

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	17 May 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Upgrading works to 330-356 Victoria Road
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/090
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Committee for the detail of this project to be developed and consulted upon.

Environmental improvements and repair works to 330-356 Victoria Road.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Committee is recommended to instruct the Director of Communities Housing and Infrastructure to:

- a) develop this proposed project in detail;
- b) conclude the grant application with the grant funder that has indicated support for this project;
- c) consult with the private owners of flats within these blocks, and seek their consent for the proposals; and
- d) report back to Committee on these outcomes.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The capital cost of this project has been given an indicative estimate of £720,000 excluding fees (£806,400 including administration costs). This cost estimate is based on all the recommended repair and improvement works being undertaken to all the properties.

The Council, however, owns 25 of the 42 flats. The estimated contribution by the HRA is therefore £428,571 excluding administration costs (£480,000.00 including administration costs).

It is proposed that the capital cost is met by the Housing Revenue Account, private owners and a grant from SITA Trust (Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (£10,000) (less 11.5% Contributing Third Party payment: £1150).

See section 7, Management of Risk.

It is proposed that the Housing Revenue Account, in conjunction with the private owners, meet the cost of the required repairs to the exterior of these properties.

It is proposed that the Housing Revenue Account, in conjunction with the private owners, meet the cost of replacing and repairing dilapidated walls, drainage, clothes poles, paving and fencing.

It is proposed that the Housing Revenue Account meets the cost of installing additional fencing in locations which will reduce anti-social activity and provides a communal environmental benefit.

It is proposed that the grant funds the provision of shrubs and trees, in key locations.

Upon completion of the works these backcourts will be readily maintainable by the Council's environmental and repairs teams and these maintenance works will remain within the normal range of such works.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS: Private Owners**

##### **4.1 Consents**

The consent of the private owners will be required if improvement works are to be undertaken to mutually, or privately, owned areas of land.

Of the 42 flats, within 6 closes (12 drying greens), 17 flats have been sold under Right-to-Buy legislation. Private owners have the right of veto on improvement works being undertaken to 7 of the mutual drying greens and a number of privately owned portions of land.

The proposed improvement works are to be in areas of land and property in the ownership of the Council.

It is proposed that the private owners will be given the option of having similar improvement works being undertaken to the areas of land and property to which they have an interest. Experience has, however, shown that private owners are unlikely to approve optional works, if

there is a rechargeable cost. No grants have been identified that would assist with the types of fabric improvements that might be undertaken, as part of this project. In addition, it is understood that there is insufficient incentive for the HRA to subsidise the private owners, so that any improvement works are carried out consistently to each of these blocks.

It is proposed, therefore, that the works to the areas of land and property where the ownership is shared will be limited to works that can be classified as being 'repairs'.

In addition, no repair or improvement work is envisaged to land and property that is entirely privately owned, unless advance payment has been received from the owner, or unless there is a serious disrepair which allows for enforcement action, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

Where repair work is proposed to areas of land and property where the ownership is shared, the scheme decision making powers of the Tenement (Scotland) Act 2004 will be employed. At times, this may require use of the "Missing Shares" provision of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

## **4.2 Land Ownership**

Aberdeen City Council owns the major part of the land referred to in this report.

ACC shares the ownership of most of the drying greens with the private owners.

Some plots of land have been sold to private owners, in the areas around these blocks.

## **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

The regeneration of Torry is identified as a priority within the Council's Strategic Infrastructure Plan. This project is intended to be part of the Council's on-going investment in the community and physical assets within this neighbourhood.

A number of fabric investment requirements to these blocks have been identified within the Asset Management Plan. This project prioritises these investment requirements, so as to meet the regeneration priority of the Council. Improvement works are also proposed, to combat anti-social activity and improve the amenity of these blocks, and this neighbourhood.

The flats owned by the Council, within these blocks, have been subject to the complete SHQS internal modernisation works. In addition

calculations have been undertaken which has established that the Council's flats comply with the requirements of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) 2020.

It is understood that EESH will be raised progressively between 2020 and 2050. The EESH requirement, for the period beyond 2020, has not been confirmed. It is envisaged, however, that the immediate rise in EESH, after 2020, will be achievable by improvements within the Council's flats.

The proposed works are intended to maximise the period that these blocks can be regarded as fit-for-purpose, while working within the constraints of their mixed tenure.

The roofs, rain water goods, concrete lintels, render, balconies, handrails, balustrades and entrance screens are to be repaired, as required.

Dilapidated clothes poles are to be replaced, where required. The existing paving, rear steps and handrail dilapidations are to be made good.

The dilapidated fencing is to be removed and replaced.

Fencing is to be provided to the rear of 338/340 Victoria Road, so as to secure its drying green from the public footpath and lane.

Fencing is to be provided to the front of each block so as to separate the pavement from the front garden areas.

Planting is to be provided, to enhance the amenity of this neighbourhood for the residents and wildlife.

It is proposed that:

- the drying greens will remain designated as communal spaces; and
- the other garden areas (to front and rear) will be promoted as being available for lease to individuals, or groups of residents.

## **6. IMPACT**

### **6.1 Neighbourhood Regeneration - Improving Customer Experience –**

This project will assist the enhancement of local identity, which will, in turn, support the regeneration of Torry. It is envisaged that this project will encompass both physical and community regeneration.

### **6.2 Community development - Improving Customer Experience**

The community will be encouraged to develop during the course of this project and become empowered to make increasing use of their environment and take increasing control.

It is envisaged that the works, and the Council's Communities & partnership Team and Housing Officers, will help establish residents groups that will facilitate:

- making decisions as to the detail of what is to be implemented in their area;
- self-police the use, misuse and maintenance condition of their area; and
- lead on future developments

### **6.3 Unpaid Work Team - Improving Customer Experience & Improving our use of Resources**

It is intended that the works that will enhance the environmental amenity of this neighbourhood be undertaken in partnership with the Unpaid Work Team. It is intended that the anticipated environmental grant will be employed predominately to purchase plants and materials.

There are corner areas that would benefit this neighbourhood from being developed as 'pocket' parks.

It is intended that the cultivation and planting works, to these pocket parks, will be undertaken by the Unpaid Work Team. In addition, it is intended that the Unpaid work Team will also manufacture and install bird and bat boxes within the areas of the works.

### **6.4 Corporate –**

Shaping Aberdeen: people; place; improving customer experience; and improving our use of resources.

Joint working across Council services: Communities and Housing, Land and Property, Public Infrastructure and Environment, and Health and Social Care Partnership

**Public** – an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken. It has been assessed that this project will have a positive impact

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

The primary risk to this project is the practicalities of securing of scheme decisions to the blocks to which the Council has minority ownership: 330 to 336 Victoria Road (2 tenement blocks). It may be that normal precautionary type maintenance work will not prove deliverable these blocks.

If the private owners cannot be persuaded to support this project this will result in the total expenditure on this project being significantly smaller, and will give rise to a reputational risk. Two of these blocks will continue to have a dilapidated appearance, and the Council will continue to let three flats in blocks which are in poor maintenance order.

These risks have been greatly reduced by the acceptance that only limited repairs are likely to be achievable to land and property where the ownership is shared, or privately owned.

Further detailed consultations will be undertaken with the private owners in order to give them the option of having their properties repaired.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Shaping Aberdeen:  
people; place; improving customer experience; and improving our use of resources.

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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