

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

6 APRIL 2023

APPROVAL FOR INVESTMENT TO COMPLETE REQUIRED FIRE SAFETY WORKS AT HOWBURY HOUSE RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor A Hardman

Relevant Officer

Strategic Director for People

Local Member

Councillor B Nielsen

Recommendations

- 1. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care is recommended to approve:**
 - (a) The letting of the contract for required fire safety works to be progressed at Howbury House Care Home; and**
 - (b) funding for this work to be allocated from the Investment in Community Capacity/Specialist Housing Capital Programme provision for an estimated £0.8 million plus c£95k for specialist project management resource.**

Background

2. Howbury House is a residential care home, based in Malvern, Worcestershire that is owned, staffed and run by Worcestershire County Council. It was re-purposed, by Adults Social Care in 2016 from a reablement and rehabilitation unit to a residential care home, with a focus on customers with complex needs and advanced dementia.
3. In June 2022 a routine fire inspection identified “*significant concerns regarding aggravating factors of the premises collectively*” and the overall residual risk rating of “substantial risk”.
4. Officers have reviewed a feasibility exercise of initial outline proposals and options for updating the building to make it compliant, based on the limitations and arrangements of the existing building.
5. During the process of considering options to mitigate identified fire risks, officers have also considered alternative options. These included the potential for seeking care for the residents elsewhere, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

6. Officers undertook a cost benefit analysis of the options and recommend that the remedial work is carried out to Howbury House to a plan aiming to minimise distress to the residents. This option is recommended due to:

- a. The comparable market price for residents to move to an alternative care home is more expensive than the current costs to retain Howbury House;
- b. The payback period, when comparing Howbury unit price with the external market average unit price would be just over 1.5 years;
- c. There is a risk to life to move elderly people, with complex dementia care needs from one home to another.
- d. There would be significant reputational risk associated with a formal public consultation to close Howbury House and move residents to alternative accommodation.

7. Due to the nature of the work and noting that this establishment homes elderly and disabled people, it is recommended that building works will need to be completed on a phased basis, wing by wing. Residents will need to move around the home, as these phases are completed. Whilst this would require residents to move bedrooms for 6 weeks whilst their current bedroom wing is refurbished, this will be planned and managed sensitively with residents and their families/carers, to ensure they are fully engaged and appropriately supported through the change.

8. The impact on residents will be minimised, when compared with the alternative options to close Howbury and move residents either temporarily, whilst work is completed; or permanently if the decision was made to not progress with the required fire building regulation works.

9. Currently five beds are being held as vacant or have temporary residents, to accommodate these temporary moves, which impacts on the overall placement costs for adults social care. This is due to Howbury providing more cost-effective placements than the external market and “double funding” the cost of care whilst beds are vacant. It is important that we commence works as soon as possible so that this capacity can be brought back into operation.

10. If the decision is made to proceed with the works, it is expected work will commence on 5 June 2023 for approximately 26 weeks.

11. When balancing the cost of placing residents temporarily in the external market and the mental and physical risks to them from moving in and out of their long-term final home whilst the works were completed, it is recommended that we retain Howbury House and complete a phased approach to necessary building works, whilst residents remain living at Howbury

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

12. Following further engagement with Council officers, the contractor provided a detailed cost plan and budget estimate in December 2022. The overall estimated cost, including risk mitigation and contingency, is c£0.8 million

13. A further estimated £95k (based on current market rates) will be required to fund a project manager to oversee the project.

14. The price provided by the contractor is a fixed price.

15. Howbury House is a 32 bedded residential home and Adults Social Care ensure that new residents meet the higher needs criteria, particularly those with complex needs and advanced dementia – this approach supports the management of cost for complex residential placements.

16. A full cost impact analysis indicates that the cost of undertaking the works has an approximate four-year payback period, based on the additional cost estimated to provide external care rather than internal care. Whilst closure and relocation of the residents would release a potential capital receipt from the sale of the site, this capital receipt could not be used to fund the difference in care costs. If the home was closed there would also be additional staff costs either from redundancy or redeployment.

17. If closure of the home was pursued, formal public consultation would be required, which could not commence until Summer 2023. The reputational impact to the Council closing the care home along with the on-going risk of having staff and residents working and living in a home that, following fire inspection, is deemed as “substantial risk” is unacceptable.

18. Consideration was also given to reducing the cost of the required fire building works, through temporary closure and temporary move of residents to alternative homes in the external market. This is not recommended because the additional cost to the Council of moving residents to temporary accommodation, based on current market price, would be significantly higher than the recommended option, in addition to the half year running costs for Howbury

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

19. A **joint impact assessment (JIA)** screening has been completed, reference 491. The JIS screening identified the need for a full Equality and Public Health Impact assessment which has also been completed.

20. The Equality and Public Health Impact assessment identified potential negative impact for the elderly and disabled who are resident at the Care Home. The potential negative impact relates to disruption to them whilst building works are carried out which will be mitigated by the phased approach that will be taken to completing building works and the temporary move of resident to different wings of the building during this time.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for People) the background paper relating to the subject matter of this report is the cost benefit analysis of the options (which is exempt as Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the local authority holding that information)).