

Agenda Item No:

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Report of : Land and Property Services
Report to : Chief Officer Economy and Regeneration
Date: September 2016
Subject: 21 Victoria Avenue, Yeadon, Leeds, LS19 7AS

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	Otley & Yeadon	
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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:	10.4(3)	
Appendix number:	1	

Summary of main issues

1. 21 Victoria Avenue is a vacant house jointly owned by the Five District Councils. Leeds City Council has approached the other four Councils asking to purchase the full freehold title. The property has stood empty for some time.
2. Leeds City Council's Area Renewal Team has received funding to repurchase ex-local authority residential properties that have been vacant for longer than six months with a view to adding these to the Council's housing stock. Whilst 21 Victoria Avenue is not in private ownership it is proposed to be acquired under this scheme.
3. Environment and Housing has confirmed that it would take on the management and responsibility of the property. The Area Renewal Team has confirmed that funding is in place from a £2 million scheme which will be used to acquire individual properties. Terms have been provisionally agreed for Leeds City Council's acquisition of the house.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the freehold of 21 Victoria Avenue, Yeadon is acquired by Leeds City Council with the house being added to the Housing Leeds portfolio.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend the terms upon which Leeds City Council will acquire the freehold of 21 Victoria Avenue, Yeadon, Leeds LS19 7AS.

2 Background information

- 2.1 21 Victoria Avenue is owned jointly by five councils (Leeds City Council 40%, Bradford City Council 40%, Calderdale Council 6.67%, Kirklees Council 6.67%, and Wakefield Council 6.67%). The house was previously part of the Leeds Bradford Airport portfolio and was occupied by the airport fire officer. When the airport was sold the five councils retained the house and the original use ceased.
- 2.2 The property is a three bed 1930's semi-detached house, with gardens to front and rear. There is also a half width track that provides access to a field to the rear. It has been vacant for ten years and it is now poor condition and requires complete renovation.
- 2.3 Leeds Bradford International Airport (LBIA) approached the Council and expressed an interest in acquiring the property. Terms were issued, however, LBIA decided not to proceed.
- 2.4 When LBIA decided not to purchase, the possibility of selling the property by way of auction was explored. Ward Members were consulted; all raised objections to it being sold and requested that it be retained and put into Council housing stock. Leeds City Council owns three of the neighbouring properties (numbers 23, 25 and 27).
- 2.5 Leeds City council approached Bradford City Council which also has a 40% ownership and asked if they would be agreeable to Leeds purchasing the other Councils' shares and take the house into Leeds council housing stock. Bradford Council was supportive of the proposal and consulted Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield. *Calderdale and Wakefield have agreed the valuation, Kirklees has not responded yet. Bradford is chasing. Further comments will be added.*

3 Main issues

- 3.1.1 The half width track adjacent to 21 Victoria Avenue has rights of access for agricultural use only; these rights also extend to LBIA which owns the field to the rear. The field is currently in agricultural use, but could be developed in the future. Access arrangements have been investigated and a solution, not utilising the access track adjacent to 21 Victoria Avenue has been proposed. It is proposed; however, that Leeds City Council will retain a 1m wide strip of land along the boundary to the field, as shown on the attached plan 17530 denoted by dots, to control access to the field if a vehicular access point is ever decided to run through the garden. This strip will be excluded from the council house tenancy to protect it from being included in a right to buy disposal.
- 3.2 Leeds City Council and Bradford have agreed a valuation of the house, taking into account the costs of works required to bring it up to lettable standards. The valuation is detailed in the confidential appendix.
- 3.3 Environment and Housing (Area Renewal Team) has agreed to fund the acquisition and Environment and Housing (Housing Leeds) has agreed to take on the responsibility and maintenance of the property in due course.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Environment and Housing (Housing Leeds) has been consulted and has agreed to take on the future maintenance and responsibility of this property including any decency works and future work programmes if needed.
- 4.1.2 The overall Empty Homes/Council Housing Growth Programme was discussed by Executive Board on 17 July 2013 and approved.
- 4.1.3 Ward Members were originally consulted on 14 July 2015 and they raised objections to the house been sold. They requested that the house be retained for the Council's housing portfolio as the demand for Council housing in this area is high. Ward Members were advised on 31 August 2016 of the Council's intention to purchase the full freehold from the other four councils.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 There are no equality issues arising from this proposal.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The acquisition will assist in meeting the Council's priorities through the provision of additional social housing stock.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 The property will become the responsibility of Housing Leeds and will be re-let. Given that the demand for social housing is very high across the whole city is it likely that a new tenant would be able to take occupation as soon as the property is ready.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 Under Part 3 Section 3E Paragraph 2(a) of the Council's Constitution (Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)) the Director of City Development has authority to discharge any function of Executive Board in relation to the management of land (including valuation, acquisition, appropriation, disposal and any other dealings with land or any interest in land) and Asset Management.
- 4.5.2 The Chief Officer Economy and Regeneration has authority to take the decisions requested in this report under Executive functions 1 and 10 (specific to the Director of City Development) of the Director of City Development's sub delegation scheme.
- 4.5.3 The proposal constitutes a significant operational decision and is therefore not subject to call in.
- 4.5.4 The information contained in the Appendix attached to this report relates to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, and of the Council. This information is not publicly available from the statutory registers of information kept in respect of certain companies and charities. It is considered that since this information was obtained through one to one negotiations for the acquisition of the property then it is not in the public interest to disclose this information at this point in time. Also it is considered that the release of such information would or would be likely to prejudice the Council's commercial interests in relation to other similar

transactions in that prospective vendors of other similar properties would have access to information about the nature and level of consideration which may prove acceptable to the Council. It is considered that whilst there may be a public interest in disclosure, much of this information will be publicly available from the Land Registry following completion of this transaction and consequently the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information at this point in time. It is therefore considered that this element of the report should be treated as exempt under Rule 10.4.3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There is the risk that a suitable tenant is not found and the property remains empty for a longer period of time thus becoming a target for vandals. This is thought to be very unlikely.
- 4.6.2 There is the risk that once the acquisition is completed, further works to the property may be required which were not identified at an earlier stage. Housing Leeds is, however, satisfied with the current condition of the house.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 It is concluded that the acquisition of the freehold of 21 Victoria Avenue, Yeadon Leeds be recommended for approval and this property be returned to Council housing stock.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the freehold of 21 Victoria Avenue, Yeadon is acquired by Leeds City Council with the house being added to the Housing Leeds portfolio.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None.

¹ 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.