



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 20 NOVEMBER 2018

SUBJECT: TENANT DOWNSIZING INCENTIVE SCHEME

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the Communities Committee with details on the resources required to manage and maintain the Council's Tenant Downsizing Incentive Scheme.
- 1.2 The report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (3) and (4) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's Housing Stock and to deal with the allocation and letting of houses and homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:

- (i) considers the new job description for the Housing Options Advisor (HRA);**
- (ii) agrees that the Head of Service can proceed to fill this vacancy with immediate effect; and**
- (iii) agrees to fund the Housing Options Advisor (HRA) from the Housing Revenue Account.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 26 June 2018, the Communities Committee considered the findings from an audit of the Tenants Downsizing Incentive Scheme (paragraph 8 of the Minute refers).
- 3.2 The aim of the Scheme is to encourage tenants of 3+ bedroomed properties to downsize and release larger properties for those with a greater housing need. The Scheme also supports the transfer of tenants living in an adapted property where the disabled person is no longer in residence.
- 3.3 The main findings from the audit concluded that:

3.3.1 Resources

There were no dedicated resources available within the Housing Service to manage and monitor the Scheme.

3.3.2 Data Records

There was a need to improve the records kept relating to the Scheme and that governance also needed to improve.

3.3.3 Communication/Awareness

There was evidence found to support a view that some tenants were not fully aware of the Scheme despite the fact that it has received wide coverage on social media, the Council's website, local press and the Tenants Voice.

3.3.4 Budget Provision

The operation of the Scheme is resource intensive and without a dedicated staff resource the transfer target (25 per annum) and/or the annual budget (£72k) allocated to operate the scheme will not be fully expended.

- 3.4 On 26 June 2018, this Committee agreed to create a dedicated post to deliver the full objectives of the Scheme subject to the development of a new job description and clarification around the costs that would be incurred by the Housing Revenue Account (paragraph 8 of the Minute refers).

4. **JOB DESCRIPTION**

- 4.1 A new job description is provided in **APPENDIX I**. This provides clarity in terms of what is expected from the new post and it also seeks to address the main shortcomings that were identified from the audit.
- 4.2 To maximise the role of the Housing Options Advisor (HRA) it is proposed that they have a wider role in creating movement within the social housing rented sector. By working in a pro-active manner to match prospective tenants it is intended to increase the volume of mutual exchanges in future years. This could have a positive impact on the housing waiting list as well as delivering better outcomes for tenants. In 2017/18, 160 tenants transferred by mutual exchange.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Post has been evaluated by colleagues in Human Resources as Grade 5. The additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account is £27,476 per annum.

6. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Meeting housing need is a key priority of the Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and the Housing and Property Service Plan. The Tenant Downsizing Incentive Scheme and the Mutual Exchange Policy seeks to make best use of the Council's housing stock and promotes healthier citizens and adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm.

(b) Policy and Legal

The legislative framework for the Council's Allocations Policy is contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended.

(c) Financial implications

The additional cost of creating a dedicated post is set out in Section 5. The Post has been evaluated as Grade 5 at an annual cost of £27,476. This cost will be borne by the Housing Revenue Account and there is sufficient budget available to fund the new Post with immediate effect.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

The staffing implications are set out in sections 4 and 5 of the report and in the Summary of Implications, section (c).

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no Equalities implications arising from this report.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Housing Needs Manager, Housing Services Manager, Housing Strategy and Development Manager, Asset Manager, Human Resources Manager, Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), Legal Services Manager (Property and Contracts), Don Toonen (Equal Opportunities Officer), Caroline Howie (Committee Services Officer) and any comments received have been incorporated into the report where relevant.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This report asks the Committee to consider the new job description and agree to allow the Head of Service to proceed to fill this vacancy with immediate effect. The Committee is also asked to agree that the new Post will be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.**

Authors of Report: Richard Anderson, Head of Housing and Property

Background Papers: With author

Ref: Downsizing – June 2018 – EA