

**REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE -
28 SEPTEMBER 2009**

REPORT ON: PURCHASE OF REUSE FURNITURE PACKAGES

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 460-2009

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to request approval from Committee to transfer £50,000 from Waste Management Department's Revenue Budget into the Housing Department's, Homeless Services Unit budget to enable continuation of the purchase of furniture packages for statutory homeless households taking up permanent tenancies.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. Committee approves the transfer of £50,000 from Waste Management Department's Revenue Budget into Homeless Services Unit budget to enable the purchase of reuse furniture packages for statutory homeless households.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The £50,000 costs will be met from Waste Management Department's 2009/10 Revenue Budget.

4. MAIN TEXT

4.1. Introduction

There are significant benefits to the Council in supporting local reuse furniture companies in Dundee. Reuse furniture companies are social enterprises and are the main supplier of furniture packages to disadvantaged homeless households in the City. They also provide a valuable source of good quality furniture available to purchase for low income households who otherwise would have difficulties furnishing their homes. Reuse furniture companies also act as an employer providing full time posts to persons who otherwise may have had difficulties entering the labour market and also provide volunteer placements to enable persons who are or have been homeless the opportunity to gain work experience.

4.2. Housing Department

There are clear benefits to the Housing Department in continuing to access furniture packages for homeless households. The benefits are financial and service specific and include:

- Prevention of homelessness

DCC's strategic aim is to reduce homelessness through prevention activity. This

strategy not only includes first line prevention it also includes avoidance of repeat homelessness. Provision of essential furnishings along with housing support is vital in assisting vulnerable households to maintain tenancies and avoid the breakdown of tenancies leading to repeat homelessness with associated costs.

- Provision of temporary accommodation

The Council has a statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation to any person presenting who claims to be homeless. Demand for temporary accommodation is intense and a constant supply needs to be maintained. In order to avoid the costs of providing temporary accommodation in Hotels and Guest Houses DCC and our partners in the voluntary sector concentrate on freeing up units of temporary accommodation by moving clients through the system and into permanent or alternative forms of accommodation as quickly as possible. One of the main barriers to people moving out of temporary accommodation is the lack of essential furnishings to set up home. In the absence of being able to supply a furniture package a client may have to reside in temporary accommodation for up to six additional weeks in order to obtain a Community Care Grant or Social Fund Loan to buy essential furnishings. Lack of throughput in temporary accommodation will lead to shortages and inevitably will result in costly B&B placements.

- Void loss

As stated above, the absence of furniture packages can lead to people not being able to take up mainstream tenancies for up to six weeks. Housing Benefit will not pay benefit on two homes (except in strictly defined limited circumstances) therefore the client's benefit claim will continue for the temporary accommodation and will not be paid for the permanent home until they physically move in.

4.3. **Waste Management Department**

Dundee City Council has some very challenging recycling targets to meet in the coming years, namely 40% recycling and composting by 2010, and 50% recycling and composting by 2013.

The recycling rate for 2008/09 was 36.1%, meaning that an additional 4%, (equivalent to approximately 4000 tonnes of waste) is required to be recycled to meet the 2010 target. Although the collection scheme for dry mixed recyclate has still to be rolled out to many parts of the city, the fact that traditional kerbside recycling services such as garden waste, cardboard and paper have now been rolled out to the majority of suitable properties within the City, indicates that this additional 4000 tonnes of recycling will require a number of different approaches to be utilised..

Last year Dundee City Council was able to claim 126 tonnes of furniture that passed through reuse companies towards its recycling targets. Discussions between reuse companies and officers of the Waste Management Department identified means of significantly increasing this figure during 2009/10, and it is predicted that this amount could quite easily be increased to over 300 tonnes per annum. This would make a positive contribution to the 2010 recycling target, and in recycling terms would represent good value for money, equating to a cost of around £150 per tonne.

4.4. **Conclusion**

Furniture reuse companies operate on a business footing and are not seeking grant assistance from the Council, rather they are seeking to charge an economic rate for the service they provide. Without this service there are likely to be substantial difficulties for the Homeless Service in carrying out its temporary accommodation duties and for the Housing Department HRA in terms of additional void loss in Council houses. Waste Management Department also see substantial advantages in supporting the purchase of

reuse furniture packages as described above. Given the benefits of in terms of service delivery and income it is recommended that £50,000 is transferred from Waste Management Department's Revenue Budget into Homeless Services budget to enable the purchase of reuse furniture packages to continue.

5. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

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

6. **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive (Support Services), Deputy Chief Executive (Finance), Head of Finance, Assistant Chief Executive and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on this report. No concerns were raised during the Officer consultation.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1. None.

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