
SCOTTISH BORDERS RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN 2019 - 2024

**Report by Service Director – Customer and Communities
Executive Committee**

8 June 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/2020 – 2023/2024 (RRTP) (Appendix 1), and seeks endorsement of the reviewed Scottish Borders RRTP – Action Plan (Appendix 2), Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) and Funding and Activity Monitoring Return (Appendix 4) for submission to the Scottish Government.**
- 1.2 The Scottish Government is committed to making “radical changes to end homelessness in Scotland” and sees “Rapid Rehousing by default” as a cornerstone of this commitment. In 2018 the Scottish Government requested that all Local Authorities submit a 5- year RRTP for the period 2019/20 – 2023/24 by the end of March 2019.
- 1.3 Development of the Scottish Borders RRTP was led by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership and included consultation with key partners including the Borders Housing Alliance and the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Planning Group. The Council formally approved the Scottish Borders RRTP at its meeting on 28 March 2019 and it was submitted to the Scottish Government in March 2019.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government has provided funding to local authorities for the development of RRTP from the ‘Ending Homelessness Together Fund’. Further details can be found in Section 4.
- 1.5 The RRTP Action Plan has been reviewed and updated by the Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership, particularly in light of the impact of the pandemic, and a Funding and Activity Monitoring Return has been prepared for submission to the Scottish Government.
- 1.6 There have been significant delays to progress on the RRTP, particularly in light of the impact of the pandemic, however, significant progress is now being made.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:-

- (a) Notes the progress made with delivery of the Scottish Borders RRTP.**
- (b) Approves submission of the reviewed and updated Scottish Borders RRTP Action Plan, Integrated Impact Assessment, and Funding and Activity Monitoring Return to the Scottish Government.**

3 RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) was set up by Scottish Government in October 2017 to develop solutions to alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping across Scotland. HARSAG produced 4 sets of recommendations, all of which the Scottish Government accepted in principle, and these informed the joint COSLA/Scottish Government publication of 'Ending Homelessness Together – A High Level Action Plan, in November 2018. The Scottish Government created an 'Ending Homelessness Together' fund to support this commitment. A cornerstone of the recommendations is a transition to a 'Rapid Re-housing', incorporating 'Housing First', approach to tackling homelessness.
- 3.2 HARSAG was reconvened in June 2020 in response to the pandemic and further recommendations were proposed to the Scottish Government, these recommendations were considered and an updated Ending Homelessness Together action plan was published in October 2020.
- 3.3 The vision from the recommendations is of a whole-system approach whereby prevention of homelessness is paramount and the responsibility lies not just with Local Authorities but with housing providers, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the broad range of organisations that provide support.
- 3.4 When homelessness cannot be prevented, Rapid Rehousing should be the default response. Rapid Rehousing means: (a) A settled, mainstream housing outcome as quickly as possible; (b) Time spent in any form of temporary accommodation reduced to a minimum, with the fewer transitions the better; (c) When temporary accommodation is needed, the optimum type is mainstream, furnished and integrated within a community.
- 3.5 And for people with multiple complex support needs beyond housing: (a) Housing First is the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages; (b) Housing First provides general settled housing as a first response for people with complex needs; (c) It recognises a safe and secure home as the best base for recovery and offers personalised, open-ended, flexible support for people to end their experience of homelessness and address wider needs; (d) The model aligns the provision of housing and support, offers choice and control to tenants and works to the principles of harm reduction.
- 3.6 The Scottish Government gave Local Authorities and their partners a 5 year timescale for transformation to "Rapid Rehousing by default" and requested that all Local Authorities submit a 5-year RRTP for the period 2019/20 – 2023/24.
- 3.7 The Scottish Government indicated that it will use the RRTPs to assess progress towards the 5-year vision of Rapid Rehousing and inform the allocation of resources (eg from the 'Ending Homelessness Together Fund'). It is expected that RRTPs will be jointly developed, implemented and resourced by Local Authorities, Health & Social Care Partnerships, RSLs, and other relevant partners (although led by Local Authorities). RRTPs should sit within the Community Planning Partners wider strategic planning framework

of the Local Outcome Improvement Framework and the Local Housing Strategy.

