

CABINET

21 November 2023

Minute Extract

1. **59 COLEBROOK STREET – REFURBISHMENT AND CONVERSION TO SHARED ACCOMMODATION FOR THE USE OF UKRAINIAN AND AFGHANISTAN GUESTS**
(CAB3433 refers)

Councillor Westwood introduced the report emphasising the demand for single occupancy accommodation for Ukrainian guests, particularly with the lack of guarantee for government funding for host families beyond April 2024. The proposal also offered a good investment for the council in the longer term.

Ian Tait spoke during public participation as summarised briefly below. He considered that the capital sum required to refurbish the property appeared excessive given that it had only been empty for a few years and had been used as a house in multiple occupation (HMO) prior to this. He suggested it might offer better value to sell the property and buy an alternative house. He mentioned examples of other council owned properties that had remained empty for a number of years and expressed concern that the council was not effectively managing its assets and its approach lacked consistency.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

He welcomed the proposal to provide temporary shared accommodation, recognising the need. He asked what the refurbishment standard would be? He also requested that Cabinet consider changing the procurement requirements generally to specify refurbishment products with a lesser carbon impact.

Councillor Horrill

She welcomed the proposal to make additional accommodation available. However, she suggested that the council's approach to HMOs appeared to be inconsistent, mentioning another council owned property in Eastgate Street. In addition she queried the council's proposals for a newly renovated property at 163 The Broadway which was currently empty? She also requested clarification regarding the provision for ongoing repairs of 59 Colebrook Street.

Councillor Westwood responded to the points raised above. It was clarified that the council also owned the freehold of the sites surrounding 59 Colebrook

Street and it was not therefore considered financially prudent to sell one property in isolation. The refurbishment would be undertaken to EPC 'C' standard in line with the "fabric first" retrofit programme. Councillor Westwood noted Councillor Lee's request for a change to the procurement rules for further consideration outside of the meeting. He advised that Barnes House was considered under report CAB3432 below and also agreed to make further enquiries with officers regarding the other two properties mentioned by Councillor Horrill.

The Strategic Director responded regarding the provision for repairs which was set out in Appendix 1 to the report and also clarified that decisions on different properties were taken in order to ensure the best return to the council on its assets. The Strategic Director also advised that the property 163 High Street was in the process of being let.

Councillor Westwood responded to questions from Cabinet Members.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RECOMMENDED (TO COUNCIL):

1. That a capital budget of £610,000 to refurbish 59 Colebrook Street to provide temporary homeless accommodation be approved, funded by £250k grant from HCC, £206k grant from LAHF, and £154k of prudential borrowing.

RESOLVED:

That subject to Council approval of the budget:

2. That capital expenditure of up to £610,000 be approved to refurbish 59 Colebrook Street to provide temporary homeless accommodation.

3. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (responsible for Housing) to approve the tender evaluation model.

4. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (responsible for Housing) to appoint the preferred contractor(s) following a competitive procurement process.

5. That authority be delegated to the Service Lead (Estates): to enter into all relevant agreements, to negotiate the contractual agreements and see them to completion to enable the conversion and refurbishment contract to be executed.