

**REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 18TH FEBRUARY 2002**

**REPORT ON: CITYWIDE COMMUNAL CLEANING**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**REPORT NO: 152-2002**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To seek approval to pursue communal cleaning Citywide through an external contract with Tayside Contracts.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To pursue pro-actively Citywide communal cleaning in all areas where there is some degree of Council ownership, subject to obtaining the prescribed levels of approval for each individual communal block of properties. This will be 50% of properties which must include 100% approval from any owner occupier within the communal block.
- 2.2 Negotiations to be entered into with Tayside Contracts to provide a workforce to carry out a communal cleaning contract subject to being at a competitive cost over a prescribed contract period.
- 2.3 Staff currently operating in these areas will be redeployed within the Housing Department in accordance with the Council's redeployment policy. The existing posts (2) of Manual Grade 3 will be deleted from the Housing Department structure.
- 2.4 Approval for Director of Housing to include communal cleaning as part of the new tenancy agreement under the "Scottish Secure Tenancy ..." when the communal property has previously been part of the scheme or is intended to become part of the scheme.
- 2.5 Standard specification including bin store cleaning and returning of wheelie bins to be negotiated with Tayside Contracts.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Communal cleaning will be a self-financing project, with the only costs to be borne by the Council arising from administration in collecting the charges from tenants/owners. With regard to owners, they will be invoiced three months in advance; whilst tenants' charges will be included with their rent payments.

#### 4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

#### 5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

#### 6. **BACKGROUND**

6.1 Approval to implement communal cleaning was obtained from the Housing Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> November, 1997. The guidelines still remain in force - such as 50% agreement from tenants and 100% from owners - with housing benefit being paid to cover residents who qualify.

6.2 At present there are still areas of the City where communal cleaning is being operated in different modes and at different costs; depending on the length of time required to clean/size of area requiring cleaning. The difference in cost can range from £1.30 per week to £1.95 per week.

6.3 Common complaints on a regular basis highlight that tenants, along with elected members and the Dundee Federation of Tenants Association, are concerned about the condition of communal closes which are viewed as anything but aesthetically pleasing in many locations. There is a requirement to address these concerns in a realistic and pragmatic way and to respond in a proactive - rather than existing reactive - manner if we are to retain council housing as a leading source of rented accommodation.

6.4 The case of tenancy enforcement procedures are still an option for the non-cleaning of communal closes; but in reality these are costly, cumbersome and also time-consuming relative to the results which can be achieved. Their objective would ultimately be eviction for non-compliance. It is also accepted that tenants' responsibilities and priorities have changed dramatically in the last two/three decades in that there has been less enthusiasm and effort in cleaning communal areas. The detrimental effect of this is that it adversely affects the popularity of estates and the lettability of properties.

6.5 It is therefore viewed that the solution to the problem of communal cleaning can be achieved through a consolidated, unilateral approach to cleaning the communal closes within the city. This should provide a more focused approach to the issue in order to meet the expectations of the public, and even exceed them.

#### 7. **MAIN TEXT**

The proposal to introduce Citywide communal cleaning through Tayside Contracts offers considerable benefits which, at this present time, could not be achieved with present arrangements for communal cleaning.

- 7.1 The foundation of the Housing Department's long-term strategy for dealing with communal closes is to increase communal cleaning projects from a minority position to one of a majority programme. If successful, a considerable amount of fruitless effort and frustration will be eradicated from staff time spent trying to deliver the principle of close cleaning through traditional methods of encouraging and threatening tenants who fail to comply in cleaning their required areas. The derived results have long since been outweighed by the effort applied.
- 7.2 Communal cleaning has been proven to be successful in areas of the City which have it in place. However, this has always been in a fragmented, small unit scale, with differences in method of operation and cost.
- 7.3 The cost to the recipients of this scheme, like any other, is extremely important particularly in non-benefit cases and it is therefore imperative that best value is achieved.
- 7.4 Communal cleaning as it exists is only a small element of that which tenants wish to see introduced under the scheme, since they would like this to be expanded to cover other areas such as the return of empty wheelie bins and the cleaning of bin shelters.
- 7.5 To market this scheme successfully it will be necessary to have uniformity not only in work schedules but also in the costs Citywide. To allow this to succeed it would require that schemes in operation at present within the Housing Department be transferred to one contractor who would deal with new and existing areas.

