

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Social Care and Wellbeing DATE 3 June 2010

DIRECTOR Fred McBride

TITLE OF REPORT Accommodation Support for Offenders

REPORT NUMBER SCW/10/062

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members both of the current issues in respect of Aberdeen City Council's provision of supported accommodation for offenders and of the proposal for a new means of delivering accommodation support by a community based service, which will be developed in line with best practice and best value

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members approve the recommendation to close St Fitticks House and to discontinue the Sacro service within the financial year 2010/11.
- 2.2 Members approve the phased development of a community based service in the financial year 2010/11 to support offenders to obtain and sustain appropriate accommodation. This will enable the continued provision of an effective service within budgetary constraints and will link in with the objectives of the Council's Homelessness Strategy in terms of preventing homelessness.
- 2.3 Members instruct officers to continue to liaise with Housing and Environment colleagues to ensure that the accommodation needs of offenders and ex-offenders are fully considered in service planning.
- 2.4 Members instruct officers to communicate their decisions to the Northern Community Justice Authority.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The 2010/11 ACC Criminal Justice Social Work budget for supported accommodation services for offenders is **£318,422**.

This is based on £373,285 Section 27 Grant funding for 2010/11 from the Northern Community Justice Authority (NCJA) minus 8% management fee of £2,986, minus £25,000, which is the estimated 10% contribution towards Intensive Support and Monitoring (ISM) packages for the 'critical few' very high risk offenders. It is anticipated that the £94,000 income from what was previously "Supporting People" will no longer be available.

- 3.2 The present levels of funding is insufficient to continue to maintain the service as it is currently delivered. Despite the fact that St Fitticks House residents are in receipt of Housing Benefit, there is still a significant shortfall in income.
- 3.3 Moreover, the Section 27 funding for 2011/12 will be further reduced to £292,288, which equates to an available budget of £243,905 in real terms
- 3.4 In 2009/10 total income was £733,343 (aforementioned Grant plus Housing benefit), whilst expenditure was £867,151 (St Fitticks £626,434, Sacro £199,375, contribution to ISM £5,000 and 8% management fee £36,342), resulting in a present year deficit of £133,808.
- 3.5 Given the aforementioned reduction in Grant funding in 2011/12, this deficit will significantly increase. There is no other funding source to meet this deficit.
- 3.6 Potential redundancy or voluntary severance costs have been estimated at £140,000, based on salary details as at March 2010.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 4.1 In addition to the financial impact upon the council's resources, it is increasingly recognised that it is not for Criminal Justice Social Work to provide accommodation. Existing services do not provide best value, as they accommodate only a proportion of those referred, and do not routinely meet the needs of the highest risk and most vulnerable offenders requiring supported accommodation services. Consequently, a new service model to support the accommodation needs of offenders requires to be developed.
- 4.2 A Criminal Justice Accommodation Review Group was established, comprising representation from HMP Aberdeen, Housing, Sacro, St Fitticks and Shelter. This group examined options in relation to alternative models. A summary of the options appraisal findings is attached in Appendix 1
- 4.3 Based on the findings of this Review Group it is proposed that St Fitticks House be closed and the current Sacro Supported Accommodation service be discontinued. In its place it is proposed that an in-house community based Criminal Justice Supporting Accommodation Team (CJSAT) be developed. It is anticipated that this team would comprise a

Team Leader plus approximately 4 support workers, who would support offenders to access and maintain mainstream accommodation.

- 4.4 The benefits of this team would be that it would provide a service to a greater number of offenders than with the present residential model; enable Criminal Justice Social Work Services to target resources more effectively in line with risk and need and, as a consequence, improve community safety; improve the social inclusion of offenders and ex-offenders; enhance the delivery of Community Payback Orders and deliver on ACC's preventing homelessness agenda and demonstrate best value.
- 4.5 This approach is in line with the Northern Community Justice Authority's principles that offenders' accommodation should be provided by mainstream services, while CJ social work services provide supervision and support in the community.
- 4.6 The closure of St Fitticks House and the discontinuation of the present Sacro Supported Accommodation Service means that offenders who would otherwise have been referred to these services will access mainstream housing services at an earlier stage. There may therefore be implications for Housing services. However the majority of St Fitticks residents are ultimately accommodated through the homeless route. It is therefore anticipated that the major impact will be an earlier presentation to the homelessness service by offenders who may otherwise have been accommodated at St Fitticks in the interim.
- 4.7 The new CJSAT will liaise closely with housing colleagues to ensure that the optimum nature and level of support is provided. This service will be more responsive and available to a greater number of offenders.
- 4.8 In addition to accommodation support, workers within the reconfigured team will help individuals to identify and put in place the changes required to reduce offending in the longer term. St Fitticks House staff have significant experience in working with offenders over the years and the new service will build on this knowledge of best practice and "what works".

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Personnel: The recommendation to close St Fittick's House will potentially be very stressful for employees who will have to undergo redeployment, or possibly redundancy. This will be managed as sensitively as possible in line with corporate policies and procedures, with VS/ER an option

6. REPORT

- 6.1 A full option appraisal has been carried out as part of Review of Supported Accommodation and is attached as Appendix 1.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

21st Century Social Work Review: Changing Lives
Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968