



CABINET (SPECIAL MEETING)

3RD DECEMBER 2018

AGENDA ITEM (4)

EMERGENCY HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION

Accountable Member	Councillor NJW Parsons Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning Councillor SG Hirst Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing Group Manager - Customer Services, Revenues and Housing Support Services 01285 623304 jon.dearing@cotswold.gov.uk

Purpose of Report	To seek approval for The Croft, 22-24 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester to be used by the Council for Emergency Homeless Accommodation.
Recommendation	That the use of The Croft, 22-24 Ashcroft Road, Cirencester as Emergency Accommodation be approved.
Reason for Recommendation	To seek to provide additional emergency accommodation for those in need of a safe and affordable temporary home within the District.

Ward(s) Affected	Not applicable
Key Decision	No
Recommendation to Council	No

Financial Implications	<p>(i) The refurbishment of accommodation is estimated to be £35,000. This would include essential safety works, furnishings and general decorations. Funding for this will be provided from the Homeless Prevention Fund.</p> <p>(ii) For 2018/19, the property attracts a long term empty charge of 150% Council Tax, totalling £2,784 cost to the Council.</p> <p>(iii) It is anticipated that each room will be rented at the Local Housing Allowance Rate - currently £70.40 per week per person. The expectation is that clients using The Croft will be in receipt of benefits, with the Council receiving rent payments directly through Housing Benefit.</p> <p>(iv) Temporary accommodation is exempt from Universal Credit; therefore, it will always be possible for the Council to be paid directly.</p>
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	<p>(v) In terms of overall costs, and assuming a realistic void rate for empty rooms at 15%:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Annual Rental Income</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7 Bedrooms x 52 weeks</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(41,733)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15% Void period</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>6,260</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expected rental income</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(35,473)</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Budget Impact</td> <td style="text-align: right;"> £</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Income Foregone</td> <td style="text-align: right;">13,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bed & Breakfast costs saved</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(11,000)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Estimated Rental Income</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>(35,473)</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Estimated Surplus</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(32,973)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retained for further Homelessness strategies</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>16,486</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contribution to General Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(16,487)</td> </tr> </table> <p>On-going costs will require the Council to apply a modest service charge to cover utilities, bedding, cleaning etc. This would be paid directly by the clients.</p>	Annual Rental Income	£	7 Bedrooms x 52 weeks	(41,733)	15% Void period	<u>6,260</u>	Expected rental income	(35,473)	 Budget Impact	 £	Income Foregone	13,500	Bed & Breakfast costs saved	(11,000)	Estimated Rental Income	<u>(35,473)</u>	Estimated Surplus	(32,973)	Retained for further Homelessness strategies	<u>16,486</u>	Contribution to General Fund	(16,487)
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Legal and Human Rights Implications	None																						
Environmental and Sustainability Implications	None																						
Human Resource Implications	None.																						
Key Risks	The proposal does, however, mitigate an existing risk - in that, currently, those placed in emergency accommodation are generally placed outside the District, meaning that they are removed from their local support networks; but by utilising The Croft we are avoiding this, therefore maintaining and adding more support to the placement.																						
Equalities Analysis	Vulnerable customers who become homeless will be able to maintain their local connections and support networks whilst the Council supports them in finding more suitable/alternative accommodation.																						
Related Decisions	None																						
Background Documents	None																						
Appendices	None																						
Performance Management Follow Up	<p>(i) Implement Cabinet decision.</p> <p>(ii) Monitoring and management of residents to ensure appropriate move on accommodation is sourced.</p> <p>(iii) Monitoring and management of budgets to ensure cost savings achieved and a value for money service is provided.</p>																						

Options for Joint Working	This will be a joint venture with West Oxfordshire DC, ensuring the full maximisation on the property to reduce any potential void periods.
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Background Information

1. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (implemented in April 2018) introduced new legal duties on Housing Authorities to prevent homelessness occurring. While this has always been the approach taken by this Council, there will always be instances where prevention is unachievable.
2. Where homelessness is unavoidable, for those to whom we have a legal duty, we need to provide emergency accommodation while we secure a suitable settled home for the individual or household. As we have limited access to such suitable emergency accommodation within the District, our current approach is to utilise motel accommodation.
3. This approach, although unavoidable at present, is not a desirable one for several reasons - the key ones being that it is almost always outside of the District, there are often no cooking facilities, and the cost is so high that it is only partially covered by Housing Benefit.
4. For some time officers have, therefore, been exploring opportunities to secure our own suitable emergency homeless accommodation within the District boundary.
5. The Croft is a seven-bedroom property in Cirencester town centre made up of two houses, and is already owned by this Council. Two of the seven bedrooms are able to accommodate couples. The property was originally purchased by the Council in 1977, to provide a potential future alternative access to the adjacent Brewery Car Park. It has since been retained for strategic purposes and, in the interim, has been leased out. A comprehensive review of the Council's land and property assets is likely to occur during 2019/20, but it is not considered that such a review should delay this proposal.
6. The property has most recently been let to Bromford Housing Association Limited and used as single room accommodation with shared facilities; and is therefore already set up for multiple occupations.
7. There is office accommodation as part of the property and it is the intention to utilise this space to work with residents to ensure that move-on to settled accommodation is expedited and any support needs are met.

(END)