

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2005

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the level of budget approved by Communities Scotland for Private Sector Housing Grant in 2005/06, the outcome of our bid to carry forward funding unexpended in 2004/05 in respect of Area Regeneration and to seek approval to disburse funding on the basis of their offer.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Communities Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, allocated the Council Private Sector Housing Grant funding for both 2004/05 and 2005/06 in the amount of £860K per annum to support its strategic intentions for investment to improve the condition of its private housing sector.
- 2.2 On 23 August 2004, Communities Scotland wrote to the Council intimating flexibility within the PSHG budget that would allow bids for additional funding to be submitted. Accordingly a bid for additional funding to support Area Regeneration by selective demolition, and to provide additional support to common and adjoining owners affected by the Housing Investment Programme, was submitted and received approval on 24 November 2004 in the amount of £1.541M.
- 2.3 The late approval of our request for this additional funding did not allow full expenditure to be achieved prior to the end of the 2004/05 financial year and, as contracts under this funding were in progress, a request to carry forward the remainder of the allocation in the amount of £952K was submitted to Communities Scotland.
- 2.4 Communities Scotland initial award of £860K funding for 2005/06 also included a sum of £100K to support a Town Centre redevelopment partnership initiative which has been discontinued following the completion of the feasibility study and report to Committee. Permission has been sought to retain and redirect this budget allocation to meet increased staff costs resulting from the enhanced budget and to fund initiatives such as the Landlord Leasing Scheme as reported to committee on 7 September 2005

3. DETAILED BUDGET PROPOSALS

3.1 Baseline allocation

An allocation of £335K was requested under this heading and detailed in our bid submission as follows:

- (i) To service mandatory grant requests for Below Tolerable Standard properties and properties on which a Repair Order has been served, in the amount of £60K.
- (ii) To service mandatory grant requests for the provision of standard amenities, in the amount of £183K.
- (iii) To fund additional PSHG staff to service the increased grants workload, in the amount of £50K.
- (iv) To develop a Private Rented Sector Action Plan and fund appropriate staff costs to administer the Landlord Leasing Scheme in the amount of £42K.

3.2 Care and Repair

A budget of £193K was requested under this heading to roll out the Care and Repair service to all Council areas following the successful pilot within the Dalmellington Area. This request comprised £150K to cover capital costs and £43K to fund associated revenue cost of staffing and administration through Shire Housing.

3.3 Private Sector Housing Survey

A budget of £90K was requested to commission a private sector house condition survey to augment information currently available from the Scottish House Condition Survey and to provide additional guidance for our Local Housing Strategy.

3.4 Standard Amenities/Disabled Adaptation Grants

A budget of £185K was sought under this heading to augment the £183K included within the Baseline allocation for standard amenities and to support the continuing approaches from disabled persons requiring alterations to their homes to suit their disabled needs.

3.5 Communal Repairs

A budget of £220K comprising £100K from our initial bid and £120K as carry-forward from our bid for additional funding in 2004/05 was requested to address requests for financial assistance from common/adjoining owners affected or involved in our Housing investment Programme. Provision of this level of funding is considered necessary to ensure the co-operation of owners to achieve our Standard Delivery Plan as submitted to the Scottish Executive.

3.6 Supporting Area Regeneration

A carry-forward of unspent budget allocated from our additional bid in 2004/05 in the amount of £832K was requested to provide the required funding to complete the area regeneration partnership initiatives through selective buy-

back and demolitions within Longpark/Riccarton areas of Kilmarnock and as commenced in 2004/05.

4. OUTCOME

- 4.1 Communities Scotland have now written accepting our proposals and funding estimates of £1.855M and have agreed to provide the total funding requested.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is anticipated that the offer from Communities Scotland will be sufficient to address the grant requirements under each proposal for 2005/06.

6. LEGAL AUTHORITY/ IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is required to comply with the conditions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 with effect from 1ST October 2003 , when exercising its authority to make grants available to the private sector.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The award of Private Sector Housing Grant funding will assist the Council in delivering its objectives as set out in the Community Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The Scottish Ministers, in accepting our proposals and agreeing the funding, have enabled the Council to address its statutory requirements and progress its proposals as detailed in section 3 of this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee are recommended to:-
- (i) agree to disburse the available funding under the proposal headings detailed in section 3;
 - (ii) remit to the Head of Housing to monitor the phasing of expenditure in agreement with Communities Scotland;
 - (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

CMcA/JC2

11 October 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Communities Scotland letter of offer of additional PSHG dated June 2004.
2. Communities Scotland letter of confirmation of revised award dated 24 November 2004.
3. Communities Scotland letter of offer of PSHG budget allocation dated 4 October 2005.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone (01563) 576658 and ask for Jim Clark.

Implementation officer:

Chris McAleavey, Head of Housing - chris.mcaleavey@east-ayrshire.gov.uk