

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee – 12 October 2017

Subject: Brookdale Park Huts

Report of: Strategic Director, Development

Summary

This report is produced at the request of the Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee to explain why the demolition of the Huts in Brookdale Park represent best value for the Council.

Recommendations

That Committee note the content of the report.

Wards Affected: Miles Platting and Newton Heath

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above

None.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is in response to a request from Scrutiny for a paper that sets out why the demolition of the hut in Brookdale Park represents best value for the Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The building in question is a timber framed panel building/structure (similar to a portakabin) that was erected circa 1975. The building was originally used as a Sure Start Centre, but has been vacant since 2012.
- 2.2 Various attempts have been made to re-let the premises, but these had been unsuccessful. The building was secured and alarm systems have been put in place due to the level of vandalism experienced in and around the building.
- 2.3 In 2013/14 a Building Surveyor and Structural Engineer were requested to visit the building and make an assessment, with a view to demolition. Their professional opinion was that the building was in very poor condition and that the structure had reached the end of its useful life. They noted that the panels were rotten, the roof had deteriorated in several areas and it would be easy for the property to be broken into by smashing through the panels, the door or roof.
- 2.4 The demolition works were put on hold when a local group expressed an interest in the property and asked that they be allowed to put together a Business Plan with a view to them taking over the building and putting the property in order.
- 2.5 This enquiry never came to fruition, and with the benefit of hindsight, at this point in time the group probably should have been advised that the building was not of a suitable standard to accommodate them. However, we were determined to explore all options.
- 2.6 Subsequently the Newton Heath Youth Centre expressed an interest in the building in April 2016 and had secured funding to support additional service delivery. The building was identified by the group as a potential location. The process of engaging with the commenced, with Council staff working with the group to support them and direct them to the various support channels/mechanisms.
- 2.7 It very quickly became clear that the building was in such a poor state of repair that it would never be possible to bring it back into use.
- 2.8 As the work with the Youth Group continued and became more widely known, other concerns were expressed about the proposal relating to the state of the building.
- 2.9 Eventually the decision had to be taken to demolish the building.

3.0 Why demolition represents best value

- 3.1 Attached at **Appendix A** are a set of photographs of the hut (internal and external). As can be seen from these pictures the property is in such a poor state of repair it would be uneconomic to refurbish it.
- 3.2 The location of the building in the park, which itself is subject to regular vandalism and anti-social behaviour, means that there is a need to secure the site and huts and the council has an alarm/response service in place at an annual costs of £3,500. Regrettably, despite these measures youths still target the building and break in and there has been further vandalism and deterioration of the building since these pictures were taken.
- 3.3. The poor state of repair of the building combined with the regular vandalism and break in mean that the building presents a Health and Safety risk. Despite the measures taken to secure and alarm the building it is recognised that the hut will continue to attract the attention of youths. There is a very real concern that youths breaching the security and playing on and around the hut may sustain injury, so demolition of the hut would negate this potential risk.
- 3.4 An estimate cost of replacing the hut is £175,000 plus VAT, whilst the cost of demolition is estimated at £30,000. Both estimates include estimates for on costs, connection or disconnecting utilities, contractor costs, installation or disposal and contractor overheads and profit; and in the case of a demolition the removal of materials from site.
- 3.5 In the last 2 months there have been 3 security call outs to this building and this is not unusual. The costs for the on-site alarm system/security are £3,500 a year, which includes 2 security check visits per week and a weekly test of the alarm. In addition to the security costs in the past 2 years there have been further costs of £225 in respect of boarding up after the property has been vandalised. The security contractor has also carried out boarding up works when identified following their weekly checks.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 Scrutiny Members are requested to:
 - 4.1.1 Note the poor condition of the property;
 - 4.1.2 Note the costs associated with securing the huts;
 - 4.1.3 Note the potential Health and Safety risks that could present themselves as the huts are a magnet to local youths;
 - 4.1.4 Note the levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour both within the park and around the hut.

Appendix A



