1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that Committee:-

(i) note the current performance information provided;

(ii) note the progress so far in pursuing serious arrears.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Members have been informed of performance on tackling rent arrears and are aware of the challenges currently facing the Council in securing regular rent payments. This report provides an update on performance at the Angus wide level and the local Community Housing Team level and provides evidence of action and progress.

3. PERFORMANCE

3.1 Table 1 provides details of our performance at week 46 (13 February 2011), rent arrears levels have increased since previously reported to Committee, figure now sitting at 7.63%. Several factors have had an impact on the increase in rent arrears since the end of November:-

i) Number of people unable to work due to weather conditions;

ii) Unable to apply for housing benefit or have not applied due to the need for 5 weeks pay slips to be taken into consideration;

iii) Number of people cancelling direct debits for Christmas;

iv) Number of visits to tenants in arrears reduced due to adverse weather conditions;

v) Phone alternative to visit not so effective;

vi) Some tenants openly stating that they used the money for Christmas;

vii) Increased living costs, heating, petrol and food costs.

4. HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1987 IN RELATION TO HOMELESSNESS

4.1 If a tenant is evicted, the tenant concerned may present themselves to the Council as homeless. Within the current legislation the Council would be required to provide them with temporary accommodation while their homelessness application is assessed. The Council seek to conduct an assessment as early as possible and the Social Work and Health
Department will be fully informed of the progress of any eviction including steps taken to avert the eviction.

5. **RECENT ACTION**

5.1 The Division continues to work with colleagues in Revenues, tenants who will be affected by the changes in Housing Benefit will be identified and action taken to notify them of the changes in legislation and how this will impact on them.

5.2 Local Community Housing Teams have continued contact tenants during the adverse weather, visits have been reduced but telephone calls have been increased to compensate the inability to visit.

5.3 Members are asked to note the general action plan which will be undertaken by each of the Community Housing Teams until the end of financial year with a focused approach towards people reducing and clearing any rent arrears. Each Community Housing Team will tailor the action plan to the individual needs of the office and local demographic.

i) Continued early intervention processes already underway;

ii) Approximately 2,500 visits carried out on people with arrears in Angus between now and end of financial year;

iii) Review all cases to ensure that an effective Notice of Possession is in place;

iv) Approximately 420 Notices of Possession will be served;

v) Review all cases over £500 ensuring that court action has been initiated, where appropriate;

vi) Approximately 50 court actions will be initiated;

vii) Approximately 4,000 letters sent to tenants in arrears throughout Angus;

viii) Actively contact tenants who have cancelled their Direct Debit in December with a new amount to clear prior to March 2011;

ix) Increased evening visits or telephone calls dependant on individual offices circumstances until End of Financial Year;

x) Increased contact with tenants with arrears less than £250;

xi) Review all cases that have been sisted with a view to recalling cases where the arrears have increased since the case was sisted;

xii) All customers leaving a balance when making a payment as ACCESS offices will be notified of the balance left.

6. **FORMER TENANT ARREARS**

6.1 Members are asked to note Table 2 showing Former Tenant Arrears.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no financial implications for the Council arising directly from the recommendation in this report.
7.2 Members should note, however, that should any evictions be actioned and should such tenants present themselves thereafter as homeless, costs would be incurred in respect of temporary accommodation. Such costs would be met from the appropriate budget provision within either the Housing Revenue Account or the General Fund Other Housing budget depending on the outcome of the assessment of their homelessness application.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

8.1 All implications, particularly with regard to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights: protection of property and the right to respect for private and family life have been considered in preparation of this report. The recommendations are considered to be proportionate.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Social Work and Health, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The issues dealt within this report have been the subject of consideration from the equalities perspective (as required by the legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Angus Council remains committed to providing support with rent payment but ultimately where this is not utilised by tenants Angus Council must enforce the tenancy conditions agreed through the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and make it clear that rent payment is a priority and that failure to keep up rent payments will result in the utilisation of the full range of sanctions available to the Council. The decline in rent arrears is slowing down in Angus and the future changes to housing benefit are being tracked to understand their possible impact on this area of business. Members are asked to note that all efforts are being made to sustain the decline in arrears but in the context of the current economic climate it appears the challenge is of maintaining the current positive momentum is a growing one.

RON ASHTON
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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 on to a material extent in preparing the above Report.

Hsg/NS/AMcK/MK
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Number</th>
<th>Bandings for Rent Arrears</th>
<th>Balance Amount Arbroath, Carnoustie and Monifieth Community Housing team Area (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Forfar and Kirriemuir Community Housing team Area (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Montrose and Brechin Community Housing team Area (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Dispersed Accommodation (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Current Temporary tenants accommodation (number of cases)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>(31 Oct 2010) WK31</td>
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<td>£6,125.27 (2)</td>
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<td>£172,479.26 (643)</td>
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<td>£3519.14 (19)</td>
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Graph 1 – Current Tenant Rent Arrears

Summary of HRA Arrears (Houses only)
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<tr>
<th>Week No.</th>
<th>Bandings</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Balance Amount Former tenants (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Former Dispersed tenants accommodation (number of cases)</th>
<th>Balance Amount Former Temporary tenants accommodation (number of cases)</th>
<th>Former Tenant Arrears cash collected as a % of overall debt</th>
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<td><strong>£131,094.45 (402)</strong></td>
<td><strong>£176,847.81 (732)</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,246.35(0.25%)</strong></td>
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<td>£0.00 (0)</td>
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<td>2000 to 3000</td>
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<td><strong>£177,707.23 (740)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>(06 Feb 2011) WK 45</strong></td>
<td>&gt;3000</td>
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<td>£37,337.36</td>
<td>£12,813.18 (3)</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td><strong>£180,751.94 (749)</strong></td>
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