

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ISSUE No. 2

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This document aims to provide answers to questions that have been asked at the drop-ins or by correspondence during the first two months of the consultation period. It follows a previous release of Questions and Answers issued on 15 October 2012.

The questions have been grouped under nine subject headings, each of which begins with an introduction describing the subject and the range of questions that have been raised. As in the first release, the questions under each heading in most cases stand for groups of individual questions that have been asked in different ways.

A series of formal questions and answers between individual residents and the Council's Executive have been published separately and these can be viewed on the Council's website at

http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your_council/consultations_and_petitions/council_consultations/richmond_court_consultation.aspx .

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1. The Building

Introduction

This section responds to a number of questions about the physical layout and functions of the building. At this stage, architects have done preliminary work which can be viewed at the drop-in sessions at Campbell Hall and there is scope to alter the designs before these become a specification. However the answers below convey the intentions of CDHT as the owners, and Foundation Enterprises North West as the service providers, concerning the building's use and functions.

Q1 How will the building's functions be separated, i.e. the office/management function, the accommodation function, the reception function and the 'meaningful activities' function? Where will the main entrance be? When will it be possible to see more detailed and final architect's drawings?

The architect's drawings that can be viewed at the Campbell Hall drop-in sessions give an impression of the planned use of space within Richmond Court. These drawings show the main entrance at the western end of the building from the car park, but it is more likely that the main entrance will be on Spital Walk facing the canal.

There will be a duty office from which the reception area and overnight seating can be supervised and a range of communal areas – communal lounge and refreshments area, laundry facilities, toilets etc – will be accessible from here. There will also be an office area from which the Accommodation and Outreach Walk teams can work and a 'multi agency room' (this does not yet have an official name) which can be used by police and other agencies for contact with each other, service users and with FENW staff.

Under the present proposals there will be 12 units of self-contained accommodation on the ground floor fitted out to a temporary accommodation standard. There will be a further 22 units of self-contained temporary accommodation on the first floor. All but two of the units will be one-bedroomed and there will be two units for couples. Access to the accommodation areas and to individual units will be controlled by an electronic key system, allowing a degree of 'zone control' as required.

Design work is currently on hold pending the consultation and the current focus on managing the transition to the new service. Further design drawings may be prepared between now and the New Year, but the overall functional arrangements and the accommodation standards are not expected to change.

Q2 Will the accommodation be mixed or will there be some segregation? What common areas will there be and how will these be managed? What about laundry and drying facilities, for example?

The accommodation will be mixed. In addition to the 32 units of single person accommodation there will also be two units for couples. It is likely that the first floor units will be used by more settled residents and the ground floor units by people who require a shorter period of stay.

The common areas will include a communal lounge and refreshments area, communal laundry facilities and of course the enclosed garden area to the rear of the building. Management responsibilities for the building and service functions at Richmond Court will rest with professional staff, but as a place of residence for a changing population there will be an important role for 'house rules', to be managed and periodically reviewed by residents and staff together.

Q3 What kind of boundary treatments and site security will there be? Will there be secure storage/parking for bicycles?

The intention at present is to retain the existing boundary treatments and natural landscaping as far as possible, although these can be reviewed in the light of comments received during the consultation. There will be on-site CCTV monitoring of the area within the site boundary, controlled access to the building and internally, an electronic key system.

There will be secure storage/parking for bicycles although no decisions have yet been taken on where this will be located.

Q4 What about ownership, management and maintenance responsibilities?

The building will remain in the ownership of Chester and District Housing Trust (CDHT) and will be leased to Foundation Enterprises North West (FENW). The lease costs payable to CDHT will be reinvested in FENW.

Building maintenance work will be carried out by TrustWorks, CDHT's in-house building contractor.

Q5 What is the process and timetable for refurbishing the building?

The current intention is TrustWorks, CDHT's in-house building contractor, to carry out the refurbishment of the building, with a provisional start on site date of February 2013 and a construction period of up to seven months – on this revised timetable the building would not be ready for occupation until September 2013.

