



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 13TH MARCH 2014

**SUBJECT: FORMER CASH OFFICE – 29A/29 HIGH STREET, NEWBRIDGE**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 A report on the possible conversion in to flats of the former cash office in High Street, Newbridge was requested by Cllr. Ackerman
- 1.2 This report advises members of the proposal to undertake such works.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The building in question is currently vacant and is available to Housing Services for conversion into either 2 x 2 bedroom flats or 1 x 2 bedroom and 1 x 1 bedroom flats.
- 2.2 There is already living accommodation on the first floor, with the ground floor having been previously used as an office.
- 2.3 The conversion and improvement of the whole building to living accommodation is an attractive proposition. This is due to the location and the high demand from singles, couples and older persons registered on the housing waiting list. It would also suit tenants wishing to transfer to smaller housing to reduce or avoid paying 'bedroom tax'.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 **Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales (Welsh Government, 2010)** which sets out the national context on meeting housing need, homelessness and housing-related support services.
- 3.2 **Caerphilly Delivers (Single Integrated Plan, 2013)** refers to improving standards of housing and communities and giving appropriate access to services across the county borough.
- 3.3 **People, Property, Places: A Housing Strategy for Caerphilly County (2008-2013)** provides the contexts for the provision of housing and related services in the borough.

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The history to this property is that the ground floor was originally used by Corporate Finance and the Housing Service as a local cash and repairs office. There was a flat above which was let for Social Housing.
- 4.2 Over the years several changes took place. The local repair office was closed by Housing and the cash office continued as a Customer First Service. The flat above was leased to Gwalia

Housing from January 2004 until July 2009.

- 4.3 Customer First closed the cash office in June 2013 to move to the Newbridge Memo and the premises has been marketed since then by Corporate Property but without success.
- 4.4 The building is considered to be in joint ownership between Housing and Corporate Property and is valued at £45,000. It has been agreed that Housing will acquire the whole building by paying half the current value of £22,500.
- 4.5 The conversion and modernisation to either 1 x 2 bedroom and 1 x 1 bedroom flats or 2 x 2 bedroom flats will cost an estimated £51,000 plus fees. A planning application will be submitted if this report is approved.
- 4.6 There are 20 x 2 bedroom flats in Newbridge with a waiting list of 241 applicants and a typical turnover of 2 flats per year.
- 4.7 For 1 bedroom flats there are 20 sheltered housing 1 bedroom flats with 47 applicants on the list and a typical turnover of 3 flats per year.
- 4.8 In Newbridge there are 162 Council tenants under pension credit age claiming housing benefit. 89 (55%) are under occupying.
- 4.9 Having regard to the location and the demand for smaller housing units it is proposed that the conversion works be carried out during 2014/15, subject to Planning and Cabinet Sub-Committee approval.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not needed because the issues covered are for information purposes only, therefore the Council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The cost of the conversions can be met from within existing budgets.
- 6.2 Detailed estimates of the cost for the work will be prepared and the initial guide price is approximately £75,000. This includes the refurbishment cost for the 2 units to fully meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, the environmental works, and the Planning and Building Regulations Fees.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no Personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 All view and opinions following consultation have been incorporated within the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members are requested to support the conversion of 29A and 29 High Street, Newbridge into flats.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To bring the properties back into beneficial use and support the increased demand for smaller units of accommodation in response to the Welfare Reform Act.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Housing Act 1984 and 1996.

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