

CABINET - 5TH MARCH 2013

SUBJECT: MAES-Y-DERWEN, TREDOMEN

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To recommend that the Authority enters into a partnership arrangement with United Welsh Housing Association in respect of the use of Maes-y-Derwen, Tredomen, as temporary accommodation for single homeless persons.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Maes-y-Derwen is a former secure hospital located alongside the main Ystrad Mynach/Nelson Road at Tredomen. The property has been empty for some 2 years or so and is currently being marketed.
- 2.2 The homelessness situation within Caerphilly is such that we currently have some 28 single persons in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. B&B accommodation is very much the last resort in respect of temporary accommodation, being expensive and mostly not conducive to the needs of the vulnerable persons placed therein. There is, therefore, a desperate need for more suitable accommodation.
- 2.3 Officers have, therefore, entered into informal discussions with United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) with a view to UWHA purchasing Maes-y-Derwen and converting it into 18 units of single persons accommodation compliant with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)(Wales) Order 2006. Negotiations are currently ongoing between UWHA and the current owners of the building, although the conclusion of these negotiations are subject to a formal agreement being reached with the authority on the utilisation of the building.
- 2.4 In a similar manner to other supported housing schemes, the Authority will need to enter into a Partnership agreement with UWHA prior to them purchasing the property. On completion of the redevelopment a tri-party Management Agreement will need to be entered into with the support provider and the Authority. Thereafter the Authority would utilise the accommodation as an alternative to B&B for placing single homeless persons.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The provision of this much needed resource for single, homeless people at Maes y Derwen links to the following strategies:
- An ambition of Welsh Government in the Ten Year Homelessness Plan For Wales (2009-2019) to provide a range of accommodation that is accessible in all areas to homeless people.

- Objectives 1 and 24 of the Community Strategy – *“encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient and sustainable homes and environments which can meet all needs and reduce health inequalities by tackling deprivation and the wider determinants of health”*.
- Aims 1 and 4 of People, Property & Places – A Housing Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough (2008-2013) – *“reduce the incidences of homelessness and repeat homelessness, and to eliminate rough sleeping and meet the housing requirements of vulnerable people through better access to a range of high quality, specialist housing and support services”*.
- Indirectly links to the central themes of the strategy Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership Plan (2011-2014) – reducing ASB, substance misuse and crime.
- The overarching priority outcome of the Children and Young People’s Plan (2011-2014) – *“All children and young people are not disadvantaged by poverty”*.
- Theme 5 of the Health, Social Care & Well Being Strategy (2011-2014) – To *“develop and strengthen preventative work and service provision for vulnerable children and adults to prevent crisis”*.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 There is increasing pressure on homelessness services in respect of the number of single people of all ages approaching the Authority and presenting themselves as homeless. The numbers of single people qualifying for temporary accommodation, through age, vulnerability and offending background have increased by 53% in the three years 2009/10 to 2011/12.
- 4.2 Additional temporary accommodation has been secured for some young and vulnerable persons via the recent commissioning of the Countryman at Bedwellty. However, at the time of writing some 28 single people continue to be accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 4.3 Currently, those single people, deemed to be homeless but not eligible for temporary accommodation are being offered advice and are often signposted to hostels in Cardiff and Newport. However, with the redistribution of Supporting People funding likely to adversely affect both Cardiff and Newport councils, both are now declaring that, in future, priority access to their hostels will be afforded to their own residents and that other local authorities whose residents are directed there are likely to incur charges. With increased demand it is more likely, however, that homeless persons approaching those hostels will increasingly be redirected back to their own local authorities for assistance.
- 4.4 The current Welsh Housing White Paper (Homes for Wales) also outlines an intention to introduce a requirement for local authorities to provide temporary accommodation to anyone who has “nowhere safe to stay” whilst interim housing solutions are sought. This new duty will substantially increase the number of single people that the Authority may have a statutory duty to temporarily accommodate.
- 4.5 It is anticipated that in the current economic climate, and with the introduction of the Welfare Reform agenda, the situation will only be exacerbated with more single people requiring both temporary and permanent accommodation. In response to this anticipated increase in demand the Authority is seeking to create a portfolio of well-managed accommodation, suitable for the needs of single homeless persons.
- 4.6 The proposal for Maes-y-Derwen is that the accommodation would be purchased and subsequently developed by United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) and thereafter utilised for the accommodation of single homeless persons nominated by the Authority via its Housing

Advice Service. The acquisition of the building has not yet been concluded and will be subject to a partnership agreement being reached between UWHA and the authority. The capital costs of the development would be met by UWHA whilst Supporting People would fund the necessary support required for the scheme to successfully operate. The project will provide the Authority with an additional 18 units of accommodation for single homeless people for whom the only realistic option currently available would be a placement in B&B.

- 4.7 A specialist support provider will staff the facility on a 24-hour basis. The support available will, in the first instance, start with crisis intervention, through to the provision of educational and living skills engagement (based within Maes-y-Derwen), eventually enabling their move towards independent living.
- 4.8 Referral to Maes-y-Derwen will be controlled by the Housing Advice Centre Homelessness Officers, who currently resort to placing people to whom the Authority has a duty to investigate their homelessness claim in one of several B&B establishments. Whilst specialist support to these B&B clients is currently provided on a floating support basis, the opportunities afforded by such support being provided directly where their clients are accommodated will present a major opportunity to improve the level and quality of support offered.
- 4.9 The location of any homelessness facility is often critical to its success and Maes-y-Derwen is conveniently located near the centre of the county borough, accessible both by bus and local train services.
- 4.10 United Welsh HA are in a position to submit a planning application for change of use of the building, subject to the successful purchase and subject to approval at this Cabinet. Following planning approval, it is anticipated that a start on site could take place during the summer of 2013 with completion around March 2014. As part of the consultation process UWHA will engage with residents living adjacent to the proposed scheme.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Eqla screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified, therefore a full Eqla has not been carried out. A full Equality Impact Assessment would be undertaken on any future update to the Local Housing Strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The purchase and development costs for Maes-y-Derwen will be borne by United Welsh Housing Association, and are in the region of £1.6m.
- 6.2 The operating costs of this accommodation and support will be funded from the rent and service charges applicable to clients placed into Maes-y-Derwen. It is anticipated that the majority of these clients will be in receipt of housing benefit and will, therefore, also be eligible for Supporting People assistance. The classification of this type of accommodation has been confirmed as exempt and is therefore not subject to the S1/2011 subsidy limits. This means that the cost of the rent and service charge will be fully met from Supporting People and Housing Benefit (where clients are eligible) as long as the charges are reasonable.
- 6.3 Caerphilly Supporting People will be receiving an additional £500,000 over the next two years as part of the Welsh Government redistribution process to ensure that supporting people grant funding is directed at those counties exhibiting the highest level of need. The Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan prioritises the provision of further temporary accommodation for single vulnerable people and the intention would be to utilise a proportion of this new funding to fund a support provider to manage the project.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Consultation responses have been incorporated within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Cabinet approve the proposal that the Authority enters into a partnership arrangement with United Welsh Housing Association in the manner outlined in paragraph 2.4 above, subject to the successful acquisition and that Maes-y-Derwen be commissioned as a single person, supported housing scheme.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To increase the supply of suitable, well-managed accommodation for the needs of single homeless persons.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Not applicable.

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Cllr Robin Woodyatt – Cabinet Member for Social Services
Cllr Mrs Anne Blackman – Ward Member
Cllr Sean Morgan – Ward Member
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