommended the provision of a purpose built Housing Access Centre on the site of the existing property at Victoria House. The conceptual plans and funding mechanisms for this proposal will be presented to Committee in May 2010.

In order to increase access to additional temporary accommodation, contact was made with a number of local B&B proprietors and hoteliers to seek arrangements for an interim period and was successful in arranging a limited provision with the Premier Inn. Unfortunately recent efforts to procure any rooms from B&B proprietors have been unsuccessful. The Homelessness Service currently has access to 99 B&B units at a cost of up to £50 per room per night. The Premier Inn offered a reduced rate of £62.50 per room per night and is the only provider at present which is willing and able to meet immediate demand.

Lets to other agencies

A report on accommodation let to other agencies was submitted to Housing and Environment Committee in August 2009. Area Housing Officers now have discretionary powers to decide if properties continue to be let to other agencies or returned for Council use. The decision is based on supply and demand and the use a particular property was being put to. This has resulted in 16 properties being made available for general letting and in particular for single homeless persons.

Outcome 6: Address the varying needs of homeless households through the provision of appropriate temporary accommodation

Winter Care Shelter

A Winter Care Shelter was commissioned for the period 4 January to 31 March 2010 to provide a fully equipped night shelter to meet the needs of rough sleepers in the City as well as providing additional emergency accommodation during the winter months for people who could otherwise end up sleeping rough on the streets of Aberdeen. The Winter Care Shelter is an interim measure to meet a gap in current provision and the contract was awarded to Bethany Christian Trust. The Trust provides safe, secure accommodation and a hot meal, while using the opportunity to encourage

individuals to explore how they might be able to move into more permanent accommodation. A full report will be provided to the Homelessness Strategy Working Group in June 2010 and Housing and Environment Committee in the summer.

Women's Refuge

A specification is currently being drawn up for the provision of a woman's refuge in a location that was previously used by Aberdeen Women's Aid. It is expected that the contract will be in place by summer 2010. The development of new self contained accommodation by Tenants First has been delayed due to problems with the planning application.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments procedures are now in place for all temporary accommodation provided by the Council. The Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Leasing Senior Officer is responsible for carrying out all risk assessments to ensure a safe and secure environment for homeless households.

Direct Access Arrangements

Negotiations with Aberdeen Foyer around the commencement date for the additional property for this purpose are ongoing. This will be managed within the existing approved budgets.