

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2003

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

Report by the Director of Homes and Technical Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the award of additional funding by the Scottish Executive to develop the homelessness strategy in East Ayrshire and the proposals detailing how it will be used. The report also provides an update on progress achieved to date.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Housing Committee of 26th March 03 approved the Homelessness Strategy for East Ayrshire, prior to submission to the Scottish Executive. A response from the Scottish Executive, providing comment on the objectives of the Strategy is expected within the coming months.
- 2.2 The Strategy detailed a number of key objectives that sought to prevent and alleviate homelessness in East Ayrshire, address the health needs of the homeless population, and assist in the provision of effective routes out of homelessness as recommended in the Homelessness Task Force Final Report – Helping Homeless People.
- 2.3 Detail of the provision of funding to assist in the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy, for 2001/02, 2002/03, and 2003/04 has previously been reported to Committee.

3. FUNDING

- 3.1 As reported within the Strategy, total grant funding awarded by the Scottish Executive to the Council for the current financial year amounts to £470,000. A profile of the proposed expenditure for this funding is appended.
- 3.2 It is proposed that part of this funding be used to recruit three temporary workers to support the delivery of key objectives set within the Homelessness Strategy namely:
- The extension of the pilot housing education project to all secondary schools within East Ayrshire;
 - The provision of information and advice services which meet the National Standards specified by Communities Scotland; and
 - To improve links and access with the private rented sector.
- 3.3 The Scottish Executive has confirmed that funding will remain at current levels for financial years 2004/05 and 2005/06. Further detailed proposals for the use of this funding will be reported to Committee in due course.

4. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS

- 4.1 The Strategy sought to develop resources to ensure provision of adequate housing support to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness within East Ayrshire. The Tenancy Support Team was established in March 03 and is currently working with 403 households, assisting in tenancy sustainment, thus seeking to prevent homelessness.
- 4.2 Associated Policies and Procedures for Homelessness Services and Tenancy Support Team have been reviewed and updated documentation is currently in draft format for consultation and implementation.
- 4.3 In recognising that those leaving institutional care, i.e. hospitals and prisons, are more at risk of homelessness, the pre-allocation process within the Department has been developed to address this risk and minimise homelessness within this group.
- 4.4 A Homelessness Forum, involving multi-agency partners has been established. The Forum provides an opportunity for an exchange of information across the partners and allows consultation on strategic developments and influence of operational policies affecting homeless people.
- 4.5 In order to meet our increased obligation to provide temporary accommodation to homeless people, the Department has developed a range of additional facilities providing emergency and short stay accommodation. By doing so, we have been able to minimise our use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Furthermore, the recent bi-annual count of rough sleeping across all local authority areas, commissioned by Communities Scotland found there to be no-one sleeping rough within East Ayrshire.
- 4.6 Following previous research into the issues affecting homeless people, it was established that the personal development of children within temporary accommodation suffers in respect of their health, education and recreational needs. Funded through Changing Children's Services Fund, a multi agency project has been established to address these needs. Children's Health, Learning and Supported Play (CHLASP) operates within all temporary accommodation. Coordinated by a steering group, this provides the necessary linkage with colleagues within Health, Social Work, and Education, and offers recreational and leisure pursuits to homeless children. The initiative also offers supported resettlement for these children to assist in their effective integration within their new communities, following rehousing.
- 4.7 Information available to those within temporary accommodation has been developed to provide a necessary range of housing options and general advice. Providing detail on the availability of housing, how to access housing support, health and other associated services, this information is contained within a Hostel Information Pack which is made available to all residents within the Hostels. It is planned that similar informative literature is provided for those within other forms of temporary accommodation.
- 4.8 Within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Registered Social Landlords have an increased duty to assist in the provision of accommodation for homeless people. As such a draft protocol for referral and administration of homeless applications has been developed. On approval, this protocol will be implemented and provide enhanced housing options for homeless people.

- 4.9 Whilst addressing the general health needs of the homeless population, it was recognised that health services require to meet the specific needs of those with an addiction. The Tenancy Support Team has developed effective linkage with Addiction Services and works closely with health colleagues to address these needs. In addition, a process has been established to ensure consistency of health care for those being liberated from HMP Kilmarnock.
- 4.10 Finally, the Strategy recognised the need to improve the provision of information and advice services to prevent and alleviate homelessness and prioritise the need to establish a 'one stop shop' facility to provide these services locally.
- 4.11 A joint exercise by housing and property has identified suitable premises for the new facility in a newly constructed building in College Wynd, Kilmarnock. The building has sufficient floor area to provide public reception space, private interview rooms and additional office accommodation for the local homeless and tenancy support teams. Initial discussions with the developer have taken place and members are now asked to note that formal negotiations are taking place with the intention of leasing the building for a 5 year term. Funding for the project has been identified within the grant monies provided to the Council by the Executive, for delivering the homeless and supporting people strategies.
- 4.12 In addition, the property in College Wynd will require to be fitted out to meet operational requirements prior to commencement of the proposed lease. Given that the owner and developer, John Morton trading as JC Morton Homes is still on site and the need to have the fitting out works completed as quickly as possible, it is proposed to instruct the developer to carry out the fitting out works on behalf of the Council. As this proposal is effectively a negotiated tender, Council standing orders relating to contracts require that Committee approval be obtained both in respect of the negotiation and of the person with whom the tender is to be negotiated. A report on the outcome of these negotiations will be reported to Committee in due course.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 All recommendations contained within this report will be funded by Scottish Executive Homelessness Strategies Funding.

6. LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 imposes duties on the Council which will affect the way we deal with homeless people. The foregoing is fully in accordance with these legal requirements and in line with current Departmental Policies.
- 6.2 Committee approval in respect of Paragraph 10 (2) of the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts is required in relation to the matters detailed in paragraph 4.11.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Approve the grant funding proposals set out within Appendix 1;
- ii) Authorise a negotiated tender for the fitting out works for the premises at College Wynd, Kilmarnock with John Morton trading as JC Morton Homes in terms of paragraph 10(2) of the Council's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts; and
- iii) Authorise the Director of Homes and Technical Services, in conjunction with the Head of Personnel, to submit these staffing proposals for approval by the Corporate Governance Committee.

James Lavery
Director of Homes and Technical Services
13 August 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Committee of 26 March 2003 (Homelessness Strategy Update)
Housing Committee of 30 January 2003 (Homelessness Strategy)
Housing Committee of 11 September 2003 (Homelessness Strategy Update)

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

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