

REPORT TO: HOUSING, DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES AND
ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE -
24 MARCH 2008

REPORT ON: TENANTS' ALLOWANCES UPDATE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 143-2008

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. The purpose of this report is to upgrade the tenants' allowances in line with inflation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that the Committee agree that the Tenants' Allowances Scheme should be increased in line with inflation as detailed in paragraphs 4 and 5 and the Appendix of this report from 1 April 2008.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. The allowances are increased by 2.5%, since the last review in January 2007 and the levels apply to both revenue and capital programmes, starting after 1 April 2008.

The allowances detailed can be met from within these budgets.

4. MAIN TEXT - TENANTS' ALLOWANCES

4.1. Reference is made to the report to Housing Committee Tenants' Allowances on 15 January 2007 (ref: 707-2006) which was the last review of the amounts. The purpose of the Tenants Allowances Scheme is to ensure that tenants are not significantly 'out of pocket' as a direct result of works taking place in their home. Payments do not fully cover all costs incurred, as in normal circumstances, tenants are responsible for decoration and an assessment for wear and tear is taken into account. The intention is, therefore, to approach tenants' requirements with flexibility, so that individual needs can be catered for, as well as achieving across the board consistency and fairness in the levels of payments made. This report recommends that the allowances increase in line with inflation over the period from the last review, the details of the allowances follow and the maximum amounts payable are clearly listed in the Appendix.

4.2. In the same report, Committee also agreed to modernise the system to improve efficiency and customer service by carrying out a number of changes to the system. One of the most significant changes was the move away from vouchers to cheques for paying tenants allowances following capital contracts. This has proved very popular with tenants and informal feedback has been very positive. This will now form part of the tenants' allowance scheme.

- 4.3. Two other initiatives introduced last year are listed below.
- a. Amending the qualifying criteria to require tenants to be 65 or need proof of disability before qualifying for redecoration.
 - b. Where tenants qualify for redecoration to be carried out, wallpaper is stripped before the (e.g. rewiring) work is carried out, and the contractor has taken choices from tenants and arranged to have redecoration carried out within the contract period of a maximum of 3 weeks.

Both have been very successful and will now form a standard part of the Tenants Allowances Scheme.

5. TYPES OF ALLOWANCE PROVIDED

This paragraph details the types of allowances available, the criteria for issuing them and the revised amounts payable.

5.1. Decoration Allowance

This is payable to assist with redecoration following remedial or improvement work where the tenant's decoration has been affected.

The same allowances are also made to new tenants where the conditions of the relet house merits an allowance. The appendix details the rooms which qualify for decoration allowance and the maximum allowance for different sizes of property.

5.2. Window Blinds

Where replacement windows have been installed which alter the dimensions so that the existing blinds do not fit, an allowance is authorised to compensate for alterations or contribute to new blinds, as the tenant desires. It is proposed that the value per blind is increased from £22 to £23.

5.3. Floorcovering Allowance

- 5.3.1. Where floorcoverings need to be uplifted to carry out remedial or improvement work, the tenant is given a choice of:

- a. an allowance as a contribution to lifting and relaying the floorcovering.
- b. a specialist carpet fitter, employed by the main contractor, to lift and relay carpets etc, which can reasonably be lifted without damage. If this is not possible the matter is referred back to the Housing Officer.

It is proposed that the value per house of the floorcovering allowance is increased from £99 to £102.

- 5.3.2. It is also recommended that, where damage to floorcovering is anticipated as part of the work, eg where new kitchen units are a different size from existing units or a fireplace has to be removed leaving a gap in the carpet, then an additional floorcovering allowance up to the value of £102 can be approved.

- 5.3.3. Where tenants have fitted wooden or laminate flooring and this is unavoidably damaged as part of a Capital Contract, an additional floorcovering allowance can be approved up to the value £102.
- 5.3.4. For clarification, a tenant can receive a maximum of £306 of floorcovering allowances, where all the criteria above are met.

5.4. **Non-slip Flooring/Floor Tiles**

Where tiles can be removed and refitted the appointed contractor will carry out this work. Where they cannot be lifted, an allowance will be offered in line with Appendix 1.

5.5. **Urgent Additional Allowance**

This permits an additional payment up to £266 to be made if urgent rehousing is required and where genuine need exists. This is limited to tenants who are either in receipt of Housing Benefit or have particular medical requirements.

Each application will, however, be considered on its own merit. It is proposed to increase this allowance from £266 to £273.

5.6. **Removal and Storage of Furniture**

Assistant Project Officer will, where required, arrange removal and storage of tenants' furniture directly with a removal contractor on the tenant's behalf.

6. **DECANT ALLOWANCE - TENANTS MAKING THEIR OWN ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION**

This is a payment made to tenants who make their own arrangements for alternative accommodation when they require to be decanted from their home. This allowance in 2006/07 was £109 per week or part of week plus a rent abatement for the period that the tenant cannot live in their house. It is proposed that this payment is increased to £112 per week for each adult over 16 years of age in the household. This payment will be made to the tenant of the house.

Where tenants require to be decanted and do not wish to make their own arrangements, varying options are available. The range of options include the use of furnished lets decant accommodation and hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation which includes evening meal. These options are all less cost effective than tenants making their own arrangements.

This allowance will be payable for a maximum of 3 weeks. In any project which is to take longer than 3 weeks, tenants should be offered a decant house from the Council stock as the preferred option.

7. **REVIEW OF ALLOWANCE LEVELS**

The appendix illustrates the new allowances increased in line with inflation, which have been quoted throughout the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications sustainability, strategic environmental assessment and equality impact assessment. There are no major issues.

9. CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Head of Finance, Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) and all Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations has also been consulted regarding this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Tenants Allowances - Housing Committee March 2005 (175-2005).
- Capital Contract Services Working Group - Interim Report - Housing Committee - 26 June 2006 (ref: 390-2006).
- Tenants Allowances Review - 15 January 2007 (706-2006).

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