

ANGUS COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE – 15 APRIL 2010

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 20 APRIL 2010

ANGUS SCHEME OF ASSISTANCE 2010

JOINT REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

ABSTRACT: This Report details the development of the Angus Scheme of Assistance 2010. Members approval of the Scheme is sought, along with agreement to its ongoing development.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 It is recommended that

- (i) Members of the Neighbourhood Services Committee approve the Angus Scheme of Assistance 2010 and agree to Review the Operation of the Scheme after year one of operation;
- (ii) Members of the Infrastructure Services Committee note the above.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 introduced a requirement for all Scottish Local Authorities to restructure the way they interact with homeowners and the tenants of private sector landlords, and produce and make public a Scheme of Assistance (SoA) by 01 April 2010. Report 825/09 refers.
- 2.2 The requirement for a SoA is the result of a review carried out by the Housing Improvement Task Force (HITF) in 2001 of housing policy pertaining to private sector housing in Scotland. The review concluded that the current system of improvement and repairs grants only helps a minority of homeowners, and the approach needs to be significantly modified in order to provide higher quality assistance to those in the private sector.
- 2.3 The purpose of the SoA is to provide homeowners and private sector tenants with appropriate levels of information to assist them in making informed choices about maintaining and repairing their homes, and remove the requirement to provide grants for repairs and maintenance, except in certain situations.
- 2.4 In order to achieve this, Local Authorities are required to provide a comprehensive suite of information, advice and assistance, and concentrate grant aid on only the most serious works and essential adaptations for disabled occupants.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Developed in line with guidance issued by the Scottish Government, and with consideration given to the specific situation of Angus the SoA will, over time, deliver a package of advice, information, practical assistance and, in some cases, financial assistance in order to enable homeowners to make informed choices about maintaining and repairing their homes. A copy of the Angus SOA has been placed in the Member's Lounge.

- 3.2 With these changes, it is envisaged that private owners will become more aware of their responsibilities in terms of repairs and maintenance and be more proactive in carrying them out. There will be a cultural change in attitudes to housing quality in the private sector and a move away from reliance on grant funding.
- 3.3 Grant aid will be focused on supplying disabled occupants with essential adaptations to allow them to live more independently in their own homes. An element of funding will also need to be conserved to address situations where the Council is legally obliged to provide funding, i.e. where work to a property is required via a Work Notice. All other grants will now be discretionary, and the Council may decide to target discretionary funds at specific problem areas.

4. THE NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Further work is required in relation to several aspects of the implementation of the SoA. However, the Angus SoA 2010 provides a clear outline of the services already in place, and those which will be developed over the course of 2010. As such, it will make a significant contribution to the Council's policy portfolio in relation to private sector housing, and also the development of the 2011 Angus Local Housing Strategy.
- 4.2 The development and publication of new information resources in a variety of formats will be progressed by the Director of Neighbourhood Services, Director of Infrastructure Services and Director of Social Work & Health during 2010. Members will be advised of progress made.
- 4.3 This will include the investigation of the possible development of shared information and advice services with the Council's voluntary sector partners, and neighbouring local authorities. Once again, Members will be advised of progress made.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the SoA. The costs attached to its development and implementation will be met from existing resources.
- 5.2 As and when additional costs arise in relation to the SoA the amounts will be quantified and a report prepared for the consideration of Members.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct human rights implications arising from this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

8. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus:
- Good quality housing is available to all in communities throughout Angus.
 - Resources are used effectively.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, the Directors of Corporate Services, Infrastructure Services and Social Work & Health, and the Heads of Finance and Law & Administration have all been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Angus Scheme of Assistance 2010 reinforces the Council's commitment to creating a high quality, well maintained and sustainable private housing sector in which owners understand their responsibility for their property and are proactive in its maintenance. Approval of the SoA 2010 will allow the Council to begin implementing a plan of action which will significantly contribute to the improvement of Angus's private housing stock and also improve the living conditions of disabled occupants as more funds will be available to target essential adaptations, allowing disabled people to live independently in their communities for longer.

**RON ASHTON
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DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES**

Note: - The following background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act (1973) (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to a material extent in the preparation of this report:

- Report 825/09 – Housing (Scotland) Act 2006: - Developing a Scheme of Assistance for Angus.

NS/HSG/AMcK/KS