

ANGUS COUNCIL

Housing Committee - 15 January 2004

HOMELESSNESS DEBT - WRITE-OFF 2002/2003

REPORT by DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

ABSTRACT

This report meets financial regulations in seeking council approval for debts in respect of homelessness accommodation rent, to be written off covering the four years to 31 March 2003

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agree that 637 debts, valued at £161,132.35 be written off as irrecoverable during 2002/2003. It should, however, be noted that this level of debt does not pertain purely to the 2002/2003 financial year but covers the four-year period from 1 April 1999 to 31 March 2003.

[Table 1](#) gives numeric detail of cases written off analysed by Homeless Unit.

2. BACKGROUND

The Homeless (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 impose wider responsibilities on all local authorities with regard to provision of temporary accommodation. The legislation has also widened the range of customers presenting as homeless and this has a substantial impact on the caseload entitled to emergency accommodation and support.

Members will be aware that a significant proportion of the client group involved have very complex problems and many have chaotic lifestyles. As a consequence, there is a high percentage of these households who move on before housing benefit can be processed and therefore the debt is incurred. Also, often the client does not fully complete housing benefit application forms and this is only discovered after they have left temporary accommodation, and sometimes even move from the area.

From [Table 2](#) can be seen that over the four-year period the average level of debt write-off shown as a percentage to rents collected is 22.9%.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The anticipated rent is no longer attainable and was taken into consideration in the Housing Revenue Account final accounts for 2002/2003.

4. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The Council's action is not incompatible with Human Rights legislation.

5. CONSULTATION

In preparing this report there has been consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Finance who are in agreement with the above recommendation.

Ron Ashton
Director of Housing

Note:- 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.