

1 CONSUMER DIRECT – A NATIONAL CONSUMER ADVICE HELPLINE – UPDATE (AN451-2003)

Reference is made to Article II of the minute of meeting of the Environmental and Consumer Protection Committee of 16th December, 2002 wherein approval was given for Dundee City Council to submit a bid to host the contact centre for this helpline in Dundee. However, no suitable facilities were identified within the city.

Consumer Direct is a national (UK) consumer advice helpline, one hundred percent funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, to be delivered through a number of regional contact centres, and will start operating in summer 2004.

The operation of Consumer Direct will also involve close co-operation with local authorities and other advice agencies, and will result in the referral of complaints which require further action to Dundee City Council Trading Standards Service. These complaints will, in the main, involve local Dundee citizens who feel disadvantaged, or have suffered detriment, through consumer transactions.

The Committee is asked to note the selection of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as the preferred bidder for Consumer Direct in Scotland, and agree to support the Consumer Direct initiative and accept referrals of relevant complaints.