

REPORT TO: Housing Committee 19 February 2001

REPORT ON: Direct Input of Housing Applications to Computer

REPORT BY: Director of Housing

REPORT NO: 60-2001

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report recommends the introduction of an additional method of applying for a Council house by enabling new customers to register their interest by telephone or by personal interview. It also contributes to the Information and Communications Technology Strategy for the City.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that a pilot scheme is introduced to enable requests for housing from new customers be accepted by telephone or by personal interview thereby eliminating the need for a written application form.
- 2.2. The pilot scheme to operate for 6 months and be located at the Applications Section, 3 Shore Terrace, and the Property Shop, Wellgate Centre, and that an evaluation be carried out at the end of this period.
- 2.3. A free phone number be established and advertised solely for the purpose of direct input of housing applications.
- 2.4. The I.T. Department be remitted to develop programmes to enable direct input to be carried out in the manner described in 2.1. and to ensure, as far as possible, that customer confidentiality is safeguarded.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The cost of a new number with extensions, headsets etc. is estimated at less than £1,500. The total cost of a free phone number cannot be estimated as usage is unknown at this time. The free phone costs will be reviewed at the end of the pilot.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- i. There are no local agenda implications.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. This report will ensure equality of access to housing on the basis of housing need.

6. BACKGROUND

6.1. It is recognised that access to housing in the city has been improved in recent years, however, as the opportunities to obtain a suitable property have also increased, it is necessary to respond to the changing demands of new customers.

6.2. Research was carried out among current and potential tenants and with other housing providers throughout Scotland and with some Housing Associations in England.

The concept of directly inputting an application for housing generated some interest, however, only one authority had introduced this method.

6.3. After visiting that authority, it was considered that the idea of direct input was worth developing especially to enable the department to respond immediately to an enquiry for housing. In this way, an applicant can be registered quickly and after the vetting process has been completed, be available for housing with minimum delay.

6.4. This new scheme will be restricted to new customers at least to begin with in order to measure its effectiveness more accurately.

Council tenants seeking transfers will still be required to apply in the traditional manner.

6.5. Some savings are anticipated in that there should be fewer documents to process, however, the greatest saving is expected to be in the time it takes to get a potential customer onto the Waiting List.

6.6. There will be no change to the current method of applying and new customers will be offered the choice of completing an application form or using the new method.

6.7. Applicants who apply by telephone will have their details sent to them as an acknowledgement, and will be required to sign and return a copy of that document to the Application Section.

6.8. This Initiative is also seen as part of the continuous improvement programme of services offered to customers and forms part of the Best Value Report relating to services within the maintenance of the waiting list.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1. The Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations were consulted on this proposal and have given their support.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Signed: _____

Date: _____