

**REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 21 MARCH 2005**

**REPORT ON: USE OF HOMELESS FUNDING 2005/06**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**REPORT NO: 281-2005**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. To seek Housing Committee approval to spend special grant allocations for 2005/06 to meet the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That Housing Committee approve the prioritisation of Homeless Task Force Grant for 2005/06.
- i. That £15,000 is committed to develop and train staff up to Homepoint Standards level.
  - ii. Two vehicles be purchased by the Homeless Services Unit up to the value of £50,000.
  - iii. Investigation into the hidden homeless within the city be addressed by commissioning an independent research study.
  - iv. Remit the Director of Housing to obtain costs for the refurbishment of the Lily Walker Centre.
- 2.2. That with regard to 2.1 (ii, iii and iv), the Director of Housing brings forward further reports to the Housing Committee with specific proposals and details of expenditure.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All costs will be met from specific grant of £486,700 awarded by the Scottish Executive. There are no implications for the Housing Revenue Account or Council Tax.

**4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. The proposals reflect a number of key Dundee 21 Themes, including access to good food, water, shelter and fuel at a reasonable cost, health is protected, access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society.

## 5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Implementation of the new homeless duties fulfils the Council's commitment to assist those in need by ensuring that needs are assessed and a range of accommodation is available for local people.

## 6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The Council has been allocated £486,700 for implementation of homeless strategy and to tackle homelessness which must be spent in accordance with the Local Outcome Agreement.
- 6.2. This report sets out how to meet increased demand and ensure compliance with current legislation as a result of the Council's extended duties to homeless persons. The report also identifies a number of projects and refers to some existing commitments as identified in the homeless strategy and Local Outcome Agreement.
- 6.3. The new legislation increases the Authority's homelessness duties to provide advice, information and temporary accommodation. In November 2003, Personnel Committee approved the recruitment of these additional staff for Homeless Services Unit, to enable the Housing Department to fulfil statutory duties.
- 6.4. In January 2003, Personnel Committee approved a report to establish a Homeless Strategy Team which would be responsible for ensuring that the Local Authority met its obligations under Section 1 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- 6.5. As agreed with partner agencies in the Local Outcome Agreement, an investigation should be carried out into the extent of hidden homelessness within the Dundee area. It is recommended that we investigate the possibility of independent research and report back to a future Committee.
- 6.6. Part I of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 states that every Local Authority must secure, free of charge, advice and information to the prevention of homelessness and services available within the City. Within their Regulation and Inspection role, Communities Scotland are recommending that all Local Authorities achieve the recognised Scottish National Standards and Good Practice for Housing. Information Services, known as Homepoint. It is therefore recommended that £15,000 is committed to develop and train staff to Homepoint Standards.
- 6.7. The Homeless Services Unit has identified problems with transporting homeless people and their possessions to and from temporary accommodation units. This has been exacerbated by problems with insurance for staff using their own cars for these purposes. To meet these needs it is proposed that the Homeless Service Unit purchase 2 people carriers to provide this service. Running costs of the vehicles will be balanced by savings made from travel expenses which would previously have been claimed by Homeless Persons Officers.
- 6.8. Since the introduction of the Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004, the Housing Department has identified a need for accommodation which is suitable for the needs of homeless families. The Unsuitable Accommodation Order states "*it is not acceptable for children to be accommodated in circumstances which run counter to their best interests*". The Lily Walker Centre no longer meets the criteria specified in a number of areas.

It is therefore recommended that the Lily Walker Centre is refurbished to utilise all available space for single people. It is recommended that estimates are obtained and reported back to a future Committee.

Families will be accommodated by increasing the number of dispersed flats throughout the city.

## 7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1. All members of the Homelessness Co-ordinating Group have been consulted and approved the contents of this report.
- 7.2. Comments have been sought from relevant Departments and these have been incorporated into this report.

## 8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1. Report on Use of Homeless Funding Allocations 2003-04, approved by Housing Committee 16 February 2004, Report No 102-2004.
- 8.2. Report on Homeless Services Unit – Establishment of Posts. Approved by Personnel Committee November 2003, Report No 699-2003.
- 8.3. Note on Extension of Fixed Term Posts (Homeless Strategy Team – approved by Personnel). Committee February 2005, Agenda Note No AN35/2005.
- 8.4. Report on Dundee's Homelessness Local Outcome Agreement 2004/2005, approved by Housing Committee 21 June 2004, Report No 441-2004.

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

**FEBRUARY 2005**