

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **CABINET**

**DATE:**                 **TUESDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2012**

**REPORT BY:**         **DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**SUBJECT:**           **FLINT MAISONETTES**

**1.00**   **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01    This report seeks approval to commence demolition of Flint maisonettes as a key component of the delivery of the Flint Master plan.

**2.00**   **BACKGROUND**

2.01    There has long been a local ambition to regenerate the centre of the town of Flint. Such a scheme requires a review of both the civic land and property of the County Council in central Flint and the social housing units which are adjacent to the central shopping precinct. A working group was established by the Councils Executive in 2011, and DTZ were commissioned to undertake a master planning exercise. This work included a number of consultation events with retailers, local businesses, tenants and residents, stakeholders and other potential partners to consider options and the potential for these to be realised. The final report is also being presented at this meeting.

2.02    The maisonettes (214 units of social housing) are dated in their design and are a challenge to maintain. Designed in the main as family accommodation (a 2/3 bedroom house on top of a 2/3 bedroom house), with limited defensible space, shared upper walkways, and no provision for vehicle parking adjacent to or near to homes. The physical condition of the homes is poor with significant concrete deterioration, resulting in regular inspection and removal of loose pieces and deterioration (due to age) of walkway coverings resulting in water penetration and dampness. Communal heating systems are in place, which regularly breakdown despite significant investment.

2.03    In addition there are 83 garages situated adjacent to the maisonettes. 18 are in two blocks of 9 adjacent to the Leas maisonettes, with 65 in a multi storey car park adjacent to Castle heights. The garage sites could be good locations for early redevelopment.

2.04    At the Executive meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2011, the council agreed to stop letting maisonettes and council owned garages in Flint town

centre to enable the blocks to be emptied and the sites redeveloped. In order for this to be achieved, the Head of Housing, (subject to annual budget setting) was given authority to make Home Loss and disturbance payments available to residents, in accordance with Home Loss Payment (Prescribed Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2008. The Head of Housing was also authorised to prepare a phasing plan in conjunction with local members to allow this programme to commence.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.01 A phasing plan was agreed with local members and shared with residents at a further residents meeting held before Xmas. Since December, 60 moves have been arranged and a sensitive customer focussed decanting scheme is progressing very well. Removals are being organised for tenants and help is being provided with arranging disconnections and re-connections of cookers, washing machine etc. Coleshill Lea is almost empty with Feathers Lea more than half empty. The garage block adjacent to Coleshill Lea is also now empty.
- 3.02 The repairs team are recycling all fittings that can be re-used and the next phase in the process is to tender for demolition of the vacant blocks. It is recommended that demolition is to slab level as this will reduce cost in the short term, with grass and rail provided (to prevent unauthorised access). In addition it is proposed that in conjunction with Communities First that a piece of art is commissioned on the site of Coleshill Lea at this important gateway to provide an attractive vista in the interim. The demolition contractor will be required to recycle as much of the materials as possible.
- 3.03 There are 5 properties on the site owned by Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and they have agreed to work collaboratively with the Council to empty their homes. There are 6 properties which were previously the subject of the Right to Buy which will need to be repurchased by the Council to enable the scheme to proceed. Independent valuations have been sought to assess potential cost and to enable negotiation with the home owners by the Councils Valuation team at the appropriate time. A number of residents are actively pursuing repurchase and this will be done in a careful way to meet the phasing plan. The purchase of the properties will be taken forward through the general fund capital programme and not through the Housing Revenue Account.
- 3.04 A budget provision has been made for Home loss and Disturbance payments but there is currently no provision for the cost of demolition or to purchase back properties sold under the Right to Buy.
- 3.05 The next phase of the housing component of the Masterplan is to finalise early proposals for replacement housing, both the numbers of homes, tenure mix and design style, ready for consultation. There is

an expressed view from the consultation events, that new homes should reflect the old street patterns of terraced homes as far as possible with design features which are a reminder of the old gated town.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 Cabinet is asked to

- Agree a budgetary provision of £250k be made available from Housing Revenue Account surplus in 11/12, to enable demolition.
- Provide delegated authority to the Head of Housing to demolish vacant blocks of maisonettes and garages subject to budgetary provision being made available on an annual basis.
- Provide delegated authority for Right to Buy maisonettes to be repurchased following independent valuation to allow the demolition of blocks to proceed, subject to provision being made in the Council Fund (Community Services) Capital Programme.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 Final accounts for 11/12 have been prepared and the £250k can be funded from the additional HRA balances (see final outturn report also on this agenda).

5.02 Concerning the right to buy properties, costs in the region of £400k will be made available from the Council Fund (Community Services) Capital Programme.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 There are no direct immediate implications however, high quality homes which are cost effective to heat, light and use contribute positively to reducing poverty. All costs for residents needing to move home are being met by the Council.

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 The maisonettes do not present an attractive image for a vibrant town. In addition the construction type does not meet modern standards for CO2 emissions. The new housing development will have a significant positive impact on Flint Town Centre.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 Quality impact assessment is underway. Individual residents needs are being met as part of the re-housing programme

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None arising directly from this report

**10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 A full consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders has commenced and will continue as this programme develops

**11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Discussions with local ward members and tenants have been undertaken regularly as part of this programme.

**12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985  
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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