CDHT would aim to use the opportunity of the refurbishment project to deliver part of its commitment to local employment and training.

2. Management of Richmond Court

Introduction

This section attempts to cover the many questions received about how Richmond Court will be managed. Some of these questions relate to policies and procedures, including the 'house rules' and conditions of residence (license agreement) that will be in operation. Some of these questions were answered in the first release of Questions and Answers dated 15 October 2012. Some questions have been about scenarios – like people 'hanging around' Richmond Court or people shouting from the windows.

Other questions have sought to establish and understand the levels of risk that could be present and how these will be managed. A summary of the preliminary risk assessment carried out on Richmond Court is on the Council's website and copies are available on request from members of the consultation team.

A recent letter to a number of residents from the Chief Police Superintendent has outlined a number of recommendations by the police concerning security. This has given rise to a number of questions about what additional measures will be introduced and whether these are desirable from residents' point of view.

There have also been a number of enquiries about staffing cover, agency activity and opportunities for volunteering.

Q1 What will the license agreement and 'house rules' cover? What will happen if they are broken? How far will they cover residents' conduct in the vicinity of Richmond Court and the conduct of visitors? What will the rules be on drinking – on site and in the vicinity?

The license agreement will be modeled on a standard form of agreement as used by Forum Housing Association and other national providers of temporary supported housing. A license agreement is a legally binding document between the licensor and licensee. Like a tenancy agreement, it lists the rights and obligations of the licensor (FENW) and the licensee (the individual service user). The main difference between a license agreement and a tenancy agreement is that a license agreement provides less security of tenure and can be terminated with immediate effect or subject to the expiry of the 28 day license period. Failure to comply with the terms of the license agreement could constitute grounds for ending the license.

A typical license agreement requires the licensee/service user to: co-operate with and participate in the service (i.e. including the personal recovery plan agreed as part of their period of residence); not to cause or allow visitors to cause a nuisance,

and not to commit or allow visitors to commit harassment, illegal or disruptive acts, physical harm etc., to neighbours, staff or other residents (i.e. other licensees).

The license agreement will also require licensees/service users to observe the house rules. These will be set and reviewed on a regular basis by the staff and residents themselves. This flexibility is important to allow different rules to be introduced as the circumstances and mix of people change within the building.

The intention is that residents will be permitted to drink on site in accordance with the 'safe, sensible, social' guidelines endorsed by Government. This approach has been used successfully elsewhere within supported housing. The DPPO (Designated Public Places Order) that covers Chester – and, from 8 December 2012, the rest of the borough as well – prohibits drinking in public places, i.e. beyond the curtilage of the property.

Q2 What risk categories will be admitted to Richmond Court? How will the reception function be managed alongside rehabilitation? What happens if people refer themselves and, for example, turn up at night?

Each individual will be subject to a needs and risk assessment upon referral and the assessed risk attributed to any given individual will take account of what is known and not known about that individual. The assessed risk will also be influenced by the accommodation that could be offered to the individual and the existing make-up of the population in that accommodation.

Among the population of homeless people there is a prevalence of people with histories of mental health problems and/or traumatic experience (e.g. turbulent relationship, military combat etc.). There is also a general prevalence of people with an institutional background and a history of failing to manage independent living.

For some of those living with these problems excessive drinking and the use of illegal drugs can become part of a perpetuating lifestyle. The greatest risk presented by people with these problems is as a rule to themselves as opposed to others. The introduction of more effective services recognises not only this starting point but also that each individual's needs, and route to recovery, will be different.

Richmond Court's internal design uses electronic keys to create limited access zones meaning that there will be scope to tailor the accommodation offer to individual needs within the service. Similarly, the diverse and flexible portfolio of other accommodation across the borough extends this principle beyond Richmond Court. The flexibility of the new service means that it will be possible to avoid or at worst manage any potential conflicts between reception, rehabilitation and other functions.

Current practice is generally in favour of detoxification and rehabilitation at home, with or without floating support. This approach will be used where necessary across

the new service. This flexibility will also allow the service to develop an abstinence-based recovery element in response to demand from service users.

