

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 11 MARCH 2013

REPORT ON: TENANTS' ALLOWANCES UPDATE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 117-2013

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to upgrade the tenants' allowances in line with previous increases.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee agree that the Tenants' Allowances Scheme should be increased in line with inflation (Retail Price Index) as detailed in paragraph 4 and the Appendix of this report from 1 April 2013.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The allowances are increased by the January 2013 General RPI (excluding mortgage) of 3.3% (rounded to the nearest pound), since the last review in April 2012 and the levels apply to both revenue and capital programmes, starting after 1 April 2013. For decoration allowances the 3.3% increase has been applied to the maximum allowance per room and multiplied by the number of rooms per dwelling to establish the maximum allowance per dwelling.

It is expected that the total allowances for 2013/14 will be approximately £225,000 which has been included in the agreed 2013/14 Housing Revenue Account and Capital Plan.

4. MAIN TEXT - TENANTS' ALLOWANCES

- 4.1. Reference is made to the report to Housing ,Dundee Contract Services and Environment Services Committee Tenants' Allowances Update on 12 March 2012 (Report No: 120-2012) which was the last review of the amounts. The purpose of the Tenants Allowances Scheme is to ensure that tenants are not significantly 'out of pocket' as a direct result of works taking place in their home. Payments do not fully cover all costs incurred, as in normal circumstances, tenants are responsible for decoration and an assessment for wear and tear is taken into account. The intention is, therefore, to approach tenants' requirements with flexibility, so that individual needs can be catered for, as well as achieving across the board consistency and fairness in the levels of payments made.

- 4.2. This report recommends that the allowances increase in line with the January 2013 General RPI (excluding mortgage) of 3.3% inflation over the period from the last review, the details of the allowances follow and the maximum amounts payable are clearly listed in the Appendix 1.
- 4.3. Tenants who are over 65 or who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or following the implementation of welfare reforms the forthcoming Personal Independence Payment qualify for redecoration assistance. Where tenants qualify for and request assistance to redecorate the appointed contractor will make arrangements to have redecoration carried out as soon as practicably possible.

Types of Allowance Provided

- 4.4. This paragraph details the types of allowances available, the criteria for issuing them and the revised amounts payable.

Decoration Allowance

- 4.5. This is payable to assist with redecoration following remedial or improvement work where the tenant's decoration has been affected.
- 4.6. A pro-rata allowance can also be made to new tenants where the conditions of the relet house merit an allowance and, dependent upon the extent of redecoration, completed by the Council. Properties in very poor condition and sheltered properties will be decorated. In other properties part decoration and part allowance will be offered to give tenants more choice and allow staff some flexibility in terms of delivering a good quality product within budget.
- 4.7. The appendix details the rooms which qualify for decoration allowance and the maximum allowance for different sizes of property. A standard redecoration and flooring allowance applies to kitchen and bathroom contracts of £333 per dwelling.

Window Blinds

- 4.8. Where replacement windows have been installed which alter the dimensions so that the existing blinds do not fit, an allowance is authorised to compensate for alterations or contribute to new blinds, as the tenant desires. It is proposed that the value per blind is increased from £27 to £28.

4.9. Floorcovering Allowance

- 4.9.1. Where floorcoverings need to be uplifted to carry out remedial or improvement work, the tenant is given a choice of:
- a. An allowance as a contribution to lifting and relaying the floorcovering.
 - b. A specialist carpet fitter, employed by the main contractor, to lift and relay carpets etc, which can reasonably be lifted without damage. If this is not possible the matter is referred back to the Housing Officer.

It is proposed that the value per house of the floorcovering allowance is increased from £118 to £122.

- 4.9.2. It is also recommended that, where damage to floorcovering is anticipated as part of the work, eg where new kitchen units are a different size from existing units or a fireplace has to be removed leaving a gap in the carpet, then an additional floorcovering allowance up to the value of £122 can be approved.
- 4.9.3. Where tenants have fitted wooden, laminate or tiled flooring and this is unavoidably damaged as part of a Capital Contract, an additional floorcovering allowance can be approved up to the value £122.
- 4.9.4. For clarification, a tenant can receive a maximum of £366 of floorcovering allowances, where all the criteria above are met.

Urgent Additional Allowance

- 4.10. This permits an additional payment up to £312 to be made if urgent rehousing is required and where genuine need exists. This is limited to tenants who are either in receipt of Housing Benefit or have particular medical requirements.

Each application will, however, be considered on its own merit. It is proposed to increase this allowance from £312 to £322.

Removal and Storage of Furniture

- 4.11. Assistant Project Officer will, where required, arrange removal and storage of tenants' furniture directly with a removal contractor on the tenant's behalf.

Decant Allowance - Tenants Making their own Arrangements for Alternative Accommodation

- 4.12. This is a payment made to tenants who make their own arrangements for alternative accommodation when they require to be decanted from their home. This allowance in 2012/13 was £128 per week or pro rata per part of week plus a rent abatement for the period that the tenant cannot live in their house. It is proposed that this payment is increased to £132 per week for each adult over 16 years of age in the household. This payment will be made to the tenant of the house.

This allowance will be payable for a maximum of 3 weeks. In any project which is to take longer than 3 weeks, tenants should be offered a decant house from the Council stock as the preferred option.

Where tenants require to be decanted and do not wish to make their own arrangements, varying options are available. The range of options include the use of furnished lets decant accommodation and hotel/bed and breakfast accommodation which includes evening meal. These options are all less cost effective than tenants making their own arrangements.

Post Flood Allowance

- 4.13. This is payment made to tenants who are required to use a dehumidifier to assist in drying out property after flood damage. The allowance is contribution towards costs associated with running costs and is a daily payment made for the duration that the dehumidifier is used. The daily rate for 2013/14 will be £6.50 per dehumidifier.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been screened for any policy implications, sustainability, strategic environmental assessment and equality impact assessment. There are no major issues.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council Website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact>.

6. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and all Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations has been consulted regarding this report.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Tenants' Allowances Update on 12 March 2012 (Report No. 120-2012)
- Review of Rents and Other Housing Charges - 28 January 2013
- Equality Impact Assessment

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

FEBRUARY 2013

TENANTS' ALLOWANCES FROM 1 APRIL 2013

DECORATION ALLOWANCE

The following rooms can qualify for a decoration allowance, subject to the house size, a **maximum** allowance being applied to the final decoration allowance awarded:

For clarification this is the number of rooms multiplied by the maximum allowance per room.

Kitchen/Hall and Stairs/Bedrooms/Lounge/Bathroom

<u>Maximum Allowance per Dwelling</u>	<u>From 1 April 2013</u>
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1-apartment.....	£424
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2-apartment.....	£530
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3-apartment.....	£636
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4-apartment.....	£742
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5-apartment.....	£848
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6-apartment.....	£954
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Maximum Allowance per Room.....	£106
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URGENT ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE.....	£322
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STANDARD REDECORATION & FLOORING ALLOWANCE

KITCHEN & BATHROOM CONTRACTS.....	£333
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FLOOR COVERING ALLOWANCE.....	£122
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MAXIMUM ALLOWANCE FLOOR COVERING.....	£366
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BLINDS.....	£28
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DEHUMIDIFIER ALLOWANCE	£6.50 per day/per unit
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DECANT ALLOWANCE

Tenants making their own arrangements for alternative accommodation	£132 per week
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(per adult resident in the household over 16 years of age)