

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	29 th August 2017
REPORT TITLE	Seaton Backies Two: demolition of wash houses
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/208
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
REPORT AUTHOR	Bill Watson

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Committee for officers to undertake a scheme of demolition of wash houses: the ownership of which is shared by the Council and a number of private owners.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is recommended to instruct the Director of Communities Housing and Infrastructure to arrange for the demolition of individual wash houses (within these noted 'Backies'), where unanimous consent has been obtained from its owners.

3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES / OTHER HEADINGS AS APPROPRIATE

These works are required in preparation for the environmental improvement of two 'Backies' within Seaton:

- 2 to 14 Seaton Avenue; 16 to 18 Seaton Drive; 1 to 13 Seaton Road; 27 to 29 School Road; and
- 1 to 3 Seaton Gardens; 1 to 3 Seaton Avenue, 17 to 25 School Road.

This project is the second phase of Seaton Backies improvements: see Committee Report 19th May 2015.

The initiative to tackle the poor environment within Seaton first came about from a group of young mothers who were concerned that their children had nowhere safe to play. This led to the Seaton Backies steering group being formed in 2012.

These 'Backies' are well used for clothes drying and children playing. The amenity of these 'Backies' is, however, greatly reduced by these substantially dilapidated wash houses. These wash houses and accompanying coal

cellars are not let by the Council to any of the residents. Some cellars have been blocked-up, others are being used in an ad hoc manner.

The experience of the first Seaton Backies project (and also a recently completed Torry Backies project) suggest that the private owners (that can be contacted):

- are likely to wish for these wash houses and cellars to be demolished;
- are not likely to wish to contribute towards their repair;
- are not likely to wish to contribute towards their demolition;
- are likely to consent to the demolition of these buildings, if they do not have to contribute to this cost.

The experience of the two previous projects suggests that it may prove impractical to make contact with all the private owners. Where contact cannot be made with a private owner, demolition of the respective wash house will not be achievable. In such an event, the environmental improvements are to be undertaken around any such remaining wash houses.

It is noted that the proposed environmental improvements will be undertaken to land owned by the Council and will, therefore, not require the consent of the private owners.

It is noted that the scheme of proposed environmental improvements has been developed in consultation with the residents. A resident engagement event was undertaken on 17th June. Online and door knocking consultations were also undertaken.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An allowance has been made within the HRA capital budget for 2017/18 to fund these demolition works and also to fund the subsequent environmental upgrading of these 'Backies'.

The anticipated budget cost for these demolition works is £102,000, including administration costs.

There are 13 wash houses with 156 cellars within these two Backies, i.e. the anticipated demolition costs is £654 per cellar. 10 wash houses are in shared ownership. These wash houses contain 14 cellars which are privately owned. It is proposed that the cost of demolishing the privately owned cellars (£9156) is not recouped. It is proposed that the Housing Revenue Account meets the full cost of demolition.

The justification of this proposal being that, in return for subsidising the private owners, the HRA will:

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

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

6.1 Financial

There are no significant or unusual financial risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.2 Employee

There are no significant or unusual employee risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.3 Customer / Citizen

There are no significant or unusual customer/citizen risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.4 Environmental

There are no significant or unusual environmental risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.5 Technological

There are no technological risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.6 Legal

There are no significant or unusual legal risks arising from the recommendations of this report.

6.7 Reputational

6.7.1 A negative reputational impact can be anticipated if it is not possible to demolish all the wash houses (and there is a significant possibility that this might be unavoidable). In such an event, the quality of the achieved environmental improvements will be reduced. In mitigation: officers will explain the reasons for this, if queries arise, while not infringing the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

6.7.2 It is understood that the private owners that consent to the demolition of these buildings (that they share ownership) are fully responsible for their decision, and any future consequences that might arise in relation to their title deeds. So as to avoid the cost of any such future changes being a surprise, the private owners have been advised to consult with their Solicitor with regard to these proposals.

7. IMPACT SECTION

7.1 Economy

The recommendations of this report have a positive economic impact.

7.2 People

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

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

7.3 Place

This project will assist the enhancement of local identity, which will, in turn, support the regeneration of Seaton.

7.4 Technology

The recommendations of this report have no technological impact.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

'Seaton Backies, Planning for the Future'.
Final report by erz Ltd, for Aberdeen Greenspace, December 2012.

9. APPENDICES (if applicable)

Not applicable

10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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