

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 24 APRIL 2019
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: PETER HAYES

SUBJECT: SERVICE HOUSING STOCK

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the development of a programme which will see the refurbishment of the houses owned by the Fire Authority.
2. To secure approval to sell five houses with a view to the sale proceeds being released to cover the costs of the refurbishment works.

Recommended: That Members;

- [1] note the report;
- [2] authorise the Director of Governance and Commissioning to arrange the sale of five of the Service houses.

Background

3. The Fire Authority owns fifty-four houses in five locations (Congleton, Knutsford, Northwich, Stockton Heath and Winsford). All of the houses were originally used by staff operating the day crewing duty system. Knutsford and Stockton Heath fire stations now operate the on-call duty system.
4. Staff occupying the day crewed houses pay a subsidised rent. Other staff pay a higher rent. Overall, the maintenance of the houses costs more than the rental income. The condition of the houses has deteriorated. Their upkeep has, due to budget constraints, been quite piecemeal.
5. A report in very similar terms to this one was considered by the Estates and Property Committee on 28th March 2019. The Committee endorsed the sale of five houses.

Information

6. Officers have prepared an outline plan associated with creating a refurbishment programme for the houses. It includes the following activities:
 - Confirmation of Service need
 - Description of the Service's standard
 - Establishment of a budget requirement
 - Delivery of an end to end process for licences

- A refreshed and reinvigorated property management process
 - Preparation of a new licence agreement
 - Sale of surplus houses on the open market to secure funds
7. A number of the officers that will deliver the programme have been fully committed to other activities and it is likely that the work described above will need additional resources.
 8. In the meantime, Service Delivery has carried out an assessment of Service need. There is a requirement for ten houses at each of the locations where the day crewed duty system operates (Congleton, Northwich and Winsford). The houses in the other locations offer a significant incentive to those considering a role as an on-call firefighter. The key at those locations (Knutsford and Stockton Heath) is whether the houses deliver a value by helping to secure and maintain on-call cover.
 9. Service Delivery has agreed that five houses are surplus to requirements. These include two in Congleton, two in Knutsford and one in Northwich. The sales will take time to achieve, but will be an important step in delivering the programme.
 10. The programme will need to be delivered with some sensitivity. Some occupiers will need to relocate either to allow sales to take place, or because some refurbishments will need to be completed with the houses vacant. The Head of Service Delivery will ensure that occupiers are kept informed.

Financial Implications

11. There is no specific budget associated with maintenance of the houses. Given that there appears to be a considerable amount of work required to bring them up to standard, the sale of surplus houses is a logical step. The sale proceeds will provide a capital receipt that could be used to fund the capital expenditure associated with a refurbishment programme.

Legal Implications

12. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

14. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report. However, some refurbishment works will positively impact the environment as improved glazing, insulation and heating will be involved.

CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, CLEMONDS HEY, WINSFORD

TEL [01606] 868804

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE