

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee : 16 February 2011

Subject : Housing and Council Tax Benefit Take up Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend to Committee a housing and council tax benefit take up strategy for the Council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The risk assessment carried out by Audit Scotland in December 2008 identified 25 action areas that presented a risk to the continuous improvement of the Council's benefit administration service.
- 2.2 In the follow up review conducted in July 2010, and reported to Committee in December 2010, Audit Scotland confirmed that 19 of these action areas had been reviewed to their satisfaction and that work was ongoing in the remaining 6 action areas. Since the time of the follow up review a further 3 action areas have been completed.
- 2.3 One of the action areas to be addressed is to develop a benefit take-up strategy for the Council's benefit service.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 A draft strategy was issued to strategic partners for consultation including Registered Social Landlords, Welfare Rights, Housing Services, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Independent Resource Centre.
- 3.2 A final version of the housing and council tax take up strategy is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

4. People Implications

- 4.1 There are no people implications.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council's ability to deliver services which meet the needs of its citizens depends heavily on its success in collecting revenues and maximising customers' housing and council tax benefit.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The Council has a duty to ensure all customers who claim receive the correct amount of housing and council tax benefit due to them. A housing and council tax benefit take up strategy will seek to ensure the Council adapts a proactive approach to encourage all our customers, who may have an entitlement to housing and / or council tax benefit to claim.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** An equality impact screening was carried out and there were no positive or negative impacts identified for any equality groups. This is an internal policy which affects all users and it will be published in an accessible format as set out in corporate guidelines.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** The introduction of a housing and council tax strategy will seek to ensure the Council maximises the take up of housing and council tax benefit.
- 8.2** Members are asked to approve the attached housing and council tax take up strategy.

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Joyce White
Executive Director of Corporate Services
Date: 26 January 2011

Person to Contact: Vincent Gardiner, Client & Support Manager
Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton, G82 3PU.
Telephone (01389) 737192
Email: vincent.gardiner@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: Appendix 1 Housing and Council Tax Benefit Take up strategy
Appendix 2 Summary Report Proforma

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All Wards