

**REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 17 DECEMBER 2001
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – 14 JANUARY 2002**

**REPORT ON: USE OF FUNDING TO ASSIST IMPLEMENTATION OF
HOMELESSNESS SECTIONS – HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2001**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL & MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

REPORT NO.: 823-2001

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to utilise funding allocated to the Housing Department, in line with the Scottish Executive's recent Interim Guidance, for the first phase of implementation of homelessness provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

- 2.1 the Housing Committee approves the preparation and submission of a **“schedule of intentions” as required by Scottish Executive, to access the £88,900** allocated to Dundee City Council this financial year, to support the delivery of new homelessness duties;
- 2.2 the Personnel and Management Services Committee approves the establishment of the following posts for a fixed term period of 12 months;
- 2.3 one post of Principal Housing Officer (Homelessness Assessment Strategy Team), graded PO3-6 (24,741 - £26,979);
- 2.4 one post of Senior Housing Officer (Homelessness Assessment Strategy Team), graded AP5 (£21,036 - £22,959);
- 2.5 one post of Housing Officer (Homelessness Assessment Strategy Team), graded AP3 (£16,173 - £17,796).

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There will be no increase in the cost of ongoing funding to services and projects providing accommodation and support to homeless people, as contained within existing budgets, or allocated resources.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

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

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Implication of the new homelessness duties fulfils the Council's commitment to assist those in need by ensuring that needs are assessed and a range of accommodation is available for local people.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Correspondence from the Scottish Executive in September 2001 confirmed that Sections 1 and 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 would commence on 1 October 2001.

Section 1 requires Authorities *to carry out an assessment of homelessness; and prepare and submit a strategy for preventing and alleviating homelessness* in its area. Interim guidance on conducting an assessment leading to a homelessness strategy has been issued.

Section 2 requires Authorities *to provide free advice and information* about homelessness, prevention and services, guidance on these duties is expected anytime.

The Housing Department also received notification that £88,900 has been allocated to "support the additional work which will be necessary for Local Authorities to make an assessment and develop strategy".

Authorities must submit in advance, a schedule of intentions for use of the allocation, to be paid through Scottish Homes, now known as *Communities Scotland*. The new Executive Agency will be the regulator in monitoring delivery of outcomes - namely Dundee's Homelessness Strategy.

7 CONDUCTING AN ASSESSMENT: USE OF FUNDS ALLOCATED

- 7.1 The Interim Guidance is specific about methods, accuracy, causes, groups affected, sources of information and consultation. Consideration has been given to adapting this to produce a brief, for appointment of an external consultant to carry out the evaluation, on a contract basis.

This approach is not recommended due to time constraints and doubts over attracting quality bids. Perth and Kinross and Angus Councils recently sought tenders to conduct a joint housing needs and demand assessment - only one tender was received which still did not fulfil the brief.

It is, therefore, proposed to **set up a temporary staff team** for an initial 12-month period, to utilise the £88,900 allocated this year, with responsibility for conducting an assessment of homelessness in Dundee. Scottish Executive have acknowledged that Authorities may select to apply funds for recruitment or secondment of staff. Advertised internally, this could include staff from other departments.

8 ONGOING COSTS

- 8.1 If the available resources are drawn down before 31 March 2002, the Housing Department can arrange to carry forward any underspend to 2002/03. It is anticipated that Scottish Executive will confirm by mid February 2002 that a similar level of funding will be available for 2002/03 and 2003/04, to implement and monitor the local Homelessness Strategy. Staffing levels would be reviewed as part of the budgetary process when allocations are confirmed.

9 HOMELESSNESS ASSESSMENT/STRATEGY TEAM

- 9.1 The following are estimated costs for 12 months, say March 2002 to March 2003:-

Salaries

1 x PO3 Principal Officer	£30,695
1 x AP5 Senior Housing Officer	£27,500
1 x AP3 Housing Officer	<u>£20,131</u>
Staff Total	£78,326

3 PCs / IT	£4,000
Furniture / Stationery	£2,000
Expenses / Rental	£2,000
Consultation / Training	<u>£2,574</u>
Expenditure Total	<u>£88,900</u>

- 9.2 Reporting to the Housing Strategy Manager, the **Principal Officer** will supervise the assessment exercise to meet Scottish Executive timescales and Guidance.
- 9.3 This will include collaborative working with staff in other Council Departments, NHS Tayside, Tayside Primary Care NHS Trust, Local Health Care Co-operative and partners in local voluntary organisations to ensure statutory duties are provided by this department and other relevant agencies. Regular monitoring reports will be produced for Housing Committee and the New Executive Agency.
- 9.4 In addition, the PO will develop, consult on and implement a Homelessness Strategy framework which engages homeless individuals and local agencies. Consultations approaches will reflect the Homelessness Task Force's draft principles (choice, control, participation in service delivery and shaping future policy), and advocacy services may need to be developed for this. Training needs of Housing, Social Work, Health and hostels staff will be identified and resources for joint training will be negotiated
- 9.5 The **AP5 Senior Housing Officer** will have responsibility for conducting a local homeless resources audit to define expenditure and outcomes. Developing links with Supporting People team. Evaluating existing strategies, plans and procedures, e.g., Anti-Social, Rent Arrears, Allocations and Vettings, Social Inclusion, Housing Regeneration, Community Care, Children's Services and Health and Homelessness Action Plan.

- 9.6 This will include investigation of existing data sources to define the extent and nature of local homelessness, including hidden homeless. A geographic review to identify any hot spots and exploration of reasons for these will be required. Causes and contributing factors will be identified, to direct Homelessness Strategy activities, as well as responses to particular groups such as young people, or those with challenging behaviour.
- 9.7 Housing and support projects required to meet needs assessed, as part of an effective local strategy will be identified and a proposed development schedule agreed. Any development opportunity which occurs, will be progressed towards the achievement of strategy objectives
- 9.8 The **AP3 Housing Officer** will have responsibility for an assessment of available accommodation and support services will describe the range of permanent, temporary and supported accommodation available, its use and clients served, gaps or duplication in services will be highlighted.
- 9.9 Courses, sessions and materials to meet training needs will be programmed and delivered, to raise awareness of the Homelessness Strategy and operational arrangements, e.g., joint protocols, joint assessments and referral arrangements.
- 9.10 An evaluation of information and advice provided at Lily Walker Centre, Area Offices, House Letting, local hostels, will clarify improvements required and shape the content of staff training and materials to be developed. Where appropriate, these will conform to Homepoint standards, as it is expected that Guidance to be issued shortly will specify these are the standards (of information and advice) to be achieved.
- 10 **ACCOMMODATION**
- 10.1 Office space is being investigated and could be available in Shore Terrace. Central premises are preferred with access to Housing Department IT systems.
- 11 **CONCLUSION**
- 11.1 The availability of funding is an opportunity for the Department to establish a Homelessness Assessment Team, to carry out work which will contribute to strategic planning and improvements to homeless service delivery.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

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DATE _____

JIM PETRIE
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL & MANAGEMENT SERVICES

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