

# **Guidance note for the use of Tenant Forum environmental & improvement budgets**

## **Purpose of the guidance**

The purpose of this guidance note is to give Tenant Forums and staff of The Moray Council broad guidelines on how environmental and improvement budgets can be spent without becoming overly prescriptive. This note will also answer some of the questions that tenants and staff will have.

Environmental and improvement budgets have been in existence for some years and are allocated to Tenant Forums at the beginning of each financial year. The purpose of the budget is to provide forums with discretion to prioritise and fund environmental and improvement projects that they feel would benefit the area they cover.

However, as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funds Forum budgets, it is important that any proposed expenditure is appropriate for HRA funding.

## **How much funding will local Tenant Forums receive**

The funding for environmental and improvement budgets is given to area housing offices on an annual basis depending on the number of properties the housing office 'manages'. These are divided into management 'patch' areas and are then allocated to the appropriate local forum. Where no local forum exists then the responsibility for prioritising the use of the budget falls to housing officers.

## **Does the local Tenant Forum receive the funding directly**

No. The local housing office retains the funding but the local tenant forum will allocate projects to spend against the budget.

## **What can environmental & improvement budgets be spent on**

Broadly speaking, environmental and improvement budgets should be used to improve the environment and/or properties on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land and land that is closely associated with HRA land. For example where the land is not owned by the

HRA there must be a significant benefit to those who live in HRA property close to the proposed project.

Historically, environmental and improvement budgets have been used for projects such as fencing, bins, benches, lighting and gutter cleaning. However, there are also projects that have been funded to improve the environment and properties around a specific complex or area. For example paving an area of ground to allow easier access for tenants of a sheltered housing complex, part funding of a play area upgrade, door viewers and safety chains.

The proposed projects should not be restricted to the areas covered by the members of the forum – consideration should be given to the whole area the forum covers and the decision should be that of the voting members of the forum.

Any improvements that are the responsibility of the housing service and could be a potential health and safety risk will be dealt with directly by the area housing office and **not** the forum environmental and improvement budget. For example, an unsafe path on HRA land will be dealt with by the housing service.

### **Who decides what the environmental & improvement budget can be spent on**

Within the confines of this guidance, local tenant forums will decide what they want their environmental and improvement budgets to be spent on.

Staff from within the Area Housing Offices and the Capital Programmes Team will however, provide them with guidance on certain requests. For example if the staff are aware of particular restrictions they will highlight these to the forum. Staff will also make professional recommendations to the forum. For example where they are aware that previous projects have been vandalised and there is a high risk this will be repeated, they may suggest to the forum that this is not the best use of their funding.

Where the proposed project is outwith the scope of that described under 'What can Environmental & Improvement Budgets be spent on' then the area housing manager will advise the forum that

funding cannot be provided for the project (or certain aspects of the project as appropriate).

### **Can local Tenant Forums appeal against any decisions made by an area housing manager**

There is no formal appeals process for environmental and improvement budgets. However, if the local tenants forum is unhappy with a decision that has been made they can contact, in writing, the Senior Area Housing Manager, The Moray Council, High Street, Elgin, IB30 1BX stating the relevant details of their concern.

-----

If you wish any further information on the above, please contact:

Graeme Davidson  
Housing Strategy and Policy Manager  
The Moray Council  
Room 314  
High Street  
Elgin  
IV30 1BX

Alternatively you can call on 01343 563506 or email on [graeme.davidson@moray.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.davidson@moray.gov.uk) .