

**Meeting of the Executive Members for
Housing and Adult Social Services and
Advisory Panel**

14th January 2008

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Future options for temporary accommodation on Ordnance Lane

Summary

1. To consider future options available to bring the temporary accommodation at Ordnance Lane up to decent homes standard, and give an in principle endorsement of a capital bid to Communities and Local Government for a resettlement project for Young people through the “Places of Change” programme.

Background

Ordnance Lane

2. During the last 2 years the council has spent in excess of £400K refurbishing it's main temporary accommodation hostel on the west side of the city at Howe Hill. This has resulted in a scheme that is now fit for the purpose and meets Decent Homes standard. Six additional self-contained 2-bedroom flats have been developed and the existing building has been modernised with new kitchens, bathrooms and security features. A recent Government Office visit acknowledged the work that had been done to improve the facilities but also that any further investment in temporary accommodation should look to provide self-contained units.
3. On the east side of the city the main temporary accommodation is Ordnance Lane hostel. This provides 32 units of varying size with some shared facilities. Historically the buildings were part of Imphal Barracks and have been converted for use as temporary accommodation. The existing hostel buildings are made up of 4 separate buildings making it difficult to manage as a hostel.
4. Ordnance Lane has not been modernised and is in need of significant refurbishment to bring it up to a Decent Homes standard, and make it fit for purpose. Recent surveys of the scheme advise that the minimum cost of refurbishment would be in excess of £1.3 million. This would have its limitations as it would still leave the authority with a hostel that is difficult to manage, has some shared facilities and limited accommodation for staff and facilities to work with residents on life skills/employment skills training. There are clear messages

from government that modernisation and replacement programmes should look to provide self-contained accommodation.

16 / 17 Year Olds

5. In recent years the council has witnessed an increasing trend for young people (16/17 year olds) to present as homeless. These do not include those young people that are currently known and are working with agencies, such as the council's Children's Services, and are going through a planned route of resettlement and support. The young people presenting as homeless are frequently chaotic young people, who have been excluded from school, and have a history of trouble with the police
6. During the two year period between October 2005 and October 2007 the case-worker team have dealt with 339 representations by young people under the age of 21 years old that have required a homeless decision. 203 of these cases have led to a decision of accepted homeless and of these 109 were 16/17 years of age. Of these 109 16/17 year olds 65 % have subsequently failed whilst in temporary accommodation and have either been evicted or abandoned accommodation.
7. Young people are currently being accommodated in temporary family accommodation such as Ordnance Lane and Howe Hill. The recent increase in numbers has led to a number of management issues. During the summer of 2007 it was not unusual for there to be in excess of twenty 16/17 year olds in the hostels - that represents approximately 30% of our temporary hostel accommodation.
8. The majority of these young people have a lack of basic life skills, and their lack of educational achievement means they are unlikely to be able to sustain employment. Many also have complex issues around drugs, alcohol and mental illness. These problems are not being properly addressed whilst in temporary accommodation due to the limited appropriate support available. This has led to some young people being evicted, and some others who are offered a permanent tenancy subsequently fail and are ultimately evicted for arrears or nuisance. Closer examination of introductory tenancies has revealed that in the 3 years since they were introduced 70 households either abandoned or were evicted. Taking a random sample of 44 of these cases showed that over 50% of these tenants were under the age of 20.
9. Many of the young people who present as homeless make representations to other services. Since April 2007 Children's Services have dealt with 130 16/17 year olds that have had a housing issue. Closer inspection of these young people's educational attainment demonstrates a close connection between homelessness and educational achievement. Only 60% completed year 11, 9% gained 5 GCSEs at grades A-C and only 36% achieved any qualification. 11 were noted as having at least 1 permanent exclusion.
10. A new post funded by Supporting People has been established to pick up young people at the homelessness assessment stage and try to resolve difficulties with the family through intensive support to prevent young people coming through the

homelessness route. This has prevented 40 young people (16-17 year olds) leaving the family home.

11. Although the homelessness prevention post has been very successful, and the service provision increased to reflect this, there will still be cases (estimated 20-25) that will need further intervention. The provision of a “safe house” to assess, support and resolve problems is essential to minimise young people continuing through the homelessness route.

12. Supporting People carried out a mapping exercise of young people services based on a standard three tier approach used with all other client groups where the temporary support is required to enable the customers to develop the confidence and lifeskills to live independently in the community.

Tier 1 – front line or direct access accommodation (no more than 6 months)

Tier 2 – temporary short term supported accommodation (up to 2 years)

Tier 3 – visiting support to customers in their home

This is an effective model that has demonstrated its effectiveness for homelessness, domestic violence and offenders and has since been developed with mental health.

13. Young people services only has Nightstop as a tier one service. Although effective this is only suitable for young people with less complex needs and where facing homelessness can be resolved in up to 3 days.

