

DEMOLITION OF WITCHBURN ROAD OFFICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Council staff moved from the former Witchburn Road offices to Kintyre House in the latest phase of the Campbeltown Office Rationalisation project. In addition, the Valuation Joint Board, who also used the premises for storage, have recently moved to another property.
- 1.2** Rather than run the risk of reputational damage associated with a vacant property which is deteriorating on an ongoing basis, measures have been taken to prepare for its demolition.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.3** It is recommended that the cost of the demolition should be met from the Strategic Housing Fund on the basis that clearance of the site would enable future housing development. This is on the understanding that a report will be brought back to the June 2018 meeting of the committee outlining options for the development of the site.

DEMOLITION OF WITCHBURN ROAD OFFICES

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of the Campbeltown Office Rationalisation project, Council staff moved from the former offices at Witchburn Road to Kintyre House at the end of 2016. The Valuation Joint Board also used space within the property for storage but they have recently moved from the premises.
- 2.2 Rather than incur non domestic rates on an ongoing basis and run the risk of vandalism, the demolition of the premises has been planned in the interim. This has been costed, in indicative terms and the value is outlined within the appendix to this report, as in advance of the necessary tendering exercise, it is considered to be commercially sensitive. A building warrant has also been obtained to enable the demolition and it is recommended that the cost of the process should be funded from the Council's Strategic Housing Fund on the understanding that the cleared site will thereafter be made available for housing development.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the cost of the demolition should be met from the Strategic Housing Fund on the basis that clearance of the site would enable future housing development. This is on the understanding that a report will be brought back to the June 2018 meeting of the committee outlining options for the development of the site.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The former Witchburn Road offices in Campbeltown have become vacant as a consequence of Council staff moving to Kintyre House at the end of 2016 and the Valuation Joint Board, who used the premises for storage, moving recently to an alternative property.
- 4.2 While measures have been taken to secure the vacant property, there is the risk of ongoing vandalism. In addition, there are ongoing maintenance liabilities associated with the vacant property, including the

need to maintain the intruder alarm to satisfy the need of the Council's insurers. The Council also remains liable for non domestic rates. In the circumstances, plans have been taken forward to secure the demolition of the property. An indicative cost has been prepared and this is outlined within the appendix to this report. A building warrant has also been obtained for the demolition. This preparatory work has been taken forward to mitigate the risk of reputational damage to the Council associated with the ongoing deterioration of a significant vacant property.

- 4.3 Planning have indicated that as the site is located within the Campbeltown settlement zone, following the demolition, it would be suitable for housing development which takes account of the grade C listed boundary wall and archway that will be retained. The site, which also adjoins the Campbeltown Conservation Area, has potential for sub-division into serviced plots that could be made available for the promotion of starter homes. The market demand for this is still being ascertained but the demolition of the buildings is likely to make the site more attractive for development. In the circumstances, it is recommended that the demolition should be funded from the Strategic Housing Fund on the understanding that this step will enable future housing development.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Following the completion of the last phase of the Campbeltown Office Rationalisation project, the former offices at Witchburn Road have now been vacated and plans have been made for their demolition. The necessary building warrant has been obtained and an indicative cost has been established for the demolition.
- 5.2 The cleared site has potential for enabling future housing development including sub-division into serviced plots. In the circumstances, it is recommended that the demolition should be funded from the Strategic Housing Fund.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – The recommended use of the Strategic Housing Fund would enable future housing development.
- 6.2 Financial – The Council is currently having to bear costs of approximately £2000 per month for non domestic rates and maintenance charges.
- 6.3 Legal - None.
- 6.4 HR - None.
- 6.5 Equalities – None.
- 6.6 Risk – Failure to undertake the demolition would expose the Council to

ongoing financial and health and safety liabilities including the risk of vandalism. There could also be increased reputational risk due to the ongoing deterioration of a significant vacant property.

6.7 Customer Service – None.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director – Customer Services

Councillor Rory Colville
Policy Lead – Corporate Services

Ann Marie Knowles
Acting Executive Director - Community Services

Councillor Robin Currie
Policy Lead – Communities, Housing, Islands and Gaelic

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For further information contact:

Craig Houston
Property Service Manager
Tel: 01369 708569

Douglas Whyte
Team Leader – Housing Strategy
Tel: 01546 604785