

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 10 JUNE 2008

SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS BUDGET 2008/09 AND 2009/10

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is presented to Committee to seek approval for the Private Sector Housing Grants Budget for 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to private sector housing grants.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Communities Committee approves the proposed Private Sector Housing Grants Budgets for 2008/09 and 2009/10.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Government has allocated the Council a Private Sector Housing Grants budget of £1.28m for 2008/09 and 2009/10. These budgets are currently ring fenced but this will be removed for year 2010/11 and thereafter. The Scottish Government has also allocated additional funding of £0.342 over the two years to be used for Disability Adaptations and Care and Repair. In addition, the Financial Plan for 2008-2012 agreed by Council on 14 May 2008 included £0.050m for Care and Repair per annum.
- 3.2 The method used by the Government to disburse grant monies has also changed, with the Council now able to automatically draw down grant on a quarterly basis. Previously expenditure had to be reclaimed. The Government has confirmed to Councils that any underspend in 2008/09 can be carried forward to 2009/10.
- 3.3 The Council's Private Sector Grants Team consists of three officers. Due to retirement and one officer leaving the area, there is currently only one officer in the section. It is unlikely there will be a full staff complement until August. As a result, there will be delays in approving expenditure this year. These staffing vacancies contributed to the underspend in Private Sector Housing Grant last financial year.

4. PROPOSED GRANT BUDGET 2008/09 AND 2009/10

- 4.1 A two year budget would allow longer term planning to take place to ensure that all grant monies are expended. To compensate for short term staffing problems, Officers recommend that expenditure is weighted towards 2009/10 in the draft two year budget, detailed in **APPENDIX I**.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government has not yet confirmed the level of Private Sector Housing Grant for 2009/10. The two year budget assumes a similar grant level to 2008/09.
- 4.3 This budget is presented in the current format. The Government has changed the way in which grants expenditure is to be reported. Future Committee reports will follow the new format.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The improvement of housing quality and maintaining individuals with disabilities within their communities are key parts of the Community Plan, Corporate and Service plans.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no Policy or Legal implications associated with this report.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

This is a ring-fenced budget and has to be spent on the activities specified by the Scottish Government.

(d) Consultations

The Director of Community Services, the Chief Housing Officer, the Home Improvements Services Manager and the Head of Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 **The Scottish Government has confirmed that any underspend in Private Sector Housing Grant in 2008/09 can be carried forward to 2009/10. With the temporary staffing shortages in the Housing Grants Section, it is recommended that the two year budget is weighted towards 2009/10.**

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Background Papers: with author
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