
Report of the General Manager – 27th June, 2006

ITEM 5.12 **Future use of the former Whitehall Children's Home, Revesby**

FILE **BCC/000188**

AUTHOR **Service Planning and Commission**

ISSUE

To provide Council with an update on the status of the former Whitehall Children's Home, Revesby and options for future use.

BACKGROUND

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 26 April 2005, Council considered a request from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to extend the agreement for the Whitehall Children's Home and resolved the following:

- "1. Council approve a 13 months extension of the Deed of Assignment with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care for Whitehall Children's Home.*
- 2. Authority to execute the Deed of Assignment for additional 13 months from 1 June 2005 until 30 June 2006 in the terms outlined in this report under the Common Seal of Council be granted to the General Manager and Mayor.*
- 3. "A further report on options for the use of the site be presented to Council prior to June 2006."*

DISCUSSION

Under the lease entered into between the Intellectually and Physically Handicapped Children's Association of NSW and Council in 1982 and since reassigned under the same terms to DADHC, *Part 16 - Buildings*, states:

"The Lessee shall have the right to remove all buildings and outbuildings on the demised land which have been erected by the Lessee within 3 months of the expiry of this lease"

The lease is due to expire on 30 June 2006 and Council is still awaiting official correspondence from DADHC to advise that the facility has been vacated and under what terms they propose to vacate. Through informal discussions with Council officers, DADHC has indicated that they do not propose to remove the facility from the site.

Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 27th June, 2006

Building condition assessment

In anticipation of the impending hand-over of the facility to Council, staff engaged consultants to conduct a Condition Audit of the facility. The report has concluded that significant work is required for the building to be brought into line with current Building Code Of Australia requirements (Copy of report has been circulated to Councillors under separate cover).

Some of the major items requiring attention are:

Mechanical Services (Airconditioning Work)	\$89,500
Roofing	\$76,500
Paintwork	\$62,000
Floor Finishes	\$30,800

The estimated cost of works totals \$420,000, however this is based on the facility being upgraded for it's current use as a health building. Re-use of this facility for other purposes may significantly alter this estimate.

The estimated cost to demolish the existing structures is \$120,000

Potential future use of the site

Council has several options to consider for this site. The facility is situated on land that is classified as community land and zoned open space. Any action taken must be in accordance with a plan of management that would need to be developed specifically for this site.

Option 1

Request that the buildings be removed at the former lessee's cost on the basis that Council did not construct any of the buildings, did not control their usage, was not responsible for the maintenance and their reversion to Council in their current dilapidated state is an unreasonable burden on Council. It is likely that DADHC will not agree to this option and unfortunately the original lease condition did not require them to return the site to the condition that existed prior to the buildings' construction.

Option 2

Demolish all buildings at Council's cost and retain the area as open space for general community use. The estimated cost for demolition of the existing structures is \$120,000. Funds would need to be identified to cover the demolition costs as well as the cost of landscaping and other essential park infrastructure works.

Option 3

Demolish the buildings, reclassify the site to operational land, rezone it and ultimately dispose of the site. Consideration should be given to the impact on the Scout Hall that is located to the north of the site.

Option 4

Call for open expressions of interest to use the facility in its current condition and to upgrade it at the expressor's cost. Depending on the response, this may involve reclassification of the site from community to operational land as well as rezoning. Similar consideration should be given to the impact on the Scout Hall adjacent.

Option 5

Retain the community land classification, zoning and the buildings and investigate their potential for adaptive re-use by various community groups. This could be achieved by either allocating the site to selected groups or through an expressions of interest process to openly identify community demand and interest. Within the constraints of its community land classification and current zoning, the buildings may have the potential to accommodate a number of programs and services that could be conducted by various not-for-profit organisations. This process would be limited to community organisations supporting the Bankstown community. Council would need to identify the level of funding it was prepared to invest in any building upgrades or improvements.

POLICY IMPACT

There is no direct policy impact arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Early indications are that the minimum cost of works to rectify compliance issues is around \$420,000. In addition to this cost, works would be required to adapt the building for other users based on their specific needs. The cost of demolition is estimated at around \$120,000 but this cost is still subject to further discussion with DADHC on their intentions under part 16 of the lease.

Council has not identified any funds in its current or 2006/07 draft budget to carry out works at this site.

CONCLUSION

Upon termination of lease agreement with DADHC on the 30th June 2006 Council will secure the facility and ensure that DADHC has complied with all its lease obligations.

A decision on the future of the Whitehall buildings should not be made without Councillors first having the opportunity to fully inspect the site and consider all options.

Council has received two (2) requests from local community organisations for accommodation proposing to use this facility to provide programs and services that will directly support the local Bankstown community. In addition, Council has also received requests from two (2) other community groups to utilise the Revesby Community Hall for their permanent office and program space. This was not considered feasible, as this facility has limited meeting space that is well used by local community groups and residents.

If Council were to pursue an Expressions of Interest process (options 4 or 5) Council may be in a better position to determine if it is feasible to retain the buildings. If Council is to retain Whitehall for future community purposes, the substantial cost of modification of the 40 year old buildings to meet the practical needs of potential users must be weighed against other options eg to develop modern and purpose built community facilities at this or another location.

RECOMMENDATION

That -

1. A Councillors inspection of the former Whitehall site and its facilities be arranged at a suitable time.
2. Following that inspection, a further report be brought back to Council on the preferred options for the site.
3. A Working Party of Councillors and staff be convened to provide a recommendation to Council on the future use of the site.