

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH 2004

REPORT ON: TENANTS' ALLOWANCES

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 136-2004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The Housing Committee of 17 February 2003 agreed a report by the Director of Housing to upgrade tenants' allowances in line with inflation. These allowances are now due to be updated in line with inflation for financial year 2004/2005. In addition, Committee is asked to agree a more in-depth review of the decant allowances for tenants making their own arrangements, as outlined in paragraph 8.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Housing Committee:

- 2.1. agree that the Tenants' Allowances Scheme should be increased in line with inflation as detailed in paragraph 7 and the Appendix of this report from 1 April 2004.
- 2.2. agree the revised decant allowance for tenants making their own arrangements, outlined in para. 8.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. These allowances are increased in line with inflation and apply to both revenue and capital programmes starting after 1 April 2004. The allowances detailed can be met from within these budgets.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. None.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. 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 payment made.

7. TYPES OF ALLOWANCE PROVIDED

7.1. Decoration Allowance

This is payable to assist with redecoration following remedial or improvement work where the tenant's decoration has been affected.

The same allowances are also made to new tenants where the conditions of the relet house merits an allowance. The appendix details the rooms which qualify for decoration allowance and the maximum allowance for different sizes of property.

7.2. Window Blinds

Where replacement windows have been installed which alter the dimensions so that the existing blinds do not fit, a voucher is issued to compensate for alterations or contribute to new blinds, as the tenant desires. It is proposed that the value per blind is increased from £19.50 to £20.

7.3. Floorcovering Allowance

7.3.1. Where floorcoverings need to be uplifted to carry out remedial or improvement work, the tenant is given a choice of

- a. a voucher 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 who will issue a voucher.

It is proposed that the value per house of the floorcovering voucher is increased from £89 to £91.

7.3.2. It is also recommended that, where damage to floorcovering is anticipated as part of the work, e.g. where new kitchen units are a different size from existing units or a fire place has to be removed leaving a gap in the carpet, then an additional floorcovering voucher up to the value of £91 can be issued.

7.3.3. Where tenants have fitted wooden or laminate flooring and this is unavoidably damaged as part of a Capital Contract, an additional floorcovering voucher can be issued up to the value of £91.

7.3.4. For clarification, a tenant can receive a maximum of £273 for floorcovering allowances, where all the criteria above are met.

7.4. Non-slip Flooring/Floor Tiles

Where tiles can be removed and refitted the appointed contractor will carry out this work. Where they cannot be lifted, they will, as at present, be replaced under the contract.

7.5. Urgent Additional Allowance

This permits an additional payment up to £240 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 £240 to £246.

7.6. **Removal and Storage of Furniture**

Housing Officers will, where required, arrange removal and storage of tenants' furniture directly with a removal contractor on the tenant's behalf.

8. **DECANT ALLOWANCE – TENANTS MAKING THEIR OWN ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION**

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 2003/2004 was £57.50 per week or part of week plus a rent abatement for the period that the tenant cannot live in their house.

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 or bed & breakfast accommodation which includes evening meal. These options are all less cost effective than tenants making their own arrangements.

It is anticipated that the number of tenants making their own arrangements would increase if the amount of the allowance was considerably increased. The scale of the central heating programme over the last couple of years is such that there is great pressure on all resources including the availability of suitable decant accommodation. It is therefore recommended that the allowance increases from £57.50 to £100 a week for financial year 2004/05. In most situations decants are planned for between one and three weeks. If decants are planned to be in excess of three weeks an assessment of costs will be carried out in order to consider the most suitable option. Where work is not planned to take more than 1-3 weeks, but does due to delays on the contract by the contractor, an increased amount of liquid and ascertained damages will apply to reflect this increased allowance. In this way the Council will recover the extra costs incurred. In the event of exceptional unforeseen circumstances causing decants to run more than 3 weeks, for example, dry rot is discovered in a heating replacement contract, then this allowance will be paid accordingly. Tenants in this situation may wish to choose a different option and this will be accommodated as far as possible. This option should therefore, not be used where long term decants are anticipated. A review of this scheme will be reported to Committee at the next review of these allowances and if necessary amended.

9. **REVIEW OF ALLOWANCE LEVELS**

The appendix illustrates the new allowances increased in line with inflation, which have been quoted throughout the report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) and Chief Executive have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations has also been consulted regarding this report.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

FEBRUARY 2004

TENANTS' ALLOWANCES FROM 1ST APRIL 2004**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:

Kitchen / Hall & Stairs / Bedrooms / Lounge / Bathroom

<u>Maximum Allowance per Dwelling</u>	<u>From 1st April 2004</u>
1-apartment.....	£320
2-apartment.....	£400
3-apartment.....	£480
4-apartment.....	£560
5-apartment.....	£640
6-apartment.....	£720
<u>Maximum Allowance per Room</u>	£80
<u>URGENT ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE</u>	£246
<u>FLOOR COVERING ALLOWANCE</u>	£91
<u>MAXIMUM ALLOWANCE FLOOR COVERING</u> ...	£273
<u>BLINDS</u>	£20
<u>DECANT ALLOWANCE</u> Tenants making their own arrangements for alternative accommodation.....	£100 per week