14. Improving the health and well being of young people is a key priority in the Community Strategy for York (“Without Walls”) and in the Local Area Agreement for York. Young people at risk is one of the 4 top priorities in the Supporting People Programme for York. Contact with the Director of Children’s Services and the Associate Director of Public Health at North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust has confirmed in principle support for the development of a more focused and well resourced service for young homeless people.

Places of Change

15. The Communities and Local Government (CLG) Department has announced the second phase of the Hostel Capital Improvement Programme. This programme is known as *Places of Change*, recognising not only the importance of high quality accommodation but also the wider input of support, education and training to ensure positive move on to independence and real change and opportunity in peoples lives. There are specific criteria that need to be fulfilled to be eligible, however it is not necessary to address all of them in detail, and those listed below are the key ones which relate to any bid submitted from York:

- The bid must be received from the Local Authority
- The proposal must demonstrate that it addresses issues around Rough Sleeping.

- Demonstrate that it is dealing with service users' holistic needs and provide appropriate training in life skills, employment and health.
- Demonstrate voluntary sector agencies working in partnership
- Include social enterprise or links to social enterprise
- Work with the 'Move on Plan Protocol' developed by Homeless Link

The total amount of money available nationally is £70M and the initial expressions of interest need to be submitted to CLG by 25 January 2008 with a decision being announced on the 29 February 2008. CLG have also indicated that any unsuccessful schemes will automatically go on to their reserve list and will be considered if successful scheme find they are unable to deliver. There will not be a future opportunity to bid for this money.

Consultation

16. There have been discussions with the Supporting People Commissioning Body , Learning, Culture and Children's Services, and the PCT around the needs of 16/17 year olds. All are of the view that there needs to be specific accommodation for the most chaotic and difficult to house young people. It is accepted that the most appropriate solution would be to create a Foyer type scheme that would initially assess the young people and start to work with them to develop the skills that they will need to sustain an independent tenancy and contribute to the economy.

The Director of Learning, Culture and Children Services has commented:

"The proposals are consistent with the priority expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan 2007-2010 to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ("NEET") and are likely to be welcomed by the Children's Trust partners (YorOK). They will provide an opportunity to engage with some of the most troubled young people, and to ensure that they have access to the full range of support services that will be available from 1 April as part of the plans to introduce integrated Young People's Support Services in York."

17. Early discussion has been had with Foundation Housing and York Housing Association. Both organisations are currently providing resettlement services for young people in York. They have both indicated that they would be interested in working with the council on future proposals to develop a Places of Change scheme and a structured plan for young people.
18. There was a consultation meeting with young people services in November 2006. It was agreed in this meeting that there needed to be a clear throughput of young people and that services needed to be identified as part of the process towards independence.

The Voice (a group of young people 16-25 who had experienced homelessness in York) did a consultation event in October 2006 at York on the needs of young people that included: young people; councillors; providers; statutory services and more. This identified a number of requirements including a Foyer type provision.

In March 2007 Supporting People contacted all providers and stakeholders regarding proposals for future development of supported services. The two accommodation services proposed were for a direct access young persons service and a young offenders service. Further consultation with Youth Offending Team and other strategic services concluded that a mixed Young Persons scheme was more appropriate.

In September 2007 a consultation exercise took place through The Voice to establish the needs of young persons accommodation. The exercise included a visit to Batley Foyer where the young people at the Foyer were consulted to compare their experiences and understand what service should be provided. The key points that came out of the consultation were:

- i. There should be a separate direct access provision to adults for young people aged 16-20.
- ii. The service should be short term (up to 6 months)
- iii. Housing support should be provided to develop life skills
- iv. It should only be for young people facing homelessness and mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that they are all genuine cases.
- v. The service would not be suitable for young parents unless the design of the scheme enabled there to be a separate section for single parents/young families.

Options

19. A number of different options will need to be explored in more detail concerning the future of Ordnance Lane. This will be necessary irrespective of the success of any Places of Change bid. Proposals for the future could include:

- Demolish the existing scheme and replace it with a new build which could provide 25 x 2 bed self contained units for temporary accommodation, and a Places of Change/Foyer scheme of 20 x en suite units for 16/20 year olds. The Places of Change scheme would include workshop, leisure, training facilities and office accommodation.
- Demolish the existing facility and rebuild a 25 x 2 bed self-contained scheme for temporary accommodation and to consider redeveloping the remainder of the site for affordable housing.
- Refurbish the existing buildings up to decent homes standards, acknowledging that there will be an element of shared facilities
- Dispose of the current site of Ordnance Lane hostel on the open market and relocate the existing use with or without the Places of Change / foyer scheme to an entirely new site. Depending on the availability and size of a replacement site, the projects may have to be sited on separate new sites.

Analysis

20. Decisions will have to be made on the overall future of Ordnance Lane as the current accommodation does not meet modern standards and is not 'fit for purpose'. At a minimum, en suite and individual cooking facilities would need to be provided as well as substantial investment in the fabric of the building. A detailed analysis of all options available will need to be considered once further work has been done on the future asset management appraisal and business case.

