

5 CHARGING FOR HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES (AN183-2006)

Reference is made to Article I of the minute of meeting of the Housing Committee and Article III of the Social Work Committee of 18th November 2002, and to Report No 839-2006 which set out the charging policy for housing support services. This report noted that, in accordance with Scottish Executive Guidance, people in receipt of housing benefit were to be exempt from charges for housing support services.

In January 2006, COSLA produced revised guidance on charging for non-residential services, which included a recommendation that local authorities should remove the exemption for people in receipt of housing benefit and receiving housing support services. This is intended to ensure equality irrespective of financial circumstances, and to bring Scotland into line with current practice elsewhere in the UK. COSLA's recommendations were agreed at a Leaders meeting in January 2006.

The removal of this exemption would apply to new service users only; existing service users who currently enjoy this exemption would continue to do so until they ceased receiving housing benefit.

The removal of this exemption is likely to increase income from charging over time. Although it is not possible to estimate the amount involved at this stage, it is anticipated that the financial impact will be small.

It is recommended that the Committee approves the removal of the exemption with effect from 22nd May 2006.