## 8. **OPTION APPRAISALS**

There are several options which could be introduced, which are -

### 8.1 **Expand Present System**

At present communal cleaning is covered by care-taking staffing within different locations Citywide. This involves, at three locations, staff in fixed positions, and at others staff being attached to a mobile operation. To expand this scheme would involve recruiting further personnel, as the current communal cleaning is being operated at full capacity at present. As such it is not feasible to expand using existing levels. To operate Citywide communal cleaning on the basis of expanding it from the current method of operation has several disadvantages.

- a) Introduction of large scale communal cleaning involves commitment on the part of the contractor (council) to its client (tenants) and as such there would be a commitment for all closes to be cleaned once a week. To achieve this would require a considerable pool of personnel to cover absence, sickness, training etc.
- b) In conjunction with (a) and the principle that this scheme is to be self-financing, there would be a burden in financial terms on the scheme, as the cost of relief staff would have to be incorporated into the total.

- c) To expand the current method of operation would present problems from the outset, in that the cost to the tenant would be in direct relation to the cost of employing the workforce. There is very little room for manoeuvre.
- d) A pilot scheme carried out on behalf of the Housing Department by Tayside Contracts highlighted that the work could be delivered satisfactorily with savings of 19% which would be passed on entirely to the tenant.
- e) Enlarging the present scheme would result in the need to purchase further equipment such as vehicles, since there is presently one, which carries only two operatives.

There are the advantages that accompany any scheme which has its own workforce, such as closer management and control; notwithstanding this they have to be weighed against the aforementioned disadvantages and the opportunities that can be derived from the other options undernoted.

## 8.2 External Tendering

The option of external tendering – whilst considered under normal circumstances – is not seen as appropriate in this case. Approval has been obtained from the Chief Executive, due to the nature of this contract – which requires consistency of performance and the need for expediency – and has the uncertainty of the supply element, for it to be dealt with under the category of ‘special circumstance’ in the Council’s Standing Orders.

## 8.3 Negotiated Contract

The third category is to use Tayside Contracts within the special circumstances category highlighted in 8.2. This would provide advantages normally associated with private tendering through an in-house contractor.

Advantages of using the above are;

- a) Tayside Contracts have a large workforce which allows them to work on economies of scale. This reduces the final cost the tenant will be required to pay.
- b) Tayside Contracts have indicated previously that they can provide a service beyond stair cleaning if required, i.e. returning wheelie bins, cleaning of bin shelters, etc.
- c) Their work in a previous communal cleaning pilot scheme, has been found to be satisfactory and below existing costs for in-house communal cleaning.
- d) A negotiated contract with Tayside Contracts would ensure there was no misunderstanding about the type of service to be provided or costs involved. The service provided would be that which was agreed upon.

9. **ADVANTAGES TO HOUSING DEPARTMENT OF CONTRACT BEING ADMINISTERED BY TAYSIDE CONTRACTS**

There are several advantages in increasing communal cleaning through Tayside Contracts:

- Financial saving to the Council in areas such as sickness, holiday, and other management issues.
- Reduced cost of staff time in ensuring that tenants comply with tenancy conditions pertaining to communal cleaning of areas within the confines of the property. Should any problems regarding standards exist, there will be one main point of contact.
- A consistent approach to carrying out communal cleaning – not a fragmented one – will provide a clear, concise statement of intent by the Council when dealing with problems at unsatisfactory communal areas.

10. **ESTATE SUPERVISION OFFICERS**

The implementation of a Citywide scheme would be operational in conjunction with existing local Estate Supervision Officers.

11. **CONSULTATION**

Chief Executive, all Chief Officers, Dundee Federation of Tenants Association.

12. **BACKGROUND**

Housing Committee 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1996 – Report on Communal Cleaning to Low Rise Properties – Citywide Policy (Report 210/1996) Housing Committee 17<sup>th</sup> November 1997 – Communal Cleaning to Low Rise Properties – Citywide Policy.

**ELAINE ZWIRLEIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**SIGNED** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_