

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2012

PROPOSED REINSTATEMENT OF WHITE WINGS HOUSE BEDSITS TO CREATE
A SUPPORTED HOUSING PROJECT FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2291 - Proposals for use of White Wings House Bedsits - 1 Feb 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides further detail on the proposals to bring 18 vacant bedsits at White Wings House back into use as supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities. Letting these units will generate a substantial annual income for the Council, will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the sheltered housing schemes in Denmead and will provide a highly sought after independent housing opportunity for vulnerable adults with learning disabilities.

At its meeting on 1 February 2012 Committee resolved that, subject to the outcome of further consultation:

1. That the vacant wing of bedsit flats at White Wings House be designated for letting to vulnerable adults.
2. That approval be given for the Head of Strategic Housing to include an appropriate referral arrangement into Hampshire Homechoice to enable allocations to be dealt with in accordance with the sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme.
3. That the Head of Landlord Services be authorised to develop detailed proposals in conjunction with Hampshire County Council officers, undertake further consultation with existing tenants, and take account of the outcome of an Equality Impact Assessment.
4. In view of the value of the refurbishment project, a financial appraisal will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That in light of the consultation undertaken and the financial appraisal, Committee confirm that the White Wings House bedsits be designated for use by vulnerable adults.
- 2 That the estimated expenditure of £190,000 required to bring the properties up to an acceptable standard be authorised under Financial Regulation 6.4.
- 3 That authority is given for tenders to be invited for the necessary building and maintenance work.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. White Wings House provides sheltered housing in Denmead for 18 older people or couples. Alongside the occupied part of the scheme is a wing of bedsit flats all of which are vacant.
- 1.2. Following the report to Committee in February, City Council and County Council officers have held discussions about the proposals with Ward Members, Parish Council representatives, with the existing tenants and at the Denmead Public meeting.
- 1.3. Officers have continued to develop the proposals for converting the vacant wing into a supported housing project for adults with learning disabilities and will be ready to invite tenders for the works subject to approval by Committee
- 1.4. This report gives an update on the proposals and seeks authority for the project to proceed.

2. PROJECT SUMMARY

- 2.1. These proposals have been developed jointly between Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council Adult Services. The project provides the opportunity for the Council to provide a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable adults to live independently.
- 2.2. The project will offer a supported housing project with 24 hours staff cover. It will contain fourteen self-contained bedsit flats with a communal lounge / kitchen area, a respite flat and accommodation for staff to sleep over. To bring the flats up to a suitable condition for re-letting, each will require a new boiler, a new front door and kitchen and bathroom refits.
- 2.3. Plans have been drawn up and preliminary costings for the necessary works have been projected at £190,000. Allowing time for the tender process and the contract phase it is estimated that the accommodation could be ready for occupation by October / November 2012.

- 2.4. The revenue lost through setting aside the accommodation for use as communal facilities in the project will be fully met through the service charges levied on the fourteen who will be living in the occupied flats

3. FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

- 3.1. The architects have allowed a provisional budget of £190,000 for the project, although it is anticipated that this figure will be reduced once the contract is put out to tender. The estimated costs include a spend of an average of £8,900 per flat ; building works of £20,000; professional fees of £10,000 and £6,000 on enhanced fire protection.
- 3.2. Hampshire County Council has approved a contribution towards the cost of the project where works are being carried out which exceed the City Council's normal void standards. It is anticipated that this funding will meet the costs of floor coverings, assistive technology, and the conversion works to create the new communal space. Approximately £25,000 of the provisional project costs will be covered by the County Council funding (building works and associated fees), leaving an estimated sum of £165,000 to be funded by the City Council
- 3.3. A sum of £200,000 has been included in the Housing Repairs and Renewals Programme within the HRA Business Plan to fund the improvement of sheltered housing schemes. The Council's share of the project costs can be funded entirely from this provision in the Housing Capital budget for 2012/13.
- 3.4. Calculations of the expected rent indicate that the letting of fourteen flats will generate an expected net annual income of £28,000 after making allowance for ongoing repair and other revenue expenditure. In addition to the rent there will be a service charge to cover the cost of the communal facilities. The provision of welfare and other similar support to the residents will be the responsibility of Hampshire County Council. The City Council will not have any responsibility for these costs. Therefore the initial capital outlay incurred in reinstating the premises would be recovered within six years.

