

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 16TH OCTOBER 2000

REPORT ON: MARKETING PLAN

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO.: 600-2000

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1. To report the contents of the Housing Department Marketing Plan to Housing Committee. The Marketing Plan aims to ensure that the Department maximises the revenue generated from renting Council properties.

1.2. In addition the Plan seeks to ensure that we continually improve the level of customer satisfaction with the product offered.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. The Marketing Plan as outlined below in summary form is agreed and implemented.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1. The costs incurred in implementing this Plan have been budgeted for in the present financial year. Analysis of all marketing activity will be undertaken to ensure that it is cost effective, in line with the principles of Best Value.

4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

None.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None.

6. **MAIN TEXT**

6.1. The Housing Department has conducted significant market research, upon which this Marketing Plan is based. This has highlighted opportunities for the Housing Department to improve services and given a greater understanding of the position of the Housing Department in the market.

6.2. Some of the key findings of the market research conducted and the Department's responses are:

6.2.1. The public in Dundee perceive the Council to offer good quality housing, relative to other tenures. This perception may be because the proportion of houses with double glazing and central heating is higher in Council property than other rented properties. However, Dundee City Council is not always first choice of landlord for some customers. The research carried out looked into this issue in some detail.

- 6.2.2. People with experience of living in a Dundee City Council property have more positive views of the products and services on offer than those who have never lived in a Council property. Therefore, to maintain our market position we need to improve the perception of Dundee City Council properties and estates. Public relations will be the main tool used to achieve this objective.
- 6.2.3. At present Decoration Vouchers are offered to assist new tenants with redecoration in their new home. A Decoration Voucher can be the incentive to rent by the applicant/customer. This is less apparent in readily available properties. There may be alternative incentives which are more effective. An analysis of the use of sales promotion tools by the Housing Department will be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of Decoration Vouchers and other tools as incentives to rent. Any range of possible promotions would need to be examined with regard to effectiveness and financial viability. Further consultation would be required on this issue.
- 6.2.4. Local newspapers, such as the Evening Telegraph, will continue to be used for advertising, however greater use will also be made of East Coast editions of national newspapers to widen the reach of the advertising. Dundee is a competitive housing market and we should continue to seek out new customers.
- 6.2.5. Every effort must be made to identify potential customers and, once identified, the key benefits of Council housing over some of our competitors must be stressed to our target market.
- 6.2.6. The production of Housing Department leaflets will continue to inform tenants and potential tenants of the services available and benefits of being a Council tenant.
- 6.2.7. Internal marketing will continue to reduce barriers to entry into Council housing.
- 6.2.8. Customer satisfaction surveys and other market research will continue to be used to identify improvements to the services offered to tenants.
- 6.2.9. The perception that Council housing is not available to everyone persists and through marketing we intend to raise awareness of its ready availability. Our marketing strategy will therefore focus on continuing the success of the Property Shop, while tackling the problems of perception of Council housing.
- 6.2.10. There is a perception amongst the public that Council rents are lower than those of Housing Associations and the private rented sector giving us an advantage over our competitors.
- 6.2.11. There is a recognition that poor (and often outdated) reputations of certain areas of the city are key factors in low demand housing in some areas. The research highlights that people who live in these areas are more positive about their area than those who base their opinions on media reports. Discussions have taken place with Dundee Federation of Tenants' Association on how tenants can work in partnership with the Council to promote Council housing.

7. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1. All Chief Officers have been consulted on the production of this report as have Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

SIGNED

DATE