

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

11 December 2024

Joint Report by the Director of Business Operations & Partnerships and Director of Environment

COMMUNITY SAFETY 24/7 RESPONSE CENTRE AND OVERLEE HOUSE UPGRADES

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To update Council on property projects pertaining to the Community Safety 24/7 Response Centre environment and increasing the capacity at Overlee House. The report will outline the requirement for additional capital resourcing within each project.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council approves:
- a) an increase of £61k to the existing budget within the capital programme for the refurbishment of the Community Safety Response Centre project; and
  - b) an increase of £297k to the existing budget within the capital programme for the Overlee House project.

**BACKGROUND**

Community Safety Response Centre

3. An upgrade to the Council's existing Community Safety Response Centre was approved to enhance and improve the 24/7 working environment for the team responsible for CCTV monitoring; council-wide out of hours call-handling and telecare provision. This work was to address health and safety issues with the working environment; improve employee morale and enable more efficient and effective tasking of employees.

4. Initial costing for this work took place in 2019. Work commenced and was paused due to Covid lockdowns and restrictions, along with operational capacity issues with contractor availability thereafter. The upgrades were revisited in 2024, with new estimates now confirming that a total budget of £250k is required. There is currently £189k within the Capital Programme for these works, to meet this cost uplift, an additional £61k is now required.

Overlee House

5. In September 2024 the Council declared a Housing Emergency. This was in response to the high levels of homelessness and lack of available accommodation. The Overlee House project seeks to increase the number of units of temporary accommodation available. This in turn would help contribute towards the reduction in the significant revenue pressures of providing emergency hotel accommodation and would also help towards the potential for reducing the number of breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

6. At the pre-tender phase, the Overlee House project is anticipated to cost more than the available budget. In part this has been impacted by increases in service and material costs, however, there are also legislative requirements, such as for comprehensive sprinkler systems which have had an impact on anticipated pricing. The project should be considered an opportunity to spend to save; as the increase in available temporary accommodation will reduce the amount that the Council spends on hotel accommodation. This is a part of our overall strategy to increase the amount of temporary accommodation available to the Council.

7. The enhancement of capacity at Overlee House has been a standing consideration on the Council's Capital Programme, the currently available budget for this project is £553k, with £50k of this allocated for 2024/25. However, pre-tender works carried out have identified indicative costs of £850k for additional living space provision. As such, a further £297k would be required to meet these indicative costs.

## **REPORT**

### Community Safety Response Centre Refurbishment

8. In the period since the original 2019 costings and design for the Community Safety Response Centre, there have been updates made to building regulations. The primary impact of updated legislation has been in fire regulations, which have required a redesign to the original plans. Given the importance of the 24/7 Response Centre, which provides a telecare call handling service for nearly 3000 clients; handles the Council's out of hours calls (including homelessness, anti-social behaviour, housing repairs) and monitors CCTV, these works are considered a priority with several health and safety issues raised by employees and concerns about the working environment and the effectiveness of tasking given the current set-up of the room. The Control Room is a critical business operation with necessity for continued, uninterrupted operation; the systems also require contingency measures in place, as well as relevant cooling systems. A combination of these factors has led to the increase in estimated project costs.

9. The aims of the project are to refresh and modernise the facilities for the Council's Response Centre, enhancing the capabilities of the service while supporting the workforce in its operational delivery. The project will refresh the layout of the CCTV monitoring wall and the Telecare workstations to provide a centralised and integrated approach to the CCTV Control Centre work streams as well as enhancing resilience and improving the kitchen which is important given that shift-pattern staff are unable to leave the Control Room environment during their breaks.

### Overlee House

10. Increased costs have been driven by the time having elapsed since the project was originally priced for and included in the capital programme, and factors that have impacted upon this increase include general construction industry inflation (generally above Retail Price Index and Consumer Price Inflation inflationary measures). An additional cost pressure has been a changing legislative requirement upon all socially rented properties, impacting upon the need for a sprinkler system. With the building being considered a shared multi-occupancy residential building, the legislative requirements are that every building must be designed and constructed in such a way that, in the event of an outbreak of fire within the building, fire growth will be inhibited by the operation of an automatic fire suppression system.

11. Both permanent and temporary demountable accommodation provision options have been scoped for this site as part of the pre-tender costs identification. Both are similarly priced and could (assuming approval of additional funding) be delivered in approximately one year.

12. This should mean that there would be additional capacity at Overlee House by December 2025. Subject to approval, the permanent solution would deliver an enhancement of capacity by ten bed spaces across five flats on two floors, two of which would be ground floor accessible.

13. In September 2024, East Renfrewshire Council declared a Housing Emergency considering the homelessness caseload and lack of accommodation options available. Currently, the Council spends a significant amount of money in hotel and B&B accommodation as temporary accommodation. In 2023/24, the Council spent £1.246m on temporary hotel and B&B accommodation; with projected overspends of £1.5m for 2024/25. Given the lack of alternative accommodation, this results in the Council being in breach of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order on a regular and ongoing basis.

## **FINANCE & EFFICIENCY**

14. Additional capital funding of £358,000 is required to enable the successful delivery of the Community Safety Response Centre and Overlee House refurbishment projects in 2025/26.

15. Increasing the capacity at Overlee House would reduce the reliance on hotel and B&B accommodation. Rental income for the provision of Council owned temporary accommodation is fully recoverable from Housing Benefits whereas only approximately 12% is recoverable from hotel and B&B charges on average. For each additional unit delivered at Overlee House, there should be an anticipated revenue benefit of £40k via reduced reliance on hotels and B&Bs.

## **CONSULTATION**

16. This report has been jointly prepared by the Business Operations & Partnerships and Environment Department, in consultation with Finance colleagues.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

17. Work in delivering both projects will take place across multiple Council Services, as well as utilising contractors.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSALS**

18. There are no staffing, legal, Subsidy Control, equalities, sustainability, or climate change implications associated with this report.

19. Should the additional funding be received, the projects would enhance existing Council property, by either improving capacity or improving the facilities – all of which should offer significant improvements to the status quo.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

20. Upgrading the Community Safety 24/7 Response Centre and enhancing the capacity of Overlee House have been long-held Capital Programme ambitions for the Council. Both have approved funds in place; but have been impacted by changed legislative requirements, as well as significant increases in costing in the periods since they were initially approved.

21. The upgraded facilities within the CCTV Response Centre will enhance the Council's capabilities of delivering critical safety interventions, such as telecare, while providing adequate facilities for staff to carry out their duties in a safe and effective manner. Enhancing capacity at Overlee House will reduce our reliance on hotel and B&B accommodation but also acts as a critical programme for work considering the unprecedented homelessness crisis facing East Renfrewshire. In both projects, it is likely that costs would only further increase if there was a revisiting of either or both in future years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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- b) an increase of £297k to the existing budget within the capital programme for the Overlee House project.

## **REPORT AUTHORS**

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