

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services

Social Justice Committee: 13 September 2006

Subject: Discretionary Housing Payments and Appeals

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee on housing and council tax benefit performance for discretionary housing payments and appeals to the Appeals Tribunal for the financial year 2005/2006.

2. Background

- 2.1** As part of our ongoing commitment to openness and accountability of housing and council tax benefit performance, performance in relation to discretionary housing payments and appeals is provided to Committee on an annual basis. This information is not contained within the Quarterly Performance Review as there are no performance indicators which cover this area of housing and council tax benefit administration.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Discretionary Housing Payments

- 3.1.1** Discretionary housing payments are made at the discretion of local authorities subject to an annual cash limit. A discretionary housing payment can only be paid to claimants if:-

- a) they already get housing and/or council tax benefit, and
- b) there is a shortfall between their benefit and their rent charge or council tax charge, and
- c) they are having difficulty paying the shortfall.

- 3.1.2** A total of 390 discretionary housing payments were awarded in 2005/2006 amounting to £28,133. Central government allowance for the year was £28,134.

3.2 Appeals

3.2.1 If claimants are refused housing benefit or are not comfortable with the Council's decision, they can ask the Council to reconsider. If they are still uncomfortable with the outcome, they can appeal to the Appeals Tribunal. The Appeals Tribunal is part of an independent legally qualified body administered by the Appeal Service which replaces the former Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit Review Board.

3.2.2 During the year 2005/2006, no appeals were referred to the Appeals Tribunal.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This report provides the Committee with an annual update in relation to discretionary housing payments and appeals.

7. Recommendation

7.1 **The Committee is invited to note the contents of this report.**

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Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services
Date: 28 August 2006

Wards Affected: All

Appendix: None

Background Papers: None

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