

# Report

# 16

Report to:	<b>Housing and Technical Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>12 October 2011</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources) Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Housing and Technical Resources Homeless Prevention Initiative</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide details of temporary changes to Housing and Technical Resources staffing structure within Area Services following a successful bid for funding to the Tackling Poverty Programme.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the temporary increase to the establishment by 3 FTE posts, as detailed at 4.1 for a period up to 31 March 2012, be approved.

## 3. Background

3.1. A Homeless Prevention Initiative within Housing and Technical Resources Benefits and Revenue section was originally established in September 2008, funded by the 'Fairer Scotland Fund'. The initiative was aimed at using intensive support to work with households who had a consistent and high level of rent arrears and other debts, to the extent that these posed a real risk of eviction and homelessness. The key objectives were to support households to address their debt issues, establish repayment arrangements and thereby secure their accommodation, maximising income and reducing financial exclusion.

3.2. A total of 413 tenants were referred to the Homelessness Prevention Initiative with key outcomes summarised below:-

- ◆ Backdated DWP benefits totalling £54k and ongoing benefit awards of £7k per week
- ◆ Backdated Housing Benefit and Discretionary Housing Payment totalling £92k and ongoing Housing Benefit awards of £14k per week
- ◆ £24k of grants and payments achieved from charitable organisations
- ◆ Reduction of £126k in rent arrears in respect of tenants supported by the initiative
- ◆ Council Tax payments of £118k collected, including arrears
- ◆ £32K Council Tax discounts/exemptions and on-going awards of £3k
- ◆ 179 referrals made to other support agencies, e.g. Social Work, Routes to Work, Money Matters, to meet the wider support needs of tenants

- 3.3. The initiative ended in December 2010, however, Housing and Technical Resources was successful in securing temporary additional funding from the Tackling Poverty Programme for 2011/2012. This funding will be used to consolidate the initiative and ensure that the Resource can continue to embed a sustainable approach to addressing persistent rent arrears, and preventing eviction and homelessness within mainstream activity.

#### **4. Current Service Provision and Structure**

- 4.1. The current and future service provision and permanent structure will remain unchanged. However, for the period of the funding the service will be complemented by the temporary appointment of:-

- ◆ One Policy Officer, Grade 3, Level 2, £25,265 to £29,235 to be based within the Area Services Strategy Team and;
- ◆ Two Homeless Prevention Officers, Grade 2, Level 3, £20,731 to £22,702 to be based within the Area Services Offices at Brandon Gate, Hamilton and Cambuslang Gate, Cambuslang. These officers will be deployed on a peripatetic basis, covering cases throughout South Lanarkshire.

#### **5. Homeless Prevention Initiative 2011/2012**

- 5.1. As stated at 3.2 above the key aim of the initiative is to mainstream the homelessness prevention approach. Key elements of the project will include:-

- ◆ profiling tenants in arrears to help identify individuals/groups who are most likely to fall into arrears
- ◆ researching good practice in preventing homelessness, particularly in relation to rent arrears
- ◆ identifying and developing a range of intervention and supports to meet the different needs and lifestyles of tenants, with a particular focus on early intervention
- ◆ reviewing and revising current practices and procedures, to ensure the homelessness prevention approach is integrated within the rent arrears management process

- 5.2. Key benefits for households being supported by the initiative will include:-

- ◆ enhanced ability to manage their financial affairs
- ◆ reduced debt
- ◆ improved quality of life
- ◆ security of accommodation and threat of homelessness averted
- ◆ access to support regarding other problematic areas of their lives

- 5.3. For the Council the benefits will include:-

- ◆ a reduction in eviction actions due to rent arrears
- ◆ reduction in rent and council tax arrears
- ◆ reduction in homelessness and abandoned tenancies

#### **6. Employee Implications**

- 6.1. There are no implications for existing employees. The recruitment of the Policy Officer and two Homeless Prevention Officers is on a fixed term basis in line with the funding for the project. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the proposed structure.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1. £97, 274 has been awarded from the Tackling Poverty Programme in 2011/2012 to meet the full costs of the project. This includes staff costs of £95, 313 (see Appendix 1), with the additional funding meeting travel and administration costs.

7.2. There are no other financial implications.

## **8. Other Implications**

8.1. The Homelessness Prevention Initiative will assist tenants in sustaining their tenancies and reduce the risk of tenancy failure due to serious rent arrears. The initiative will contribute to the mitigation of risks associated with potential increases in current and former tenant rent arrears.

8.2. There are no significant issues in relation to sustainability.

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

9.1. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the recommendations contained in this report and, where issues were identified, remedial action has been taken. The assessment is that the proposals do not have any adverse impact on any part of the community covered by equalities legislation, or on community relations, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council/Board\* website.

9.2. Trade Unions have been consulted on the proposals contained within this report.

**Lindsay Freeland**

**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**

**Paul Manning**

**Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)**

16 September 2011

### **Link(s) to Council Values/Improvement Themes/Objectives**

- ◆ Accountable, efficient and effective
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation
- ◆ Improve lives of vulnerable children, young people and adults

### **Previous References**

- ◆ None

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Sam Moss, Area Service Manager

Ext: 2722 (Tel: 01698 452722)

E-mail: sam.moss@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



Appendix 1 – Proposed Structure Homelessness Prevention Initiative 2011/12

Post title	Number of posts			Grade / SCP	Hourly Rate	Annual salary	Gross costs (including on-costs 27.7%)
	Existing	New	Difference				
Policy Officer Homelessness	0	1	+1	Grade 3 Level 2	13.79/ 16.02	25,165 29,235	37,333
Homelessness Prevention Officer	0	2	+2	Grade 2 Level 3	11.36/ 12.44	20,731 22,702	57,980
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>+3</b>				<b>95,313</b>

These posts have been graded using the Council's job evaluation scheme.