

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 21 FEBRUARY 2005

REPORT ON: HOUSING DEPARTMENT - PROPERTY SHOP

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE
(MANAGEMENT)**

REPORT NO.: 54-2005

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To report on the pilot project operating the Property Shop, which was established in the Housing Department in April 1999.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee approve the following:

- 2.1. The Property Shop to close and the lease be terminated at the earliest suitable date, prior to 31 March 2005;
- 2.2. The functions of the Property Shop to be assumed by a combination of the Housing Area Offices and the proposed new Lettings Contact Centre.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The total budget of £161,515 has been allowed in the 2005/06 Housing Revenue Estimates and can be saved by closure of the Property Shop.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. None.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The Property Shop opened in April 1999 providing an innovative approach to giving applicants more choice in the housing they are offered and to enhance lettings performance.

- 6.2. The Property Shop successfully addressed the need for a more speedy letting of readily available properties and tested new ways of offering properties to potential tenants.
- 6.3. The Shop was recognised nationally as a positive step towards a more choice based lettings service for readily available stock when it won the Innovation in Social Housing Award for Scotland in 1999.
- 6.4. Throughout its lifespan the Property Shop has improved the Department's letting performance and has encouraged a new way of working for lettings staff. Customer focus has remained a key element of the strategy and the pilot has assisted greatly in the formulation of our future lettings strategy.
- 6.5. The Lettings Review Group has been working to transplant the innovative practices tested in the Property Shop back into local Housing Offices. The ability to advertise available properties and match an applicant to an available property has recently been introduced into the Area Offices as part of the Lettings Review Early Action Items.
- 6.6. The Early Action Items have been successful and it is proposed to continue these in Area Offices thereby taking the benefits of the Property Shop concept back into our local offices.
- 6.7. The proposed Lettings Contact Centre will take on some of the functions of the Property Shop, e.g. waiting list queries, availability queries, etc., in due course.
- 6.8. The Property Shop has been a success for the Housing Department and the staff involved are to be congratulated for their positive approach in leading the way for the department.
- 6.9. However, it is now felt that the Property Shop has fulfilled its remit and the pilot scheme should now be brought to an end.
- 6.10. All posts at the Property Shop, which are listed below, are temporary and staff will return to their substantive posts or be redeployed, as per Council procedures, in the Housing Department, at a date to be determined no later than 31 March 2005, subject to approval of the recommendations in this report.

Property Shop posts are:

- 1 Team Leader, graded AP4;
- 1 part time Housing Officer, graded AP2;
- 2 part time Assistant Housing Officers, graded GS3.

- 6.11. The Property Shop occupies a shop unit in the Wellgate Centre, the lease of which can be terminated with one month's notice.

7. **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1. The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Chief Officers, Trade Unions and Dundee Federation of Tenants' Association have been consulted regarding the contents of this report.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1. None.

Elaine Zwirlein
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

January 2005

James C. Petrie
ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (MANAGEMENT)

January 2005