Dear Mr Dornan

Letter from Local Government and Communities Committee - Homelessness

In relation to your query re Glasgow City Council failing to offer temporary or emergency accommodation I can confirm that the figure of 5,377 relates to the number of households that made a homeless application to GCC with only a proportion of this figure either needing or requesting temporary accommodation.

I can advise that there were 10,350 instances where GCC had a duty to provide temporary accommodation and did so in relation to 60% of those. GCC has been working openly and constructively with all our key partners in relation to our challenges around temporary accommodation which remains a central objective in our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP). It is also worth noting that our analysis of the provision of temporary accommodation indicates that over 88% of households do receive an offer of temporary accommodation and work is ongoing to improve the accuracy of our data recording in this area.

As you will be aware GCC is a stock transfer authority and therefore has no housing that can been directly allocated or provided. The Scottish Housing Regulator report did indicate that GCC required to generate a greater volume of Section 5 Referrals and to do so more quickly.

In 2018/19 GCC did increase the volume of Section 5 Referrals by 15% on the previous year and further strengthening of demand is again incorporated into the RRTP. On the housing supply side, work is ongoing in partnership with the city’s 68 Housing Associations, to ensure that both the demand and supply for housing from homeless households can be met rapidly and effectively.

You also note that there have been recent reports that GCC have made the decision to reduce funding to third sector organisations which provide services to homeless people by £2.6 million.

In proposing the identified savings a number of considerations were taken into account including the type of service provided, a fit for purpose environment (including lease implications), duration of stay in services, current tenancy sustainment achievements and alternative options available.
A number of services included properties that were no longer fit for purpose and were incurring substantial repair costs. In some cases demand for services had significantly reduced or the level of support to individual service users had reduced.

A number of cases have remained in services for periods of time way beyond what would be expected resulting in little or no turnover. Planning and consideration of alternatives included supporting individuals into their own tenancy via Section 5 application, use of FHOSS (Flexible Homeless Outreach Support Service) flexible outreach to support move on, the Housing First approach, self-directed care assessments and more appropriate shared living arrangements.

Although the need to identify savings was consistently highlighted it was not until specific services had been approached that the full understanding of the criteria was shared. You will appreciate that given the necessity to commit to the fiscal requirements our ability to manage any consultative approach was considerably constrained. None the less, prior to formal committee approval each identified service was invited to attend a meeting to help understand why their service was identified and what plans would be in place to manage the decommissioning arrangements in the event that the recommendations were approved by committee. Whilst we recognise that the timeframe was not ideal, the invitation to discuss this matter did inform services of our recommendation in advance of the information being made public.

The impact of any loss of placements will be offset by the increase in the numbers of people supported in their own tenancies via the progression of tenancy sustainment support, the Housing First approach and phase 1 of Glasgow’s RRTP key objectives where previously they would have required an emergency placement. Additionally, some short term increase in Bed & Breakfast provision and a review of all purchased services criteria (including emergency and length of stay) would revert to the commissioning team in partnership with TAT (Temporary Accommodation Team) to manage need and monitor vacancies more effectively. GCC and Glasgow HSCP have so far invested more than £7m combined revenue and capital to progress the Housing First Model.

Given that a considerable number of placements were static in nature, with little or no turnover, it was viewed that with improved planning via the RRTP and improved management of services would enable the council to continue, wherever possible, to fulfil its statutory duties. This is an area that we are monitoring closely particularly as we are in discussions with the Scottish Government regarding HL3 data.

I can also advise that we are presently managing move on plans for 75 cases and working in partnership with GHN (Glasgow Homelessness Network) and GHIFT (Glasgow Homeless Involvement & Feedback Team- Lived Experience) to ensure lived experience and advocacy are at the heart of the decommissioning process.

With regards to mitigating any impact on services affected I can confirm that GHN and GHIFT have met with all service users to allow an independent forum for communication with co-production remaining a strong theme throughout. Separate ongoing communication with each service remains in place with service staff, commissioning and care managers and this will remain under review.

We are also managing individual decommissioning plans with each identified provider and have met with staff across each of the provider services. This extends to weekly meeting to ensure we are tracking each move on plan. As it stands we have identified 35 cases suitable for section 5 referral with varied tenancy sustainment supports, 24 cases suitable for Housing First approach, 11 resolved/suited and 5 cases suitable for self-directed support.
I trust this information is helpful. If you require any additional information please contact the Interim Chief Officer of the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, Susanne Millar.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Susan Aitken
Leader of the Council