

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee – 22 April 2004

**REVIEW OF HOME IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE FOR COUNCIL TENANTS DURING
2004/05**

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report outlines proposed changes to the tenants Home Improvement Package measures for the 2004/05 year following a review of various issues (including the range of work now active) and consequent to seeking tenants views.

1. RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to adopt the revised 2004/05 Home Improvement Package (HIP) measures, categories and amounts as outlined in Appendices A and B and note the outcome of the method of payment review.

2. BACKGROUND

As a result of capital and planned maintenance expenditure works being undertaken, the Council have established a network of Home Improvement Package (HIP) measures to assist tenants. (These were previously referred to as disturbance / decoration allowance measures).

The Council spend considerable amounts of money on house improvements and the HIP is an additional cost. These are given to tenants to offset the inevitable disturbance / inconvenience caused and upset to decoration etc. whilst their homes are being improved (eg modernisation, heating installation, kitchen/bathroom replacements etc etc.).

In recent years the amounts concerned were up-graded by inflation but it was considered a more wide ranging review was required for 04/05 bearing in mind the variety and extent of works now being tackled.

3. PROPOSALS

Appendices A and B detail the recommended HIP for 2004/2005. These have been upgraded by around 2.5%.

Appendices C and D contain details of the active (current year) HIP.

The main changes between Appendix C (Active) and Appendix A (Proposed) HIPs are as follows:-

Item B.....sliding scale introduced.

Item D..... amended to reflect fact only 1 door is replaced at times (obviously on some flats).

Items F & Gproposed amounts slightly increased to better reflect upset etc. experienced.

Item H..... a new "combined" feature to cover such contracts.

Item K.....amended to reflect above proposals.

The proposals were arrived at following a review embracing comments from tenants, considering the types of contract we are now tackling (eg combined rewiring and heating installation), project time-scales involved and the views of our Stock Improvement Liaison Officers. The review also incorporated changes considered necessary where the balance between certain allowances had been eroded over the years or varied by active working practices.

4. TENANT CONSULTATION

As part of the review a questionnaire was issued to 125 tenants (including a number who have recently had improvement work carried out to their homes). 27 (or 22%) responded and the findings were as follows:-

Amounts (ie £ value of the HIP`s proposed for 04/05)

89% of those replying thought the amounts were adequate,

7% thought they were inadequate,

4% thought they were too generous.

Categories of work (ie aspects of work carried out allied to amounts).

96% of those replying thought the categories (or groupings) of work defined were fair.

4% did not agree.

It would appear therefore that tenants generally accept and welcome the groupings and amounts proposed within the HIP for 04/05.

5. METHOD OF PAYMENT

The department has taken the opportunity to review the way in which HIP payments are re-imbursed to tenants. Currently 2 methods are used (ie by cheque or the issuing of a decoration voucher that can be redeemed at certain (mainly national chain) outlets).

Tenant consultation on options was carried out during the tenants conference in Autum, 2003 this was followed by a questionnaire. 85% (of 27) tenants responded to the latter.

Options given were:-

a) to continue using the decoration voucher scheme (although certain outlets were no longer willing to accept these),

b) a discount scheme with a specific outlet (difficulties re negotiation and subsequent restrictions on service points and choice were noted),

c) payment direct (by credit to rent account or cheque).

74% of tenants responding agreed that reimbursement direct to tenants was preferred.

Various factors ensuring security and non abuse of the payments were also taken into account.

As a consequence it is recommended HIP payments be credited to tenants rent accounts (whereby tenants will enjoy a "rent free" period and/or a reduction in arrears). Should the tenant be in receipt of substantial or 100% Housing Benefit, then payment will be made by cheque.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there is an inflationary increase in-built for 04/05, accruing imbalances have been corrected and the grouping of certain projects (eg item H on Appendix A) allow a more focused and one-off HIP to be made.

Expenditure on HIP`s is dictated by decisions made on the scope of capital and planned maintenance arrangements, the type of work to be undertaken and the number and size of houses to be improved. As a result, the Housing Revenue Account capital plan is adjusted accordingly.

The financial implications are considered to be modest and can be met from within current resources.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that in following the recommendations in this report the Council would not be acting in any way that is incompatible with Human Rights legislation.

8. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report there has been consultation with the Chief Executive, Directors of Finance, Law & Administration and Property Services

9. CONCLUSION

A review of HIP categories and amounts revealed the need for certain changes to be made to reflect current work packaging and disturbance etc experienced. Tenants have been consulted on the proposed measures and it is recommended these be introduced for the 2004/05 year.

Additionally a review of the methods of payment used to forward (or credit) the amounts concerned has been undertaken. The outcome offers secure options which will assist both tenants and the Council.

Ron Ashton
Director of Housing

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 upon to any material extent in preparing this report.

APPENDIX A

HOME IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE (or HIP) PROPOSED for implementing from Monday 5th April, 2004

A. MODERNISATION

(See also Appendix B for details of other help provided during modernisation).