- 3.8 Development and implementation of the Scottish Borders RRTP has been led by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership and has included consultation with key partners, including the Borders Housing Alliance and the Health and Social Care Integration Strategic Planning Group.
- 3.9 The Scottish Borders RRTP vision for Rapid Rehousing in the Scottish Borders is: (a) Homelessness is prevented wherever possible but where homelessness cannot be prevented a settled, mainstream housing outcome is secured as quickly as possible. (b) When temporary accommodation is needed it will be mainstream, furnished accommodation within a community, and time spent in it will be minimal, with as few transitions as possible. (c) Housing First will be the first response for people with complex needs and facing multiple disadvantages. We will work in collaboration with Health and Social Care Partnership, and other relevant services, to ensure tenancies are supported and sustained.
- 3.10 RRTP is a learning process and we will continue to review, update and amend the Plan on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that it serves as a focused and practical tool to help us to achieve our vision for Rapid Rehousing in the Scottish Borders.

4 RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN FUNDING

- 4.1 Resourcing the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is critical to its successful delivery. All the partners in the development of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan believe it offers opportunities to improve joint working and the quality of service for people who are threatened with homelessness or who become homeless, and that we can make significant progress towards achieving our vision for Rapid Rehousing from within existing resources.
- 4.2 However, as described in the Resource Plan section of the RRTP, it is clear that without continuing to secure additional resources from, for example, the Scottish Government's 'Ending Homelessness Together Fund', it will not be possible to achieve Rapid Rehousing in full.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government has awarded Scottish Borders the following funding from the 'Ending Homelessness Together Fund' to assist with the development and implementation of the RRTP to date;
- 2018/19 - £35,000
 - 2019/2020 - £153,000
 - 2020/2021 - £167,000.
 - 2021/2022 - £166,000

The Scottish Government committed an additional £5 million towards RRTPs as part of the winter plan for social protection. Scottish Borders received an additional £105,000 in 2020/2021.

Funding allocations for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 have not yet been confirmed.

- 4.4 The Scottish Government has asked that local authorities submit a 'Funding and Activity Monitoring template in order to monitor RRTP progress and how Ending Homelessness Together funding is being used. The Scottish Government has asked that a 'Funding and Activity Monitoring template' for RRTP progress to 2020/2021 be submitted 30th June 2021, along with any updated RRTP's or RRTP Action Plans, and equalities assessments.

5 SCOTTISH BORDERS RAPID REHOUSING TRANSITION PLAN 2019/2020 – 2023/2024 – PROGRESS TO DATE

- 5.1 The COVID-19 emergency has impacted significantly on the implementation of the RRTP.
- 5.2 Borders Homelessness and Health Partnership (BHHSP) members have been on the front line of the crisis and have worked closely together throughout the pandemic to ensure that tenants, customers and those at risk of homelessness have continued to receive the services and support they require. Homelessness services were delivered by telephone wherever possible, however, given the vulnerable nature of many homeless households, face to face access and support was retained where required. Early actions in response to the pandemic were focused around ensuring homeless or potentially homeless households within the Scottish Borders had suitable accommodation available to them that allowed them to comply with the imposed lockdown measures. To achieve this homelessness services and RSLs worked in partnership to increase the availability of temporary homeless accommodation by 15 properties, and ensured homeless applicants had continued access to permanent accommodation and support.
- 5.3 During 2020/2021 767 households approached the Council's Homelessness Team for advice and/ or assistance and 90% of households assessed as unintentionally homeless secured settled accommodation. 100% of clients are now provided with housing options advice and the level of repeat homelessness remains low. The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership continues to operate with a key focus on the implementation of the Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- 5.4 A post of Rapid Rehousing Development Officer was designed in 2019 in order to help develop, implement and review the plan, and an appointment made to this post in December 2019. However, as part of our response to the COVID-19 emergency, the work of this officer was dedicated to front-line service delivery for most of 2020. The Rapid Rehousing Development Officer is now engaged full-time on RRTP work. In addition, further staff resource from the wider Customer Advice & Support Service has been committed to RRTP work in order to help compensate for time lost. Significant progress on the RRTP is now being made.
- 5.5 The procurement process is currently underway for the provision of a two year pilot Housing First Service and is expected to be operational from July/August of 2021. Housing First is the most resource intensive part of

the RRTP and £230,000 funding from Scottish Borders Ending Homelessness Together fund allocation has been committed to the pilot.

