

REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 27 APRIL 2009

REPORT ON: TENANTS' ALLOWANCES UPDATE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 143-2009

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 previous annual agreements.
- 2.2. An independent review of tenants allowances is undertaken and reported back to Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The allowances are increased by 2.5%, since the last review in March 2008 and the levels apply to both revenue and capital programmes, starting after 28 April 2009.

The allowances detailed can be met from within these budgets.

4. MAIN TEXT - TENANTS' ALLOWANCES

- 4.1. Reference is made to the report to Housing Committee Tenants' Allowances Update on 24 March 2008 (Ref:143-2008) 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. This report recommends that the allowances increase in line with previous increases 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. An independent review of the tenants allowances will be undertaken and the outcomes reported back to Committee.
- 4.2. Tenants who are over 65, or are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance 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.
- 4.3. An initiative was introduced last year that standardised payments on all Kitchen and Bathrooms Contracts. A standard allowance of £280 was paid to each tenant in the kitchen and bathroom upgrading programme. This covers decoration and flooring of an amount that is consistently predictable and is fair to all tenants in this programme. This allowance would only be paid when decoration is not carried out for the tenant.

This initiative has proven to be very successful and will now form part of the Tenants Allowance Scheme. The standard allowance for all Kitchen and Bathroom Contracts for 2009/10 will be £287.

- 4.4. These allowances have been benchmarked against other neighbouring local authorities in terms of amount and how they are applied. Dundee Council's policy offers greater choice to tenants as well as value for money

5. TYPES OF ALLOWANCE PROVIDED

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

5.1. 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.

5.2. Window Blinds

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 £23 to £24.

5.3. Floorcovering Allowance

- 5.3.1. 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 £102 to £105.

- 5.3.2. 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 £105 can be approved.
- 5.3.3. Where tenants have fitted wooden or laminate flooring and this is unavoidably damaged as part of a Capital Contract, an additional floorcovering allowance can be approved up to the value £105.
- 5.3.4. For clarification, a tenant can receive a maximum of £314 of floorcovering allowances, where all the criteria above are met.

5.4. **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, an allowance will be offered in line with Appendix 1.

5.5. **Urgent Additional Allowance**

This permits an additional payment up to £273 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 £273 to £280

5.6. **Removal and Storage of Furniture**

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

6. **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 2008/09 was £112 per week or 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 £115 per week for each adult over 16 years of age in the household. This payment will be made to the tenant of the 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 and breakfast accommodation which includes evening meal. These options are all less cost effective than tenants making their own arrangements.

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.

7. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been screened for any policy implications Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

8. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Finance and all other Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations has also been consulted regarding this report. There have been no issues arising from the consultations.

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Tenants Allowances - Housing Committee March 2005 (175-2005).
- Capital Contract Services Working Group - Interim Report - Housing Committee - 26 June 2006 (ref: 390-2006).
- Tenants' Allowances Review - 15 January 2007 (ref: 706-2006).
- Tenants' Allowances Update on 24 March 2008 (ref:143-2008).

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April 2009

TENANTS' ALLOWANCES FROM 28 APRIL 2009

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 and Stairs/Bedrooms/Lounge/Bathroom

<u>Maximum Allowance per Dwelling</u>	<u>From 28 April 2009</u>
1-apartment.....	£365
2-apartment.....	£457
3-apartment.....	£548
4-apartment.....	£639
5-apartment.....	£730
6-apartment.....	£821
Maximum Allowance per Room.....	£92
URGENT ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE.....	£280
STANDARD REDECORATION & FLOORING ALLOWANCE KITCHEN & BATHROOM CONTRACTS.....	£287
FLOOR COVERING ALLOWANCE.....	£105
MAXIMUM ALLOWANCE FLOOR COVERING.....	£314
BLINDS.....	£24

DECANT ALLOWANCE

Tenants making their own arrangements
for alternative accommodation.....£115 per week

(per adult resident in the household over 16 years of age)