

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 15/06/2021

Title: Acquisition of 2 Dispersed Units (Update)

Purpose of the report:

To revoke the Cabinet decision C150 (ii) of 23/02/21 and seek Cabinet approval for an in principle decision for the acquisition of DU2 to be located in the Cardigan area instead of in the Aberystwyth area.

For: Decision

Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member: Councillor Dafydd Edwards, Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services, Housing and Customer Contact.

1. Introduction

The Cabinet Decision C150 of the 23/02/2021 gave approval for the acquisition of 2 dispersed units (DU's) for victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence to be located in the Aberystwyth area making use of the VAWDASV Welsh Government funding scheme.

The 1st Dispersed Unit has been successfully acquired in Aberystwyth. An offer was accepted by the Agent/Vendor and the acquisition was completed on the 30th of April 2021.

The new proposal for Cabinet is to change the in principle decision regarding location of the 2nd Dispersed Unit for the location to be in the Cardigan area rather than in Aberystwyth.

The reason for the change in location is that following further analysis of increased demand across Ceredigion for accommodation for victims of abuse dispersed from the 2 refuges, additional support for victims is now being made available in the Cardigan area. Following further discussion with the West Wales Domestic Abuse Service it is now deemed that the optimal location for the second dispersed unit would be in the Cardigan area. This would in effect offer an enhanced geographical service across Ceredigion in order to ensure sufficient capacity.

West Wales Domestic Abuse Service (WWDAS) is a 3rd Sector Ceredigion based registered charity that supports victims of abuse. It is intended that they will lease the additional Dispersed Units from the authority.

2. Costs of proposal & funding position

“Exempt Information - Appendix A (Acquisition of 2 x Dispersed Units)”

Both the DU units will require upgrading and fitting-out with specialist equipment including door access and monitoring systems including security doors, CCTV, access control systems and level access showers.

The 2nd unit will then be made available to the WWDA Service on a rolling lease/rental arrangement at an affordable cost with the Council retaining responsibility for Buildings Insurance and maintenance.

The Unit would be made available to the VAWDASV Service on a 24/7 basis at the agreed rental levels as detailed in the Service Level and Lease agreements.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why

No.
This project is an opportunity to take advantage of the availability of targeted funding which is being made available to Local Authorities. This funding would allow the LA to acquire two properties and which would help deliver an enhanced WWDAS service across the County into the future.

**Summary:
Outcomes/Long term:**

The following have been identified as potential benefits which can be realised with the progression/approval of this Project:

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

- Increased availability of properties suitable for disabled victims or families with children with disabilities
- Provides Increased provision for male victims
- Provide Increased provision for LGBTQ+ victims who may be transitioning or questioning
- Support appropriate accommodation for Move-on from the refuge as a transition step to a permanent home.

- Provide future capacity to support the planned SARC unit at Bronglais Hospital
- Ensure appropriate accommodation to individuals support needs

Collaboration:

Involvement: The Project is being developed in co-operation with Corporate Lead Officers and the Housing Support Grant Service together with ongoing support from the Ceredigion WWDA Service.

Prevention:

Integration:

Statutory Power: Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 VAWDA SV (Violence Against Women Domestic Violence & Sexual Violence)

Recommendation(s):

Pursuant to: C150 Acquisition of 2 x Dispersed Units (DU) for the Ceredigion VAWDA DECISION (23rd February)

- 1) To note the acquisition of the 1st Dispersed Unit (DU1) in the Aberystwyth area as per Cabinet resolution of the 23/02/21
- 2) To revoke the decision to acquire the 2nd Dispersed Unit in Aberystwyth as per Cabinet resolution of the 23/02/21
- 3) To approve in principle the acquisition of the 2nd Dispersed Unit (DU2) located in the South Ceredigion/Cardigan area, and to give delegated power to the Cabinet Member, in conjunction with the Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal to make changes as necessary to give effect to the matters raised in this Report.
- 4) To give delegated power to the CLO Porth Cynnal to make changes as necessary to give effect to the matters raised in this report.

Reasons for decision:

To assist the Authority in securing properties for increased provision of suitable and safe accommodation for use for those fleeing domestic violence.

Overview and Scrutiny:

Policy Framework: Corporate Strategy 2017 – 2022:

Corporate Priorities: Priority 3 - Enabling Individual and Family Resilience

Finance and Procurement implications:

Finance - The financial model assumes that Welsh Government grant funding is combined with Council match funding to acquire and upgrade the two properties. The WWDA Service would then enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Council which would detail the specific responsibilities and obligations between the two parties. The agreement would also refer to the rental/lease agreement where the WWDA Service pay an affordable rental/lease to the Council.

The Capital investment required by the Council should achieve a break-even period at 14 years at an assumed interest rate of 2%. At which point there would no ongoing repayments to the Authority apart from maintenance and insurance costs.

The acquisitions would also provide increased asset value to the Authority over time.

Procurement of property – Copies of the three separate grant approval letters plus attached grant conditions have been forwarded to Procurement, Finance and Legal Sections for consideration. A summary document of the grant conditions is attached as Exempt Information **“Appendix C – Summary of grant awards”**.

Procurement of Services – The current service is delivered by the WWDAS. Funding is via a variety of sources including Housing Support Grant and Council Core Funding.

Funding risk: There are no revenue funding implications apart from annual maintenance & buildings Insurances.

Legal Implications:

Legal issues – None.

Planning status – A formal request was sent to the Development Control Section of the Authority as to any Planning related implications for the proposed use – The response confirmed that the use would be deemed to be a continuation of the current **C3 Use Class**.

Staffing implications:

None to the Authority

Property / asset implications:

Estates Department :

DU 1: Negotiations for the 1st DU were carried out in consultation with the Councils Acquisitions and Disposals

Surveyor. A RICS Homebuy Survey & Valuation was obtained and which did not indicate any significant issues with the property.

DU 2: A suitable property will need to be identified and a RICS Homebuy Survey and Valuation carried out before negotiations can be concluded.

Risk(s):

- a) **A suitable property does not become available:**
Welsh Government have agreed for the grant funding to be Programme Managed across to 2021 – 22, however it is understood that the 2nd DU should be acquired/delivered in the Q1/Q2 of 2021 – 22 at the latest or the relevant funding may be recalled.
- b) **Property purchase price increase over and above the indicative amount :**
The Council would need to consider meeting the uplift or withdrawing from the proposed acquisition.
- c) **Demand for use as Dispersed Units reduced:**
Ongoing monitoring of need working closely with the Ceredigion WWDA Service. In the event that a unit became surplus to requirements there would be a number of alternative related uses available to the Authority in agreement with Welsh Government.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: a) **Exempt Information - Appendix A (Acquisition of 2 x Dispersed Units) – Dated 23rd February**

Corporate Lead Officer: Sian Howys, CLO Porth Cynnal

Reporting Officer: Keith Davies

Date: 23rd May 2021