

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

TRANSFER OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES DELIVERY

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the current position of the transfer of the homelessness and prevention of homelessness service delivery from the Housing Service to the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP). It seeks approval for the transfer of £425,000 on annual basis until 2025/26 when the Service Level Agreement expires from the General Fund (Other Housing) budget to the Adult Services budget which is under the control and direction of the AHSCP, to allow them to provide this service on behalf of the Housing Service and Angus Council. It also sets out the governance arrangements in place to ensure the Council can satisfy the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator in relation to its duties towards homeless households in Angus.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) notes the current position with regards to the transfer of the homelessness service to AHSCP;
- (ii) notes the governance arrangements for the Service Level Agreement between Angus Council Housing Service and the AHSCP as stated in the Service Level Agreement (Appendix 1); and
- (iii) approves the transfer of £425,000 from the Housing Service (Other Housing) budget to the Adult Services budget (which is under the control and direction of the AHSCP) in 2023/24 on an annual basis until the SLA expires in March 2026.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following priorities contained within the Council Plan 2023-2028.

Caring for Our People

- Work as a core partner of Angus Health and Social Care Partnership to meet the health and social care needs of adults.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Homelessness Service is embedded within the responsibilities of the three Community Housing Teams within the Housing Service. This includes duties relating to the prevention and assessment of homelessness as well as the provision of temporary accommodation. As a result of forthcoming changes in Homeless Prevention legislation, which will significantly expand the range of public sector services with a statutory duty to prevent homelessness (known as the Prevention Duty), as well as operational difficulties in delivering the Housing Options Service as part of a generic housing role, it was previously by the Council's Corporate leadership Team and the AH&SCP Board that delivery of the Homelessness Service be transferred to the AHSCP.

- 3.2 It is anticipated that the new duties will be introduced through a Housing Bill expected in the autumn of 2023 on a range of public bodies and landlords to prevent homelessness, particularly by asking and acting on a risk of homelessness, as well as responsibilities relating to strategic and joint planning. It is also envisaged that existing homelessness legislation will be changed to ensure homelessness is prevented at an earlier stage, including a proposal to extend the duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness up to six months before, to maximise the housing options available to people and to prescribe what reasonable steps may include.
- 3.3 A service review was undertaken which established a new Homelessness Solutions and Prevention Team, to sit alongside the Homelessness Support Service within the AHSCP. The team will deliver services in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, and the statutory duties will remain with Housing.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The transfer of the homelessness service commenced in April 2023 on a phased approach and is progressing well and on schedule with the project plan. The four phases are as follows:

Phase 1	Commenced 17 April 2023	All new prevention and homelessness cases in line with the customer pathways from the Arbroath, Montrose and Carnoustie areas undertaken by the Homelessness, Prevention and Solutions Team
Phase 2	Commenced 24 July 2023	All new homelessness cases from all three Community Housing Teams undertaken by the Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Team
Phase 3	Scheduled for 1 September 2023	Transfer of Out of Hours Service
Phase 4	Scheduled for 30 October 2023	Full transfer of the homelessness service including the transfer of existing homelessness and prevention of homelessness cases currently being managed by the Housing Service.

- 4.2 The Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Team have been undergoing rigorous training as well as working with members of the project team to establish the approach to the prevention of homelessness in Angus, which includes developing new customer pathways and processes ensuring both a person centred and trauma informed approach for those customers facing a homeless situation as well as ensuring the service is easily accessible to those who find themselves facing a homeless situation in Angus
- 4.3 A service level agreement (Appendix 1) is in place between Angus Council Housing Service and the AHSCP to ensure the governance arrangements which includes quarterly review meetings and a risk assessment (Appendix 2). The transfer of the homelessness service from the Housing Service to the AHSCP raises the potential for a number of risks which would impact on customers, staff, and the delivery of a statutory homelessness service and these are being closely monitored. This risk assessment will be updated following completion of the phased transfer to ensure that it reflects any emerging risks related to the full-service implementation and any failure to meet our statutory homeless duties.
- 4.4 It should be noted by Members that while the delivery of the homelessness service is being transferred to the AHSCP, the statutory responsibility for ensuring that the service is delivered remains with the Housing Service. This means that in addition to ensuring the service continues to meet the needs of customers, any requirements made by the Scottish Government or Scottish Housing Regulator remain with the Housing Service to respond to. The Scottish Housing Regulator has been kept informed of changes being made to the service and has been keen to ensure that robust governance arrangements are in place to ensure the relevant Council Committee can be assured that the statutory duties are being met.
- 4.5 From April 2024, as part of the agreed reporting Members of the Communities Committee will receive a 6 monthly information report updating on the homelessness performance for Angus commencing. The first report will cover the period from 1 November 2023 (to coincide with the full transfer of service) to 31 March 2024.

5. Transfer of Funding

- 5.1 Funding of homelessness services form part the Scottish Government block grant. This funding covers services related to the prevention and assessment of homelessness as well as services to support people experiencing homelessness. At present the AHSCP receives £937,000 to deliver other homelessness and housing support services and the Housing Service (through Other Housing) receives £425,000 to deliver the homelessness and homelessness prevention service.
- 5.2 It is recommended that members approve the transfer of £425,000 from Other Housing (General Fund) for this current budget year 23/24 and thereafter annually for the period of the SLA i.e. until 205/26, unless the SLA is terminated in advance of the expiry date, in which case the remaining budget shall be returned to the Angus Council Housing Service, to the control and direction of the AHSCP to fund the Homeless Prevention and Solutions Team and undertake the statutory duties in relation to homeless households. In practical terms this will be effected by an Angus Council internal budget virement between Other Housing and Adult Services, with the Adult Services budget being part of the budget that the AHSCP control and direct the use of.
- 5.3 As the Housing Service will no longer receive any General Fund support for delivering homelessness service, the AHSCP will be responsible for ensuring that all its homelessness services can be delivered within budget or for securing additional funding from the General Fund should this be required.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report other than the budget virement outlined in the body of the report. The Housing Service (via Other Housing) will continue to manage any funding associated with the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan unless agreed otherwise by both parties.

7. RISKS

- 7.1 The transfer of the homelessness service from the Housing Service to the AHSCP raises the potential for a number of risks which would impact on customers, staff and ultimately the delivery of a statutory homelessness service. It should be noted that while the delivery of the homelessness service is being transferred to the AHSCP, the statutory responsibility for ensuring that the service is delivered remains with the Housing Service. This means that in addition to ensuring the service continues to meet the needs of customers, any requirements made by the Scottish Government or Scottish Housing Regulator remain with the Housing Service to respond to.

A Risk Assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Service Level Agreement

Appendix 2 – Risk Assessment