

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL



CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO HEALTH, WELLBEING & ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 March 2025

Report Title: Navigation House

Submitted by: Acting Service Director – Regulatory Services

Portfolios: Community Safety, and Wellbeing & Finance Town Centres and Growth, and One Council, People and Partnerships

Ward(s) affected: Town

<u>Purpose of the Report</u>	<u>Key Decision</u>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide Health, Wellbeing and Scrutiny Committee with a review of operations at Navigation House post planning permission being granted.			
<u>Recommendation</u>			
That HW&E Scrutiny:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receive this report.2. Undertake a tour of Navigation House once the building works are completed to view the accommodation and review the operating policy.3. Undertake a further site visit once the accommodation and operating policy has been ongoing for several months as part of the preparations to submit a planning application to continue after the first 12 months.			
<u>Reasons</u>			
In line with cross government strategy, we aim to end rough sleeping in the borough by 2025 and have embarked on an ambitious stepped approach to achieving this. Ending rough sleeping is defined as a position where rough sleeping is rare, brief and non-recurrent.			
The Shared Prosperity Fund Board have approved capital and revenue funding to develop a Homeless Hub for Newcastle-under-Lyme.			
This supports homeless individuals who are some of the most dis-advantaged in society and the furthest from accessing mainstream services.			

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2022 Cabinet approved a Shared Prosperity Fund bid to develop a multi-agency assessment centre with accommodation for homeless individuals. This recognised the increasing number of people resorting to rough sleeping and the lack of any suitable, safe accommodation with necessary support services available to offer them.

- 1.2** The bid recognised that finding a premises for the centre would be challenging as would the funding timescales which end on 31st March 2025.
- 1.3** Finding a premises did subsequently prove challenging and time consuming with International House on Stubbs' Gate eventually being identified because it:
- Is a detached premises of sufficient size for the intended use at an edge of town centre location.
 - Is a reasonably modern building that could be converted without extensive renovations and within the budget.
 - Is an enclosed, gated site with high walls.
 - Has an internal courtyard, with most windows facing onto it.
 - Has no ground floor windows facing the street.
 - Has no buildings immediately opposite on Stubbs Gate.
 - Has a well-positioned office to aid site supervision.

Cabinet approved the acquisition of the property for this facility and architects were engaged to develop plans to convert the building into 2 distinct and separate uses. A homelessness hub, to be open limited hours each week, and a unit of 12 bed 24/7 supported accommodation.

- 1.4** Separately, planning permission for its conversion was granted in September 2024. The Planning Permission is to operate for 12 months after the date of the first use of the building.
- 1.5** Procurement of a contractor for the refurbishment was undertaken via the Pagabo Framework using the dynamic purchasing system for small works AVP-HGS-1013 and following an initial expression of interest stage. The opportunity was advertised on 11th November 2024 with a deadline for response of 3rd December 2024. Eight tenders were duly returned by the deadline. Tenders were assessed based on 60% cost and 40% quality.
- 1.6** On 7th January 2025 Cabinet gave approval to enter into the necessary building contracts for refurbishment and approved the funding. The name of the property was also changed to Navigation house. Once open Navigation House will:
- Provide safe, secure emergency accommodation.
 - Provide an environment where agencies can be available to support individuals without the need for an appointment (often a barrier to engagement).
 - Provide access to Department for Works and Pension, Citizens Advice Bureau, rough sleeping services, housing providers, probation, adult social care, homeless healthcare, drug and alcohol services, etc.
 - Develop relationships / trust for ongoing referrals for support, advice, medical appointments, developing paths to move on into non-emergency accommodation to continue the support.
 - Offer showers and a laundry, a place to be clean and warm.
 - Offer advice and support to overcome financial problems, secure job opportunities, and sustain tenancies.
 - Be a one stop shop to support those that are vulnerable; to get the right help and support.
- 1.7** The benefits to the wider community will be:
- Reduce perceived and actual anti-social behaviour in town associated with rough sleeping.
 - Potential to increase footfall into town as people see reduced anti-social behaviour,
 - Supporting businesses who are impacted by this cohort not being adequately supported and housed.

- Improved health of the rough sleeper cohort and impact on long term health conditions,
- Reduce impact on Police, ambulance, and hospital as rough sleepers are high users.
- Remove current reliance on expensive bed and breakfast for emergency accommodation, which is a barrier to engagement, is isolating and fuels the revolving door of individuals between bed and breakfast and rough sleeping.

2. Issues

2.1 Managing refurbishment works on site

- 2.1.1 The contract for refurbishment has been awarded to M2 Construction. The contractor recently completed refurbishment works to council owned properties within budget while keeping a good working relationship and communication with the client and other building users.
- 2.1.2 Work is planned to start on 24th February 2025, dependent on contract signing. There will be full engagement with the contractor whilst on site with regular visits from the Council's Regeneration Officer.

