

REPORT

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE	Subject: WALKERBURN DRIVE HOMELESS UNIT	
From: HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES		
Date: 20 AUGUST 2008	Ref: MP/PH/SM	

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

The purpose of this report is to seek committee approval to proceed with the reprovisioning of the temporary accommodation at 1 - 15 Walkerburn Drive, Coltness, including the relocation of the staff and the demolition of the block.

2. Background

- 2.1 As part of the regeneration of Coltness, Committee agreed in August 2007 to the demolition of two blocks of flats at Walkerburn Drive and Innerleithen Drive.
- 2.2 Committee was advised at that time that it was planned also to demolish the block of flats at 1 - 15 Walkerburn Drive. This block presently provides temporary accommodation within five flats which provide places of shared accommodation for up to 10 women. The Wishaw tenancy support team is also based there.

3. Proposals / Considerations

- 3.1. It is proposed to demolish the block of flats at 1 – 15 Walkerburn Drive to facilitate the regeneration of the Coltness area and enable the site, along with adjacent vacant sites, to be redeveloped for new housing and provide a capital receipt to the Council.
- 3.2. The temporary accommodation provided there at present does not comply with Scottish Executive guidance on the provision of temporary accommodation nor does it meet the objectives and priorities laid out in the Council's own draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy. It does not comply because of its relative isolation (in terms of its access to facilities and its proximity to other services) and because of the need to move away from the provision of large hostel-type accommodation where sharing is the norm.
- 3.3. In line with the draft Temporary Accommodation Strategy, in the short term the intention is to replace the unit with additional dispersed accommodation across the Wishaw area. Appropriate support will be provided by support workers, where required. At present the Wishaw office area has a lower than average proportion of temporary accommodation, including dispersed accommodation, based on population.
- 3.4. The initial cost of providing the dispersed accommodation is approximately £32k but this would be recouped in full within six months via the rental and service charge. It is proposed that some of the accommodation could be provided by local housing associations.
- 3.5. In the medium term there will be a more detailed examination of the need for different types of temporary accommodation in the Wishaw area, the better use of existing supported accommodation in the area and the possibility of working with an RSL to develop purpose built accommodation.

- 3.6. The possibility of relocating the homelessness accommodation at the former residential home at Branchal House has been investigated and found to fail the tests for appropriate temporary accommodation in the same way that Walkerburn Drive is now considered inappropriate. Branchal would also be extremely expensive. Cost estimates have put the conversion of the block well in excess of £900k, in addition to the loss of a potential capital receipt to the council if the site were to be sold.
- 3.7. The Wishaw tenancy support team comprises 11 staff and 6 caretakers. Coltness has never been seen as the best place for the team given its relatively inaccessible location and the isolation of the team from other council staff.
- 3.8. It is proposed to relocate the staff currently located in Walkerburn to the former social work offices at 46 Laurel Drive, Craigneuk. The vacant offices (3x2apts) are next door to the existing housing office. They could be made fit for purpose relatively easily and quickly. Initial estimates of costs are between £10,000 and £15,000. The staff have been consulted.
- 3.9. As the requirement for caretaking duties will no longer exist within Walkerburn, the 6 posts of Caretaker will require to be deleted. It is anticipated that by the application of North Lanarkshire Council's, Redundancy and Redeployment Policies, the 6 existing staff members will be redeployed within the Council.

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1 The demolition of 1 – 15 Walkerburn Drive is expected to cost in the region of £50,000. There is a budget available within the 2008/09 HRA Capital Programme for demolition work.
- 4.2 Provision has been made within the Homelessness Budget (Non HRA) 2008/09 to meet the costs of the office accommodation and additional dispersed accommodation.
- 4.3 Consultation has taken place with the Trade Unions and Human Resources.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee agrees:

- (i) to the demolition of 1 – 15 Walkerburn Drive as outlined in paragraph 3.1
- (ii) to re-provision the temporary accommodation at 1 – 15 Walkerburn Drive with dispersed accommodation in the Wishaw office area, as outlined in paragraph 3.3
- (iii) to relocate the staff to Craigneuk, as outlined in paragraph 3.8
- (iv) to the deletion of the 6 posts of Caretaker, as outlined in paragraph 3.9.



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Head of Housing Services
7 August 2008

For further information about this report please contact Steve Mason on telephone 01698 274141