

HOUSING COMMITTEE

Friday, 12th May, 2017

9:30am, Committee Room of the Town Hall

Members Present

Councillor Mrs C.L. Wells (Chair), the Mayor, Councillor Ms C.E. Malarkey, Mr Councillor J.E. Skinner, Councillor Mrs E.C. Quirk, Mrs J. Quaggan (Independent Member)

Officers in Attendance

Director of Housing and Property (Mrs S. Harrison), Assistant Chief Officer (Housing and Property) (Mr G. Atkin), Assistant Chief Officer (Income) (Mrs C. Pulman), Assistant Property Manager (Capital) (Mr R. Green), Democratic Services Officer (Mrs D. Atkinson)

PART A – PUBLIC

Matters decided by the Committee

A1. Apologies for Absence

Mr Councillor C.L.H. Cain submitted apologies for absence.

A2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PART C – PUBLIC

Matters requiring Council approval

C3. Waverley Court Kitchen Refurbishments

The Committee considered a report submitted by the Assistant Property Manager (Capital) to consider a supplementary petition to remove the kitchen/living area partition wall to create an open plan living environment in the Waverley Court flats.

Members were reminded that a petition in the sum of £1,805,059.20 has been previously approved by the Housing Committee and Council to refurbish the Waverley Court kitchens.

It was explained that during the original period of construction of the seventy-four unit facility which was completed in 1991, Building Regulations required kitchens to be separate self-contained rooms for fire safety purposes. Current Building Regulations do not require this segregation. During a visit to the flats, it became apparent that white goods and kitchen items in general had encroached some living areas due to the limited space available in the kitchens, and the majority of kitchen doors were kept open for easier access and improved daylight in the living area.

Three void flats have had kitchens refurbished over the last month by the framework contractor for viewing and demonstration purposes. One has been refurbished with the partition wall remaining and two have been refurbished with the partition wall

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removed to create an open plan living environment. Members had previously visited Waverley Court to view the completed show-kitchens and photographs of the flats had been circulated to Members.

The report listed the benefits gained with the creation of open plan kitchen refurbishments. It was noted that 50% of the residents of Waverley Court had indicated a preference for an open plan kitchen.

In order to refurbish the kitchen in an open plan style, the extra costs will require further additional borrowing because the existing petition amount does not have enough funding in place to cover all of the structural work.

Members were presented with three options. The first option, which was recommended in the report, was to create open plan kitchens to those flats only where the tenants have opted for this improvement. The supplementary petition amount associated with this option is £57,200.00.

The second option is to create open plan kitchens to all the flats in the complex. The supplementary petition amount associated with this option is £116,759.04.

The third option is to continue with the original approved kitchen framework tender for this phase of the works.

Members unanimously selected option two on the basis that the Council should future proof and unify all the flats. Members felt that it was important that disruption be kept to a minimum for tenants and supported the proposal to decant tenants during the works. Eight furnished decant flats will be available in the facility for tenants during the works and tenants furniture will remain covered in their flats.

A Member raised a question regarding kitchens that had been installed by the tenants. It was agreed that all kitchens be inspected and those flats with a kitchen of a satisfactory standard be reviewed towards the end of the scheme and a decision about whether they remain or not be made at that point.

It was noted that there is no guarantee that the Department of Infrastructure and Treasury will concur with the open plan concept which could result in the supplementary petition being refused. Officers explained that previous petitions relating to the kitchen framework scheme had underspent elsewhere, but that this could not be vired across petitions. The Department of Infrastructure's representing officer has asked for a supplementary business case and this will need to include the rationale for decanting and the subsequent rent loss.

Resolved, "That particulars of the report and discussion be noted on the minutes and;

- (i) The development of open plan kitchen refurbishments to all flats in the Waverley Court complex and decanting of tenants during the works be approved;
- (ii) The Chief Executive be authorised to petition the Department of Infrastructure for supplementary borrowing powers in the amount of £116,759.04 being the sum required to defray the cost in relation to option 2;
- (iii) The Department of Infrastructure be advised that an assessment of the Council's housing reserve fund has been undertaken to establish if sufficient monies were available to fund the proposed scheme via that source."

The meeting ended at 9.53am

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Chair,
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