

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability

Housing and Communities Committee: 14 August 2019

Subject: West Dunbartonshire Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan “Home at the Heart” update report

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on our initial Rapid Re-housing Transition Plan (RRTP) for the period 2019/20 – 2023/24 entitled ‘Home at the Heart’.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Note the contents of this report and acknowledge the revisions made to our RRTP;
- (ii) Approve the use of the funding allocation from the Scottish Government to meet the objectives of the West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, as amended; and
- (iii) Note that an annual update and progress report will be provided to the Housing and Communities Committee.

3. Background

3.1 A key recommendation from the short-life Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) and adopted by the Scottish Government was for Local Authorities to develop and submit a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans by 31 December 2018.

3.2 A report outlining our approach was provided to the Housing and Communities Committee in November 2018, our RRTP was submitted to the Scottish Government by the 31 December 2018 timescale and our RRTP was subsequently approved by the Housing and Communities Committee on 6 February 2019.

3.3 The Committee also provided approval for the use the £63,000 awarded to assist with the development and implementation of the RRTP to dedicate a new staffing resource within the Housing Development Team to ensure the effective implementation of our RRTP.

4. Main Issues

4.1 Following submission of the RRTP’s the Scottish Government provided all Local Authorities with written feedback by end of March 2019. This was

followed up with a face to face meeting with a Scottish Government official on 8 May 2019.

4.2 The feedback received from the Scottish Government was positive and highlighted a number of areas of good practice including:

- The comprehensive temporary accommodation modelling undertaken as part of our wider “More than a Roof” approach;
- The strategic approach to tackling homelessness;
- The introduction of the supported tenancy model
- Prioritising Housing First
- Our award winning Leaving Care Housing Protocol; and
- The fact that we have largely managed to avoid using bed and breakfast type accommodation for homeless households and as a result have never breached the unsuitable accommodation order.

4.3 Some further information and detail was requested in some areas including the following:

- How we are going to achieve our projections for the reduction in time being spend in temporary accommodation over the next 5 years;
- More detail around some of the costings included within our plan, which seemed relatively high against the Scottish Government benchmark figures; and
- More detail in terms of engaging partners in the delivery of Housing Options.

4.4 A review of the plan was subsequently carried out and a second iteration of our RRTP, including revised costings, was submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of May 2019 after discussion with the Convener of Housing and Communities Committee. The revised plan is publicly available through the West Dunbartonshire Council website.

4.5 The key outcome of this review is that we have managed to reduce the overall cost within the plan from £4.63m to £3.54m over the course of the 5 years. This has been done by taking into account the availability of cost benchmark information and using this to update the projected set-up costs of Housing First tenancies and the overall cost of our Conversion Programme.

- 4.6** The revised funding being requested from the Scottish Government to deliver our 5-year vision is set out below:

Rapid rehousing costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total Costs
Housing First West Dunbartonshire	132,500	241,833	363,833	494,067	584,600	£1,816,833
Additional Housing Support Service		33,250	183,750	175,000	157,500	£549,500
Additional Resettlement Support Service	35,000	35,000	35,000	70,000	70,000	£245,000
Additional proactive Homelessness Prevention Service	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	£175,000
Conversion programme	100,000	125,000	150,000	175,000	200,000	£750,000
Total Costs per year	£302,500	£470,083	£767,583	£949,067	£1,047,100	£3,536,333

- 4.7** The Scottish Government and COSLA announced on 17 July 2019 that funding available for Scotland's transition to Rapid Rehousing had been increased from £15 million to £24 million and the £24m will be distributed over a 3 year period, with £8m being distributed in 2019/20. The agreed formula for the distribution of the remaining £16 million for the RRTP implementation will be subject to further consideration of potential options between the Scottish Government and COSLA. This will be agreed through the Settlement and Distribution Group and COSLA Leaders. The funding will be for 2020/21 and 2021/22 so will enable local authorities to plan further in the future and ensure that rapid rehousing transition plans achieve their ambition.
- 4.8** Discussions are still ongoing with the Scottish Government and Local Government around the total required to fully transition to rapid rehousing and develop Housing First. These discussions will inform planned funding arrangements for Years 4 and 5 of the RRTP transition period.
- 4.9** The funding distribution of the initial £8m for 2019/20 from the £24m allocation was agreed by COSLA Leaders on 28 June 2019, following consideration by the Joint Scottish Government and COSLA Settlement and Distribution Group (SDG). The distribution was calculated on the basis of a three year average of homeless assessments covering the period up to March 31st 2017 sourced from the published national homeless statistics.
- 4.10** West Dunbartonshire accounts for approximately 3.3% of homelessness assessments during this timeframe and as such £265,000 funding has been awarded to cover the period of the implementation of 'Home at the Heart' West Dunbartonshire Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which equates to a shortfall of approximately £37,500 to fully implement Year 1 of the RRTP.
- 4.11** The allocation of the initial £265k funding is scheduled below, and will fund the introduction of two additional services within the Homelessness and Housing Options Team, that are outlined within 'Home at the Heart' namely the introduction of a authority wide Resettlement Support Service which will provide a cross tenure full resettlement support to all new tenants housed

through the homeless service for a minimum initial 8 weeks aimed at improving tenancy sustainment and combatting repeat homelessness. The other additional service will be the introduction of a prevention service will deliver a proactive response to those households threatened with homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.

