

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **Housing Committee - 20 January 2003**
 Personnel and Management Services Committee - 13 January
 2003

REPORT ON: **Housing Department - Developing a Tenancy Support Service**

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

REPORT NO.: **30-2003**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to implement a tenancy support service within the Housing Department and suggests how funding could be secured through Supporting People funding to support defined groups.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing Committee approves the Housing Department setting up its own housing support service prior to April 2003, with the aim of providing support to a minimum of 25 tenants. This will allow for the full year cost of running the service to be identified for Supporting People funding. The initial set up and recruitment costs will be borne by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Personnel and Management Services Committee approves the establishment of a Housing Support Co-ordinator post (AP5, £21,536 - £23,459), 6 Housing Support Worker posts (AP2, £13,984 - £16,217) and a Housing Assistant post (GS3, £13,124 - £13,664) for a fixed term of one year.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementation of the Housing Support Service will ensure that access to services is improved for socially excluded groups.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Implementation of the Housing Support Service will ensure that:-
- Local needs are met locally.
 - Access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If funding is available through Supporting People, there will be no implications for the HRA or Council Tax, beyond April 2003.
- 5.2 The funding of the team will need to be paid through the HRA for approximately 4-6 weeks at the end of this financial year, as well as various set up costs (furnishings etc.). This is estimated at £20,000.

6 BACKGROUND

WHY DO WE NEED A HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE?

- 6.1 It is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 that where Short Scottish Secure Tenancies (SSSTs) are given, the Authority must provide or ensure the provision of support which the Council considers will eventually allow the tenant to have an SSST. SSSTs may be put in place for tenants who have been served with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or applicants who have had eviction orders granted against them in the previous three years. Approximately 6-8 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are applied for per year and 10-12 decrees for possession are sought on grounds of anti-social behaviour.
- 6.2 In addition to this statutory requirement, there are other situations where tenancy support would benefit the Council. Over the last 12 months, 311 tenants abandoned their homes and 129 were evicted for rent arrears. A number of these abandonments and evictions could be prevented by giving more intensive support than Housing Officers can currently manage.
- 6.3 There are also significant numbers of other people in the community who could benefit from housing support. For example, 30% of the 929 homeless applicants in 2001/02 were estimated to require greater support than they received (*Draft Supporting People Strategic Plan*).
- 6.4 Given the statutory requirements to provide support in SSSTs, the Council's increased duties toward homeless people and taking these together with the numbers of clients identified above, the Council may have potentially 750 tenants or applicants who would benefit from support. Even assuming for double counting and people who will refuse the service, this is a considerable potential demand.

EXAMPLES OF OTHER HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES

- 6.5 A number of other housing support services have been set up by Local Authorities and Housing Associations. Locally, Gowrie HA set up a floating support service last year. Start-up costs were covered by Communities Scotland Wider Action grant, the project ultimately being funded by Transitional Housing Benefit (THB) Supporting People after April 2003. Home Housing Association have to set up a service recently, they are self financing set up costs and hope to build up enough support packages prior to April 2003 to ensure a viable service. National Children's Homes currently undertake support to families with a history of anti-social behaviour. A service charge is made for this service which is funded by Transitional Housing Benefit. Margaret Blackwood Housing Association. also recently contacted the department to discuss contracting their support service to the Council.

- 6.6 Edinburgh City Council set up a support service in May of this year. Its focus is only on existing tenants who have anti-social/neighbour problems. It has funded set up of the service through the HRA (*budget of £600,000 in 2002/03*). Again it is hoping that it can build up a large enough client base by April to allow £700,000 of Transitional Housing Benefit to be transferred to Supporting People Funds.

PROPOSAL FOR A DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE

- 6.7 It is proposed that a Housing Support Team is created for the purpose of co-ordinating, assessment and delivery of support packages to the groups defined in paragraphs 6.1 - 6.4.
- 6.8 It is proposed that the Housing Support Team consists of a Housing Support Co-ordinator graded AP5, six Housing Support Officers graded AP2 and a Housing Assistant graded GS3. It is proposed that these posts are established on a temporary fixed term of one year. This will allow the roles and requirements of the posts to be reviewed to ensure that the service is delivered in the most efficient and effective manner in the future.
- 6.9 The estimated annual cost for the proposed Team is £200,000 including overheads. If it is assumed that each of the 6 Housing Support Workers provides 28 hours of support per week and that, on average, each tenant will receive an average of 6 hours support per week, costs will be recovered from Supporting People by a service charge of £165 per week.

OPTIONS FOR PUTTING A HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE IN PLACE

- 6.10 It is recommended that the service is set up prior to April 2003, with the aim that enough THB funding can be accrued to make the service sustainable beyond April 2003. This would require the service to be provided to 25 individuals by 31 March 2003. Set up costs would have to be borne by the HRA or other new initiative funding (*e.g. Homelessness Strategy Funding*).
- 6.11 Adoption of recommendation 6.11 above has the risk that not enough support packages funded through Transitional Housing Benefit prior to April may be established to cover the costs of the service. However, it is considered, given the amount of potential demand identified in paras 6.1-6.4, that recruitment of clients should not pose a problem, though time is tight. All the service charges which are included will be guaranteed by Tayside NHS Board.

CHARGING FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

- 6.12 The support costs will be identified separately for them to be paid through Transitional Housing Benefit until 1 April 2003. Given the high costs of such a service, it is unlikely that anyone not claiming Housing Benefit could afford the service. From April 2003, no charges would be levied to tenants as, under Supporting People, temporary support cannot be charged to an individual. Instead, support is contracted en bloc with the support provider.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Director of Support Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 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.

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9 January 2003

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9 January 2003