

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE – 28 JANUARY 2004

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with a report detailing progress toward the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy.
- 1.2 To advise members of the award of additional funding by the Scottish Executive to provide further assistance to those who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the Homelessness Strategy's submission to the Scottish Executive, a response has been received providing comment on the objectives of the Strategy. Further information was requested in a number of areas and the Strategy has subsequently been updated and resubmitted to the Executive. A copy of the Strategy is available via Elected Members Information Point.

3.0 HOMELESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS

- 3.1 An assessment of staff training needs has been identified across the Department, in order to ensure quality service delivery and supporting culture. Delivery of this training has already started in a number of fields, namely Understanding Domestic Abuse and Mental Health Awareness.
- 3.2 In order to develop a structure to ensure that the views of service users are integral to monitoring and evaluation of the service, regular Residents Meetings are held within each of the Hostels. In addition, a strategy has been developed to instigate a Service User Committee for clients working with Tenancy Support Team.
- 3.3 The Single Regulatory Framework is now integral to homelessness and support services. The majority of the standards specified within the framework have now been met, whilst work is underway to ensure that outstanding standards are met within coming months.
- 3.4 The Housing Education Project is now available to all 9 secondary schools within East Ayrshire. The recruitment of a Housing Education Worker is underway and it is anticipated that this officer will be in post by late February.
- 3.5 Protocols to deliver information and advice on an outreach basis, in order to prevent homelessness have been developed. Specific services include the provision of proactive advice within HMP Kilmarnock and the acute mental health ward of Crosshouse Hospital.

- 3.6 Procedures have been developed to ensure that those within temporary accommodation have every opportunity to secure appropriate accommodation and resettle effectively.
- 3.7 A range of services are available within each of the hostels to facilitate health promotion, support and routes out of homelessness. These services will continually be enhanced throughout the implementation of the Strategy.

4.0 FUNDING

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive has awarded the Council an additional £124,740 for 2003/04 to assist in the provision of furnished tenancies. The Furnished Tenancy Grant, is being provided in response to recommendations made within the Homelessness Task Force Final Report – Helping Homeless People.
- 4.2 The Grant may be allocated to temporary or permanent tenancies and should benefit those identified as being at risk of homelessness or repeat homelessness and unable to access essential goods from other sources.
- 4.3 The Grant will be up to a maximum of £3,000 per household. Each award of grant will cater for the supply and installation of a cooker, fridge, floor coverings and appropriate number of beds and curtains which will remain in the ownership of the Council if a tenant moves on.
- 4.4 An invitation to tender for the supply and distribution of these essential household items and additional household items to meet the Council's ongoing requirements has been published, and the procurement process is due for conclusion early in January 2004.
- 4.5 Temporary clerical support will be sought to assist in the management of the Grant Funding. As funding for this post is only secured until March 04, agreement has been reached with Head of Personnel to recruit to this post internally for the duration. Should funding be continued beyond March 04, the appropriate recruitment policy will be adopted.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.0 All costs associated with administration of the grant funding will be met from the grant allocation.

6.0 LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.0 Other than the requirement to comply with the procurement process as detailed in paragraph 4.4 of this report there are no direct legal implications.
- 6.1 The utilisation of the grant allocation as provided for in this report accords with the objectives of the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Note the contents of this report

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
9 January 2004

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Homelessness Strategy 2003 / 2006

For further information on this report please contact Nicola Thom, Homeless Strategy and Services Manager on 01563 – 576986.

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