

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVES EXTENSION OF FUNDING
From: HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES		
Date: 25 FEBRUARY 2009	Ref: MP/PH/SM	

### 1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the funding of a number of initiatives that help to prevent or alleviate homelessness.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The proposals in this report are presented in order to meet commitments made by the Council in the Homelessness Strategy 2006-2009
- 2.2 Under Section 2 of the Advice and Information Regulations of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Council is obliged to ensure that good quality independent housing advice and information services are available free of charge within their area. In order to meet this obligation, the Council funds three housing information and advice projects.
- 2.3 Homelessness guidance requires Councils in their homelessness strategies to address issues which can adversely affect homeless households eg poor health and unemployment. In order to meet these obligations, the Council funds the Health & Homelessness Team and the People Programme.
- 2.4 Through the Mortgage to Rent Scheme the Council has been working since 2003, to prevent homelessness by acquiring the houses of eligible home owners who face repossession due to mortgage arrears. The scheme is administered and part funded by the Scottish Government, with the Council being provided with subsidy of up to 70% of the purchase price. Homeowners apply directly to the Scottish Government and must meet specific criteria in order to be accepted onto the scheme. The main one is that the homeowner must be at risk of repossession with their lender taking court action.
- 2.5 The Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy was approved by Committee in December 2008 and includes a range of measures to improve the provision of temporary accommodation and support for homeless households.

### 3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1 The existing projects described below are presently covered by Service Level Agreements which include monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

#### Information and Advice Projects

- 3.2 Three advice and information projects are funded by the Council:-
- Housing Advice Network (CABx)
  - Housing Advocacy Project (Shelter)
  - Reachout – a homelessness education project (CAB)

- 3.3 Over the last few months, these projects have been the subject of a positive external evaluation. As a result of this evaluation, a number of service developments are planned including a closer alignment between the Advice Network and the Advocacy Project.
- 3.4 Housing Advice Network : Coatbridge CAB employs a full time housing advisor and a part time administrator in order to provide specialist training and support to CAB volunteers in North Lanarkshire and to provide a housing advice service direct to service users. The cost of this service in 2009-2010 is £54,560. Following the positive evaluation and subject to a satisfactory business plan and funding agreement being concluded, it is proposed to extend funding for this project for two years.
- 3.5 Housing Advocacy Project : Independent advocacy services are provided by Shelter Scotland to ensure that vulnerable people can access good quality advocacy across a range of issues, including housing. The project is funded jointly by NHS Lanarkshire, Social Work and Housing. The total funding in 2009-2010 is approximately £48,150, of which £28,167 comes from the homelessness budget. Following the positive evaluation and subject to a satisfactory business plan and funding agreement being concluded, it is proposed to extend funding for this project for two years.
- 3.6 Reachout : This homelessness education project, is designed to ensure that young people in schools and colleges across North Lanarkshire receive training to become more aware of issues relating to housing & homelessness, money matters and citizenship. The project recently received charitable funding of £25,000 per annum for the next 3 years. The match funding sought from the homelessness budget in 2009-2010 is £20,000. It is proposed to provide funding of £20,000 in 2009/10 and to work with the project to identify alternative sources of funding for future years from the homelessness budget

#### **Health & Employment**

- 3.7 Health & Homelessness Team : Following a request in 2004 from Lanarkshire NHS, the Council began to contribute funding towards the costs of specific posts working in North Lanarkshire as part of the Lanarkshire Health and Homelessness Team; at present these posts are a public health nurse and a mental health worker. It is proposed to provide continued funding of £51,250 in 2009-2010 during which time the project will be externally evaluated.
- 3.8 The People Programme : This is a programme of the Access Project which provides training opportunities to homeless people to assist them to move into education and employment. . It is proposed to provide continued funding of £35,000 in 2009-2010, during which time the project will be externally evaluated.

#### **Mortgage to Rent**

- 3.9 In response to the current financial crisis and the likely increase in mortgage arrears, it is proposed to increase the council's Mortgage to Rent budget in 2008/09 from £70,000 to £90,000 and in 2009/10 to £155,000. It is estimated that in 2009/10 this budget will make possible the purchase of the homes of 8 families who might otherwise have been made homeless.

#### **Implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy**

- 3.10 The Strategy includes expenditure on the reconfiguration of temporary accommodation and the development of outreach support services. In 2009-10, these projects will be part funded from the expected £300,000 underspend in 2008-09.
- 3.11 Reconfiguration of Temporary Accommodation : Projects on which expenditure was committed as part of the Strategy are as follows:-

Location of works	2009/10
-------------------	---------

Thrashbush Quadrant/ Airth Court	£50k
Wishaw refuge	£50k
Manse Avenue	£100k
Conversion of RSL dispersed lets to wheelchair standard	£40k
Total	£240k

- 3.12 Outreach Support : It is recognised that some homeless people in North Lanarkshire have high support needs and, when allocated accommodation, often fail to sustain their tenancies. This can lead to a cycle of homelessness.
- 3.13 In order to break that cycle, as part of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy it was agreed in December 2008 to develop the capacity of existing homelessness projects in North Lanarkshire by enabling them to provide additional support to homeless people with high support needs.
- 3.14 This additional outreach support would enable homeless people to stay in temporary accommodation for a shorter period of time and to have support in both dispersed and permanent lets with the ultimate aim of enabling service users to have a more settled lifestyle, to sustain tenancies and to break the cycle of homelessness. It is proposed that the additional outreach support would be provided by extending the contracts of existing support projects (ie Blue Triangle HA, SAMH, etc). The cost of the extended outreach in 2009-2010 is £180,000.

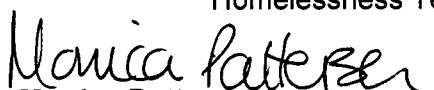
#### 4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1 Funding for these services can be met from within the 2009-10 non HRA budget allocation for homelessness.
- 4.2 Where appropriate the projects will be subject to the Council's Arms Length External Organisation (ALEO) funding procedures.
- 4.3 These projects assist the council in fulfilling its statutory duties in terms of the homelessness legislation.

#### 5. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the proposals set out in section 3 to fund a number of initiatives that help to prevent or alleviate homelessness.
- (ii) notes that during 2009-10, an external evaluation will be carried out of the Health and Homelessness Team.



**Monica Patterson**  
**Head of Housing Services**

23 January 2009

For further information about this report please contact Steve Mason on telephone 01698.274141