

**Report of Richard Marshall**

**Report to Environment and Housing Decision Panel**

**Date: 21/07/2014**

**Subject: Transfer of 5 Hillcrest Avenue to Housing Services for use as part of the Council's housing stock.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Chapel Allerton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

5 Hillcrest Avenue LS7 4DR is a five bedroom house that was used as the home for the caretaker of the Hillcrest Primary School. When the last occupant retired as the school caretaker he remained in occupation paying an Investment Property rental. He abandoned the house in March this year and it was moved into void management. The property now sits with City Development pending a decision on its future use.

Consultation on the disposal options was carried out with local Councillors. Their preference was that the property remained in public ownership and offered to a family with an application on the Leeds Homes Register.

A stock condition survey of the property confirmed that it requires £14,852 of investment to bring it to the Councils letting standard – see appendix 1. The Head of Maintenance Operations has confirmed that there are funds in the general voids budget to carry out the work as a high cost void.

**Recommendations**

The Director of Environment and Housing is asked to approve:

- The transfer of 5 Hillcrest Avenue LS7 4DR to Housing Services to be let as part of the Council housing stock. The decision will include a void cost of £14,852.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To inform the Director of Environment and Housing of a Council owned property at 5 Hillcrest Avenue that sits with City Development and is currently empty. It is awaiting either disposal on the open market, to a housing association or refurbishment for use as a Council home.
- 1.2 To seek approval to move the property into the control of Housing Services, complete a void work programme at a cost of £14,852 and let through the normal letting process.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 5 Hillcrest House is a five bedroom terrace house built circa 1900. It was used as the home for the caretaker of Hillcrest school. It is not within the school boundary but is on an adjoining street where the Council owns and lets a further four properties.
- 2.2 When the last occupant of the property retired as the caretaker he continued to live there but the house remained outside of the control of Housing Services. The property was abandoned In March this year and has been empty since then. It currently sits in void management with City Development awaiting a decision on its future use. The options are either a disposal on the open market, sale to a housing association or refurbishment and let through CBL process by Housing Services.
- 2.3 An inspection of the house was carried out by a Housing Services stock condition surveyor on 24 July, his report is attached as appendix 1. The report shows that an investment of £14,852 is required to bring it to the Councils letting standard.
- 2.4 The cost should be seen in the context of the HCA 'Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use as Affordable Housing' programme. Through this scheme the Council is buying back former Right to Buy properties that have stood empty for longer than six months. An average of £100,000 per property is available to cover the cost of purchasing and refurbishment.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Housing Services officers have stated that they would be able to let the property if it came into use as a part of the housing stock. No properties of this type were let in the Chapel Allerton ward during 2013 / 2014, but four five bedroom homes were let in the area in 2012 / 2013. The average number of bids for these properties was 65, which was twice the level of bids for five bedroom houses across the rest of the city.
- 3.2 The Head of Maintenance Operations has stated that the cost of the work to bring the property to the letting standard can be met from the general housing void budget.
- 3.3 Due to the cost of the repairs required to bring the property to the letting standard it is felt that void days for the property should not count against the void turn round target.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Housing Service officers state that they can let the property if it becomes available.
- 4.1.2 Officers from City Development consulted with Ward members in May 2014 about the future use of the property. The members were in favour of it being used to provide a house for an applicant on the Leeds Homes Register.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.**

- 4.2.1 There are no equality or diversity considerations in the change of service area for the property.
- 4.2.2 If the recommendation is agreed then the property will be let through the Councils Choice Based Letting process. This process and the policies that govern the letting of Council homes have been subject to full equality assessments.

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The use of the property for social housing supports the City Priority 'Best City to Live' to increase the number of long term empty properties brought back into use.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There is no purchase price for the property as it is already in Council ownership.
- 4.4.2 The void cost for the property is £14,852. The weekly rental income for the property would be £87.51, which amounts to £4550 annually. The repayment period for the investment in the property is around 40 months.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications for the decision and it is not eligible for call in.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Failure to keep the property within the Council stock at a time when the Council is seeking to increase the numbers of its homes through more expensive avenues – new build and repurchase – may lead to criticism.
- 4.6.2 While the property has been surveyed to assess its condition, there is a risk that unforeseen works are required which weren't identified within the survey.
- 4.6.3 The longer the property remains empty the greater the risk of vandalism and general disrepair through lack of use.

## **5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 5 Hillcrest Avenue is a Council owned property that was formerly used as the home of the caretaker of Hillcrest School. When the last occupant of the house

abandoned it in March this year it was put into void management within City Development and has remained empty since.

5.2 Members from the Chapel Allerton ward were consulted on the future use of the property. They stated that they would like to see it being used to help a family with an application on the Leeds Homes Register.

5.3 The cost of bringing the property to the Council's letting standard for housing stock is £14,852, and the repayment period for this work would be around 40 months.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 The Director of Environment and Housing is asked to approve:

- The transfer of 5 Hillcrest Avenue LS7 4DR to Housing Services to be let as part of the Council housing stock. This will include a void cost of £14,852.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Appendix 1 – void costs for 5 Hillcrest Avenue.

Inspection by Richard Leonard – Stock Condition surveyor.

Construction Services carried out costing.

5 hillcrest avenue				
description	unit code	unit cost	number	total
BOTTOM CELLAR STEPS	C06	55.32	2	110.64
FRONT DOOR STEPS BOTTOM	C54	35.72	4	142.88
HANDRAIL TO FRONT STEPS	M03	96.71	8	773.68
DEMOLISH GARDEN WALLS	C53	10.05	20	201
REBUILD WALLS	C41	77.31	40	3092.4
REBED COPEING	C45	12.05	10	120.5
BRICK ON EDGE	C67	20.9	10	209
EXCAVATION	A71	33.86	8	270.88
RELAY WALL FOUNDATION	C83	16.85	20	337
PAINT EXTERNAL DOORS	G57	7.24	4	28.96
NEW LOCKS TO EXT DOORS	JB4	62.93	3	188.79
REPAIR GATE REAR	M14	22.98	1	22.98
RENEW FRONT GATE	M12	196.85	1	196.85
RENEW INTERNAL DOORS	JC1	110.72	2	221.44
REHANG INTERNAL DOORS	JA2	23	6	138
BATHROOM LIGHT	X59	115.94	1	115.94
PLASTER VENT	L01	13.75	2	27.5
SHOWER CURTAIN	X40	41.67	1	41.67
INTERNAL DOORS	JC1	110.72	1	110.72
REPAIR PVC WINDOWS	U09	29.51	10	295.1
TILES TO WHB	L14	1.76	8	14.08
REFIX RELAY PLY TO FLOORS	A71	33.86	5	169.3
ELEC CHECK NO POWER	VG7	57.47	1	57.47
ELEC CHECK POWER ON	VG9	72.74	1	72.74
TIPPING CHARGE		300	1	300
ADDITIONAL RADS TO ATTIC		500	1	500
REMOVE GAS WALL HEATERS		144	1	144
NEW SHOWER HEAD		60	1	60
GAS CHECKS		89	1	89
ROOF REPAIR		300	1	300
NEW KITCHEN		6500	1	6500
TOTAL				14852.52