



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 25th March 2010

Title: WOMEN AND FAMILIES HOMELESSNESS ACCOMMODATION

Report of: HOUSING AND HEALTH SERVICES MANAGER

Report reference: DS. 16/10

Summary: This report presents Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny committee with the report that went to Executive on 15th March 2010 that provided an update regarding the project to provide accommodation for women and families who are homeless replacing the current accommodation at London Road.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

Input from this committee regarding the proposals including consultation.

Recommendations:

That the attached report that went to the Executive on the 15th March 2010 be considered and comments forwarded to the Executive.

Contact Officer: Simon Taylor

Ext: 7327

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: HEALTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Date of Meeting: 15.3.10

Public

Key Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan:

Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: Women and Families Homelessness Accommodation

Report of: Housing and Health Services Manager

Report reference: DS. 11/10

Summary:

This report provides an update regarding the project to provide accommodation for women and families who are homeless replacing the current accommodation at London Road, Carlisle. The report asks that the Executive approve the release of the preferred site, off Newtown Road, Carlisle, for the scheme.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that;

1. Approve the release of the preferred site for the scheme.
2. Approve the next steps for the development.
3. Approve that this report is made available for consideration by the community Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding the proposals including consultation.

Contact Officer: Simon Taylor

Ext: 7327

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The London Road Homeless Families accommodation houses 10 families/single women. It is a 3-storey building converted from two adjoining terraced houses and has communal facilities including a kitchen, laundry, bathrooms and sitting rooms. There is an office and sleep over facilities for staff. It has a large enclosed concrete yard at the rear.
- 1.2 It is not suitable for its purpose as it has no accessible accommodation for people with disabilities, requires residents to share facilities and rooms. It is unsuitable for families with children and inadequate for the needs of single women. Limitations of the building include: small rooms, inadequate communal space and the control of access to and from the building.
- 1.3 Replacement accommodation provision is needed to improve the living conditions for residents, the quality of service provided to homeless people and to address equality/accessibility issues.
- 1.4 The original proposal was for new build hostel accommodation to be provided with the 'Centre of Excellence'. However these plans were reviewed in December 2008 following representations from Cumbria police and the accommodation element withdrawn.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is that the replacement accommodation would be self contained apartment/house provision and not a like for like hostel replacement. It is anticipated that there will be 7-8 units providing 1, 2 and 3 bed-roomed accommodation. There would be a communal room, play facilities and an office on the site which would allow the scheme to be managed in a different way. Initial total estimated costs of the proposal are £1.8 million. Scheme funding includes the balance of the original project to be committed to the scheme - £690K (inclusive of a capital receipt for the current hostel building with a valuation of £450K done in 2007) plus funding from the capital programme. The current hostel building would be sold following development of the project.
- 2.2 A trawl for potential sites has been carried out through the Council's Property Services and involved using an external agent. This looked at a number of sites owned by the Council and external sites (private & public) including any

developments that had become mothballed or unfinished due to the economic downturn. A number of factors were considered when looking at the sites including;

- Site location
- Access to services
- Access to schools and health facilities
- Type and size of site
- Site condition and land use issues
- Ownership and cost

2.3 At the end of the process of looking at a number of sites two remained. The preferred site for the scheme is on land between Wood Street and Bright Street, off Newtown Road in Carlisle. This site is currently disused and is owned by the Council. It satisfies the criteria identified in paragraph 2.2.

3. CONSULTATION

3.1 Consultation to Date.

A Business Case for the scheme has been taken through the Corporate Capital Board in 2009. Consultation with the Portfolio Holder has been ongoing since 2008. Reports were taken to Joint Management Team on 1/10/09 and 15/10/09. A report (DS 82/09) was taken to Executive on 26/10/09 and approval given for a submission for funding the scheme through the council budget process. The scheme has been approved by Full Council on 2/2/10 as part of the budget process.

A steering group has been meeting since January 2009 with representatives from key agencies such as the Police, Health and other statutory/third sector bodies. This group has overseen the development plans for the Community Training and Resource Centre but has also been updated on progress with the development of the replacement accommodation for homeless women and families.

Consultation has taken place with staff, residents and people who have gone through our hostel to gain ideas and feedback for the development of the proposals for replacement accommodation. Feedback has been feed into the development of the proposals.

3.2 Consultation proposed.

Pending a positive decision regarding the preferred site for the proposed scheme being made, consultation will be carried out as part of the development process. This would be with residents, ward members and be inclusive of the Neighbourhood Forum. The next steps in the development process will include appointing a design team, working up plans and preparing an application for planning permission. During this process consultation will be with residents to look at issues and to take on board comments and feedback regarding the proposals or improvements that could be made as part of the development. This may include enhancements to the scheme or area as part of the development such as car parking, lighting. Any proposals will also be subject to a formal planning application.

Consultation through the steering group with partner agencies will continue as will consultation with staff and residents during the development process.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that;

1. Approve the release of the preferred site for the scheme.
2. Approve the next steps for the development.
3. Approve that this report is made available for consideration by the community Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding the proposals including consultation.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To enable the proposals for the provision of accommodation for women and families who are homeless to be progressed.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – Staffing will be within current capacity within the housing service.
- Financial – The piece of land identified as a suitable site is in Council ownership and is currently unused and attracts no rental income. The land is currently valued at £140,000 on the Council's balance sheet and any development would require the asset to be reclassified and re-valued dependent on its end use. It is understood there are no current restrictions on the land as to its future use.

Use of the site will also be dependent on receiving the appropriate planning permissions.

The 2010/11 budget process approved a capital budget of £1.8million profiled across 2010/11 to 2012/13 for completion of this scheme. The Budget Resolution agreed in February 2010, also includes a capital receipt from the potential sale of the London Road site once a new facility is provided.

There will be ongoing revenue costs associated with the development, but these should be met from existing budgets for the running of the London Road site. Any cross-over in the closure of the London Road site and the opening of the new facility may incur costs and these will need to be considered in the detailed Business Case and project plan as to where these will be funded from.

- Legal – The Council has available to it appropriate legal powers to enable it to develop new women and families homeless accommodation. Section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 gives the authority power to provide housing accommodation by erecting buildings on land, whilst Section 2 of the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 allows the Council to erect buildings and construct or carry out works on land for the benefit or improvement of the area. Similarly, Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything necessary for the benefit or improvement of the social, environmental or economic wellbeing of its area provided that it has regard to its community strategy prior to exercising this power.
- Corporate – Improvement of accommodation for homeless people is a project within the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2005 – 10 which is a corporate document.
- Risk Management – Risk management for the project has been carried out and incorporated as part of the business case.
- Equality and Disability – The authority has responsibilities to provide services in line with statutes relating to equality and diversity for customers.
- Environmental – The design of the project will adhere to the environmental standards of the authority.
- Crime and Disorder – Provision of decent accommodation for people will provide a basis on which people can help to move on with their life and have positive impacts on reducing participation in crime and disorder.

- Impact on Customers – The impact on customers of providing decent accommodation at a period in their lives when they are homeless is significant.