

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 16 JANUARY 2006

REPORT ON: VOLUNTARY PRIVATE LANDLORD ACCREDITATION SCHEME

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 3-2006

1. **PURPOSE**

To seek approval for the launch of Dundee Landlord Accreditation, the associated Dundee Code of Standards and the management arrangements.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Housing Committee approves:

- a. The official launch of Dundee Landlord Accreditation.
- b. The Code of Standards for Private Renting in Dundee (a copy is available in the Members' Lounge and with Group Secretaries).
- c. The Appendix to this report which sets out the detailed Management Arrangements.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There will be no financial implications for the Housing Revenue account or for Council Tax. Funds to administer the scheme are from The Scottish Executive Specific Grant which is expected to be available until October 2006.

4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

The scheme aims to raise the physical and management standards in the Private Rented Sector in Dundee as well as improve the quality assurance offered to these tenants.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

Eliminate discriminatory practices and procedures which exclude people from participation in community life because of their; race, colour, gender, sexuality, age, class, ethnic or religious beliefs, basic skills, disability, trade union activity, long term unemployment or because they have AIDS or are HIV positive.

6. **BACKGROUND**

The National Core Standards and Good Practice Guidance for Private Landlords and for Local Accreditation Scheme was launched by Communities Scotland in June 2004. Dundee has been selected as one of 4 local authorities to pilot the guidance through a Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

The Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland are promoting Landlord Accreditation Schemes as an effective means of raising the standard of property management and condition in the Private Rented Sector. This is highlighted in the Local Housing Strategy as one of the main action items in the private sector, also The Stobswell Partnership has identified landlord accreditation as an important initiative in the regeneration of the Stobswell area. In addition the Local Plan also identifies the need to *“enhance the quality of residential areas through management of stock in the private sector”*, which is the aim and objective of Landlord Accreditation.

A Steering Group was formed to develop the scheme locally and is made up of the following representatives:

- 2 property management companies.
- 2 small landlords.
- 1 member of an area development forum.
- Dundee University Student Advisory Service.
- Rent Registration Service.
- Dundee City Council (Housing and Finance Departments).

Through this Steering Group the Code of Standards, the model tenancy agreement, procedures and management structure for the scheme has been developed and agreed.

It is recommended that the Housing Committee approve the official launch of Dundee Landlord Accreditation.

The Code of Standards for Private Renting in Dundee is based on the National Core Standards produced by Communities Scotland and the Scottish Executive in consultation with landlords and consumer groups. The aim of these standards is to assist landlords and letting agents by providing guidelines for good practice and to promote awareness of landlord and tenants' obligations. The standards reflect a combination of current legislation, good practice and common sense and are divided into 10 main categories.

- i. Communication with the tenant.
- ii. Equality issues, complaints and disputes.
- iii. Management of the tenancy.
- iv. Minimum property condition.
- v. Structure and fabric.
- vi. Repairs and maintenance.
- vii. Facilities and fittings.
- viii. Furnishings and white goods.
- ix. Heating, insulation and energy efficiency.
- x. Health, safety and home security.

It is recommended the Housing Committee approve the Code of Standards for Private Renting in Dundee.

A Partnership will be set up to manage the scheme which will be made up of the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Local Authority | 1 nominated member |
| • Large Private Landlord | 1 Elected Representative |
| • Small Private Landlord | 1 Elected Representative |
| • Letting Agent | 1 Elected Representative |

- Representative from University 1 nomination from Universities
- Shelter 1 representative
- Administrative Assistant Landlord Accreditation Development Officer

The Partnership will be responsible for making strategic decisions, agreeing procedural changes, monitoring the project and hearing appeals. The Chairman will be elected by the Partnership on an annual basis. Membership of the Partnership will last 3 years. The Appendix to this report sets out the detailed Management Arrangements.

The Scheme has been set up by the Council in partnership with the Private Rented Sector as a way of encouraging self-regulation, therefore it is important that the Private Sector continue their involvement and influence. The make-up of the Partnership has been designed to reflect this.

It is recommended that the Council approve the management structure of the Scheme.

The Development Officer will be responsible for the administration of the scheme, advertising and the budget.

The Scottish Executive made available funds to Dundee City Council, as a Pilot Authority for the Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme, of £45,000 for each of the 2 years 2004/05 and 2005/06. This funding was provided for the initial set up of a local accreditation scheme and is expected to be spent by October 2006. Therefore it is essential to secure additional funding to continue the scheme.

Dundee Landlord Accreditation owes its thanks to the Steering Group for their invaluable contribution.

7. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and all Chief Officers have been consulted on this report.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Reference should be made to Agenda Notes AN383-2004 on 18 October 2004 and AN202-2005, also Report 225/2005 to Personnel Committee on 18 April 2005.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

December 2005

APPENDIX

DUNDEE LANDLORD ACCREDITATION

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Local Authority	1 Nominated Member
Large Private Landlord	1 Elected Representative
Small Private Landlord	1 Elected Representative
Letting Agent	1 Elected Representative
Representative from University	1 Nomination from Universities
Shelter	1 Representative
Administrative Assistant	Landlord Accreditation Development Officer

The Partnership will meet quarterly.

The Chair will initially be elected by the Partnership for one year. The Chair will then rotate.

Membership of the Partnership will be reviewed annually.

RESPONSIBILITY

The Development Officer shall assess application forms and decide if they meet the criteria for accreditation.

The Development Officer will be responsible for identifying which properties should be inspected and will arrange inspections.

The Development Officer will address complaints made against private landlords by their tenants.

The Development Officer shall present to the Partnership.

The Development Officer shall be responsible for the budget.

The Development Officer shall be responsible for advertising and promotions.

The Development Officer will consider a review of membership for a landlord who has breached the code of standards.

The Partnership will hear appeals.

The Partnership will monitor the project.

The Partnership will make strategic decisions.

The Partnership will agree procedural changes as they arise.

If a complaint is made against any of the Partnership Members' property, they shall not be allowed to be present at the meetings to discuss the complaint.