

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel Committee - 13 March 2006

REPORT ON: Housing Department - Private Sector Services Unit Staffing Review

REPORT BY: Assistant Chief Executive (Management) and Director Of Housing

REPORT NO.: 727-2005

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To consider staffing levels in the Private Sector Services Unit required to maintain services related to HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) Licensing, Care and Repair, and Landlord Registration policy and legislative requirements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee approves the establishment of the following posts:-

- 2.1. two posts of Housing Property Surveyor (HMO), graded T1/4, £14,828 - £23,610;
- 2.2. one post of Housing Property Surveyor (Care and Repair), graded T1/4, £14,828 - £23,610;
- 2.3. one post of Landlord Services Officer, graded AP4, £20,808 - £23,034;
- 2.4. one post of Clerical Officer, graded GS1-3, £10,938 - £15,440;

It is recommended that the Committee approves the regrading of the:-

- 2.5. Housing Property Inspection Team Leader, graded T5, £24,332 - £26,503, to PO1-4, £27,038 - £29,348.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of these recommendations will be £108,030 in a full financial year inclusive of employer's costs. All costs will be funded from the Private Sectors Services Grant, Scottish Executive's Grant for Scheme Administration and HMO fees.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. None.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The ongoing development of services and regulation within the private sector continues to create significant change for the Private Sector Services Unit. The Unit is now in the second full year of the Private Sector Housing Grant and the associated changes orientated around the introduction of the Test of Resources, a ring fenced budget and a changing allocation and reporting process. Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) Licensing continues to develop particularly in the area of enforcement and is now in the second year of renewals. Both of these areas are effectively increasing the volume and burden of work associated with licensing and this is compounded further by the challenging licensing targets set by the Scottish Executive.
- 6.2. Care and Repair continues to produce a huge number of enquiries each year and the development of a Handyperson Service in partnership with the Social Work Department will generate even greater demand. The introduction of Landlord Registration will bring further work to the Unit as the legislation is developed and implemented, this includes development work prior to the proposed implementation date of March 2006.

Improvement and Repairs Grant Scheme

- 6.3. The introduction of the new Improvement and Repairs Grant system in October 2003 has resulted in significant increases in workload within the administrative processes. This has been addressed by the establishment of two posts of Housing Officer and 2.5 posts of Clerical Officer. These additions have had a positive effect on processing timescales, however, the current average processing timescale of 5 months is still considered unacceptable.
- 6.4. The two Property Surveyors allocated to Grants are continually required to undertake work for HMO and Care and Repair due to the lack of staffing resources. This is proving detrimental to Grant work and is a contributing factor to the 5 month processing timescale.

Mandatory Licensing of HMOs

- 6.5. Mandatory licensing has been in operation since 1 October 2000. To date, 819 applications have been received and have/are being processed. 604 HMOs have been licensed and 177 applications relating to 248 HMOs are being processed. Additionally, 164 licence renewals have been dealt with and a further 67 are due to be renewed this year. Renewals are now a common feature each year in addition to initial applications for the granting of a licence.

- 6.6 Utilising some of the grant funding allocated towards HMO Licensing by the Scottish Executive, the Private Sector Services Unit employs a seconded Police Officer whose main objective is to develop the enforcement capabilities of the Unit, in line with Scottish Executive targets. To date 8 landlords have been charged and their cases referred to the Procurator Fiscal. A number of other landlords and agents are under investigation and it is anticipated that this will result in an increase in applications received as a direct result of the enforcement action. The enforcement work requires a Housing Property Surveyor to provide support which impacts on the sections ability to process applications.
- 6.7 The Unit is also required to achieve the objectives set by the Scottish Executive for 2005/06. The objectives to be achieved by 31 March 2006 are:-
- establish a formal strategy for identifying HMOs to improve robustness of the estimate;
 - have 1,750 licences in force and have received applications from or be actively pursuing all other HMOs identified;
 - ensure information to raise awareness of HMO licensing among landlords and tenants is available all year round;
 - ensure contact with tenants (in person or in writing) during application process, to raise awareness of licensing and contact point if they have concerns;
 - improve mechanisms to share information between teams/sections involved in licensing.
- 6.8 To enable the Private Sector Services Unit to process the anticipated increase in applications as a result of enforcement action and to meet the objectives set by the Scottish Executive, it is considered that two additional Housing Property Surveyor posts, graded T1/4, £14,828 - £23,610, dealing with HMO Licensing be established. This also takes into consideration the level of resource currently devoted to enforcement action.
- 6.9 The costs incurred from the establishment of the two Housing Property Surveyors posts will be met by the HMO fees.
- 6.10 Additional staffing costs will be recoverable from HMO fee income.

Care and Repair

- 6.11 In 2004/05, 769 Care and Repair enquiries were processed, leading to 373 Small Repair Awards or Grant Applications and 265 advice only cases. This is a 53% increase over the previous year. In the first six months of this year the Unit received 379 enquiries, suggesting a similar outcome. At the moment there is one dedicated Care and Repair Officer within the Unit with clerical support provided from the Administration and Assessment Team.
- 6.12 To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the service, it is considered that an additional Housing Property Surveyor (Care and Repair), graded T1/4, £14,828 - £23,610, be established. Aside from releasing some of the pressure on the service, the additional resource will help in addressing issues identified by Internal Audit.

Landlord Registration

- 6.13 The mandatory registration of all landlords will be introduced in April 2006 as part of the Anti Social Behaviour, etc (Scotland) Act 2004. Although final guidance is awaited substantial activity around preparing for the introduction of the legislation is diverting staff from other statutory duties. This will be exacerbated as the new legislation comes into force.
- 6.14 First assessment of the workload suggests a minimum staffing requirement of one Landlord Services Officer, graded AP4, £20,808 - £23,034, and one Clerical Officer, graded GS1-3, £10,671 - £15,063. It is proposed that these posts be recruited to prepare for the introduction of the legislation.
- 6.15 The Landlord Registration is a new scheme and as such an estimate can only be made with regard to the workload at this time. The staffing requirements associated with the scheme will be reviewed once it is established.

Housing Property Inspection Team Leader

- 6.16 The proposed additional staff and related responsibilities will increase the management, supervision and operational responsibility of the Housing Property Inspection Team Leader. To reflect this greater responsibility, it is proposed to regrade the Housing Property Inspection Team Leader from T5, £23,739 - £25,857, to PO1-4, £26,379 - £28,632.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. New and expanding legislation and increased demand for services has resulted in a significant increase in work for the Private Sector Services Unit. The proposed staffing requirements will enable the Council to meet its statutory and service requirements.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), all Chief Officers and the Trade Unions have been consulted regarding the contents of this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

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6 March 2006