



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **NEATH PORT TALBOT CABINET BOARD**

**23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024**

#### **Report of the Head of Housing and Communities – Chelé Zandra Howard**

##### **Matter for Decision**

##### **Wards Affected:**

Pontardawe.

##### **Triage Feasibility Assessment**

##### **Purpose of the Report:**

To provide Members with the outcome of a feasibility assessment in respect of the potential to repurpose the Cross Community Centre (“the Centre”) into Triage provision.

##### **Executive Summary:**

This report sets out the conclusion of work undertaken by Officers to understand the feasibility of repurposing the Centre into a Triage service. The conclusion of this assessment is that the building would be unsuitable for the delivery of Triage.

## **Background:**

The development of Triage is key in the council's plan to reduce the number of homeless people placed in B&Bs and to help people in temporary accommodation quickly move into a new home. There is an identified need for two Triage centres in order to replace traditional temporary accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness. The Plan set out that each Triage centre would need to provide between 15 and 20 bedspaces ("units") in order to meet demand and deliver optimal operational efficiency.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024, Cabinet resolved to declare the Cross Community Centre surplus to the ongoing strategic and operational requirements of the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Directorate and to transfer ongoing responsibility for the future management of the premises to the Head of Property and Regeneration until such time as a decision is made on the future of the premises.

Given the size and geographical location of the Cross Community Centre, Housing Officers wished to explore the feasibility of repurposing the Centre into Triage. Redeveloping the Centre into Triage would have likely required the Council to financially invest in the capital costs of the development, as there are limited Welsh Government grant schemes for this type of accommodation.

The Head of Housing and Communities presented a report to Cabinet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 to request permission for Officers to undertake work so that they could better understand the potential option for the Centre to be repurposed for Triage and once that work was completed, bring back a report for decision.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024, Cabinet resolved to:

- Grant delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Communities to undertake additional work to finalise a proposal to repurpose the Cross Community Centre into a Triage Centre.
- If required, grant delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Head of Property and Regeneration to appoint a provider to develop the architect plans, obtain any necessary pre-planning advice and the provision of a quote for the cost for the refurbishment works to better inform the financial case.
- Once the above activities have been completed and a more detailed business and financial case has been developed, grant delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Communities to undertake an engagement exercise with the local community and other key stakeholders in respect of the proposals.

## **Feasibility Assessment**

### *The Building*

Housing Officers have now met with Architects to discuss the potential of redeveloping the Centre in line with the specification for Triage, which would require as a minimum:

- 15 units – self-contained 1 bedded flats with potentially some shared kitchen areas.
- 2 units of emergency out of hours accommodation (optional).
- Ground floor disabled facilities/room.
- Shared facilities: Communal area/ social space/ utility room.
- Designated area for interviews/training/skills development.
- Staff office space/sleep in area/bathroom/car parking.

- CCTV facilities /Wi-Fi/noise reduction.
- Outside smoking area.
- Courtyard/green space/time-out.

Following an assessment of the building plans, Architects indicated that it would not be possible to redevelop the Centre in line with the Triage specification.

Housing Officers worked with Architects to consider the possibilities of adapting the specification in line with the building's limitations. However, it was determined by Housing Officers that the extent of the adaptations to the specification would be prohibitive to operating an optimised service, which could then impact on the delivery of outcomes for those that require Triage.

The main limitations of the building that result in the proposal not being viable for the delivery of Triage are:

- Only space for 8 units (4 on first floor, 4 on second floor).
- Whilst there may be potential for 1 additional unit on the ground floor, the front of the property is in Flood Zone 2, which may mean that ground floor accommodation is not viable.
- The ground floor can only accommodate limited supplementary facilities, which would reduce the ability to undertake intensive support work required within a Triage.
- Over 50% of the basement has limited head room, which alongside the potential flood risks limits its use.

In addition, the building itself would require a range of alterations, including structural improvements, for it to be used as accommodation.

### *The Location*

Whilst there was an initial high-level assessment of the local area, further work has identified a number of additional considerations,

which indicates that the location of the Centre is unlikely to be suitable for Triage.

### **Financial Impacts:**

An initial estimate of the cost of works required to redevelop the Centre into Triage would be around £2-£2.5 million, however this does not take into account any unforeseen works that may occur.

There is also a need to consider one off costs such as planning, building regulations, architects and structural engineering fees, which would be in the region of £200-£250k.

The financial assessment indicates that there would be no financial benefit in utilising the Centre for Triage.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment, as the Officer recommendation does not result in any change to the current position.

### **Valleys Communities Impacts:**

No implications.

### **Workforce Impacts:**

No implications.

### **Legal Impacts:**

No implications.

### **Risk Management Impacts:**

### Risks Associated with Repurposing the Centre for Triage

The limitations of the building mean that the Centre would not support the development of the service model required for successful Triage provision, resulting in people not receiving the level of service they require in order to meet their identified outcomes.

Whilst achieving financial efficiencies through the development of different temporary accommodation models is not the main driver, the redevelopment of the Centre would not represent value for money due to the low level of units and high costs of redevelopment.

In addition, Officers have become aware of local area considerations that may result in the development of Triage having a disproportionate impact on parts of the community and those that would receive a Triage service.

As such, the feasibility assessment concludes that the Cross Community Centre would not be an appropriate building or location for the establishment of a Triage Centre

### Risks Associated with Not Repurposing the Centre for Triage

There is still a requirement for Triage within Neath Port Talbot, Officers will continue to work towards identifying a more suitable location and building for the provision of this service and Cabinet will be updated as this work progresses.

#### **Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

#### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that members resolve that the Cross Community Centre is disregarded as a consideration for Triage and/or temporary accommodation.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The Centre is unsuitable for the provision of a Triage service.

**Implementation of Decision:**

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

**Appendices:**

None.

**List of Background Papers:**

None.

**Officer Contact:**

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