

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 18 AUGUST 2015**

**FORMER HOMELESS UNIT AT QUEEN'S CLOSE, MONTROSE – DISPOSAL**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report seeks authorisation to declare the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) property at Queen's Close, Montrose surplus to requirements.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approves that the former homeless unit at Queen's Close, Montrose, be declared surplus to requirements for the reasons set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report.
- (ii) Authorises the Head of Technical and Property Services to dispose of the property on the open market.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manner.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Council owns a 4 storey building at Queen's Close in the centre of Montrose, which is listed as Category "B", and is on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), (See Appendix A for location). It was last used in 2006/7 as a Homeless Unit when it was closed after a fire, and changes were made to reduce the number of bedrooms to 11 as part of the resultant refurbishment and re-instatement works.

3.2 Following completion of the works in 2008, the building has been unused. The intention had been to re-open it as a Homeless Persons Unit in 2014 as part of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy, which involved the de-centralisation of temporary accommodation to more locality based provision, including in Montrose. However, recent experience has shown that better use of individual council properties dispersed throughout the mainstream stock (known as dispersed temporary accommodation) has provided a more effective way of accommodating homeless people in the locations they want to be (generally close to family and friend support networks), without placing undue pressure on any particular community. These dispersed units can also be moved relatively easily, should demand change from one area to another, so the flexibility they provide has many benefits.

**4. CURRENT POSITION**

4.1 Historically, there were various formal complaints submitted to the Council about the Queen's Close Homeless Unit when it was in operation, by neighbouring property owners (both residential and commercial). Several enquiries have recently been received from neighbours,

concerned that the Council has plans to re-open the unit, with a focus on their view that the use of the building and the town centre location would make it difficult to manage and would lead to Anti -Social Behaviour. Whilst it is possible in certain locations and with the right type of property to manage such a unit properly, in this case there would be a high risk of issues emerging.

## 5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Queen's Close is a very difficult building for the Council to use effectively. It is in a very constricted residential and retail area, with a building layout that is both tortuous and unsatisfactory. Officers have looked at other options, but no alternative Council uses for the building have been identified. It does not and cannot provide the type of housing accommodation that meets our customer expectations.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the building be declared surplus and marketed for sale, subject to ministerial consent.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Declaring the property surplus and advertising it on the open market will raise a capital receipt for the HRA and help to support further investment in improvements to affordable housing provision across Angus.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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### APPENDIX A: LOCATION OF FORMER HOMELESS UNIT AT QUEEN'S CLOSE