In terms of access to the service, the majority of homelessness presentations and referrals tend to take place during the day rather than at night. The emphasis within the new service on outreach contact work, the maintenance of a street presence, the availability of a hotline and the diversity of service access points (including discharge protocols with key referral agencies) means that self-referral is expected to be rare. The fact that the new service will have been running for at least nine months before Richmond Court is due to open also means that the arrangements for accessing services (i.e. other than by self-referral) will have become well-established.

Q3 What will the access times be and what level of activity (comings and goings) is expected? What will the staffing levels be during the day and at night? Who will be working from the building apart from FENW staff?

The building will have normal opening times (i.e. for visitors) but will be operational and staffed 24 hours a day. The aim will be to promote and support the quiet enjoyment of the area and to discourage and prevent any activity likely to disrupt the neighbourhood. The Outreach Walk team will have a presence as necessary on the canal towpath and in the surrounding area to help with this.

There will be up to three teams using the building as a base, so the on site staff presence will vary, but even at night there will be a minimum of two waking staff members and as a general rule there will be many more staff than this at all times of the day and night.

The building will also be used and frequented by a range of staff from other partner agencies to assist with programme delivery, including community safety, health agencies, , the probation service and voluntary organisations.

Q4 What risk assessment has been carried out and what risks have been identified? How will these be managed? What about the risk of sharps?

It is important to understand that risk is dynamic rather than static. A range of factors can either increase risk or act as important counter measures that reduce risk. One of the over-riding factors in reducing the risk potential of homeless individuals is the provision of good quality supported housing.

The preliminary risk assessment covers a wide range of issues from anti-social behaviour, site security and substance misuse through to floor cleaning, ventilation and work equipment. In each case the assessed risk is low to medium.

The key issues for the service provider are how to manage, minimize and control risk. The risk assessment provides a framework for approaching these tasks and where necessary drawing up a procedure or action plan. The approach that will be

taken by FENW will involve a combination of prevention, education and enforcement measures.

Thus, in the case of sharps, prevention could involve the placement of sharps boxes in safe but usable places; education could involve promoting a pro-social policy and the use of house rules, notices, induction sessions and counseling; enforcement could involve the withdrawal of certain entitlements and ultimately the threat of license withdrawal.

Q5 Will there be a police room at Richmond Court? How will the Council respond to the police recommendations concerning additional security?

There will not be a police room as such, however there will be a multi-agency room for a range of services to make use of – a ‘drop-in’ room which may be used for liaison, networking, rest and respite or, as required, for formal activities and meetings.

With respect to the other recommendations made by the police, the situation is presently as follows:

Extra CCTV and lighting

A feasibility study is now being carried out. There have been requests for CCTV in Boughton for some years and it may be possible to introduce coverage along the canal towpath although there are some technical and cost issues to consider. There would be further consultation on this once the feasibility has been established.

Extending the no-drinking zone

A no-drinking zone (known as a DPPO or Designated Public Places Order) is already in force throughout Chester. This will be extended to the rest of the borough on the 8 December 2012.

Consideration of alley-gating

Alley gates can be installed on publicly owned land where a case can be made on evidence of criminal activity and following consultation with residents. Where land is privately owned it is of course necessary to obtain the owner’s permission. Alley gates have a mixed record in other areas and it may be useful to take advice on what works in different circumstances. If a case is made for a particular alley and supported by the residents affected then alley-gating could happen.

Q6 What scope will there be for work experience/work placements and volunteering?

There will be plenty of scope and lots of opportunities. Placements within the service have already been discussed with a range of FENW partners and there have been a

number of individual enquiries about volunteering. There will be active promotion of work experience and work placements, recruitment of volunteers and community mentors, and several other ways of getting involved.

3. Richmond Court and the local community

Introduction

As a two-way process, it is not surprising that the consultation has brought up a number of existing neighbourhood issues. These include: traffic and parking issues, including access by emergency vehicles; current problems, both actual harassment and sense of personal safety, experienced by residents and other users of the canal towpath; areas of unused and/or unmanaged land in the area; and a sense from some that perhaps the area does not receive the level of services that it needs.

