

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 20 MAY 2002

REPORT ON: ENERGY ADVICE IN DUNDEE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 324-2002

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report outlines the need for enhanced energy advice in the city, how this can be achieved and how it will be paid for by the use of the funds generated by the preferred fuel supplier scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing Committee is asked to:

- 2.1. Agree the criteria for the urgent heating allowance.
- 2.2. Agree to the expansion of the energy advice provision in the city, through SCARF (Save Cash And Reduce Fuel) and note that a revised service level agreement will be prepared for approval.
- 2.3. Agree that these projects meet the criteria, i.e., to spend the funds on energy efficiency works or services, and to use the income from the preferred fuel supplier scheme for these issues.
- 2.4. Note that to facilitate co-ordination, quarterly meetings will be held between the Council and SCARF, and that SCARF will be invited to become a partner in DCEP (Dundee Community Energy Partnership).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The current funding arrangements will continue. The additional post and the urgent heating allowance will be funded from the preferred fuel supplier scheme. This will continue to be monitored to ensure sufficient funds are available. Posts will be temporary with the duration determined by continued funding for SCARF and the continuation of the preferred supplier agreement.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

Access to good quality energy advice will help meet the local agenda 21 themes of resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised and pollution is limited to levels at which natural systems can cope.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

The project will endeavour to ensure all sectors of the community have access to good quality energy advice.

6. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The project will meet many of the needs identified in the anti-poverty strategy, particularly, delivering services which meet needs, targeting resources, providing information and advice, helping to obtain resources through representation, aid and advocacy, obtaining external funding or grant aid, and providing employment.

7. BACKGROUND

A report was agreed at Housing Committee in September 2000 (*Report No 602/2000*) agreeing a tender from Scottish and Southern Energy plc (*trading locally as Hydro Electric*) to be the preferred fuel supplier for void Council housing stock. The scheme has the potential to generate income of £100,000 per year over the 3 year life of the contract (*based on void figures for 1999/2000*).

Housing Committee agreed to the income from the scheme being spent on energy efficiency works or services, through a Community Energy Efficiency fund. This report is intended to outline the first and most significant phase of expenditure, which meets the above criteria. The scheme has raised £75,000 in its first year of operation. Phase 2 and 3 are scheduled to start during 2002/2003 financial year.

8. URGENT HEATING ALLOWANCE

- 8.1. The first proposal is to establish an Urgent Heating Allowance of £20,000 per year from the fund. The Council's Heating for All programme operates on a geographical basis across the City, with properties which were built at the same time in the same area having the work carried out at the same time, ie on a development basis. Other factors such as the age of existing heating and the condition of existing heating are taken into account, but the work is still carried out on a development-by-development basis.

The current arrangements are effective in dealing with a programme of this size (*approximately £6.5 million per year, including almost £2 million a year through the Government's Central Heating Initiative*). However current procedures are not effective in dealing with one-off critical cases, where due to critical medical problems, it is recommended that heating be installed at an earlier date than the date it is due. Such cases will usually involve terminally ill tenants, their partners, or even their children. The scheme suggested would help the Council react to such cases and give heating to tenants at a crucial time outwith the normal programme. The scheme will be initially limited to around £20,000 a year (*which will mean up to 4 tenants a year benefit*) but this can be reviewed in future years of the scheme if desired and if resources are available.

Individual cases will be referred to the Council's Medical Adviser for assessment and decisions will be made in consultation with Housing Department Staff.

A choice of fuel type will be given to tenants however final decisions on what is offered will be based on both the medical assessment and how quickly the fuel type choice can be installed for example in some cases where there is no gas supply there can be lengthy delays in the provision of a supply and in some instances the cost of bringing in such a supply may not be economic.

9. DUNDEE ENERGY EFFICIENCY ADVICE PROJECT

- 9.1. The Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP) was established in 1998 in conjunction with Save Cash And Reduce Fuel (SCARF), who are based in Aberdeen.

The project is part funded from Social Inclusion Partnership funds (£3k), Economic Development Department (£10k) and Housing (£10k). The project aims to provide energy advice to Dundee's 70,000 households. The project has been very successful and has achieved all its main targets for the first 3 years.

- To complement existing services and help to support the Council's Home Energy Strategy.
- To target those who suffer poverty and the fuel poor, and encourage them to seek and act on energy efficiency advice.
- To raise awareness of energy conservation and its effects on the environment.
- Reducing Co² emissions.

9.2. The demand on the service far outweighs what one member of staff can achieve, eg the demand from Council tenants for individual house calls and the benefits of carrying out energy efficiency discussions with the tenants before they make their heating choices in a heating programme is immense. With an expanded heating programme we want to offer all tenants the opportunity to attend a meeting where fuel choice will be discussed. With one member of staff this is proving almost impossible, and the demand in 2002/03 is in expected to be greater with the leased heating scheme. Combined with surgeries in the SIPS areas and community events such as the Dundee Flower Show, the staffing resources for the project are spread too thinly.

9.3. There are now complementary energy advice services in the city, and the project works closely with them. Since the project's inception SCARF have established the Tayside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (TEEAC) which is now located in Balgray Place. This project has a wider remit to work with businesses and the private sector, as well as individual households. The advice is primarily telephone based, but house calls are carried out where required.

Different options have been examined for expanding the DEEAP project but in the interests of continuity, expansion through SCARF is seen as the best option. It is therefore recommended that the project be expanded to allow an additional energy adviser to be employed and based at SCARF. Targets for the service will be formalised in a revised service level agreement between SCARF and the Council.

9.4. Within this suggestion a desk space is to be retained in the Improvements and Maintenance Unit in the Housing Department in order to provide a link between the two organisations, so that the close links with Housing Officers, Area Office staff, Project Officers and Elected Members can continue and be enhanced.

10. **LINKS WITH OTHER ENERGY ADVICE INITIATIVES**

By basing the project at SCARF and it being managed through SCARF there are advantages in terms of admin support, cover for holidays, sickness etc and a closer working relationship with the TEEAC. The Dundee Community Energy Partnership (DCEP) is now being established, with a remit to identify the fuel poor and target energy advice, welfare advice and energy efficiency measures at them. The project intends to use existing agencies to provide advice etc whenever this can be achieved. It would not be possible for the DEEAP to contribute to this under the current arrangements as the existing staff member is already overstretched. However, there will be increased scope under the expanded project, especially linking in with TEEAC.

11. **MONITORING**

A revised service level agreement will be agreed and reported in the normal way, between SCARF and the Council.

Quarterly monitoring meetings will take place to ensure targets are being met, and the project is delivering its objectives.

12. **CONCLUSIONS**

The funds from the preferred fuel supplier scheme must be used for energy efficiency works or services. The establishment of an urgent heating allowance for Council tenants *(or a member of their household)* with critical medical needs is seen as an excellent use of these resources. The Scottish Executive's Central Heating Initiative and the Council's Heating For All Programme will be complemented and enhanced by an expanded energy advice provision.

13. **CONSULTATIONS**

All Chief Officers and the Dundee Federation of Tenants Association have been consulted on the contents of this report.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____