2.2 Securing a partner to manage the accommodation

- 2.2.1 The homeless hub part of the building will be run by the Council. It will replicate the successful homeless hub currently held at the Salvation Army on Bridge St on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.
- 2.2.2 The Council will be seeking a service provider to run the 12 bed 24/7 supported accommodation part of the building in partnership with The Council. The service provider will be expected to have a successful track record in providing services to rough sleepers and individuals with multiple and complex needs. The Council would like to appoint a service provider at an early stage in the project to allow them to be engaged and involved with the design, set up and delivery of the project.
- 2.2.3 The service provider will need to be a Registered Provider and will be responsible for:
 - Running the provision on an Intensive Housing Management Model funded through housing benefit, so there are no ongoing revenue costs.
 - Managing the day to day running of the 12-bed provision, including, cleaning, safety checks, refuse, resident relations and behaviours, community cohesions.
 - CCTV monitoring and access on and off the site with appropriate logs/registers.
 - Providing 24/7 staff presence, including two waking staff and security at night.
 - Creating a Psychologically Informed Environment.
 - Developing and supporting move on options.
 - To participate in 'joint communications' and 'public relations' with the Council.

2.3 Local resident involvement

- 2.3.1 Following the granting of the 12 months planning permission neighbouring residents were invited to visit the building and discuss the plans. On 3rd October 2024 an 'open house' was held to enable a tour of the building,

review the plans and discuss aspects with Homelessness Lead Officers, Regenerations Officers and the Police. The project group will be working with neighbouring residents in relation to suggestions put forward to help mitigate concerns.



2.3.2 Further engagement will be held as refurbishment progresses. On completion of works and as the centre opens there will be monthly residents' meetings.

2.3.3 Following discussion with residents, works will include gates on the alleyways at the back of Navigation House.

2.4 Second Planning Permission Application

2.4.1 Planning permission is for one year from the start of operations at Navigation House. A second application will need to be submitted after approx. 6 – 9 months of operations and approval granted if the facility is to function after the end of the current permission. This is welcomed as it provides an opportunity for the centre to be reviewed based on a reality of the situation and operation.

3. Recommendation

That HW&E Scrutiny:

- 3.1 Receive this report.
- 3.2 Undertake a tour of Navigation House once the building works are completed to view the accommodation and review the operating policy.
- 3.3 Undertake a further site visit once the accommodation and operating policy has been ongoing for several months as part of the preparations to submit a planning application to continue operations after the first 12 months.

4. Reasons

- 4.1 The Shared Prosperity Fund Board have approved capital and revenue funding to develop a homeless hub for Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 4.2 In line with cross government strategy, we aim to end rough sleeping in the borough by 2025 and have embarked on ambitious stepped approach to achieving this. Ending rough sleeping is defined as rare, brief and non-recurrent.
- 4.3 This supports homeless individuals who are some of the most dis-advantaged in society and the furthest from mainstream services.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 Cabinet has previously considered options around creation of the Homeless Hub and considered the acquisition of a property, refurbish it and operate it as a Homeless Hub as the preferred option. These activities are in line with that decision.

6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 The project is in line with the Council's Housing Strategy 2020 - 2024 Priority 3 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and relevant statutory guidance with regard to homelessness and rough sleeping.

- 6.2 The use of the Pagabo small works AVP-HGS-1013 Dynamic Purchasing Framework offers a compliant route to market in line with both the Council's internal governance procedures and Public Contract Regulations 2015

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The location of Navigation House is intended to be accessible for all who need the facility.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the funding. This identified a positive impact due to the project providing accessibility to services for disadvantaged individuals.

8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 The project requires expenditure of the Shared Prosperity Fund for which the Council is the accountable body. A key decision report to Cabinet on 9th January 2025 set out the full financial information for the project.
- 8.2 The refurbishment project will be managed by officers from the Regeneration Team in consultation with Regulatory Services.
- 8.3 Once completed the accommodation will run on a be intensive Housing Management model that is funded through housing benefit. Funding for the homeless hub, which will be operated by the Council, will continue to be through the Government Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant.

9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 Unable to deliver the Shared Prosperity Fund project – consequences are loss of investment and no improvement of facilities for vulnerable local people. Control measures include project governance processes, project approval processes and the actions of the project subgroup in managing delivery of the project and associated risks and issues.
- 9.2 Not achieving planning permission for ongoing use – consequences are loss of a much-needed facility and subsequent impact on bed breakfast budgets. Control measures include close scrutiny and maintenance of all security and management measures put in place to ensure the centre can run without impacting the local community.

10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)

- 10.1 The delivery of the project supports those most vulnerable in line with the following UNSDG's:



11. **One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council

We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.

Refurbishment of Navigation House is intended to contribute to a reduction in the cost of providing accommodation for those who experience homelessness and to enable the efficient delivery of services to those that need it.

One Digital Council

We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.

Following its refurbishment Navigation House will benefit from connection to the Council's new fibre network enabling the efficient delivery of services to both its residents and service users.

One Green Council

We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle

The refurbishment includes works to make the building more energy efficient. This includes the removal of gas as an energy source.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This is not a key decision.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 Cabinet 19.07.22 [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

13.2 Cabinet 18.10.22 [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Contract Award](#)

13.3 Cabinet 19.09.2023 [Progression of the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Homeless Hub](#)

13.4 Planning Permission issued 19 September 2024

13.5 Cabinet 09.01.25 [Navigation House Refurbishment Contractor Award](#)

14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 None.

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 None.

