



Cambridge City Council

To: Executive Councillor for Housing
Report by: Director of Customer and Community Services
Scrutiny committee: COMMUNITY SERVICES 28th June 2012
Wards affected: None

Project Appraisal and Scrutiny Committee Recommendation

Project Name: Housing Advice Service – office refurbishment

Recommendation/s

Financial recommendations –

- The Executive Councillor is asked to approve the commencement of this scheme, which is already included in the Council's Capital & Revenue Project Plan (SC528).
 - The total cost of the project is up to £26,500, funded from the general fund (£10,000 of this has already been approved at Community Services Scrutiny Committee in January 2012). The balance of £16,500 would be funded by a combination of £1,500 from the section's repairs and renewals fund to cover decoration costs and £15,000 from reserves.
 - There are no ongoing revenue implications arising from the project.

Procurement recommendations:

- The Executive Councillor is asked to approve the carrying out and completion of the procurement of works to refurbish and reconfigure office space on the ground floor at Hobson House to a value of up to £26,500 including architects' fees

- Subject to:
 - The permission of the Director of Resources being sought prior to proceeding if the quotation or tender sum exceeds the estimated contract.
 - The permission from the Executive Councillor being sought before proceeding if the value exceeds the estimated contract by more than 15%.

1 Summary

1.1 The project

Works to refurbish and reconfigure office space on the ground floor at Hobson House to be used to accommodate staff within the Housing Advice Service.

Target Dates:

Start of procurement	21 st May 2012
Award of Contract	2 nd July 2012
Start of project delivery	13 th August 2012
Completion of project	17th September 2012

1.2 Anticipated Cost

Total Project Cost	£ 26,500
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Cost Funded from:

Funding:	Amount:	Details:
Reserves	£25,000	SC528 (£10k already approved Ref C2960 capital bids and funding report to CSSC Jan 12 – appendix H page 2)
Repairs & Renewals	£1,500	<i>From centre 11509</i>
Developer Contributions	£0	
Other	£0	

Ongoing Revenue Cost

Year 1	£0	There are no additional ongoing revenue costs
Ongoing	£0	N/a

1.3 Procurement process

The procurement process will be lead by the Estates and Facilities section. A minimum of three written quotes from an approved list of contractors has been sought.

2 Project Appraisal & Procurement Report

2.1 Project Background

Following a restructure, the Housing Options and Homelessness section will become the Housing Advice Service from 2nd July onwards. Currently the section is split into 3 teams – Choice Based Lettings, Housing Options and Advice and Homelessness Service Development. The restructure will dispense with separate teams, more generic roles have been created and all staff will come together under one service.

During the course of the 30-day consultation period on the restructure proposals, members of staff expressed a strong and widely-held view that all staff in the new structure should be sited in one office area. With the inclusion of the new Housing Advice Service Manager, staff are currently sited in 4 different office spaces. Even with the existing structure there is a feeling that liaison between teams is not as effective as it might be because of the dispersed nature of the office accommodation.

The Head of Housing Strategy has been supportive of the proposals to site the service in one, largely open plan, space and submitted a capital bid for £10,000 as part of the Housing Portfolio Budget 2012-13, which was approved at Community Services Scrutiny Committee in January 2012 (Ref C2960 capital bids and funding report to CSSC Jan 12 – Item 6 appendix H page 153).
<http://mgsqimh01/documents/g530/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Jan-2012%2013.30%20Community%20Services%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

City Council architects have devised a series of plans to meet the requirement to accommodate all members of staff in the service in the area currently occupied by the Housing Options and Advice Team and the CBL Team respectively. An initial estimate was sought on the first draft and this came in at £23,586, not inclusive of architects' fees. There will now be a requirement to seek three written quotes for the works.

The preferred option (option 'D') to refurbish the existing office space is contained at appendix B (separate pdf document). The architect has advised that all options will have a similar cost. Finance has been consulted, as has the Corporate Project Manager, who is leading on the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. The Corporate Project Manager supports the proposals to make the alterations outlined in this paper and the principles behind the change while the Housing Advice Service continues to occupy Hobson House. All council buildings, including Hobson House, are subject to review as part of the Office Accommodation Strategy. Hobson House is leased on a peppercorn rent by the Council United Charities. The review of the future use of Hobson House as office accommodation will focus on whether it is fit for purpose as a 21st century office and whether the Council is likely

to continue to occupy the building into the longer term. However, any decisions about future changes are not expected to be implemented in the in the shorter term.

The Technical Services Manager has approved the plans both for the long term refurbishment and for temporary decant plans.