These issues have mostly been raised in terms of ‘the proposals for Richmond Court will make these issues worse for residents’ – although, from another point of view, bringing the building into use and under active management could provide opportunities to resolve them. There is also a kind of circular argument that starts with the suggestion that additional security will be needed – but then, if additional security is needed, there must be something to be worried about.

Rather than try to answer these questions here, more may be achieved by bringing residents and service providers together to try to understand first, the nature and scale of these existing issues and second, the options for addressing them. Whether or not Richmond Court goes ahead, it is important to capture these issues from the consultation and respond to them.

A neighbourhood workshop will be arranged in the New Year where residents and service providers can meet to discuss these issues in more detail.

In the meantime, discussion of the proposals for Richmond Court has repeatedly touched on the issue of confidence. There is an inevitable level of concern about the impact and effectiveness of a new service. Confidence has also been undermined by the way the proposals for Richmond Court became known following the contract award in June.

If the proposals go ahead local confidence would depend a great deal on how responsive FENW, the Council and other agencies would be to any issues or problems raised by residents once Richmond Court had opened. This would partly be a question of the day-to-day arrangements for reporting a problem arising from Richmond Court but there would also be a wider question about how residents and service providers including FENW could work together on neighbourhood issues in the longer term.

Q1 How would we be able to report any problems or concerns?

There will be a 24 hour hotline for the service from the start of the contract and there will be waking staff on duty at Richmond Court at all times of the day and night. FENW would want local residents to have complete confidence in its management arrangements and would respond promptly to any calls or concerns. Arrangements for local residents to get in touch with duty staff would be discussed and agreed well before Richmond Court opened.

Q2 What about broader issues and monitoring the impact of Richmond Court on the local area?

Both FENW and the Council would welcome the setting up of some kind of local monitoring group. If the proposals look set to go ahead, there will be several months before Richmond Court opened during which further discussions could take place about how such a group might be set up, how often it would meet and what its remit would be.

4. How the new service model will work

Introduction

The new service model – which aims to prevent homelessness and deliver better outcomes for those individuals who come into the service – was described in section 4 of the first release of Q and A's. The background thinking and guidance by Government, including advice from homelessness agencies, and the Council's own journey towards a strategic and operational solution, is set out in the Key Documents made available in the consultation.

This section tries to answer some of the additional questions that have been asked about how the model will work here – i.e. in the Cheshire West and Chester context and, specifically, in Richmond Court.

Q1 How will people be referred to the service and through what process will they come into the service? How will this work at night?

All referrals will be processed through the Council's Gateway – a live database of accommodation available from supported housing service providers providing an initial assessment and referral system. Anyone referred to FENW will then have a more detailed needs and risk assessment accessing agency information as necessary. All members of FENW's outreach teams and day and night staff at Richmond Court would have ready access to the Gateway through hand-held technology.

Q2 How will decisions be taken about where an individual should be placed in an emergency situation, in particular where a) little is known or can be found out about the individual and/or b) the emergency accommodation in the service is full?

It is unusual to be unable to find out something about people who are referred to the service. Anyone about whom little can be found out will be closely supervised and managed accordingly. FENW has a range of emergency accommodation options across the CWAC area. The safe seat service will provide an overnight backstop for emergency cases at night.

Q3 How will the reconnections policy work? What level of reconnection is required by the contract, how far does this depend on the co-operation of other authorities and where does this Council's responsibility end for any given individual?

Up to 60% of current service users are assessed to have no direct connection with Chester. In keeping with the aims of the new service – i.e. to work towards preventing homelessness – a proper and lasting solution to their housing need is more likely to be found through their own local authority. This principle is already

built in to local authority systems for administering housing waiting lists and allocating social housing.

There is a danger that if individuals towards whom the local authority has no housing responsibility are accepted into the borough's emergency provision this could result in improper use of the accommodation within the new service model, which is intended to provide people with local 'pathways'. On the other hand of course the whole ethos of the new service is to centre on the individual, and in cases where it would be judged regressive or harmful to pursue reconnection directly, a different approach would be taken.

