

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 7 May 2008

Subject: Update on Proposed Upgrade of Housing Repairs Depot at Cochno Street, Clydebank

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the proposal to upgrade the Housing Repairs Depot at Cochno Street, Clydebank and further, to advise the Committee of the requirement to carry out essential business critical and health and safety works.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Acting Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development (Housing and Regeneration Services) submitted a report to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on 7 November 2007 seeking approval for an allocation of capital funding from the 2007/2008 HRA Capital Plan to fund the essential extension and upgrade of the depot.
- 2.2** It had been noted that in March 2007 the Council's in-house Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service was awarded the Measured Term Contract for Repairs and Planned Maintenance of West Dunbartonshire Council's Housing Stock - 2007/2010.
- 2.3** The proposed development work is considered by the Contract Administrator to be suitable for approval as the upgraded asset will remain in Council ownership. The need to upgrade the Cochno Street depot has been a longstanding requirement and a project for this purpose in terms of preparatory drawings etc. was initiated prior to the Council decision to expose the MTC to competition.
- 2.4** As outlined in the 7 November 2007 report to HEED Committee, Cochno Street depot requires to be upgraded for reasons of health and safety, employee welfare and customer service.
- 2.5** Issues to be addressed
- (a) The accommodation generally requires redecoration and aesthetic improvements given no investment in this particular area for some considerable time. The accommodation space also does not meet current standards with regard to space/employee ratio.

- (b) The current reception area is not suitable, with no seating for the public and in addition this area also accommodates two officers.
- (c) The electrical system requires to be extensively upgraded. The present lighting does not meet current Display Screen Equipment (DSE) regulations and power/network/telecommunications cabling and earthing system is not fit for purpose.
- (d) Floor coverings are badly worn in places and are potential trip hazards. Attempts to mitigate risks have been taken by taping over areas.
- (e) Additional accommodation is required to facilitate integration of service provision and relocate the Sold Property team from Rosebery Place.
- (f) Due to earlier uncertainty regarding the outcome of the Voluntary Competitive Tender (VCT) process no funding was allocated for the upgrade of Cochno Street depot in capital plans for 2007/2008 as the successful contractor was not required as part of the VCT to retain the depot for use.

2.6 Proposals

- (a) Erect new office accommodation to south west of existing office block. New accommodation to comprise prefabricated modular units, which would be relocatable should a future decision be taken to dispose of Cochno Street property asset.
- (b) Create new reception office in existing main office to front of building by reinstating original division wall and create seated accommodation in current reception office.
- (c) Create new office by reinstating original divisional wall in rear large office to rear of existing building and leave the remainder of this large office for a meeting/training room.
- (d) Install disabled person's toilet in new building and ramps as necessary.
- (e) Upgrade electrics in existing office accommodation.
- (f) Redecorate existing office accommodation.
- (g) Lay new floor coverings throughout existing office accommodation.

2.7 It would be the intention to procure all of the works externally with Architectural Services acting as contract administrators, preparing tenders and employing a private contractor from the approved list. Standing orders and Council/Committee procedures to apply. Drawings have also been prepared.

2.8 The Committee agreed however on 7 November 2007 that the proposed upgrade be continued until such time as the Housing Asset Management Plan was in place and that consideration should take place thereafter.

3. Main Issues

3.1 Since the 7 November 2007 Committee report, the Cochno Street depot has continued to deteriorate and unless a decision on the planned refurbishment noted in Section 2 above is taken shortly, urgent interim remedial works will require to be carried out for business critical and health and safety reasons.

3.2 Business critical issues to be addressed of priority:

(a) As a matter of urgency the existing office accommodation computer network system requires to be upgraded. ICT have advised that the current system is in danger of collapse and the depot would then be unable to operate effectively. Cochno Street depot is the only building in the authority left with coaxial cabling and replacement parts are difficult to source. Network connections are regularly interrupted resulting in disruption to the service.

3.3 Health and safety issues to be addressed of priority:

(a) Floor coverings in the main office require to be replaced as trip hazards are become more prevalent.

(b) The lighting in all offices requires to be upgraded to meet current regulations and the Council's Display Screen Equipment Policy. Complaints of headaches etc. from staff are increasing due to the old light fittings.

3.4 Options:

3.4.1 There are two options to be considered:

(a) Option 1 proposes the complete refurbishment of the depot as detailed in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.7 above.

