

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE 18 OCTOBER, 2004

REPORT ON: USE OF FURNISHED TENANCIES GRANT 2004-05

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 719-2004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To seek approval to develop a contract with the Furniture Project Tayside (FPT) which in due course, will be transferred to the new Dundee Furniture Project Company, to utilise grant funding available from Communities Scotland in 2004-5. The funding is to be used to provide 20 furnished tenancies by 31 March 2005 to help meet the needs of homeless people.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Housing Committee approve development of a contract with Furniture Project Tayside to utilise the Furnished Tenancies Grant for 2004-5.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no financial implications for the general fund or Housing revenue account. Communities Scotland Grant will cover all costs.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The proposal reflects a number of key Dundee 21 Themes; including access to good food, water, shelter and fuel at a reasonable cost, health is protected; resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised and access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 5.1. Use of the Furnished Tenancies Grant enables the Council to fulfil their commitment to assist those in need by being able to provide essential furnishings to those setting up homes, who would otherwise have difficulty in affording these. Local implementation of this Grant complements the activities of the Anti Poverty Strategy and improves the housing outcomes for vulnerable people in Dundee.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The Homelessness Task Force final report 2002 recommends, *“A national framework for furnished tenancies should be drawn up, with appropriate funding by Communities Scotland. A national furniture grant scheme and furniture recycling network should be established”*.

- 6.2. The Scottish Executive confirmed in May this year that £3m per annum has been made available nationally, to implement the furniture grant schemes, as part of local authorities' homelessness strategies for 2003-6. The Council was offered a grant of £54,000 in August to be spent in this financial year. Communities Scotland have indicated a similar amount will be available in 2005/6.
- 6.3. Communities Scotland funding conditions state that *"each grant for a unit will cater for the supply and installation of a cooker, fridge, washing machine, floor coverings, beds and curtains. (These will be termed essential goods)"*. Funding guidance also states *"it is recommended that these goods be accessed from furniture recycling projects"*.
- 6.4. Working in partnership with Furniture Project Tayside, 20 furnished tenancies were set up between February and May, using 95% of the allocation for 2003/04. Communities Scotland have confirmed that the underspend has been added to the allocation for 2004/05, bringing the total allocation to £56,818.
- 6.5. Following approval, by Environmental Services and Sustainability Committee in June 2004, a Service Level Agreement 2004-5 has been prepared which requires Furniture Project Tayside to provide *"deliveries for clients of the Homeless Services Unit"*. Furniture Project Tayside were invited to prepare a proposal to furnish 20 properties, rather than seeking tenders from interested organisations due to timescales for expending the Furnished Tenancies Grant 2004-5.
- 6.6. Furniture Project Tayside have established a separate voluntary organisation, with charitable status, to be known as the Dundee Furniture Project to provide local services in partnership with Dundee City Council. The Convener of Environmental Services and Sustainability and an official from Waste Management Department have been participating in recent board meetings.
- 6.7. Furniture Project Tayside's proposal sets out supply and installation of the new or recycled goods as well as recycled furniture for a minimum of 20 tenancies. White goods will be supplied and washer/drier machines will also be provided. Recycled furniture will include a suite, chest of drawers, dining table and chairs, coffee table and bedside cabinet. Furniture Project Tayside are keen to demonstrate they can deliver a quality service, have arranged to employ an electrician, and will add table lamps, lampshades and double beds to the items supplied.
- 6.8. Furniture Project Tayside will work in partnership with Starter Parks Dundee for provision of kettles, bed linen, kitchen utensils, and pots and pans etc.
- 6.9. The essential items provided by this grant remain the property of the Authority. Furniture Project Tayside will provide an inventory of goods supplied and conduct quarterly checks accompanied by a Housing Department representative. Items identified as missing will be reported to the Police. Furniture Project Tayside are preparing a workplan and will arrange for a named member of staff to co-ordinate the Furnished Tenancies Project and liaise with Housing Department staff.
- 6.10. Furniture Project Tayside will prepare and present invoices for payment through this scheme by Housing Department. Funds will be reclaimed by the Department from Communities Scotland.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1. The Housing Department will identify at least 15 dispersed flats to be furnished, to be used initially as single person accommodation. A further 5 flats will be provided by NCH Cowan Grove and housing association partners.
- 7.2. The Housing Department will allocate an officer to work closely with the Furniture Project to help get the project up and running.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1. All Chief Officers of the Council were consulted in the preparation of this report.

A copy of the guidance report on Furnished Tenancies, is available in the Members' Lounge.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. Homelessness Task Force Report, Furnished Tenancies – Offer of Grant 2003-4 September 2003.
- 9.2. Housing Committee – Use of Furnished Tenancies Grant 2003-4, January 2004.

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