- Demolition of the existing building and re-provision, and a Places of Change scheme is only possible if we are successful in a bid to CLG. The CLG bid will only be for the young persons accommodation, workshop / training and office accommodation. The criteria of the bid does not include statutory homeless provision. By creating the Places of Change project the council would be providing the one part of the jig-saw required to recreate a resettlement process for Young People 16/20 year olds and would ensure that they had a much better prospect of sustaining a long term tenancy. By providing the young people with life skills and vocational training, and dealing with other issues such as drug or alcohol the council would be breaking the cycle of state dependency and avoiding these chaotic young people becoming the Rough Sleepers of tomorrow.
- It would be possible (although not preferable) to develop a new service for young people on part of the Ordnance Lane (provided funding can be obtained from CLG) whilst considering how best to refurbish the remaining buildings on the rest of the site.
- The Government's Youth Homelessness Strategy outlines a 'pathway approach' to tackling youth homelessness. The strategy recommends services available should include early intervention and prevention, access to mediation, access to supported lodgings, emergency and short term hostel accommodation, specialist provision for complex needs and move on accommodation and support. In York the missing component of this pathway is a short term hostel, able to address young homeless peoples' needs in a holistic and integrated way.
- Replacing the temporary accommodation would provide modern facilities and by selling the remainder of the land could cross subsidise the funding the scheme and attract grant funding through a Housing Association.
- Refurbishment of the current accommodation and model of service would be possible. However, even with substantial investment it will not address the management issues nor will it provide a 21st century solution with families still being required to share facilities.
- Disposal of the site would provide a HRA capital receipt, which could be ring fenced to fund a proportion of a new build scheme, however this is unlikely to cover the full cost of redevelopment on another site.

Corporate Priorities

21. Redevelopment and a Places of Change for young people would contribute to the following corporate priorities:

- Improve the economic prosperity of the people of York with a focus on minimising the income differentials – By providing the young people with employment training and employment advice while they are going through the resettlement path.
- Increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects – Similar to the above.
- Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose levels of health are the poorest – Those people going through the resettlement or homeless route are known to suffer from poorer health. The training provided at the resettlement centre will include life skills training that will help residents to sustain and maintain a permanent tenancy later in life.
- Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city
- Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city – Ordnance Lane in its current form is not fit for purpose the alternatives do bring the scheme up to standard.

Implications

21. **Financial** – All potential options for the future of the site will be explored in detail and evaluated when the outcome of the expression of interest to CLG for the Places of Change capital grant is known. It is anticipated that the council will bid for £2 million from the CLG Places of Change programme. The outcome will be reported back to March 2008 EMAP.

- **Human Resources (HR)** - no implications arising directly from this report.
- **Equalities** - no implications arising directly from this report.
- **Legal** - no implications arising directly from this report.
- **Crime and Disorder** - no implications arising directly from this report.
- **Information Technology (IT)** - no implications arising directly from this report.
- **Property** – The Corporate Landlord has indicated that there are no suitable replacement sites on the east side of the city for homeless services. The site at Ordnance Lane is a well established site for hostel accommodation.

- **Other** – In consultation with Learning, Culture and Children’s Services (LCCS) it is widely recognised that the number of young people who have multiple issues that lead to them becoming homeless, are on the increase. LCCS are supportive of this initiative.

Risk Management

22. The current building is not fit for purpose and therefore doing nothing is not a long-term option for this scheme. There is an opportunity to access substantial capital funds which will not be available after the 25 January 2008 deadline. It should be recognised that a submitted bid will be a detailed Expression of Interest rather than a detailed scheme proposal and a further report will need to be presented to EMAP detailing the scheme when the outcome of the bid is known.
23. In compliance with the Councils risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives (Strategic) and to deliver services (Operational), leading to financial loss (Financial), non-compliance with legislation (Legal & Regulatory), damage to the Council’s image and reputation and failure to meet stakeholders’ expectations (Governance).

Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score all risks has been assessed at less than 16, This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

24. The Executive Member is asked to endorse the expression of interest submission to Communities and Local Government for capital funding for a Young Persons Places of Change project, and explore future options for Ordnance Lane temporary accommodation.

Reason: This solution will provide people going through the homeless or resettlement route with accommodation that is fit for the 21st Century and which improves their life chances by providing training in trades and life skills which will also help to sustain future tenancies in the long term.

Contact Details

Author:

Tom Brittain
Housing Operations Manager
HASS
01904 551262

Dilys Jones
Strategy and Enabling Manager
HASS
01904 554198

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Bill Hodson
Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

All relevant background papers must be listed here

Submission of Expression of Interest to CLG for Places of Change project for Young People
Homeless Strategy
Supporting People Strategy
JAR (Joint Area Review) Refresh Document - LCCS