- 5.6 A Housing Intervention Fund launched in February 2020, aims to improve the housing options available to applicants who are in need of intervention due to rent arrears and who often face the prospect of being homeless. The applicant's landlord and the homelessness team are required to work together to ensure reasonable milestones are met by the applicant that aim to address the underlying cause of the arrears. Seven applications to the Housing Intervention Fund were approved in 2020/2021, with a total commitment of £11,000. £20,000 per annum, for the life time of the RRTP, has been committed for the remaining years of the RRTP.
- 5.7 A Crash Pad has been established from within the temporary homeless accommodation portfolio. The Crash Pad is a self-contained property that can accommodate households on a short term basis (one or two nights) that face an immediate crisis. This will allow for improved assessment of need prior to allocation of temporary accommodation and aims to result in suitable temporary accommodation being provided first time. This will improve the customer's experiences of homelessness, make more efficient use of the wider temporary accommodation stock and reduce the Council's risk of breaching the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. £4,725 was spent on the implementation of the Crash Pad and has an estimated £5,500 annual cost for the remaining of the RRTP.
- 5.8 A key aim of RRTP is to utilise less, but better quality, temporary accommodation. However, Covid 19 resulted in an increase in demand for temporary accommodation in 2020/2021. To meet this challenge the Council and its RSL partners added to the stock of temporary accommodation properties. There continue to be concerns about the possibility of a further increase in demand for temporary accommodation at some point as a result of COVID19 factors. Close monitoring and management of the temporary accommodation demand and supply continues in order to ensure that we continue to be able to provide suitable temporary accommodation for everyone who needs it. Despite the additional challenges brought about by the pandemic, and a national doubling of the use of B&B over the first months of the pandemic, Scottish Borders Council did not require to place any household in to Bed and Breakfast or unsuitable accommodation during 2020/2021. Nevertheless, whenever the COVID19 situation stabilises sufficiently, a critical priority will be to revise the RRTP targets and timescales for reducing the stock of temporary accommodation in order that we can meet our RRTP objectives.
- 5.9 The Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership has comprehensively reviewed and updated the RRTP Action Plan (Appendix 2) in light of the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic. A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed in relation to updated Action Plan (Appendix 3)

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) Significant elements of the RRTP can be achieved within the partners' existing resources and there is evidence to indicate that RRTP has the potential to reduce the need for expenditure on acute and emergency service provision across housing, health and social care services in the medium to long-term.
- (b) We remain committed to developing RRTP in such a way that, in due course, Rapid Rehousing and Housing First become, as far as possible, a part of mainstream service delivery across all of the partners.
- (c) However, delivery of the RRTP in full will require continuing to secure additional resources from, for example, the Scottish Government's Ending Homelessness Together Fund.
- (d) Where any specific actions are considered as having a further resource implication for the Council, Officers would bring back proposals for consideration by the Executive Committee as they arise over the period of the RRTP.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a risk that the Scottish Government will not provide the funding requested by our RRTP either in part or in full. This would lead to us being unable to provide the level of service identified to provide a transition to Rapid Rehousing for homeless households in the Scottish Borders within the target timescales.

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

A full Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out (Appendix 3).

6.4 Acting Sustainably

It is considered that there are no significant direct negative economic, social or environmental impacts arising from the content of this report. RRTP is likely to contribute to reducing inequalities and tackling poverty.

6.5 Climate Change

It is considered that there are no direct effects on the Council's carbon emissions arising from the content of this report recommendations.

6.6 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.7 Rural Proofing

The RRTP was rural proofed and it is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from implementation. RRTP is likely to improve the quality of services for people in rural areas who become threatened with homelessness or who become homeless.

6.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig

Signature

Service Director – Customer and Communities

Author(s)

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24

Appendix 2 – Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24 – Action Plan – Reviewed and Updated

Appendix 3 – Scottish Borders Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan 2019/20 – 2023/24 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 4 – Funding and Activity Monitoring Return

Previous Minute Reference: 28 March 2019 – Scottish Borders Council

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Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA