

Ref:

Called in

Yes/No

THE THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET

Cabinet Member

Councillor Lesley Ann Game

Relevant Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods

Date of Decision:

19 September 2019

Subject:

Purchase of Foy House

Key Decision

Yes

In Forward Plan

Yes

Brief summary of matter:

Orbit Housing undertook a property rationalisation in 2018 which identified their current office in Margate High Street as surplus to requirements. Orbit vacated from the property at the end of February 2019 after securing a change of use from office to residential under Permitted Development Rights. Under Permitted Development Rights, the scheme has prior notification approval for eight residential units (6 x 2beds and 2 x 1 bed).

The Council has made an offer of £500,000 to Orbit to acquire the property to safeguard a key asset in the High Street and control how the property is used and managed in the future. The intention is for the Council to refurbish the property up to lettable standards to meet housing needs.

The Council has power under section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 to acquire properties for the purpose of providing housing accommodation. This purchase is in accordance with the provisions of the Act, and any relevant subsequent legislation and may become subject to Right to Buy.

To enable the purchase, a £1.63m capital scheme for Homelessness Accommodation was approved by the Council on 28 February 2019 as part of the 2019/20 capital programme. It is proposed to use this for the acquisition, design and build.

The indicative total cost of the proposed scheme is £1.2m, which can be met from the existing approved funding headroom. The residual £400,000 will be retained as contingency until more accurate and detailed costings are available.

Subject to further detailed design and any required planning approvals, the conversion could commence in early 2020.

Decision made:

Cabinet agreed the purchase of "Foy House", a vacant office building formerly owned by Orbit Housing.

Reasons for decision:

The purchase will ensure that the use of the vacant office building is safeguarded for the future of Margate High Street and provides an opportunity for the Council to bring the building back into use for those with a housing need.

Alternatives considered and why rejected:

Two alternatives were considered:

1. Take no action: This course of action would mean that the building would remain empty and potentially create an eyesore in the high street;
2. Agree a lease arrangement. This course of action is not considered to provide best value and does not provide security in the longer term to the Council or residents.

Details of any conflict of interest declared by any executive Member who has been consulted and of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None

Author of Officer report:

Bob Porter

Background papers

Purchase of Foy House

Statement if decision is an urgent one and therefore not subject to call-in:

None

Last date for call in: 27 September 2019