

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 10 JUNE 2008

SUBJECT: HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report addresses deferred recommendations from an earlier report presented to Policy Committee in March 2008. It presents staffing proposals for housing support and seeks approval for budgets for sheltered housing.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to budgetary and monitoring arrangements for voluntary organisations and of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) agrees the 2008/09 budgets for Hanover and Castlehill Housing Associations sheltered housing warden service; and**
- (ii) agrees the establishment of two Housing Support posts within the Housing service.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A report was presented to the Policy Committee on 5 March 2008 (paragraph 64 of the Minute refers). This report explained the changes to Supporting People, particularly the removal of the "ring fence" from the grant and the removal of the need to report separately on Supporting People to the Scottish Government. The report sought additional funding for two sheltered housing providers and funding for two additional housing support posts within the Council's Housing Needs section.
- 3.2 The Policy Committee agreed funding for the sheltered housing providers in 2007/08, with any future funding agreement for sheltered housing and funding for housing support services deferred until the review of formerly ring fenced budgets had been agreed by the Council.

4. DEFERRED PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Council agreed a four year Financial Plan at its meeting on 14 May 2008 (paragraph 17 of the Minute refers).
- 4.2 The agreed Plan contains financial provision to fund the increased payments previously proposed to the two sheltered housing providers. Members will recall that these providers have hitherto been funding the deficit in sheltered housing provision from their reserves.
- 4.3 The budget proposals for the sheltered housing are contained in **APPENDIX I**. Castlehill Housing Association has sought a slight increase in their budget beyond the rate of inflation to allow an increase in their salaries after a detailed comparability study. This cost is more than compensated for by a reduction in funding for 2008/09 sought by Hanover Housing Association. This saving has been achieved by the transfer of some support costs to rental charges.
- 4.4 The agreed budget also contains sufficient financial provision to fund the two housing support posts previously recommended. The need for these posts arises from Care Commission recommendations and to cope with the increasing pressures on housing support services resulting from the Council's statutory duties in relation to homelessness. The cost of these posts including on costs is £60,000 per annum. A separate report on the Committee's agenda provides details of Care Commission inspections carried out earlier in 2008.
- 4.5 One further support contract has yet to be finalised. This contract involves NCH Independent Living project.

5. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STAFFING

- 5.1 Budgets previously funded from Supporting People Grant for people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems have now been mainstreamed within the wider budgets for these services. This allows the opportunity for housing support services for these client groups to be more closely aligned with care services. The budget for Welfare Rights has been allocated to the Housing Planning and Development Team.
- 5.2 The remaining budgets are for sheltered housing support and housing support services. There are no other external contracts for similar housing services, but there remains a need for provision to be made to monitor these budgets and service delivery. Currently, responsibility for managing the Council's sheltered housing provision and housing support services rests within the Housing Service, in the Housing Needs Team.
- 5.3 Of the former Supporting People staff team of 3 FTE posts, there are currently 1.5 FTE vacancies. The staff in post are fully engaged in activities in relation to sheltered housing. Officers are giving further consideration to the staffing requirements following the removal of the ring fence from housing support

budgets, with any proposals for change to be accommodated within the current budget provision and in terms of the Council's delegated authority arrangements.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

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

This report is consistent with the aims of the Community Plan. It is also consistent with the Service Improvement Plan in sustaining vulnerable people within their communities.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no direct policy or legal implications arising from this report.

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

Financial provision for the proposed increase in sheltered housing and the additional housing support is reflected within the Council's agreed Financial Plan for 2008-2012.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Director of Community Services, the Chief Housing Officer, the Housing Needs Manager, the Head of Community Care, Jane Mackie, Lead Systems Manager, and the Head of Financial Services.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 There is a need to increase housing support staffing and funding for sheltered housing warden schemes. Financial provision exists for this. The removal of the ring fence and the need to report separately for Supporting People services has allowed the opportunity to realign the services more closely with other service provision. Further consideration is being given to the staffing requirements to manage housing support services within the Housing Needs Team.**

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Background Papers: with author
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