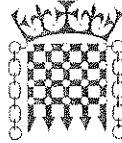


From:
Member of Parliament for Clydebank and Milngavie



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Director of Technical Services
Clydebank District Council
Council Offices
Clydebank
G81 1TG

2nd November 1992

Dear

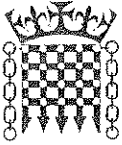
Womens Aid Refuge,

uk

I am very concerned to hear that there seems to be a threat hanging over the head of the Womens Aid Refuge in Whitecrook Street. I have valued the work of the Womens Aid Refuge over the years and you will know from their statistics just how many women they have dealt with who have been fleeing from violence. It seems to me essential that the District Council has a service which is not just about housing a woman and her children but also about the rebuilding of the confidence and self esteem of a woman who may have suffered years of abuse. As I am sure you are aware, it is simply not enough just to provide housing in such cases.

I believe that the relevant Council Committee is considering the matter at its meeting on November the 9th. I do hope that no decision will be taken on that occasion which will be damaging to the future of the Womens Aid Refuge. I have visited the Refuge and it seems to me that the essential need is for Womens Aid to be able to sit round a table with key decision makers, both at officer and elected member level, in the District Council. There does seem to have been some miscommunication, in that for a prolonged period of time the people in Womens Aid felt reassured by the contacts they had with the District Council. Unfortunately, their contacts were not with key decision makers or policy makers so that it has come to them as a very rude shock indeed to receive letters which clearly seem threatening with regard to demands for rent arrears and questions about the financing of the project and the condition of the premises.

contd.../



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I do hope a solution can be found to this because Womens Aid Refuges are so much better value for money than bed and breakfast accommodation. When run properly, as I believe the Clydebank one is, it can give enormous and valued support to women. I have visited the premises and appreciate that improvements could be made to the interior decor of the premises, but I am sure your Council will appreciate that they have been lacking in income from the District Council since 1991 and they have been severely pressed financially. I am puzzled by the difficulties which they face because I did think that there was a COSLA decision which saw the responsibilities for Womens Aid Refuges as being a 50-50 split between the Region and District. I fully appreciate that the District Council has to ensure that projects are well run but I do hope that this valued service to Clydebank can continue on a business-like and amicable basis.

Yours sincerely

MP

Clydebank and Milngavie

c.c. Womens Aid ✓

c.c. Cl1

y, Chairman, Housing Committee



Nuclear Free Zone

Clydebank District Council

District Council Offices Clydebank G81 1TG
Telephone 041-941-1331 Fax 041-952-0573

Chief Executive

Member for Clydebank and Milngavie
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

4th November 1992

Dear

Women's Aid Refuge.

I refer to your letter of 2nd November 1992 addressed to
Services, regarding the question of District Council financial support to Clydebank Women's Aid.

Director of Technical

You are obviously aware that this project was funded for seven years by Strathclyde Regional Council's Social Work Department via the Urban Programme. As you know, Urban Aid funds are temporary, and despite the project's termination date being known well in advance, no approach for funding was made to the District Council until the end of the Scottish Office funding period. This was in January 1991.

It was pointed out, and accepted by officers of the Regional Council, that the District Council's budget for the year to March 1992 had by that stage been set, and finance of the scale involved could not easily be found in the middle of any financial year. It was understood therefore, that the District Council would look at the possibility of entering a funding agreement for the 1992/93 year, and in the circumstances, the Regional Council were expected to fulfill their obligations to the project during the last financial year.

The District Council did indeed provide for grant funding to Womens Aid, during the budget estimate preparations for the current financial year, but the decision which we would have expected to be taken in April 1992, was delayed by a lack of sufficient financial details promised by the Social Work Department, which were required to assess the level of funding which the Council would provide.

By that time, the mythical COSLA decision recommending a 50-50 apportionment between Regional and District Councils, which had been the basis of the Regional Council's submissions to ourselves, had been clarified. There never has been any COSLA position as you describe it, although I understand that this position is the policy of the Regional Council's Social Work Department, which I'm sure you agree, is not quite the same thing.

The current COSLA position, as expressed in its Working Party on Violence Recommendations, deliberately avoids declaring a preferred figure for apportionment. Instead, it says that the split should suit local circumstances.

The local circumstances in Clydebank are, that as a small authority, we often suffer from economies of scale. Projects such as a Women's Aid Refuge, particularly one which has a higher than recommended place:population ratio, becomes a relatively expensive commodity, and the provision made during the budget process represents a very significant amount of money to the Authority.

In addition, the District Council has supported the project indirectly over the last eight years, in that while the district valuer's market rent level for 77 Whitecrook Street is £7,500 per annum, the Council has only ever charged £2,325. I might add, that this has not been paid for the last two years.

T.P.I., C.Eng., M.I.C.E.

Chief Executive

Recent questions regarding operational and management issues at the project, have arisen from concerns expressed by members of the District Council, and I'm sure you will accept that these concerns have to be duly investigated. The District Council has a duty to ensure that any project which it might fund meets appropriate standards, including those which perform valuable social services.

I would conclude by saying that in my view, Women's Aid refuges are much more a Social Work function than any District Council responsibility, and your comments in the first paragraph of your letter support this view in my opinion. I am also of the view, that the District Council's approach to Womens Aid over the years has always been supportive, amicable and business-like, and it would be a misrepresentation to suggest otherwise.

As you are aware, the matter will be discussed again at the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on Monday 9th November, after which I will be able to advise you further.

In the meantime, thank you for your letter, and if I can be of any more help, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive and Administrative Officer