4. CONSULTATION:

- 4.1. Consultations about the proposed use of the vacant accommodation have taken place through a number of means.
- 4.2. City Council and County Council officers met with Ward Members and the Chairman of Denmead Parish Council Parish Council to discuss the proposals. A further consultation meeting has also taken place with the existing tenants at White Wings House, that meeting also being attended by Ward Members and representatives of the Parish Council. The matter was also discussed at the Denmead Public meeting.

4.3. The tenant consultation meeting was well attended with fourteen of the eighteen occupied flats represented. The discussion revealed widespread support for the proposed use of the vacant wing, although there were some specific concerns which centred on security of the building; the capacity of existing facilities, specifically the laundry room and refuse disposal and ensuring compatibility of incoming tenants. Some specific actions were agreed to address these concerns, all of which can be addressed within the project:

4.3.1. One additional washing machine and one additional dryer will be provided to cope with the increase in demand.

4.3.2. Additional wheeled bins to be provided in a suitable storage area.

4.3.3. Additional security to be provided to allow the two parts of the scheme to be separately secured as required.

4.3.4. No specific age limit to be applied to the supported housing project but selection criteria to be implemented to minimise the likelihood of conflict with existing tenants.

4.3.5. Provision of a £5,000 contingency fund to carry out any necessary modifications / enhancements to the premises if needs emerge once the new project is operational.

4.4. The Parish Council representatives expressed regret that the proposed use of the accommodation would deprive older people in Denmead of rehousing opportunities. However they were satisfied that the tenants have been consulted and that it is their wish that the project should go ahead.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. The accommodation at White Wings House has been vacant due to bedsits proving very hard to let which made the scheme unviable.

5.2. Numerous options have been considered for the wing including redevelopment as Extra Care for older people and demolition and rebuild for general needs housing. However for a number of reasons, none of the options previously considered has proved to be viable. Any effective new build proposals would effectively require demolition of the existing sheltered scheme which remains popular with the existing tenants and meets a need within the local community. Also decommissioning, demolition and new build would take a number of years to produce any new housing units. Neither internal reconstruction to enlarge the bedsits nor conversion to provide Extra Care Housing for older people proved to be financially viable.

5.3. The use proposed in this report offers an outcome which is both affordable and deliverable and which makes effective use of this

housing resource to meet the strategic need to provide affordable supported housing for vulnerable adults with learning disabilities. Allocation to the flats in the project will be administered via Hampshire Homechoice but eligibility for housing in the project will be determined by an inter-agency panel which will ensure that full account is taken of housing, care and support considerations for both the applicants and the integrity of the scheme as a whole.

6. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1. The proposed use of the accommodation at White Wings House would promote the objectives of Inclusive Society and help promote Health and Wellbeing for the new tenants who would benefit greatly from the opportunity to live independently.
- 6.2. The project would also contribute significantly to the strategic objectives of Hampshire County Council Adult Services.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1. The financial appraisal above shows how the capital costs of the project can be met within the existing budget and that the net revenue income will recoup the initial outlay over approximately 6 years. It is anticipated that the reinstated flats will continue to generate rental income for many years to come.
- 7.2. The proposal makes effective use of this social housing resource and will offer an opportunity for independent living to vulnerable adults some of whom are currently in residential care.

8. TACT COMMENT

- 8.1. TACT has made the following comments on the report:
- 8.2. "We are pleased to support the proposals for White Wings House. TACT has long been calling for action to address this "white elephant" and these proposals do not come soon enough. It is gratifying that this proposal will also provide a much needed resource for vulnerable adults "

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Architect's drawings – Studio 4

Appendices

None