

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANT - ADDITIONAL FUNDING**  
**MEETING: HOUSING & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**DATE: 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2008**  
**AUTHOR: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to make Members aware of additional Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) which has been awarded to the Council, by Communities Scotland, for expenditure prior to March 2010 and to seek approval for officers to develop detailed proposals for its use.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council currently receives around £1m PSHG annually from Communities Scotland to fund investment in private sector housing. The main activities financed include:

- Repair and Improvement Grants £750,000
- Private Sector Enabling Works £ 25,000
- Staffing / Admin costs £175,000
- Travelling Persons Site £ 52,000
- Housing Act Implementation £ 10,000

- 2.2 A key priority for recent Scottish Governments has been to improve the quality of private sector housing and to ensure that owners take greater responsibility for the condition of their property. Previous reports to Committee have highlighted the increasing private sector housing responsibilities being placed on the Council as a result of new legislation being introduced to achieve this national objective. Most recently, a report to Housing and Social Services Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007 outlined the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and highlighted the opportunities the legislation may present to the Council, for example, in addressing problems associated with the management of multi-tenure estates.

- 2.3 The Council has recently received an additional allocation of PSHG resources from Communities Scotland amounting to £225,000 for expenditure over the period until March 2010. The funding requires to be spent on the following predetermined priorities:

- Adaptations grants for older and disabled owners
- To ensure local Care and Repair schemes have the funding they require
- Implementing the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

### 3. PROPOSALS FOR USE OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING

- 3.1 The Council's position in respect of each of the above priorities is outlined below, together with initial thoughts on expenditure proposals.
- 3.2 As noted in paragraph 2.1, repair and improvement grants are currently funded from PSHG. This includes grants for **disabled adaptations**, the budget for which is generally sufficient to meet present levels of demand, which has averaged around £400,000 per annum over the past 3 years. However, the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 are expected to adjust the basis of calculating grant funding for work of this nature, which may result in higher levels of grant being awarded. Any such increase would require further PSHG resources to meet existing demand and in the event that this occurs it would be proposed to allocate a proportion of the additional funding for this purpose.
- 3.3 The Council's **Care and Repair Service** is also funded from PSHG resources. One of the main objectives of the Service is the co-ordination of disabled adaptations for owner occupiers, including arranging virtually all the disabled adaptations grants noted above. A report to Policy and Resources Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2008 sought approvals to extend the current Service to include a Small Repairs Service for owner-occupiers and private sector tenants. In approving the report, Committee agreed to the use of PSHG resources to cover the running costs for the project, estimated to be £25,000 to £30,000, which would be met from the additional PSHG award. Committee also authorised the development of proposals for a Handyperson Service on an all tenure basis, the details of which will be reported to Housing and Social Services Committee when available. In developing proposals, consideration will be given to the potential use of the additional PSHG to fund appropriate elements of the service.
- 3.4 The implementation of the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2006**, noted in paragraph 2.2, is taking place on a phased basis between 2007 and 2009. Draft guidance on the main elements of the Act is expected to be issued by the Scottish Government in the near future. Following a 12 week consultation period, it is anticipated that the finalised guidance will be made available during Autumn 2008. Thereafter, the Council will require to develop strategic and policy responses to a number of new responsibilities as well as make operational arrangements for implementation. Members will be aware from the report to the Housing & Social Services Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2007 that this will include issues such as the development of the Scheme of Assistance and arrangements for Housing Renewal Areas. The additional funding available will assist in helping to meet costs likely to be incurred.
- 3.5 Members may wish to note advice from the Scottish Government, that PSHG will only be ring-fenced within the Council's funding allocation until 2009 – 2010. After this time it will be contained within the Council's main local government funding settlement.

### 4. SUMMARY

- 4.1 The Council has been awarded an additional £225,000 PSHG, which requires to be spent on predetermined priorities. Detailed proposals for expenditure still require to be developed by officers over the coming months and will, to a large extent, be influenced

by the introduction of guidance on the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, expected in Autumn 2008. As proposals are finalised further reports to Committee will be required.

**5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that Committee:**

- 5.1 Note the award of an additional £225,000 PSHG and the priorities the Scottish Government has identified for expenditure, as noted in paragraph 2.3.**
- 5.2 Authorise officers to develop detailed proposals for expenditure within these set priorities for reporting to a later Committee.**



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**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008

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***Background Papers***

- 1. Correspondence from Communities Scotland

