

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel Committee - 13 December 2004

REPORT ON: Housing Department - Private Sector Services Unit Staffing Review

REPORT BY: Director of Housing and Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

REPORT NO: 704-2004

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Committee's approval to proposed changes to the establishment of the Unit which it is considered are essential if the Unit is to maintain its previous performance in respect of Private Sector Housing Grant expenditure, Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing targets and associated legislative requirements.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee approves the following recommendations:

- 2.1 The establishment of the post of Housing Officer, graded AP2/3 (£14811 - £19029); this post to be filled by the member of staff currently undertaking these duties on a temporary basis.
- 2.2 The establishment of two posts of Clerical Officer, graded GS1/3 (£10068 - £14211).
- 2.3 The establishment of a part-time (18.5 hours) post of Clerical Officer GS1/3 (£10068 - £14211).
- 2.4 The deletion of the post of Advice and Liaison Team Leader, graded AP5 (£22398 - £24396).
- 2.5 The deletion of the post of Housing Officer, graded AP1 (£14211 - £15204).
- 2.6 The part-time (18.5 hours) post of Clerical Officer, graded GS1/2 (£10,068 - £13,416) be regraded GS1/3 (£10,068 - £14,211).

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The maximum additional costs of these proposals in a full year is £15,355. This cost can be met from additional grant funding for HMO Licensing available from Communities Scotland.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Since the formation of the Private Sector Services Unit, the Unit has experienced significant change as a result of the introduction of Mandatory HMO Licensing and a new housing improvement and repairs grant system involving the introduction of a Test of Resources linked to the introduction of ring fenced funding in the form of Private Sector Housing Grant. These new schemes and systems have significantly increased workloads on the existing staff. Failure in these areas is likely to have an adverse effect on future funding and the credibility of the service as well as failing to meet our Statutory Obligations.
- 6.2 In respect of the current establishment the Unit has two vacant posts; the post of Housing Officer, graded AP1 and the post of Advice and Liaison Team Leader, graded AP5. The former is vacant, as a result of the member of staff currently filling the vacant Housing Officer post, graded AP2/3 on a temporary basis, and the latter due to ill health retirement.
- 6.3 The Unit is currently processing approximately 500 grant applications, 500 Care & Repair enquiries, 120 Building Condition Surveys and 175 HMO licence applications per year. Additionally within HMO licensing we are now processing the first of the renewal applications, requiring 164 applications for renewal of licences to be processed by the 1 October of this year. This task is being met with two Property Surveyors dealing with grants, two with HMOs and one processing C&R. Administrative support is provided across all of these services by two Housing Officers and one part time Clerical Officer. All word processing is carried out by two part time WP/Clerical Officers. In addition the Housing Action Area Team comprises 1½ full time equivalent Housing Officers dealing primarily with Housing Action Areas and Statutory Notices. It is therefore proposed that a posts of Housing Officer, graded AP2/3, two posts of Clerical Officer, graded GS1/3 and a part-time post of Clerical Officer, graded GS1/3 be established to ensure the effective and efficient administration of this significant workload.

7 IMPROVEMENT & REPAIRS GRANT SCHEME

- 7.1 The introduction of the new grant system in October 2003 has resulted in a 63% increase in available budget, however the associated administration has also generated a significant increase in workload. This has primarily been created by the introduction of a Test of Resources requiring an assessment of each applicants income/contribution to determine the level of grant assistance to be awarded. The complexity of this calculation process is time consuming in its application, however the complexity of the system has also led to significantly higher time being spent on a one to one basis with applicants calling at the office seeking assistance and guidance.

8 MANDATORY LICENSING OF HMOs

- 8.1 Mandatory licensing has been in operation since 1 October 2000. To date, 543 applications have been received and are being processed including 321 referrals to the Licensing Committee, leading to 311 licenses being granted. An additional 96 have had reports issued, leaving a current backlog of 44 outstanding applications.
- 8.2 Existing staffing resources have required that the service has had to concentrate on simply processing those applications received and have been unable to devote any significant time to identification and enforcement. With growing numbers of licensed properties and properties requiring licenses there is a need to enhance the enforcement aspects of the service. This has attracted specific grant funding from Communities Scotland, which is subject to meeting the following objectives, by 31 March 2005:

- Establish a formal strategy for identifying HMOs to improve robustness of the estimate.
- Have 900 licences in force and have received applications from or be actively pursuing all other HMOs identified.
- Ensure information to raise awareness of HMO licensing among landlords and tenants is available all year round.
- Ensure contact with tenants (in person or in writing) during application process, to raise awareness of licensing and contact point if they have concerns.
- Improve mechanisms to share information between teams/sections involved in licensing.

9 CARE & REPAIR

- 9.1 At this time over 500 enquiries, leading to 235 Small Repair Awards or Grant Applications as well as 265 advice only cases, are being dealt with annually by one Care & Repair officer with admin and clerical support being provided by his Team Leader. It is likely that a backlog will build up in this area. Clerical support would make a difference but is not available at this time from the single part time officer within the Unit.

10 HOUSING ACTION AREAS/STATUTORY NOTICES

- 10.1 Housing Action Areas and Statutory Notices, specifically Repair Notices are dealt with by the Advice & Liaison Team within the Unit. This is a small team of 1½ full time equivalent officers. Their main responsibility is to provide advice and assistance and a co-ordinating role to owners and their agents in the private sector relating to the improvement and repair of typically tenemental property.
- 10.2 This team are currently involved in twelve Repair Notices at various stages of progress and again have no clerical support in this role.
- 10.3 The proposed conversion of the vacant AP5 Team Leaders post requires that the staff report to an alternative Team Leader.

11 ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY AND NEW INITIATIVES

- 11.1 In attempting to process the various forms of application very little time is available to deal with work not directly associated with the services being offered. Whilst this is the case across the board, it is most apparent on the admin side of the office. Statistical returns to the Scottish Executive, internal Performance Indicators and the PSHG Spend Monitor are examples of additional but important pressures on the two Housing Officers responsible for producing this information. Producing this information is at the expense of delivering the services.
- 11.2 New initiatives within the private sector will cause an increasing workload for current staffing levels and this will likely influence the approach and effectiveness of delivering the service. Examples include:
- Private Sector Housing Grant bid funding initiatives
 - Fuel Poverty in the Private Sector
 - Care & Repair

- HMO licensing initiatives and outputs
- Housing Improvement Task Force Final Report
- Landlord Accreditation Pilot
- Landlord Registration Scheme

12 **SUMMARY**

- 12.1 Increased activity in Private Housing Sector Grants, Mandatory Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Care & Repair, together with the workload of the Advice & Liaison Team, has placed an increased workload on administrative and clerical support which it is considered could be addressed by the proposed changes to the establishment.

13 **CONSULTATION**

- 13.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and the trade unions have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

14 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1 None.

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7 December 2004

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7 December 2004