

Midlothian Families Project

Report by Derek Oliver, Chief Officer Place

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) Approves the use of the building to provide short term emergency accommodation to homelessness households with children or a pregnant person.
- (b) Approves funding the setting up of this project through the Ending Homeless Together Funding.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline a proposal to utilise an existing council-owned building for use as temporary accommodation for homeless applicants with either a) dependent children; or b) a pregnant person within the household in Midlothian.

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Report Contact:

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3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1** In order to be compliant with the requirements of the revised Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020, Midlothian Council require families accommodation to be available for emergency use. Due to the exceptional population growth in Midlothian combined with cost of living challenges, it is highly likely there will be increased demand for homeless services.
- 3.2** Midlothian Council currently has two families' projects which provide fully furnished self-contained emergency accommodation. Onsite housing support is provided through a concierge service based within the building. This service is paid for through the service charge applied to these properties. Tenants remain in the accommodation for a very short period of time until they are provided with longer term temporary accommodation.
- 3.3** Cabinet approval was received for the first conversion to emergency family accommodation on 3 September 2019. This property comprises of 8 two bedroom properties. Cabinet approval was received for the second conversion to emergency family accommodation on 12th December 2020. This property comprises of 2 one bedroom flats, 1 two bedroom flat and 2 three bedroom flats.
- 3.4** Due to the tenant's support needs and sensitivity requirements in cases such as domestic violence (i.e. proximity to alleged perpetrator), it would be beneficial for the homeless service to have additional emergency family accommodation across Midlothian. Officers from Housing Services have identified a site which would be suitable for use as emergency homeless accommodation in the Midlothian area. The properties comprise of 2 three bedroom properties and 4 two bedroom properties.
- 3.5** At present all of the properties are unoccupied. The properties are in the process of being brought up to a lettable standard. All tenants who were previously resident in this property were awarded a management transfer and are suitably accommodated. We therefore have the opportunity to utilise the whole block for the provision of short term emergency accommodation.
- 3.6** The property is one which has been difficult to re-let through the usual route of allocation, resulting in extended void times and associated loss of rental income. This initial set up cost can be met through the funding received from the Scottish Government to fund Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan projects.

- 3.7** It is intended to provide an onsite concierge service. This is beneficial to facilitate the following:
- Enable prompt turnover of properties when they become vacant.
 - Ensure the safety of occupants, help to prevent instances of anti-social behaviour, and provide appropriate supervision to ensure residents are meeting the conditions of their occupancy agreement.
- The cost of providing this service can be met through the service charge for the accommodation.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

The costs associated with setting up this project can be met through funding received from the Scottish Government's Ending Homeless Together Fund to support Local Authorities in the delivery of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan activities and projects. The revenue generated by the project will support delivery of any concierge type service, and provision of replacement furnishings as a result of general wear and tear.

4.2 Digital

No impact

4.3 Risk

Use of the property reduces the risk of the council having to source accommodation in the private sector to meet its statutory homeless duties, undoing to achievements of ending the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. This also provides greater security to residents and ensures resident adhere to their occupancy agreement.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognized, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan ensuring all actions have taken account of the needs of equality groups in relation to homelessness.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Midlothian Council and its Community Planning Partners have made a commitment to treat the following areas as key priorities under the Single Midlothian Plan:

- Reducing inequalities in the health of our population
- Reducing inequalities in the outcomes of learning in our population
- Reducing inequalities in the economic circumstances of our population

The themes addressed in this report impact on the delivery of the Single Midlothian Plan. Particularly in relation to the delivery of affordable housing, homelessness and health and social care outcomes.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☐ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☐ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☐ Continuous Improvement
- ☒ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☐ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☐ Efficient and Modern
- ☐ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The proposed use of this building provides a use for an existing building in a residential area in Midlothian.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

If approved, information will be presented to, and discussions held with, local ward Councillors.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Changing the use of the building for the provision of short term emergency temporary accommodation has a positive impact in terms of providing accommodation of an improved quality. Changing use will also reduce the risk of long term re-let times and the associated rent loss

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Addressing the needs of homeless clients at the earliest opportunity will assist in moving the balance of services and resources into preventing the need for longer term or future crisis support.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The proposed use of this building provides a use for an existing building in a residential area of Midlothian.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links - none