

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**Housing Committee - 26 August 2004**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF POST OF HOUSING IMPROVEMENT CO-ORDINATOR**

**REPORT by DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**ABSTRACT**

This report relates to the establishment of a new post within the Technical Section at Housing Headquarters.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that a new post of Housing Improvement Co-ordinator is established to assist with liaison between the Council and owner-occupiers. This post will be graded AP2.

**2. BACKGROUND**

With the ever increasing number of council properties being sold to tenants, the workload associated with contacting owner-occupiers regarding mutual and common repairs, maintenance issues generally, and the improvement programme is increasing. The Council's original housing stock of has now reduced substantially, with 6,300 properties having been sold to tenants up to June 2004, and many of these properties involve common and mutual responsibilities for the owners. Many of these mutual and common repairs require owner-occupiers to contribute, under responsibilities detailed in their Title Deeds. Each case has to be pursued separately, as there are many issues surrounding these common repairs, and involve such factors as eligibility to repair grants, the involvement with Angus Care and Repair where elderly owners are involved, and the time being spent on these issues by staff in the Technical Section, at both local office and headquarters levels, has increased dramatically.

Experience with recent large heating installation contracts has shown that many owners are reluctant to allow the Council to take access through or over their property, and there are often disputes over the need for repair or improvement work, the specification of the work, and of course the costs. Many owner-occupiers wish to select their own contractors, which are not necessarily the same as those being used by the Council, and there are inevitable disputes over the cost of the works, supervision during implementation, subsequent "snagging", and resultant maintenance etc.

There are also issues regarding factoring services, which have been raised by Communities Scotland in their recent inspection report, and this issue is one that requires to be investigated further before any recommendations are made regarding the Council acting as factors for owner-occupiers.

**3. PROPOSAL**

The post of Housing Improvement Co-ordinator will enable more time to be spent on liaising with owner-occupiers prior to repair or improvement works starting, to ensure that they are agreeable to the work, and understand the need for work of this type. The

postholder will also be responsible for ensuring that relevant costs are recovered from owner-occupiers. The post description includes a requirement for the post-holder to visit owner-occupiers, explain to them what responsibilities are contained within their title deeds, advise them if necessary to speak to their legal advisers and will also involve discussions regarding the specifications to be used. Some of this work is related to repair and maintenance, while other elements will include larger improvements such as re-roofing, improvements to external areas, and regeneration strategies. The new post will be located at Housing Headquarters, Forfar, in the Technical Section, which is already heavily involved in all these aspects of the Council's Housing Service.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This new post will be funded from a successful bid during the 2004/5 budget submission, and from fees payable by owner-occupiers in regard to mutual and common repairs.

#### **5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

#### **6. CONSULTATION**

In preparing this report there has been consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law & Administration and the Personnel Services Manager.

#### **7. CONCLUSION**

Due to the steady rate of council house sales, there is a need for additional support in liaising with owner-occupiers to ensure the Council act reasonably in maintaining their property, and provide suitable advice to owner-occupiers regarding their responsibilities in this regard. The establishment of this new post will allow this work to be developed and ensure the Council collect any revenues due from mutual and common repair works.

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.