- 4.12** The funding will allow our planned scaling up of our Housing First Service which we introduced earlier this year, and as a result of the our shortfall in terms of the funding allocation for 2019/20 we have reviewed our target number of conversions to be funded from the Scottish Government RRTP funding, as we have revised our projected costings our overall target for the number of conversions will remain at 60 for 2019/20.

Rapid rehousing costs	Year 1
Housing First West Dunbartonshire	132,500
Additional Resettlement Support Service	35,000
Additional proactive Homelessness Prevention Service	35,000
Conversion programme	62,500

- 4.13** It is expected that RRTP's will become an integral part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. An annual update outlining the progress being made will be reported to the Scottish Government, the Council's Housing and Communities Committee and the Health and Social Partnership Integrated Joint Board.
- 4.14** Responsibility for the implementation of the RRTP will rest with the Housing Solutions Partnership which is chaired by the Housing and Communities Committee Convener.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** The implementation of the RRTP, notably the introduction of the Resettlement Support Service and the Homelessness Prevention Service will require the introduction of two new posts for an initial 1 year period, to be reviewed based on future funding announcements.
- 5.2** Approval was granted in February 2019 to extend the role of a dedicated resource to review and implement the RRTP until December 2021 from the initial funding allocation received from the Scottish Government during a service redesign this post has been made permanent.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** The revised West Dunbartonshire plan has identified that an additional £3,536,333 is required in order to facilitate a transition to rapid rehousing over next 5 year period, with £302,500 required in Year 1.

- 6.2** It is now known that West Dunbartonshire will be allocated £265,000 in 2019/20, therefore this represents a shortfall of £37,500 in Year 1 of our RRTP, as such we have revised our conversions target within the funding allocation outlined in 4.12 of this report.
- 6.3** RRTPs were produced to be implemented over a 5 year period, however at present funding only covers a 3 year period which creates some uncertainty about being able to deliver on our ambitious targets.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There are financial and regulatory risks associated with delivering the Rapid Rehousing Plan and in Housing First approaches, which require to be managed successfully during implementation.
- 7.2** Specifically, there is significant risk that West Dunbartonshire will not receive the full funding identified to make the full transition to Rapid Rehousing. This would lead to West Dunbartonshire Council being unable to provide the level of service identified to provide a transition to rapid rehousing for homeless households in West Dunbartonshire within the 5 year target timescales. If the current funding formula was applied to 2020/21 and 2021/22 allocations to local authorities there would be an estimated significant shortfall of £707,666 to West Dunbartonshire, however there is a level of assurance with the announcement that the agreed formula for the distribution of the remaining £16 million for the RRTP implementation will be subject to further consideration of potential options between the Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure that rapid rehousing transition plans achieve their ambition.
- 7.3** There is a financial risk posed by the Scottish Governments change to the initial proposed funding period from 5 years to 3 years, albeit with an increase to the total funding available. There is therefore a misalignment between the funding available and the timeframe proposed to make the transition to Rapid Rehousing. However the discussions referenced in 4.8 of this report between COSLA and the Scottish Government around the total funding required to fully transition to rapid rehousing and develop Housing First will hopefully provide some certainty in terms of funding arrangements for Years 4 and 5 of the RRTP transition period.
- 7.4** There is a financial and regulatory risk posed by the Scottish Government and COSLA's decision to award funding in Year 1 based on a formula and not the content of the RRTP's. This formula will therefore benefit larger local authorities who receive a higher proportion of homeless assessments and discourage local authorities from eradicating homelessness if funding continues to be based on the number of assessments they receive.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** Preventing and responding to homelessness has a significant impact on individuals and communities. Our overall strategy 'More Than a Roof' for homelessness aims to tackle current health and other inequalities. Through an initial screening within the RRTP we highlighted some key groups where homelessness and housing challenges exist. A full Equality Impact Assessment

has been undertaken and submitted to the Scottish Government as part of this plan.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** The first draft of our RRTP was developed in collaboration with key partners, including the Health and Social Care Partnership, local Registered Social Landlords and third sector organisations, via a series of well attended stakeholder events held in November and December 2018.
- 9.2** Consultation and communication have continued since the submission of the first iteration of the RRTP through the Housing Solutions Partnership. Further engagement has also taken place with other local landlords via the Strategic Housing Providers Forum, engagement has continued with the Health and Social Care Partnership and also a dialogue with the WDTR0 regarding the implementation of the RRTP and Housing First has also taken place.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all strategic priorities.

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Date: 31 July 2019

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Council's Revised Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan including Action Plan, [Home at the Heart](#)

West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy More Than a Roof 2017-2021 [More Than A Roof](#)

Housing and Communities Committee Report 7th November 2018 "Rapid Rehousing Transition Paper position paper"

Joint letter from Kevin Stewart, MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning and Councillor Elena Whitham, Community and Wellbeing Spokesperson, COSLA on Distribution of Funding for Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) for 2019/20

West Dunbartonshire Rapid Rehousing Transition Tool,
December 2018

Ending Homelessness Together – High Level Action Plan;
Scottish Government/COSLA December 2018

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2018/11/ending-homelessness-together-high-level-action-plan/documents/00543359-pdf/00543359-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

Wards Affected:

All