

Record of Decisions

Leonard Stocks Acquisition

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 13 February 2024.

Decision

1. That, subject to completion of all necessary due diligence, the Director of Pride in Place be authorised to proceed with the acquisition of the Leonard Stocks homeless hostel, with the Chief Executive to be given delegated authority to implement all necessary actions to achieve the same.
2. The Director of Adult and Community Services prepare options for discussion with the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services and all Group Leaders, as to how any residual income resulting from this acquisition can be best used to support the work of the hostel.

Reason for the Decision

The expected benefits of acquiring the site are:

- The Council maintains and enhances its only Homeless provision and remains compliant against legislative duties.
- The Council would be able to utilise some of the income from Housing benefit to offset the operational staffing costs, in line with regulations (subject to agreement).
- There would be potential to use some of the additional income to support the service offer which was identified by a commissioned report in 2022.
- The Council would own the site in its entirety which would afford the Council regeneration and development options in the future should the Council move to a different model of delivery for its homeless provision.
- The Council would be able to influence the positive regeneration of the wider regeneration of Union Square and Temperance Street.
- There could be an opportunity (in the future) around adding solar PV and air source heat pumps. This would help to offset the Council's operational costs of running the building and demonstrate a continuous level of investment. This would also support the council's ambitions towards carbon neutrality.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 26 February 2024 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

The Leonard Stocks building and much of the land it sits on is currently owned by Langley House Trust, with one parcel of land owned by Torbay Council and leased to Langley House Trust in return for full nomination rights enforced via a Nomination Agreement.

In 2021, Langley House Trust approached Torbay Council with an offer to sell the building and their land holdings to Torbay Council. The Leonard Stocks Hostel was Torbay's only purpose-built short term homeless hostel and was equipped to tackle rough sleeping and rehabilitation for multiple complex needs. It was a crucial part of Torbay's rough sleeping and homelessness strategy (2020-2025), and demand was always high for the services it provides.

Torbay Council was required to take reasonable steps to help homeless clients secure suitable accommodation for at least 6 months. Without this provision the Local Authority would be required to look at alternative solutions such as other temporary accommodation or Hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodation. The Council had secured an advantageous position in so far as the building's purchase helped to safeguard vital homeless accommodation in the Town Centre, whilst offering an opportunity to unlock a high-profile regeneration opportunity in the long-term.

At the meeting Councillor Chris Lewis proposed and Councillor Tranter seconded a motion was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

An alternative option would have been to do nothing, however this option was discounted as Langley House Trust had stated that they would seek to change the operational model of the service or cease operation entirely if Torbay Council were unable to purchase the land and building from them.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

16 February 2024

Signed: _____
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

Date: _____