

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Use of Gardner Hall residential accommodation at Venns Road for key workers on short term basis from April 2020, for three months
Date of decision:	26 June 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Economy & Place
Authority for delegated decision:	Council constitution 3.7.9 all necessary decisions in the case of emergencies
Ward:	College
Consultation:	Alistair Neil (CEO) Richard Ball (Director for Economy and Place) Claire Ward (Solicitor to the Council/ Monitoring Officer) Andrew Lovegrove (Section 151 Officer)
Decision made:	To initially open Gardner Hall residential accommodation at Venns Road for key workers on short term basis for three months from April 2020
Reasons for decision:	<p>The decision was taken to make available overnight accommodation in Hereford city for key workers during Covid-19 response phase (April to July 2020).</p> <p>In March 2020 during the early stages of the Covid 19 emergency response an urgent need was identified to establish temporary accommodation for key workers in Hereford. Key workers defined as NHS, social care, social workers, police/ emergency services employees.</p> <p>The rationale for this was; A member of a key workers household may display Covid 19 symptoms which would lead to a requirement for a 14 day quarantine period. This could significantly reduce available key worker capacity at a time of emergency.</p> <p>A key worker may live with a person who was being 'shielded', asked by government to isolate for 3 months. This may mean a key worker in the same household would be unable to work for this period without alternative accommodation. This again would reduce available capacity during emergency.</p> <p>Additional key worker capacity may be required in Herefordshire, recruiting people from other areas of the UK who would need somewhere to live.</p> <p>Due to the lockdown accommodation such as hotels, bed and breakfasts were ordered to close, and private rental opportunities severely limited.</p> <p>As such a decision was taken to make the council owned student accommodation in Gardner Hall available free of charge to key workers who needed temporary accommodation.</p> <p>As lockdown measures are currently being lifted with alternative accommodation to be available again from July a subsequent decision has been taken to close Gardner Hall for key workers from the end of July 2020 and not extend this provision. It is anticipated that between September and December 2020 Gardner Hall will be required as temporary accommodation for Hereford College of Arts students not able to be accommodated in the Station Approach development which has been</p>

	<p>delayed due to Covid 19. As such, previous negotiations with NMITE to lease the Gardner Hall accommodation have been suspended until January 2021. NMITE will continue to utilise the Gardner Hall office space on the ground floor in the interim.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>To be occupied by individuals as licensees whilst employed by the NHS or Herefordshire Council and working as a key worker during the current pandemic, and no relationship of Landlord and Tenant will be created. The Council will retain control, possession and management of the property.</p> <p>Also available to other keyworkers if needed during current pandemic, such as the police.</p> <p>Occupiers must vacate in the event that their employment ceases and provide written notice immediately their employment with the NHS Council or the Council ends. In such circumstances they will be given one week's notice to vacate the property but the Council reserves the right to immediately terminate their occupation if the rules and regulations pertaining to the building are not complied with.</p> <p>In the event that the facility is no longer available four weeks' notice will be provided.</p> <p>Prolonged use of the residential accommodation by Herefordshire Council could delay the lease (in preparation) to NMiTE who currently have a Licence of the building at a reduced fee (not including a fee for the student accommodation). Herefordshire Council responsible for cleaning costs, utility costs and emergency repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council will reimburse NMiTE for energy and water consumption based on meter readings with effect from 27 April.</p> <p>Summary of Costs (April to July 2020)</p> <p>Legionella testing and monthly flushing (£467.65 per month) = total £1,870.60 Cleaning (£845.11 per month) = total £3,380.44 Utilities (NMITE estimate £1,620 per month) = total £6,480 Total Cost April to July of £11,731.04</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>A number of options for key worker accommodation were considered at the time, including;</p> <p>Hotel accommodation – the council engaged hotel operators in Hereford regarding re-opening to provide key worker accommodation. However, there was no clear demand for large volumes of accommodation on this scale, which would also have a significant cost.</p> <p>Other student accommodation – opportunities to utilise other student accommodation were explored. However, as Gardner Hall was in council ownership, and not subject to a rental agreement at the time (NMITE occupying the ground floor offices under a license agreement), it was identified as the most cost effective means of meeting the urgent need.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 26 June 2020

Richard Ball
Director for Economy & Place