Council Direction: Not Applicable

Information:

Council at their meeting of April 28, 2004 approved item 2 of Social and Public Health Services Committee Report 04-006. Staff were directed to proceed with a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the delivery of a co-ordinated access system for social housing. Co-ordinated Access Waiting List is a local system of referring applicants seeking rent subsidized housing to social housing providers.

In September 2004, Fengate Property Management Ltd. was awarded Contract C2-15-04 effective January 1, 2005.

Currently, Fengate Property Management holds a three-year contract for the delivery of the co-ordinated access system for social housing. As per the City of Hamilton’s Purchasing Policy, in 2007 and, every three years thereafter, the City of Hamilton will issue another RFP for the delivery of the Co-ordinated Access System for Social Housing.

Access to Housing (ATH) was adopted as the working name for the co-ordinated access system for the City of Hamilton. They are responsible for maintaining a common waiting list system to co-ordinate the application process for individuals who apply for subsidy in social housing units. The current structure of Access to Housing is designed to make the application process as accessible and user friendly as possible for applicants and social housing providers. Access to Housing’s office is located at 499 King Street East. This office location is conveniently located on a bus route with on-street parking available. Access to Housing’s office is open 40 hours each week.
Operational Review – Fengate Property Management:

In January 2006, an Operational Review was conducted to measure the performance of Fengate Property Management with the requirements of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* and the Co-ordinated Access System Agreement with the City of Hamilton.

Based on the Operational Review, staff have concluded that the performance of Fengate Property Management is satisfactory and operations are in compliance with the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*. All contractual obligations under the Co-ordinated Access System Service Agreement with the City of Hamilton are being met.

Co-ordinated Access Advisory Committee:

Council at their meeting of April 28, 2004, item 2 of Social and Public Health Services Committee Report 04-006 endorsed the establishment of the Co-ordinated Access Advisory Committee (CAAC). The purpose of this committee is to provide advice to the City of Hamilton on operational issues pertaining to co-ordinated access for social housing. In collaboration with CAAC, the City of Hamilton is committed to develop clear and consistent guiding principles, policies and procedures for the delivery of excellent customer service identified by key stakeholders. This is expected to be completed by the end of 2006.

Internal Review Hearing Committee:

As per the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* an applicant can appeal any decision made by ATH relating to: eligibility for RGI assistance; eligibility for special needs housing; the type or size of accommodation in which the household may reside; and, the category in which a household has been placed on a waiting list (includes Special Priority, Urgent, Homeless, Newcomer and Youth Status).

As the City of Hamilton has assumed direct responsibility for the oversight of ATH, the City through the Co-ordinated Access Advisory Committee established and subsequently facilitates the internal review process for all applicant appeals. The Internal Review Committee, which includes representatives from the housing provider sector; social housing resident/advocates sector and City staff, meets every Tuesday morning to hear appeals.

In 2005, the City received 26 requests for internal review hearings. Of the 26 requests: 5 hearings were not necessary as remedial action was taken; 1 file was closed with no further action as 3rd party information was disclosed to the applicant. Of the remaining 20 appeals that were heard; the Committee agreed to uphold 10 decisions made by Access to Housing; and 10 decisions were made in favour of the applicant.

Web-based Waiting List:

To increase accessibility, as well as timely and accurate information for applicants, housing providers, community agencies and City of Hamilton staff, Council also directed staff to explore the use of effective web-based technology for the co-ordinated access system.

As a result, the City has contracted with an expert in Lotus Notes database management. With this expertise, the City of Hamilton has developed a web-based waiting list system that provides ATH, housing providers and City of
Hamilton staff with on-line access to the waiting list. Web-based access that will allow applicants to apply on-line is a longer term project that may be developed in the future.

**Waiting List Statistics Update:**

In 2005 after consultation with CAAC, housing providers, community agencies, community committees such as the Affordable Housing Flagship, and other City departments the ATH application form and waiting list system was enhanced in order to collect social housing statistics.

Within the context of the City of Hamilton’s role as Service Manager for social housing and homelessness, staff continue to refine the ATH database in order to inform systems planning for housing and homelessness. With further development, the database system will answer questions such as who is on the waiting list, where do they currently live, what type of housing are they looking for and how long have they been on waiting for subsidized rental housing. This information will provide a more precise picture of housing needs in our community and will be reported on annually once completed.

**2005 Statistical Update:**

As of December 31, 2005 there were 4,258 active applicants on the centralized waiting list for social housing. The “Active ATH Applications at Year End, 1998-2005” chart as attached as Appendix A exhibits the activity of the wait list during the past eight (8) years. This chart indicates that there has been a decrease of 639 (13%) individuals and/or families from 2002 to 2005 on the waitlist.

The “City of Hamilton / Access To Housing, Social Housing Waiting List as of December” chart as attached as Appendix B compares the number of applicants on the waitlist to the number of applicants housed in 2003, 2004 and 2005. In 2003 30.5% of applicants on the waiting list were housed. This increased to 31.2% in 2004, and 35.1% in 2005. This is an encouraging trend and staff have established a target of 38% for the number of applicants housed who are on the waiting list for 2006.

The “City of Hamilton / Access To Housing 2005 Applicants Housed by Category” chart attached as Appendix C illustrates the categories of the housed applicants. As per the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 applicants with Special Priority Status are placed at the top of the waiting lists. The City of Hamilton also assigns priority to applicants who meet the requirements of its own local guidelines. This ensures that housing is available to applicants with critical needs.

Of the 1,497 housed, 50.6% were chronological applicants; 20.2% had Special Priority Status; 16.0% were homeless; 9.2% had Urgent Status; 3.4% were Newcomers; 0.4% were terminally ill; and 0.3% had Youth Status.

Overall, the charts in the appendices demonstrate that an increasing proportion of social housing applicants are being housed in social housing units and are receiving rent geared-to-income assistance.
Next Steps

Staff will continue to work with Fengate Property Management and CAAC to ensure that the City’s goal of delivering excellent customer service to both applicants and housing providers who are the key users of the co-ordinated access waiting list.

_____________________
Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager
Community Services Department
City of Hamilton / Access to Housing
2005 Applicants Housed by Category

- Chronological: 50.6%
- Special Priority: 20.2%
- Urgent: 9.2%
- Terminally Ill: 0.4%
- Homeless: 16.0%
- Newcomer: 3.4%
- Youth: 0.3%