

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	17 May 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Back Court improvements to: Grampian Place; Tullos Circle; and Tullos Place
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/16/053
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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 to: 33 to 43 Grampian Place; 2 to 10 Tullos Circle; and 4 to 18 Tullos Place

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 applications 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 £354,500 excluding administration costs (£397,000 including administration costs).

It is proposed that the capital cost is met by the Housing Revenue Account (£379,300 including administration costs) and a grant from

SITA Trust (Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (£20,000) (less 11.5% Contributing Third Party payment: £2300).

It is proposed that the Housing Revenue Account meets the cost of removing and replacing dilapidated wash houses and fences.

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

It is proposed that the grant funds the provision of hedging, 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.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS: Private Owners

4.1 Consents

The consent of the private owners will be required if improvement works to individual back courts are to be undertaken.

Of the 114 flats, within 19 closes, 22 flats have been sold under Right-to-Buy legislation. Private owners have the right of veto on improvement works being undertaken to 11 of the back courts.

Where a decision cannot be made to improve individual back courts, it is proposed that repair works are undertaken. In such an eventuality the owners will not have the right of veto and they will have an obligation to meet a proportional share of the costs.

If, and where, improvement works are undertaken there will be little practical means of recouping a share of the costs from the private owners. Hence the recommendation (in section 3) that the Housing Revenue Account meets the cost of the majority of the works.

In return for subsidising the private owners the HRA will:

- achieve a better living environment for the tenants and their families;
- reduce future maintenance liabilities, with the removal of some of the wash houses; and
- increase the participation of the residents in the use and control of their neighbourhood (in particular the children).

4.2 Land Ownership

Aberdeen City Council owns the major part of the land referred to in this report. Some of the cellars are, however, privately owned.

Where these cellars are removed, along with their adjacent wash houses, it is intended that these private owners will be given the opportunity, should they wish, to participate in an excambion process that will allow their land to be relocated (so as to allow the erection of private sheds in more appropriate locations).

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 tenement blocks to 33 to 43 Grampian Place; 10 Tullos Circle; and 4 to 18 Tullos Place were the subject of an extensive fabric repairs and thermal upgrading programmes in 2104

The tenement blocks to 2 to 8 Tullos Circle were the subject of fabric repairs and over-cladding in 1989

These blocks have been subject to the complete SHQS internal modernisation works.

These proposed external works are intended to complete the regeneration of these blocks i.e. to ensure they are fit for purpose for, at least, the next thirty years.

- a) The wash houses and cellars, that are no longer required, are to be removed.
- b) The wash houses and coal cellars, that are required, are to be repaired.
- c) The dilapidated fencing is to be removed and replaced.
- d) The dilapidated clothes poles are to be replaced, where required. The existing paving, rear steps and handrail dilapidations are to be made good.
- e) Planting is to be provided, to enhance the amenity of this neighbourhood for the residents and wildlife.

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.

Outwith the back court there are a number of 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 within this project is a reputational one.

Tenants of the Council can become frustrated as to the lack of apparent action by the Council, while at the same time the Council can find itself inhibited by an inability to achieve private owner consents. Private owners often do not appreciate the extent of the responsibilities that they acquired when they purchased their properties, and can often find it difficult afford to meet these responsibilities. In addition, it is often extremely challenging, and at times impossible, to make contact with private landlords.

Consequently, this project has been designed to allow progress to be achieved while at the same time putting in place procedures that allows this risk to be managed.

This risk has been greatly reduced by not making the progress of the whole project dependant on the consent of all the owners to all the works: the works to each back court will be progressed to the degree allowed for by the consents received. The works to some back courts may be restricted to being repair works; to other areas a higher standard of environment may be achieved. It is envisaged that having delivered a higher standard of environment to some areas peer pressure and financial pressure may facilitate the other areas also being brought up to a good standard

Further detailed consultations will be undertaken with the tenants and private owners in order to manage this risk.

No demolition of a mutually owned wash house will be undertaken unless written authorisation has been received from each private owner. The practical effect of this will be that some wash houses may be retained, and the Council may have to pursue the owners for the cost of repairing these dilapidated properties.

In addition, when asking for the consent of the private owners to the demolition of their properties each private owner will be advised to obtain legal advice, prior to giving their consent, or otherwise. This is to ensure each private owner is advised of the need for them to be briefed as to the full consequences of their decision.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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