

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing Committee - 18 February 2002
Personnel and Management Services Committee - 11 February 2002

REPORT ON: Housing Department - Private Sector Grant Unit and Housing Action Area Section - Review of Establishment

REPORT BY: Director of Housing and Director of Personnel and Management Services

REPORT NO.: 3-2002

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the findings and recommendations emanating from a review of the Private Sector Grant Unit and Housing Action Area Section of the Housing Department. A separate Best Value Review report deals with system and procedural changes to be implemented as a result of this report.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committees approve:-

- 2.1 the proposed staffing structure in Appendix 1;
- 2.2 the deletion of a post of Housing Officer, AP3 SCP23-26 (£16,173 - £17,796);
- 2.3 the deletion of 2 posts of Clerical Officer, GS3 SCP13-15 (£12,624 - £13,164);
- 2.4 the deletion of a post of Clerical Officer, GS1/2 SCP3-12 (£9,180 - £12,399).

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementing the proposed structure will release four posts from the combined staff. This is the equivalent of £58,523 plus on costs per annum saving to the Other Housing Account.

In addition, the Other Housing Capital account salaries expenditure can be offset by drawing down funds from Houses in Multiple Occupation budget.

4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6 BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

6.1 The review examined the detailed operation and functions of the Private Sector Grants Unit and their specific relationship with the Housing Action Area Section of the Housing Department.

The objective of the review was to determine whether:-

- a) Changes could be made to the services delivered;
- b) Procedures could be simplified;
- c) Costs could be reduced;
- d) Any duplication could be eliminated;
- e) Improved services by a single approach to Private Sector Services could be achieved.

The review also considered the aims and objectives of Housing Management and future changes in legislation which will affect the Housing Department including:-

- The new Housing Act.
- Review of the Tolerable Standard.
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- Housing advice services.

7 SERVICES REVIEWED

7.1 Private Sector Grants Unit

The Private Sector Grants Unit provides a wide range of services mainly to the private sector housing market but also to other sections within the Housing Department and to other Departments of the Council. These services include:-

- Provision of Mandatory and Discretionary Grants.
- Technical and Clerical support to Dundee Care and Repair.
- Building Conditions Surveys (Area Offices HRA).
- Property Enquiries (Planning).
- Mandatory licensing of HMOs.

Current establishment is 15½ full time posts. Current actual staffing level is equivalent to 13½ full time posts consisting 1 fulltime Principal Housing Officer, 7 full time technical officers, 4 full time administrative officers, 1 job share clerical officer (half post unfilled), 1 part time clerical officer and 1 job share WP operator (half post unfilled).

The costs of the Units are shared between the Other Housing Capital and Revenue Accounts.

Building Condition Surveys, Property Enquiries and Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation all generate an income to the Other Housing Revenue Account.

7.2 **Housing Action Areas Section**

The Housing Action Areas Section are mainly concerned with activity within declared Housing Action Areas and related statutory Repairs Notices. As the private sector housing situation in Dundee has changed so has the Section's work to include non grant aided housing advice (particularly important as grant funds have reduced significantly).

One Housing Officer provides Care and Repair services.

The Section consists of five staff (4½ FTE) - 1 Senior Housing Officer (AP5), 2½ x Housing Officers (AP3), and 1 Clerical Officer (GS3).

Costs of the Housing Action Areas are met from the Other Housing Revenue Account.

8 **REVIEW FINDINGS**

- 8.1 Review of both Sections' work reveals a close relationship between the Sections and in some cases, particularly Care and Repair, an overlap of duties. Full details are contained in the related Best Value report.

Assessment of the services provided concludes that a better, more focused service could be provided by amalgamating the two Sections. An amalgamation would save £58,232 plus on costs through the deletion of 1 x AP3 post (Care and Repair), 2 x GS3 posts and 1 x GS1/2 post.

It is also the case that Private Sector Grant Unit Officer time expended on grant related work has reduced considerably since Local Government Re-organisation. Examination of workloads and charge sheets reveals that the equivalent of 6½ staff from the establishment of 15½ are engaged in grant related duties.

A further 7 Officers are engaged in HMO, Care and Repair, Building Condition Survey and Property Enquiries. There are 2 posts vacant.

While grant related work has reduced over the years, new duties, particularly the licensing of HMOs, have required staff to alter work patterns and acquire new skills.

9 PROPOSED STRUCTURE

It is proposed that a new Unit of the Housing Department be formed from the amalgamated Private Sector Grants Unit and Housing Action Area Sections. The new Unit would be named Private Sector Services Unit.

The Unit would comprise three Sections:-

Housing Advice and Liaison - all Private Sector policy and preparation for new legislation. Liaison with Private Sector landlords, tenants and owner occupiers over maintenance of property and environs. All work related to Housing Action Areas and Repairs Notices.

Housing Property Inspection - all inspection and reporting of work related to Mandatory and Discretionary Grants, licensing of HMOs, Care and Repair, and Building Condition Surveys.

Housing Assessment and Admin - assessment of Mandatory, Discretionary and Care and Repair Grant applications. Means-testing of applicants, HMO management and procedure verification. Performance monitoring and budget control.

This structure (attached as Appendix 1) has a number of advantages to the Council and customers:-

- a) A clearer and more focused identity.
- b) One Section dealing with all private sector services.
- c) Streamlining of grant applications, assessment and finalising, especially Care and Repair grants.
- d) Savings on administration and staff costs.
- e) Expansion of service into areas of concern to Elected Members and residents of mixed tenure private sector property.

As outlined in the recommendations, 4 posts will be deleted from the establishment, the posts of Clerical Officer, GS1/2 and GS3, are currently vacant, the postholder of Housing Officer, AP3, will be redeployed into a suitable vacancy within the Housing Department.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Review of Private Sector Grants Unit and Housing Action Area Sections has revealed the service provided by the sections has substantially changed since the Sections were set up at the time of Local Government Re-organisation.

An amalgamation of the Sections to create the Private Sector Services Unit permits cost and efficiency savings while expanding Council services into new and important areas.

11 CONSULTATION

11.1 The Chief Executive and Director of Finance have been consulted on the contents of this report. The report has also been the subject of consultation with the relevant trade unions.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

13 SIGNATURE

E. Zwirlein
Director of Housing

Date

J.C. Petrie
Director of Personnel and Management Services

Date

PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICES UNIT