(b) Option 2 proposes measures to be undertaken immediately should the committee not agree to 3.4.1 (a) above, these measures to:

- Proceed with the network upgrade with the facility thereafter to incorporate as much of these works into the proposed structured electrics and communication system in any future extension and refurbished offices.
- Install the new lighting to meet with current regulations. This may involve disruption to the service as an asbestos survey indicates that almost all the textured ceiling coverings contain asbestos fibres.

- Replace the carpet within the main office and re-use if possible as part of any future extension and refurbishment works.

3.5 It is considered however that the proposals to undertake the full extension and overall refurbishment offer the most appropriate solution where costs were estimated in November 2007 at £175,000 which included the business critical and health/safety issues detailed in 3.2 and 3.3 above but which have now risen to a more likely estimate of approximately £200,000 - £220,000.

3.6 The Committee is asked to note that any project costs are likely to increase over time and additional costs will be incurred by carrying out some of the essential works (3.2 and 3.3 above) prior to any capital refurbishment works yet to be agreed by Committee.

3.7 Given a definitive decision and the results of any public consultation on the Housing Standard Delivery Plan not anticipated during 2008/2009, it is considered that investment in Cochno Street depot is crucial for service delivery and is required to effectively administer the Housing Repairs Measured Term Contract. It is also considered that the premises will be used as a housing repairs depot for the foreseeable future.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 If the entire refurbishment were to proceed, it is intended that staff would occupy the new build once completed prior to any refurbishment commencing in the existing building. To minimise disruption however, should it be decided that only the urgent business critical and health/safety works be undertaken in isolation, work may be necessary out of hours to avoid disruption to service and which will further increase costs.

4.2 It is also proposed to re-locate the Sold Property Team from Rosebery Place to Cochno Street but this depends on a decision taken to authorise overall extension and refurbishment works and where it is considered that the entire capital refurbishment proposals would benefit employee welfare.

4.3 Staff morale is very low due to the delay in a decision on the proposed refurbishment and updates are regularly requested.

4.4 The present condition of the accommodation is not welcoming to members of the general public whom visit daily. Cochno Street does not presently portray West Dunbartonshire Council as positively as other front line office accommodation.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Total costs for the entire refurbishment as described in this report at Sections 2.4 to 2.7 are now estimated at £200,000 - £220,000.

5.2 It would be anticipated that the costs of the overall planned extension and refurbishment works if agreed by Committee would be funded from the 2008/2009 HRA Capital Plan budget given that the depot is used exclusively for works associated with delivering repairs and planned maintenance to Council Housing Stock.

5.3 Indicative costs for the business critical and health and safety issues only as described in items 3.2 and 3.3 above should these be required in advance of any refurbishment agreement are:

(a)	Network upgrade	£10,000
(b)	Lighting upgrade	£10,200
(c)	Floor covering	£4,500
	Total costs	£24,700

5.4 It would be anticipated that of the £24,700 amount above, network and lighting upgrades (£20,200) would require to be met from appropriate 2008/2009 HRA Capital Plan budget with floor covering work (£4,500) being funded from Housing Repairs DLO surplus.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The proposed minimum interim measures described in 5.3 above are considered the minimum essential to provide continuity of service and require to be carried out as a matter of urgency should the Committee agree not to progress with the overall extension and refurbishment project.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The overall upgrade proposals and refurbishment of Cochno Street depot was chosen from the following appraised options;

- (a) do nothing
- (b) new single depot
- (c) relocate all to existing Dumbarton depot
- (d) upgrade Cochno Street

7.2 Benefits of option 7.1 (d) above include:

- (a) retention of Clydebank base
- (b) minimal disruption to employees and service users
- (c) reduction in impact of any A82 road disruption (critical single route from Dumbarton)
- (d) cost effectiveness

7.3 The proposed measures will improve;

- (a) employee welfare
- (b) health and safety provisions
- (c) customer service

7.4 Since the submission of the original report on 7 November 2007 there has been further deterioration in the existing accommodation.

7.5 Should the Committee decide not to implement the overall depot refurbishment the interim measures are necessary to improve:

- (a) Employee welfare
- (b) Health and safety
- (c) Customer service

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (a) acknowledge the critical role that the Cochno Street depot plays in the delivery of an effective Housing Repairs Service,**
- (b) approve the business critical and health and safety investments required are progressed as a matter of urgency,**
- (c) approve the wider refurbishment of the Cochno Street depot as outlined in section 2 above,**
- (d) authorise expenditure for the project from within the 2008/09 HRA Capital Plan Budget.**

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Date: 14 April 2008

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: Proposed Upgrade of Housing Repairs Depot at Cochno Street, Clydebank, HEED Committee 7 November 2007.

Wards Affected: None