When it is judged appropriate to reconnect someone with the local authority and other services in another area this will be subject to a place being available for them and if they need assistance to get there this will be provided.

FENW will work with local authorities across the UK to reconnect people, so that they are well received into their home authority and properly connected with services that are able to help them.

Q4 How will the service deal with individuals who are a) under MAPPA, b) drink or drugs dependent, c) suffering from severe or enduring mental health problems and, as a separate management issue, d) cohabiting in the same premises?

Individuals covered by MAPPA (multi-agency public protection arrangements) are subject to a high degree of agency monitoring and management and are therefore by definition very unlikely to be, or to become, homeless. In the highly unusual circumstance that someone referred to the service were found to be under MAPPA the agency responsible for their management would be contacted immediately.

Individuals who are homeless and have a drink or drug dependency will be encouraged to confront and tackle their dependency on the basis that it is not only likely to be physically, mentally and socially harmful to them but also likely to be an obstacle to successful independent living. There will be a culture within the service of breaking dependencies and promoting 'contagious recovery'. Personal detoxification and/or rehabilitation programmes will be drawn up with individuals who need those specific types of support.

While it is accepted that many people who end up homeless may have histories of mental health problems and/or traumatic experience, those who suffer from severe and enduring mental health problems will generally need specialised support, clinical treatment and/or psychiatric supervision. As with individuals found to be under MAPPA, staff carrying out needs and risk assessments will know the correct referral procedures for individuals under the management of, or likely to need, specialised services.

Although this aims to show that individuals with acute, complex or specialised needs can and will be directed to the right kind of professional support there will clearly be times when staff will be called upon to exercise judgment, to manage unpredictable situations and to deal with difficult behaviour. Staff are trained to a high level of competence and prepared to cope safely and confidently with these eventualities. It is also important to stress that the design and management of the building will incorporate the thinking behind 'psychologically informed environments' and ways of managing shared space safely and beneficially.

FENW is currently developing a range of protocols, service level agreements etc. with professional agencies who will provide services to support service users. This will ensure that service users have access to the support they need, at the right time.

Q5 Under the new service model what kinds of activity and therapy may be used, who will provide these services and what advantages if any are seen in locating services in a residential area rather than the city centre?

The range of activities and therapies that could be made available will depend on the range of needs of the individuals within the service at any given time but will generally aim at helping individuals to take control of their own recovery and their life beyond recovery. FENW will make use of the Outcome Star, a widely used set of tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people.

The activities which will be on offer are grouped into nine areas including therapeutic activity, health, community, enterprise and work, resilience, finance, accredited learning, aspirations and peer-led activities.

This whole area is one of potentially complex but extremely rewarding work. It can involve the building of a relationship over a period of time, the use of incentives, activities with a health focus, an intellectual focus, a focus on self-expression. It can involve acquiring basic skills, job skills and training for employment; it can involve support to manage living independently in one's own home.

The particular advantages in locating services in a residential area are to do with the disciplines and benefits of a social environment where people have to co-exist, respect each other and take responsibility for the space they share. This tends to happen more effectively in residential areas than in city centres.

5. Displacement of services from city centre

Introduction

Since the award of the contract to FENW it has been announced that some of the services and accommodation for homeless people currently provided in the city centre will close. From the end of November 2012 Crispin House will no longer operate as a night shelter and the Harold Tomlins Centre will no longer provide the shelter and wet (i.e. permitted drinking) facilities that are presently available most weekdays from 7.00am to 1.00pm. These services are not funded by the Council and do not form part of the new contract.

Roodee House is due to close as a hostel as soon as Richmond Court is available as part of the accommodation in the new service.

Some concerns have been expressed about the potential for city centre street behaviour like street drinking and begging to gravitate to the area around Richmond Court. More generally there is a degree of uncertainty about the impact of closing existing services in the city centre.

Q1 Why are the present facilities and services for homeless people in the city centre being closed and what will take their place?

