

REPORT TO : SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 21 MAY 2001

REPORT ON : PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS AT THE ELMS, SECURE UNIT, SOUTH ROAD, DUNDEE TO ACCOMMODATE NEW OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

REPORT BY : DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK and CITY ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES OFFICER

REPORT NO: 321-2001

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report details new work which has been identified by the Social Work Services Inspectorate of the Scottish Executive and independent security advisers as being necessary to meet the operational requirements at The Elms, Secure Unit, South Road, Dundee. It also follows consultation with management, secure unit staff and local residents.
- 1.2 Improvements have been detailed in Clause 6.3.
- 1.3 To seek the Committee's agreement to proceed with these improvements at the earliest possible date.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee agrees:-

- 2.1 That all improvements summarised in Clause 6.3, be approved.
- 2.2 That the City Architectural Services Officer be authorised to negotiate with the original Contractor, Taycon Construction Ltd., Dundee, up to a value of £265,000 , and enter into a Partnering arrangement, with a view to agreeing a programme and carrying out this work at the earliest possible date.
- 2.3 That the South and West Wing (which includes Education), be closed during building operations to ensure the safety of staff, clients and residents. It is anticipated that the Secure Unit would require to be closed for a maximum period of 4 weeks.
- 2.4 That a Health and Safety Plan and Risk Assessment be prepared in conjunction with the Contractor and Management and that this be implemented to allow the North and East Wings (Close Support Unit plus Administration) to function during building works.
- 2.5 That a temporary site access be formed from Wellburn Street, via the old Tennis Pavilion site, to allow improvement works to be carried out to the access from South Road. It should be noted that the Council is owner of the ground which it is proposed to use for this temporary access.

The temporary access would be required for a period of approximately 4 weeks. Controlled traffic safety arrangements from the Elms would be implemented at Wellburn Street during this period.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The total cost of the improvements set out in Clause 6.3 is estimated at £265,000. The Scottish Executive have already agreed to meet the costs of the secure fire assembly point. A new application will be made to the Scottish Executive for capital grant and consent. The priority areas that they may provide funding for amount to approximately £150,000.

- 3.2 The balance of the funding will be included in the Council's 2001/02 Capital budget and this will be adjusted once the Capital Grant from the Scottish Executive has been approved.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

The following Local Agenda 21 item is being addressed by the implementation of these improvements.

- 4.1 Local needs are met locally.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Equality of opportunity is enhanced by ensuring that local young people who need this specialist care can be nearer their families.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The Elms was designed as a "Close Support and Secure Unit", and as such was granted planning consent and a building warrant. The building was designed to current building regulations, fire safety requirements, in accordance with the draft guidelines 'Secure 2000' and with the knowledge and experience made available at the time. The concept of a 'Secure Wing' within a close support unit was seen to be a new approach and one where it was hoped that the more open wing would offer encouragement to those in the secure side to improve their behaviour and so move, through the open side, back into the community.

The Close Support Unit and Secure Unit was built between February 1999 and June 2000 at a cost of £1.25 million.

Admissions to secure care are governed by legislation. A child may be placed in secure accommodation following the decision of a Children's Hearing in accordance with Section 70(9) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The Courts may also place a child in secure accommodation in certain circumstances under Parts V and XI of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995. This covers the young people where detention in prison or youth custody is deemed not necessary. Exceptionally the Chief Social Work Officer can authorise a placement in secure care but only with the agreement of the person in charge of the establishment.

Any admission to the secure places are subject to a maximum period of 3 months which is the standard Children's Hearing disposal or 110 days, which is the length of a remand from the Sheriff Court.

So far 10 of 12 children have been placed following a Children's Hearing decision. All young people admitted to date have been under 16 years on admission.

The principle behind the Secure Unit is to keep to a minimum the time young people are kept in security by moving them to the close support facilities where there is greater structure and support than that available in one of the open residential units.

- 6.2 Recommendations from the Social Work Services Inspectorate and security advisers, as well as operational experience, consultations with staff and local residents, have led to the need for security features of the building to be upgraded

Further consultations were held with outside Agencies and feedback was received from the Secure Care Forum which meets to discuss and share operational problems throughout Scotland.

Secure Units in other parts of Scotland have had similar experiences requiring increased security and revised specifications.

- 6.3 The main items identified for improvement and upgrading as a result of the consultations are summarised below :-

- Replacement locks and installation of manual locking systems and new doors to the secure unit.
- Replacement front door to be operated electronically and concierge/security officer to be on duty in front office for 24 hours per day.
- CCTV system to be extended to further areas internally and to entire external perimeter.
- Driveway from South Road and Car park to be resurfaced in bitumen finish and access driveway lights installed for additional security.
- Mature trees to be planted at east boundary to provide screening and these will be supplemented by further planting of shrubs and younger trees which will provide additional screening in 2-3 years.
- A secure fire assembly point to be built on the instructions of the Scottish Executive.
- Revised window restrictors, toilet accessories, downpipe protection and heavy duty electrical accessories to be fitted.
- Furniture requirements reviewed and adapted as required.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The measures outlined in this report will increase the overall security of the building, providing added security for staff so they can work more positively and confidently in addressing the often challenging behaviour of the young people referred to the unit.

In addition the measures will also address concerns raised by the Social Work Services Inspectorate and by local residents and locally elected members.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Directors of Education, Finance, Support Services and Corporate Planning, have been consulted on the contents of this report.
- 8.2 The Scottish Executive, various Security Advisers and Statutory Authorities were consulted on improvement proposals which have been identified in this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 No background papers, as defined by section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

Jacquie Roberts
Director of Social Work

John T P Porter
City Architectural Services Officer

JP/YM
13th April 2001