

**REPORT TO:** HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 24TH MAY 2010

**REPORT ON:** TAYSIDE INTER AGENCY PRISON DISCHARGE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROTOCOL

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

**REPORT NO.:** 276-2010

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Committee for Dundee City Council's participation in the Tayside Inter Agency Prison Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol. A copy of the protocol has been passed to each of the Group Leaders, the Lord Provost and the Deputy Lord Provost.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1. Note the contents of this report.
- 2.2. Approve Dundee City Council's involvement as a full partner to the Tayside Inter Agency Prison Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol.
- 2.3. Remit the Director of Housing to update the Homeless Policy and the Homeless Strategy Action Plan to reflect participation in the protocol.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. There are no financial implications at this time for the Housing Revenue or Council Tax Accounts.

**4. MAIN TEXT**

- 4.1. The Tayside Inter Agency Prison Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol was developed during 2008-09 in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council, Angus Council and Shelter Scotland. The protocol details background information explaining why the joint arrangements were required, the protocol also details the overall objectives and lists the partner agencies describing the roles and responsibilities of each. The document outlines the principals underpinning the protocol, and details the homelessness prevention pathway in full. The concluding sections of the protocol describe the requirements for information sharing and confidentiality, training and the process for monitoring outcomes.
- 4.2. The main objectives of the protocol are to:
- Prevent homelessness occurring when a prisoner is released
  - Through successfully assisting prisoners, meet their accommodation needs to reduce re-offending
  - To successfully re-integrate and resettle prisoners in the community to reduce re-offending and return to prison

- To reduce repeat homelessness and increase tenancy sustainment
- 4.3. Partners signing up to the protocol will agree to work together to achieve the following:
- On admission prisoners will have their housing status identified/established
  - Where it is established a prisoner holds an existing tenancy an agreement will be reached with the prisoner and all agencies involved as to the most appropriate course of action to prevent homelessness on release
  - Staff working within the prison will have sufficient information and training to be able to make appropriate and timely referrals to the relevant local authority homeless service
  - Partners will effectively work together to jointly resolve housing problems, preferably without the need to make a formal homelessness application
  - Where it is identified that a prisoner has a re-housing requirement a housing and support needs referral will be made a minimum of 2 months in advance of the discharge date
  - Each local Authority partner will meet in full their legal obligations to prisoners in respect of homelessness legislation and where required will make temporary accommodation available on a prisoner date of release
  - Outcomes and resource shortfalls will be monitored through regular meetings of a Prison Discharge and Homeless Prevention Working Group comprising representatives from all the partners
- 4.4. The key to effective homelessness prevention and homelessness services is early intervention and information sharing. The main initiatives arising from the protocol have been the provision of information lists of prisoners incarcerated in Perth Prison and the introduction of weekly homeless surgeries at Perth Prison. The information lists enable area housing teams to identify where current tenants have been sentenced and take appropriate action to secure properties, reduce abandonments and reduce rent arrears, thereby assisting in the prevention of homelessness for prisoners and importantly other household members who remain in the property while the tenant serves their sentence
- 4.5. Weekly surgeries by DCC Homeless Officers at Perth Prison enables identification of prisoners where no housing options are available and rooflessness on release is likely to occur. The opportunity for early intervention provided by the surgeries allows for a planned approach to resolving housing need, provision of temporary accommodation and drastically reduces the incidence of crisis presentations by prisoners on release. The adoption of a planned approach to meeting the accommodation and support needs of prisoners returning to the community will make a significant contribution to preventing re-offending and subsequent repeat homelessness.
- 4.6. Operationally the information lists and homelessness Perth Prison surgeries have been in place since November 2009 and are working well. Formal adoption of the protocol will not commit DCC to any additional services or resource commitments. Each participating Local Authority will carry out it's obligations to prisoners according to it's own policies and practices and each authority will only be responsible for services to prisoners who have a local connection with the receiving authority. Formal participation in the protocol will enable joint monitoring of outcomes, joint training where required, access to wider support networks, sharing of good practice and will enable the protocol to be further developed and improved through shared experience. It is therefore recommended that Dundee City Council formally signs up to the Tayside Inter Agency Prison Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Assessment. There are no major issues.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance, Assistant Chief Executive and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on this report. No concerns have been expressed.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. Tayside Inter Agency Prison Discharge And Homelessness Prevention Protocol.

**ELAINE ZWIRLEIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**MAY 2010**