7 March 2018

Dear Bob

I am pleased to let the Committee know that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) has today presented me with 20 recommendations on how to end rough sleeping for good in Scotland. This is the second set of recommendations from the Action Group, of which the most significant are:-

- New prevention responsibilities and duties on all public bodies
- A national model of flexible outreach, empowered to act immediately
- Rapid rehousing by default, including Housing First for those for whom that is appropriate
- Developing a comprehensive data collection and management system to measure progress, assess impact and support improvement
- Reviewing and amending existing legislation and associated statutory guidance to ensure it supports the improvements being recommended

The full recommendations together with the Group’s report on their work is published on the Scottish Government website [https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group/].

I have announced that the Scottish Government accepts all these recommendations in principle and will move at pace to implement them appropriately. You will note there is significant agreement between the Action Group and the Committee’s recent report on Homelessness; we will ensure our responses to you and to the Action Group set out a clear overarching strategy that makes effective use of all the expert advice contained in both sets of recommendations. The Action Group will be making subsequent sets of recommendations between now and June on how to transform the use of temporary accommodation and how to end homelessness altogether. As well as responding to your recommendations in these
areas, we expect to continue to evolve our response over the course of the spring and beyond, making sure we make the most of this opportunity to think strategically and with the benefit of such detailed consideration.

The first set of recommendations produced by the Action Group related to actions the Government could take this winter to reduce rough sleeping; these were put into effect and it is clear they were valuable in helping to prepare services for occurrences like last week’s severe weather. I have therefore today also announced a further £150,000 to continue to provide some services until the summer, while the latest recommendations are taken forward.

Kind regards

KEVIN STEWART