2.2 Aims & objectives

The Housing Advice Service aims to support the Council's objective to create *a city, which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds – close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities* by aiming:

- To develop an enhanced housing options service offering holistic solutions to our customers, with a key focus on making the best use of housing stock, increasing the use of the private rented sector as a housing option and tackling 'worklessness' and debt
- To work with internal and external partners to provide inclusive and accessible services, which empower people to find ways to address their housing needs and/or prevent homelessness

Moving all members of staff who work within this service into a single office space will help to support these objectives more effectively by:

- Enabling staff to share casework information in a common office space - this is particularly beneficial when attempting to deliver successful homeless preventions. Service users will be talking to advisors about their position on the housing register and will often mention details, which will trigger homelessness prevention investigation and action.
- Allowing the service to liaise with external partners in a more cohesive way - work with single homelessness agencies and service users has, to date, been dealt with quite separately from our statutory functions. Although the reasons are just as much about legislation as physical office space, there is no distinct

line between the two and these groups cross over. Liaison between our Housing Advice Service and partner agencies delivering homelessness services will concern both operational and strategic matters and it, therefore, makes sense for the office environment to be conducive to ensuring that operational and strategic officers within the service have a greater awareness of the full range of work we are doing with our partners.

- The new Housing Advice Service introduces a new role, Assessment and Support Officers, who will support all parts of the section. They will play a key role in the running of the service and it is far more efficient for them to be able to liaise with all officers within one single office space.
- Some of the existing office space is located close to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) but CSC officers still need to move between office areas when liaising with staff, often with customers waiting in the reception area. The creation of one single office space will serve to improve front line communication significantly.

2.3 Summarise key risks associated with the project

The key risks if the project takes place are:

Risk of overrun on building works – the impact will be that the service suffers from minor disruption. One of the advantages of the location of the designated office space is the opportunity for close liaison with the Customer Service Centre (CSC)

Mitigation: Close liaison with the CSC during this period and clear communication with other internal partners who may liaise with officers in the Housing Advice Service – telephone number transfers to be organised via SERCO.

Risk of transgressing listed building guidelines

Mitigation: The Senior Conservation and Design Officer has been consulted throughout and the plans have been drawn up in line with his advice.

Risk of cost exceeding £26,500

Mitigation: Guide price of £20,000 to be set by the architect in procurement documentation

The key risks of the project not taking place are:

Much greater risk that the service will remain disjointed and that important communications around homelessness prevention or customer casework will not flow as naturally as it would in an open plan office environment

The Housing Advice Service Manager, Housing Advice Partnerships Manager and Policy and Performance Officer will remain isolated from staff in the section as there is currently no identified space available within existing office accommodation and the remaining members of staff will be split between two enclosed offices spaces. This will provide considerable limitations in meeting the objective to provide a single cohesive service.

The service to the customer will be undermined if the conditions for CSC/Housing Advice liaison are not improved.

2.4 Financial implications

Appraisal prepared on the following price base: 2012/13

2.5 Capital & Revenue costs

(a) Capital	£	Comments
Building contractor / works	23,750	
Purchase of vehicles, plant & equipment	N/a	
Professional / Consultants fees	2,750	Estimated architects' fees
IT Hardware/Software	0	
Other capital expenditure	0	
Total Capital Cost	26,500	

(b) Revenue	£	Comments
Maintenance	0	
R&R Contribution	0	Existing R&R funds contribution levels will be sufficient for the revised office space
Developer Contributions	0	
Total Revenue Cost	0	

2.6 VAT implications

Hobson House is leased to the Council at a peppercorn rent from United Cambridge Charities. There are no service charges and the Council does not receive an income from any third party for Hobson House. Therefore, there are no VAT implications.

2.7 Environmental Implications

Climate Change impact	
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Nil – the proposed works are relatively minor and will not affect the climate change rating of the building

2.8 Other implications

The office accommodation currently includes the only disabled toilet in Hobson House. The plan is to retain this toilet and ensure that access to it is unhindered. If these proposals change the Technical Services Manager will be consulted to ensure that he is satisfied that there are adequate WC facilities and access to those facilities available throughout Hobson/Mandela House.

2.9 Staff required to deliver the project

Additional assistance will be required from SERCO and Estates and Facilities to ensure that staff are successfully decanted from the existing office space while the works are carried out.

2.10 Dependency on other work or projects

Not applicable

2.11 Background Papers

- *Quote from approved contractor, Richard Jasny*
- *Draft reconfiguration plan for office space - architect's drawings – at appendix B (separate pdf document)*

2.12 Inspection of papers

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Capital Project Appraisal - Capital costs & funding - Profiling

Appendix A

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Make sure year headings match start date ...

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	
Capital Costs						
Building contractor / works	23,750					
Purchase of vehicles, plant & equipment						
Professional / Consultants fees	2,750					
Other capital expenditure:						
<i>insert rows as needed</i>						
Total Capital cost	26,500	0	0	0	0	
Capital Income / Funding						
Government Grant						
Developer Contributions						
R&R funding	1,500					from 11509
Earmarked Funds						
Existing capital programme funding	10,000					SC528
Revenue contributions						
Total Income	11,500	0	0	0	0	
Net Capital Bid	15,000	0	0	0	0	