Size	Total £
2-apt	241
3-apt	253
4-apt	280
5-apt	311

Where a modernisation project takes place and a tenant opts out of having certain (or all) rooms redecorated via the contract, the amount of the HIP should be increased as follows in relation to the room (or rooms) being tackled by the tenant direct :-

Size	Kitchen	Bathroom	Living Room	Hall	Bedroom
2-apt	£43	£23	£33	£16	£16
3-apt	£43	£23	£36	£16	£16
4-apt	£43	£23	£38	£23	£16
5-apt	£48	£23	£43	£28	£16

B. WINDOW REPLACEMENTS.

Where window replacements only are being carried out, the tenant should receive an HIP based on following table :-

- 2 Apts. £40
- 3 Apts. £48
- 4 Apts. £56
- 5 Apts. £64

The above should apply irrespective of whether this is part of a capital/planned contract or a one-off instructed by the Housing Inspector.

C. KITCHEN REPLACEMENTS.

Where kitchen replacements only are being carried out, the tenant should receive an HIP of £44 no matter what size of the house. This should apply irrespective of whether this is part of a capital/planned (kitchen only) contract or a one-off instructed by the Housing Inspector.

D. DOOR REPLACEMENTS (external doors).

Where door replacements only are being carried out, the under-noted HIPs are to be given.

- £40 if both front and back doors are replaced,

- £20 if only one door (e.g. the only one in a flat or one (of two) doors in a cottage/terraced) is replaced.
These will apply irrespective of:-
- Whether this is part of a planned (doors only) contract or a one-off instructed by Housing Inspector,
- The size or type of the house.

E. COMBINED PLANNED CONTRACTS COVERING WINDOW and/or KITCHEN and/or DOOR REPLACEMENT WORKS

The HIP should be as detailed below dependent on whether two or indeed all three improvements are being undertaken at the same time.

Number of Improvements Being Undertaken (Size of house)	Two	Three
2-apt	£65	£75
3-apt	£75	£87
4-apt	£86	£100
5-apt	£96	£108

F. REWIRING

HIP	£	
2 apt	89	These sums to be enhanced by 50% if rewiring involves ragging into walls/ceilings or creating access holes in ceilings
3 apt	99	
4 apt	109	
5 apt	119	

G. HEATING INSTALLATION/REPLACEMENT

HIP (Irrespective of Heating Type)	£
2 apt	65
3 apt	75
4 apt	85
5 apt	95

- Also, where warm air grilles are removed an addition to the HIP of £32 is to be made where appropriate
- These should apply irrespective of whether this is part of a capital/planned contract or a one-off instructed by the Housing Inspector.

H. **COMBINED PLANNED CONTRACTS COVERING REWIRING AND HEATING INSTALLATION/REPLACEMENT.**

The HIP should be as detailed below should these 2 aspects of work be carried out at the same time.

Size	Rewiring Part	Heating Installation / Replacement Part	TOTAL
2 apt	£60	£40	£100
3 apt	£70	£50	£120
4 apt	£80	£60	£140
5 apt	£90	£70	£160

- The rewiring part only to be enhanced by 50% if rewiring involves ragging into walls/ceilings or creating access holes in ceilings.
- The Heating Inst./Replace. part only to be enhanced by £30 where warm air grilles are removed.

I. **DRY ROT, WET ROT, WOODWORM TREATMENT.**

HIP	£
When decant required	108

J. **TENANTS INCENTIVE PACKAGE.**

Maximum increased to £500.

(The reasoning behind the TIP will need to be reviewed given the changes made to the waiting list point-age and allocation priorities).

K. **GENERAL BACKGROUND AND GUIDANCE**

If situations arise which are not catered for by the above examples, the following general background and guidance should be kept in mind :-

- If 2 or more aspects of work are being undertaken at the same time, the tenant should be awarded either the amount (from E or H above) or the higher of the HIP amounts involved (i.e. the tenant is not entitled to the total of the HIPs).
- The HIPs will never reflect the variety of circumstances we encounter especially given variables like differing house types/ layouts /sizes, technical difficulties on site, historic condition, contractors performance, speed & extent of work, terms of contract (re finished article), individual tenants standards and expectations etc.
- The HIPs are set in a general fashion as an acknowledgement that some upset/inconvenience etc. is inevitable. The amounts were also arrived at in that overall fashion to avoid (as far as is possible) the on-site officer (eg SILO or HV) having to do individual assessments.
- It is acknowledged the HIPs throw up a variety of scenarios some where the tenants may feel they are getting a good deal and others that they are hard done by. We

have taken on board the experiences gained over many years however and applied what we think is reasonable under most circumstances.

- It is worth recalling that the Council are spending significant amounts of money on improving the house condition. The HIPs are given over and above this to assist the tenant/household get back to normal.