From 26 November 2012, the starting date for the new contract, FENW will take over the management of Roodee House, which currently provides 22 units of temporary accommodation in the city centre.

Crispin House, which has been used by Chester Aid to the Homeless (CATH) to provide eight places of emergency overnight accommodation, will close on 25 November 2012. The Harold Tomlins Centre will after this date cease providing a wet area, i.e. where people can drink. The role of the centre is due to change, to become an advice and learning resource centre, and it is not considered that a wet area is compatible with the centre's new role.

As far as replacement emergency accommodation is concerned, this will be provided by the new service provider, FENW, from 26 November 2012. Everyone currently using Crispin House, and who has used Crispin House recently, has been interviewed by FENW staff and found alternative accommodation.

There are no plans by the Council to provide a wet area for drinking in the city centre. The impact of closing the wet area at the Harold Tomlins Centre will have to be monitored and kept under review.

Q2 If Richmond Court is opened as a homeless hub, isn't it reasonable to assume that it will become a magnet for homeless people and that the area will start to attract the street drinkers and others who presently hang around the city centre?

The term hub refers to Richmond Court's proposed eventual role as the centre of operations of the new service. It will provide a base for the teams of accommodation and outreach staff delivering the new service as well as accommodation for up to 36 service users. It will not offer 'drop-in' facilities that might attract a footfall of non-residents and anyone who is offered a place there will have to have been referred through the Council's Gateway system – i.e. it will not be a place for self-referral.

If it is decided in January 2013 that Richmond Court should come into use as proposed, the refurbishment works required would not be able to start before February 2013 and have been estimated to take around seven months. This means that by the time the building would open in, say, September 2013, the new service would have been operating for more than nine months.

During this period the culture, expectations and routines of the new service will have established themselves and the displacement impacts of the closure of the existing services in the city centre will have been carefully monitored.

6. Existing service data

Introduction

A number of people have asked why the present services are to be replaced and why a new service and a new service provider are being introduced. In particular we have had requests for information about the levels and types of presentation and referral to the existing service and the levels and types of presentation and referral that have been predicted by the new service.

Q1 How many people – and what of kind of people – use the existing service? How many present or are referred repeatedly?

In the past it has been difficult to track numbers of presentations and referrals – partly because of the way information used to be collected and partly because until the Gateway was introduced in April 2012 there was no single point of referral into supported housing services.

In overall terms it is estimated that just over 300 people entered and left direct access supported housing during 2011-2012, but a significant number of movements into and out of services were made by the same individuals. These difficulties in recording and interrogating data have been addressed through the introduction of the Gateway and in the design of the new service.

Again, partly because of the way information has been recorded in the past, the majority of referrals and presentations are classified as ‘single homeless with support needs’.

Q2 What projections of presentations and referrals have been made for the new service?

The new service has been modeled on the information available about existing services, i.e. around 300 presentations/referrals per annum. However the new service model is based on achieving better and more sustainable outcomes for individuals and it is therefore expected that over time fewer repeat presentations and referrals will be made.

7. Property values

Introduction

It has been suggested by some people that the proposals for Richmond Court have had a negative impact on local house prices and activity in the local housing market. Others have expressed concern that Richmond Court as a going concern will deter buyers and keep values depressed.

The alternative view is that the current controversy may have had an impact on the market but that in the longer term the prospects for local values are relatively good, with the Waitrose development in the pipeline and the potential for the area as a whole to be better managed.

Q1 What impact on local property values will using Richmond Court as a homeless hub have in the short, medium and longer term?

There is anecdotal evidence that uncertainty about the role and future of Richmond Court is presently affecting the local housing market. Other factors also play on the housing market and it is notoriously difficult to assess the relative influence of different factors. The eventual impact of an operational Richmond Court cannot be predicted, but it is reasonable to assume that if it is managed well and is a success it will not have a negative bearing on the housing market.

Q2 Will there be an impact on insurance premiums and can residents claim the cost of installing extra security?

