

**REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE –
30 JUNE 2003**

**REPORT ON: TAYSIDE FURNITURE PROJECT – ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL
SUPPORT**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER
PROTECTION**

REPORT NO: 466-2003

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To propose the provision of additional financial support for the Tayside Furniture Project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the members agree to:

Contribute £50,000 towards the staffing and running costs of Tayside Furniture Project from now until the end of this financial year 31 March 2004 on the condition that a new Dundee Company is established and that the Council is able to nominate appropriate Directors.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The total cost to Dundee City Council is estimated at £50,000, which will be met from existing Departmental revenue budgets as follows:

Environmental & Consumer Protection Department	£25,000
Housing Department	£15,000
Social Work Department	£10,000

4. DUNDEE 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The project's work has a major impact on the following themes of the Local Agenda 21 strategy – "resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised" and "local needs are met locally".

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The project provides assistance to a wide range of disadvantaged groups, including homeless people, victims of domestic violence and people with health problems.

6. ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The project provides practical assistance to people in poverty.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Tayside Furniture Project was established in 1996 and provides a valuable service by collecting unwanted furniture and appliances, checking and repairing these as necessary, and redistributing the items to low income households, who are referred by housing officers, social workers, health visitors, advice agencies and other voluntary groups. This often helps people to take up and sustain council tenancies. The project also provides training opportunities and work experience for staff, volunteers and New Deal trainees.
- 7.2 In 2000, the project became an independent Company Limited by Guarantee with its own board of directors. It also developed a secondary role of providing training opportunities for unemployed people through New Deal.
- 7.3 Initially funding was received from a variety of external sources such as the Urban Programme, Social Inclusion Partnership and the European Social Fund, but this funding has drawn to an end. The company is now seeking alternative sources of funding in order to maintain its current activities.
- 7.4 A report submitted to the Environmental and Consumer Protection Committee on 16 December 2002 agreed to contribute £10,000 towards the staffing and running costs of the project until the end of financial year 2002/2003 on condition that the project maintained its existing service in Dundee and that a professional Business Plan should be prepared in order to assess the funding required to secure long term viability of the project.
- 7.5 Due to the nature of the work carried out, the Tayside Furniture Project impacts directly on the services provided by a number of Council Departments. It also plays a key role in the delivery of several local and national strategies, some examples of which are as follows:
- 7.6 **National Waste Strategy** – The National Waste Strategy for Scotland urges local Authorities to “support community led initiatives to maximise the recovery of value and social benefits from end-of-life products and materials”. In addition the Tayside Area Waste Strategy commits the Council to two specific actions, namely action 8 “to investigate and report on the feasibility of the reuse and refurbishment of municipal solid waste” and action 15 “to facilitate and support the establishment and development of community based and operated waste management initiatives”.
- 7.7 At present, the Tayside Furniture Project makes around 800 collections of donated furniture in Dundee a year. This diverts a total of approximately 500 tonnes of what may otherwise have ended up as waste from either landfill or incineration, and helps Dundee City Council fulfil its obligations under both the National and Area Waste Plans.
- 7.8 **Homelessness Strategy -**
- The corporate Homelessness Strategy 2003-6 refers to the continued demand for furniture packages, to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Dundee. The aim is to extend the service currently purchased from Tayside Furniture Project, to provide additional furnished accommodation, with carpets and white goods, for homeless households. The strategy identifies resource requirements for Tayside Furniture Project, and states that the Council is eager to collaborate with this partner organisation in the provision of furnished tenancies, to ensure a sustainable, long term service.

8. PROPOSALS

- 8.1 The project has maintained its service to Dundee and produced an outline Business Plan. However, a critical element of the Business Plan is a successful application to the "Transforming Waste" fund for funding of £300,000 over the next two years. Pending any decision regarding this award there is a funding gap which may lead to closure of the project.
- 8.2 No other projects provide this service and its closure would leave a significant gap, both in terms of helping low income households and in protecting the environment by the reuse of unwanted goods which would otherwise become waste. It is therefore recommended that short-term assistance is provided both to maintain the project's service in Dundee for the rest of this financial year and to allow the project to pursue funding required to secure the long-term viability of the project. The project estimates that £50,000 is required to maintain its operation in Dundee until 31 March 2004.
- 8.3 The project has also indicated a desire to establish a new company to run the furniture recycling operation in Dundee which would take forward the particular needs of Dundee residents whilst participating in any proposed Tayside-wide initiative. The project would also wish the Board to include appropriate representatives from local bodies including Churches, Universities/Colleges and Housing Associations etc.
- 8.4 A number of Council officers have provided assistance to the project in developing bids for additional funding. It is recommended that this support continues, and as a condition of this support and to safeguard the Council's interest a new Dundee Company be established with the Council able to nominate appropriate Directors. Further, all relevant council departments will be encouraged to provide information and assistance as part of the process of developing a business plan for the future funding of the project.

9. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive and the Directors of Support Services, Finance, Housing, Neighbourhood Resources and Development, Economic Development, Social Work and Corporate Planning have been consulted on this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Environmental and Consumer Protection Committee Report No. 901-2002

Jim Laing, Acting Director of Environmental & Consumer Protection
Date: 24th June 2003