APPENDIX B

Over and above the HIP`s detailed in Appendix A, the under-noted assistance is given (where appropriate) to tenants whose houses are being modernised:-

- a) Removal expenses are paid for and arrangements made by the Council.
- b) Carpets are uplifted and re-laid or new carpets laid at the expense of the Council. (Integrated laminated wood flooring however cannot be guaranteed to be relaid by the Council without damage, due to the nature of this material).
- c) Cookers and washing machines are disconnected and reconnected at the expense of the Council. (This excludes fridges or freezers unless tenant is being decanted by the Council. Tenants are asked to move these items themselves prior to work starting in kitchen replacements or heating renewals, due to their fragile nature. (Assistance can be made available in special cases.))
- d) One quarter's rental of the telephone line and telephone apparatus (including the VAT element) are reimbursed or, in exceptional circumstances, the reimbursement of telephone disconnection and reconnection charges. (Obviously no reimbursement applies to mobile phone options).
- e) Redirection of mail costs are reimbursed.
- f) Additional costs incurred in bussing children to and from school are reimbursed.
- g) Reimbursement is made of any other reasonable cost as agreed between the Directors of Housing and Finance.

APPENDIX C

DECORATION/DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCES CURRENT/ACTIVE ALLOWANCES FOR 2003/04

I. MODERNISATION

Size	Decoration Allowance £	Disturbance Allowance £	Total £
2-apt	125	105	230
3-apt	142	105	247
4-apt	168	105	273
5-apt	198	105	303

Where a modernisation project takes place and a tenant opts out of having certain (or all) rooms redecorated via the contract, the amount of the decoration allowance part to be given should be calculated on the following basis:-

Size	Kitchen	Bathroom	Living Room	Hall	Bedroom
2-apt	£42	£22	£32	£16	£16
3-apt	£42	£22	£35	£16	£16
4-apt	£42	£22	£37	£22	£16
5-apt	£47	£22	£42	£27	£16

(It is accepted that these individual elements add up to slightly more than the Decoration Grant mentioned above).

J. COMBINED PLANNED CONTRACTS COVERING WINDOW and/or KITCHEN and/or DOOR REPLACEMENT WORKS

The decoration/disturbance allowance should be as detailed below dependent on whether one, two or indeed all three improvements are being undertaken at the same time.

Number of Improvements	One	Two	Three
2-apt	£52	£63	£73
3-apt	£63	£73	£84
4-apt	£73	£84	£94
5-apt	£84	£94	£105

K. ONE-OFF WINDOW or KITCHEN REPLACEMENTS

In relation to one-off (e.g. as instructed by the Housing Inspector and not part of a planned contract) window/kitchen replacements, that a decoration allowance be granted (where required following inspection) of £21 per affected wall with an overall minimum of £42.

L. DOOR REPLACEMENTS (WHETHER PART OF A LARGE PLANNED (DOORS ONLY) CONTRACT or ONE-OFFS)

Where door replacements only are being carried out, each and every tenant should receive a decoration/disturbance allowance of £42. This will apply irrespective of:-

- Whether this is part of a planned (doors only) contract or a one-off instructed by Housing Inspector,
- The size of the house, and
- Whether only the one main door (e.g. In a flat) or both main doors (e.g. In a cottage/terraced type with back and front) are being replaced.

M. REWIRING

Decoration/Disturbance Allowance

	£	(These sums to be enhanced by 50% if rewiring involves ragging into walls/ceilings or creating access holes in ceilings.)
2-apt	84	
3-apt	95	
4-apt	105	
5-apt	115	

N. HEATING INSTALLATION/REPLACEMENT

- Decoration/Disturbance Allowance (irrespective of heating type)

	£
2-apt	57
3-apt	69
4-apt	79
5-apt	89

- Also, where warm air grilles are removed an additional allowance of £31 is to be made where appropriate.
- In relation to **one-off** heating installation/replacements, similar allowances are to be granted as above.

O. DRY ROT, WET ROT, WOODWORM TREATMENT

Decoration/Disturbance Allowance

	£
When decant required	105

P. TENANTS' INCENTIVE PACKAGE

Maximum increased to £475.

APPENDIX D

The undernoted assistance is given (where appropriate) to tenants whose houses are being modernised:-

- a) Removal expenses and arrangements are paid for and made by the Council.
- b) Carpets are uplifted and re-laid or new carpets laid at the expense of the Council. (Integrated laminated wood flooring however cannot be guaranteed to be relaid by the Council without damage, due to the nature of this material).
- c) Cookers and washing machines are disconnected and reconnected at the expense of the Council. (This excludes fridges or freezers unless tenant is being decanted by the Council. Tenants are asked to move these items themselves prior to work starting in kitchen replacements or heating renewals, due to their fragile nature. (Assistance can be made available in special cases.))
- d) One quarter's rental of the telephone line and telephone apparatus (including the VAT element) are reimbursed or, in exceptional circumstances, the reimbursement of telephone disconnection and reconnection charges.
- e) Redirection of mail costs are reimbursed.
- f) Additional costs incurred in bussing children to and from school are reimbursed.
- g) Reimbursement is made of any other reasonable cost as agreed between the Directors of Housing and Finance.