

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing and Regeneration Services)

Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee: 4 April 2007

Subject: Private Sector Housing Grant

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the offer of grant from Communities Scotland for private sector housing grant for 2007/2008 and to recommend how this funding should be allocated and prioritised.

2. Background

- 2.1** The grant from Communities Scotland for private sector housing grant for 2006/2007 amounted to £790,000 whilst that for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 amounted to £1.228 million and £1.706 million. These high figures followed acceptance by Communities Scotland of the successful bid made in 2003. Prior to that, funding for private sector housing grants came from the Council's capital programme and, whilst varying each year, had been in the order of £400,000 annually.
- 2.2** In December 2006 Communities Scotland indicated that an additional £70,000 was being made available for use in the adaptation of private sector housing for disabled occupiers. This money was to be spent by the end of the financial year and has been fully allocated.
- 2.3** In early January 2007, following bid preparation and consultation with Communities Scotland, a further £430,000 was made available to fund Care and Repair costs. This funding is from the 2006/2007 national budget and is ring fenced for Care and Repair in the new financial year 2007/2008. As well as maintaining the existing services provided by Care and Repair this funding will assist in obtaining greater information about the condition of private sector housing and in providing an improved advice service on general grants matters in the way that is currently done for the elderly and disabled. This allocation frees up additional funding from next year's allocation for spending on grant aided works.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Reflecting on the Council's success in making positive bids and in ensuring appropriate approvals and expenditure, Communities Scotland have announced an allocation of £1.291m for Private Sector Housing Grant for 2007/2008, a 63% increase on the 2006/2007 basic allocation.

3.2 The general repairs waiting list has been static following a committee decision in October 2005. There are competing demands on limited funding from private owners involved in the Council's own proposed capital works programme coupled with a similar situation being experienced with Housing Associations. Taking these, and other, interests into account it is suggested that the allocation of private sector housing grant funding could follow that outline in the table below.

Anticipated PSHG funding levels from Community Scotland 2007/2008 allocation categories	2007/2008	Percentage allocation 2007/2008
BTS	£30,000	2.3
Disabled Adaptation	£400,000	31.0
Lead Pipe Replacement	£5,000	0.4
Compulsory Repairs/Repair Notices	£60,000	4.6
General Repairs	£300,000	23.2
HRA	£261,000	20.2
HA	£150,000	11.6
Care & Repair Administration	*	
HRES Administration	£85,000	6.6
Anticipated Allocation	Total £1,291,000	100

* paid for from additional Communities Scotland allocation 2006/2007, see paragraph 2.3 above.

3.3 The suggested allocation would maintain levels of spending on disabled adaptations, fulfil statutory requirements with regard to below tolerable standard housing, lead pipe replacement and compulsory repairs/repair notices and acknowledge the need for owners within HRA and housing association areas to access funding, allowing the broader range of property tenure to benefit. The allocation of funding to the general repair category would also enable the problem of the existing static waiting list to be addressed, though it is accepted that even this allocation falls short of the demand which exists.

3.4 Whilst repair and improvement grants for approval should be taken from the waiting list it would be prudent to profile the sum for disabled grants over four quarters, as has been done during the current financial year, to ensure that funding for higher priority cases is available throughout the year.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 There are no Personnel Issues.

5. Financial Implication

- 5.1** While the improved allocation of funding from Communities Scotland compared to 2006/07 is welcome, it is likely that it will not be possible to meet all requested grant assistance to private sector house owners in 2007/2008.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The funding for private sector housing grant is aimed at disabled adaptations and housing repairs and improvements. Generally demands for disabled adaptations can be met but as sufficient funding is not available to meet demand for repair and improvement works there is a risk that the condition of the private sector housing stock will deteriorate.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1** The allocation from Communities Scotland for private sector housing grant will not meet the demand for grant aided work. However, the allocation indicated in the table within this report shows a fair way of allocating the limited funds across the range of different types of demand. The increase in allocation over the basic figure for 2006/2007 reflects the continuing need for grant assistance and the quality of the bids made by the Council.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1** **The committee is invited to agree the content of this report, including the allocations indicated in the table in paragraph 3.2.**

Irving Hodgson

**Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services
(Housing Regeneration Services)**

Date: 16 March 2007

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Appendix: None

Background Papers: Letter from Communities Scotland
Dated 13 March 2007

Wards Affected: All

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COMMITTEE: PLANNING

DATE OF MEETING: 04 April 2007

REPORT TITLE: Private Sector Housing Grant

AUTHOR: Alasdair Gregor

Chief Officers Consulted

Chief Executive's Department

(tick as appropriate then delete this text)

- Legal Services
- Personnel Services
- Information Services
- Finance Services

Education and Cultural Services

Social Work

I confirm that the attached report has been proof-read by me personally, has been discussed with the appropriate Director/Heads of Service and is, in my opinion, of a quality suitable for submission to Committee.

Signature: **Date:**