This may vary from one insurance company to another, but it is unlikely that there will be an impact on premiums if there is no increase in crime against property. It is not anticipated that residents should need to install extra security.

8. Post-consultation issues

Introduction

The Council has asked the Executive to commit to a full assessment of the feedback from the consultation and in the light of this to reconsider the suitability of Richmond Court as a homeless hub. This has raised the question of where the service might be provided from if Richmond Court is considered unsuitable.

At the present time the Council cannot say what alternative locations there might be. The service offer by FENW was based, and costed, on the assumption that Richmond Court could be used. If FENW were able to offer an alternative location that would not materially affect their service offer, this could be considered by the Council, but if an alternative location meant a significant variation to the service offer the Council might be subject to a challenge if it were to accept it.

One option might be to continue to provide the service from the existing accommodation. However, given the constraints on and limitations of the existing accommodation this would defeat the objective of introducing a new service model based on 'Places of Change'.

Q1 If Richmond Court is found not to be suitable, what alternative premises will be used? What is the Council's contingency plan?

Even if the Council decides that Richmond Court is suitable, it could not become operational for an estimated seven months. The interim arrangements that will commence at the end of November 2012 will therefore have to be in use over this period. If the Council decides it is not suitable then it will be necessary to identify alternative premises at a comparable cost during this period. Any alternative solution that could be held to be a variation in the specification of service could bring the validity of the procurement process into question.

Q2 Were other locations and/or premises proposed by other bidders and do these present alternative options?

The other bidder who reached the final submission stage proposed the temporary use of the existing premises in the city centre until alternative premises could be identified. There was however a clear acknowledgement within their bid that using the existing premises was far from ideal.

Q3 What works – feasibility or otherwise – will be undertaken at Richmond Court while the consultation runs its course through to the report to the Council?

Some feasibility and design work may be undertaken during the consultation period and some has been undertaken already. However no building works will be undertaken until after the report on the consultation has been considered by the Council

9. Other questions

Introduction

The questions and answers above aim to cover the various questions that have been received under these broad headings and subject areas. A number of miscellaneous questions have also been received and these are as follows.

Q1 What will the livery of the outreach bus be?

This has not yet been decided, but the intention is that the livery will be discreet. The use of the bus will be directed by service intelligence and so it will not need to draw attention to itself.

Q2 What is the definition of 'within walking distance of the city centre'?

This has not been defined in terms of time or distance. The reference occurs in the Council's specification of service which requires that the accommodation made available by the service provider should include 'emergency accommodation within walking distance of the city centre'.

Q3 Will FENW be run for profit?

No. FENW will be set up so that any surpluses earned on this contract will be reinvested in the service. This is also part of the payment mechanism for the contract.

Q4 Does the Canal and River Trust have a view about RC?

The Canal and River Trust (North Wales and Borders Waterways) have been asked for their views as part of the present consultation process.

Q5 Would a homeless hub on the Richmond Court site have got planning permission if a new application for such a development had been submitted in 2012?

This would depend on what the land use designation for the site would have been if Richmond Court had not been there. The fact that Richmond Court is there, and the fact that the land use is therefore residential, means that a new planning consent is not required.

Q6 Have Dee Valley Water expressed any concerns about Richmond Court ?

No. Dee Valley Water have been contacted about the proposals for Richmond Court and they do not have a view on the proposals either way. The company have said, however, that they would be happy to discuss plans for their assets in the area – i.e. the garages and reservoir – as part of future neighbourhood discussions.

Q7 Will the reported financial difficulties of the Cosmopolitan Housing Group affect the contract with FENW?

No. Chester and District Housing Trust (CDHT) are, and will remain, the owners of Richmond Court and will be partners to Forum Housing Association in the joint venture that is Foundation Enterprises North West. Although part of the Cosmopolitan Housing Group CDHT is responsible for the commitments required of CDHT by this contract and the Council is satisfied that it has the capacity to do so. The Riverside Housing Group, in looking at a merger with Cosmopolitan Housing Group, has confirmed that CDHT's position in relation to this contract would be unaffected by any merger.