

Report from: Gurmeet Viridi, Head of Housing Management West

Report to: Liz Cook, Chief Officer Housing Management

Date: 29thth October 2015

Subject: Implementation of change the workplace in the Wortley Housing Office

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

1. Summary of main issues

- 1.1 The Pudsey and Wortley housing teams, except for the reception team, are currently based at Westfield House, Wortley. However all reception services are delivered from the Wortley Office at Heights Drive, where due to lack of space, there is only room for the reception team.
- 1.2 There are 2 empty shops adjacent to the Wortley Offices which have now stood empty for a couple of years. If these empty units were to be combined with the existing Wortley Office there is sufficient room to accommodate the whole of the Pudsey and Wortley Housing Teams.
- 1.3 Westfield House is leased from a private sector landlord, whereas the shops at Heights Drive are Leeds City Council Assets.
- 1.4 The Pudsey Team will be nearer to their patches and can continue to await the community hubs to provide "surgeries" in Pudsey for local service delivery.

2 Purpose of this report

- 2.1 To request the creation of one office at Heights Drive utilising 2 long term empty void units, and thereby placing the whole team on the same site. The site will continue to provide reception services.
- 2.2 To enable the teams to adopt the LCC CTW methodology hence making best use of stock, deliver services at the doorstep and provide value for money
- 2.3 The combined office will accommodate the Housing Teams currently in Westfield House and therefore enable the council to terminate the lease to the private landlord. This will save rental currently being paid for the lease.

3 Background information

- 3.1 Westfield House was original the ALMO West North West Headquarters and housed a number of teams. Since the restructure, Westfield house now only accommodates the Pudsey and Wortley teams. Therefore the whole of the first floor remains empty.
- 3.2 There is a five year lease on the Westfield house Office which terminates in 2017. Asset Management are confident that they can terminate the lease early and hence save ongoing rental payments. It is proposed that Westfield House dilapidations are paid for from the Housing Revenue Account. This would have been the case when the lease finally expires and is not a consequence of the early termination.
- 3.3 The relocation of the Housing Teams into the Wortley Office will mean that the whole team is cited in the same building thus benefiting all from shared knowledge and experience. The public will continue to have ready access to the Housing Officers and a full reception service will be provided.
- 3.4 The move presents the opportunity to apply the Change in the Workplace principles, update the IT infrastructure, install Wi-Fi and improve service delivery on the doorstep for tenants.
- 3.5 The approval to refurbish Heights drive will enable progress for closure of Westfield House, and deed of early surrender to reduce terms of occupancy.
- 3.6 The current shop units on Heights drive are difficult to let, and have gone into decline and dilapidation. Refurbishment and occupation of these properties, will not only revive the area, but create regeneration; at minimum revenue cost (rent) and no rent cost for number 40, plus the usual utilities and running costs. All these will be less than that currently paid for the much larger building at Westfield House.
- 3.7 The ease of multiple use of the newly created open plan office presents opportunities to work with several partner agencies using Heights Drive as a facilitation/contact point. The Police, Community safety, LASBT, and Credit Union have all expressed interest.

4 Budgets and implementation

- 4.1 The cost of combining the 3 units, the refurbishment, upgrade of the heating and electrical systems, furniture and adopting the CTW methodology is £343k. This has been budgeted from the CTW budget within Housing Leeds. This includes new furniture and laptops for the Housing Officers
- 4.2 The rental for Westfield House is £53k pa plus VAT amounting to £64k pa. As HL have brought back into use 2 derelict shop units and brought them up to modern day standards, Asset Management has agreed to nil rent for one of the three units.
- 4.3 Property & Contracts are undertaking the refurbishment and have confirmed that the work will start in November 2015 to be completed by March 2016.
- 4.4 There will be a continued reception service to customers during works. This will be relocated to Westfield House.

5 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.1 Ward Members for the Wortley and Pudsey Wards have been advised of the proposals recommended in this report.
- 5.2 Communities and Citizens are also aware of the proposals and are seeking to accelerate their Hub programme to move into this office

6 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 6.1 No issues.

7 Council policies and City Priorities

7.1 This work supports the best council outcomes of:

7.1.1 Improving the quality of life for our residents.

8 Resources and value for money

8.1 Resources are available through the housing Leeds CTW to fund the changes to these properties.

9 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

9.1 There are no legal implications and this report is not subject to call in.

10 Risk Management

10.1 No issues arising for risk management

11 Conclusions

11.1 The relocation to Heights Drive will place the whole team on one site, adopting CTW methods and be able to improve service delivery to tenants and visitors to the office.

12 Recommendations

12.1 That the Chief Officer Housing Management gives approval to create one large office by combining 3 shop units at Heights Drive at a cost of £343k. This will make best use of assets and save on the ongoing rental for the lease of Westfield House.