

<b>REPORT TO EXECUTIVE</b>			
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA: HEALTH &amp; WELL-BEING</b>			
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	17th December 2001		
<b>Public</b>			
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Recorded in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Inside Policy Framework</b>			

**Title:** JOHN STREET - DIRECT ACCESS HOSTEL HEALTH & SAFETY AUDIT

**Report of:** Director of Housing

**Report reference:** H116/01

### Summary:

The report makes proposals in response to an inspection of the hostel by the Health and Safety Executive which requires certain improvements be put in place.

### Recommendations:

In consideration of the information provided in this report, the following recommendations are set out for Members consideration.

- a. The Executive note the actions already taken to comply with Health and Safety Regulations;
- b. The proposed actions set out in sections 1.6 and 3 are progressed by officers with the timescales set by the H & S.E. Officer.

**Contact Officer:** Laurie Brewis

**Ext:** 7301

## **John Street - Direct Access Hostel**

### **Health & Safety Audit**

#### **1. Introduction**

1. At its meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2001 Members of the Executive considered report H102/01, which outlined a number of actions to conform to directives from the authorities Health & Safety Advisor following an audit on the hostel.
2. These actions included issues in relation to:

- Staffing Levels
- Fire Alarm Equipment
- Interview security measures

1. The actions outlined were agreed by the Executive and have subsequently been implemented.
2. Arising from discussions at the Executive meeting, it was considered necessary to engage further with the Health & Safety Executive (H&SE) directly following the introduction of the above interim actions.
3. This report informs Members of the outcome and identifies in brief the deliberations of the visit to the Hostel by the H&SE on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001 and potential actions still to address.

#### **Issues Arising from the Visit**

4. The following issues/actions arising from the H&SE officers visit are highlighted in *italics* and for ease, the actions taken/proposed follow :
- ***Admittance to the Hostel*** – concern was raised in relation to the procedures in place with regard to the "**selection**" process in place. Indicating that staff are potentially placed at "risk", unaware of the social circumstances surrounding the individuals being admitted.

The process of interviewing potential occupants of the Hostel is being reviewed in relation to the venue and staffing arrangements, with officers concluding that the concerns raised are valid and actions are necessary to safeguard staff in these situations.

- ***Levels of Discipline*** – Concerns in relation to the following issues were raised:
  - Food preparation equipment
  - Defined time for residents to be in their own rooms
  - No agreement for staff to enter rooms at any time
  - That staff covering the "nightshift" do so as a sleep-in arrangement thus

### *preventing monitoring of CCTV surveillance equipment*

These issues are being addressed individually as follows;

- The particular reference was concerned with the ownership of a potentially dangerous piece of equipment by a resident. Future admission policies will include consideration of the confiscation of dangerous items owned by potential residents (to be returned on the termination of occupancy) and a review of cooking arrangements and the utensils available for these activities will be carried out.
- The setting of a "turn-in" time will be seen as restrictive and some residents are concerned at limits being set. However, in seeking to adopt reasonable levels of discipline and effectively manage the Hostel officers will consult with residents to agree acceptable limits.
- The licence agreement for the Hostel will be reviewed and include appropriate conditions for access to individual rooms.
- The staffing arrangements agreed at the previous Executive included provision for double staff cover on evenings and weekends, the new directive will require an additional member of staff to cover the 'nightshift' to be available to react to crisis situations and monitor the CCTV equipment (as set out in section 3 below).
- ***Lone Working*** – *Issues in relation to staff working in isolated situations and the associated potential risks were confirmed. Recommendations clearly imply double staffing cover (particularly at night) to reduce the levels of risk for staff.*
- Issues surrounding these particular concerns were addressed in the previous decision made by the Executive at its meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2001. Associated costings for the recruitment of additional staff will be met as a "support service" eligible under the Transitional Housing Benefit Scheme.
- ***Physical or Electronic Communications*** – *Particular reference is made to No 11 John St a 7 bed annex to the main hostel and the inability of its residents being able to raise an alarm in an emergency.*
- The issues raised have been addressed through the installation of community alarm services in the annex and the main hostel.

In issuing an **Improvement Notice** the H&SE concluded the need for much of the work to be completed by Christmas, with a compulsory completion deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2002.

### **Outstanding Actions**

1. From the Information set out in Section 1.6, all issues can be addressed from the proposals identified.

## **Hostel Provision Review**

2. The issues set out in this report have been considered in light of the pending review for all hostel provision. In particular, issues and actions set out above in relation to staffing provision will impact and complement the provision of a pro-active resettlement approach, which will be a major focus in the forthcoming review. However the actions set out above need to be implemented within a given timetable which will not necessarily align with the overall review for such services.

### **1. CONSULTATION**

1. N/A.

### **2. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS**

1. The additional staffing cover required to conform to the H&SE officer's recommendations include a further member of staff each 'nightshift' and is directly linked to issues in relation to lone working.
2. The financial implication arising from this action will increase the accommodation support charge by approximately £25.00 per week, subject to shift patterns and premiums being agreed. It is the view of officers that these measures are eligible under the specified criteria for support services in the Housing Benefit Transitional Scheme (HBTS).

### **3. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS**

The City Treasurer's comments have been incorporated into the body of the report.

### **4. LEGAL COMMENTS**

5.1 The actions set out in the report address those recommended by the H&SE officer in the Improvement Notice issued on 21 November 2001 under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

### **5. CORPORATE COMMENTS**

N/A.

### **6. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT**

1. A risk assessment was carried out and provided with the previous report H.102/01 considered by the Executive on 30 October 2001.
2. Now that the HSE improvement notice has been received there are three revised options to assess:

#### **a. Comply in Full**

- o Full compliance removes the risk of further action by the HSE and ensures the City Council is doing its utmost to provide safe working systems for both staff and residents.

- Compliance also means that the hostel can continue to provide a valuable service to residents and referring agencies.
- With the additional cost of compliance being met in full by the 'Supporting People' regime there is no financial consequence for the City Council, at least until the first Supporting People funding review – perhaps in 2005/06. At that time the City Council would need to reconsider its options if funding was to be reduced at that time.

a. Appeal Against the Notice

- The City Council has the right to appeal against the notice to an Industrial Tribunal which has the effect of suspending its requirements until the matter is settled.
- Following careful review by officers the Executive is advised that there is no sustainable argument to support this option.

a. Close the Facility

- Under this option the Council could determine that it does not wish to continue to supply this service on the revised basis.
- The adverse consequences of this could be:
  - loss of unique service to not just Carlisle but North Cumbria;
  - Impact on the handling of homelessness with possible repercussions for post-LSVT arrangements;
  - Costs of closure/re-assignment of asset and staffing (general fund);
- Officers' advice to the Executive is that it would be premature to make this decision in isolation from the broader hostel review referred to in 1.6 above.

## **2. EQUALITY ISSUES**

N/A.

## **3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

N/A.

## **4. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

N/A.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In consideration of the information provided in this report, the following recommendations are set out for Members consideration.

- a. The Executive note the actions already taken to comply with Health and Safety Regulations;
- b. Officers implement the proposed actions set out in sections 1.6 and 3 within the timescales set by the H & S.E. Officer.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations presented are to ensure compliance to Health and Safety Executive directives.

T. Bramley

Director of Housing