



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Tamar Street Site
Date:	24 August 2012
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects: ext: 6217
Contact Officer:	Pamela Davison, Estates Surveyor: ext: 3506

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will recall that Committee agreed at the meeting of 25 April 2012 to accept a surrender of the current lease on the Tamar Street site from the Scout Association and approved the demolition and removal of the modular building located thereon. A copy of the previous Committee minute is attached at Appendix 1 and Location Map at Appendix 2.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	The lease surrender document is currently with the Scout Association for completion, and Belfast City Council has had the site inspected by contractors in preparation for demolition and site clearance.
2.2	Officers have however recently been contacted by two groups who have an interest in using the premises.
2.3	A request has been received from the East Belfast Protestant Boys Flute Band to have a long term lease of the property which they propose to upgrade. They also propose to make the premises accessible to a local historical and cultural society, a local women's group and a Lambeg drumming club.
2.4	A request also has been received from three groups working together (Lower Castlereagh Community Group, Templemore Action Group and the Forward Group). The three groups aim is to use the facility as a drop in for the hard to reach young men that they currently work with in the area. The young men are in the 13 – 18 age group and are either involved in or at risk of being involved in anti social behaviour. The groups would like to use this site as a venue where they could engage with this hard to reach group in a safe environment.
2.5	The Community Services Manager in the Development Department has been contacted regarding the above interests in the Tamar Street building. Community Services consider that there are alternative options within the area that would accommodate both groups and their partner organisations within their facilities. The premises include Connswater Community Centre, Ballymaccarrett Recreation Centre, Newtownards Road Women's Centre, Dee Street Community Centre, Walkway Community Centre, Skainos Centre and

	Ballymac Friendship Trust. All of these facilities are between 50 and 750 yards of Tamar Street.
2.6	Both groups are not interested in any of these alternative locations and both are interested in having the flexibility of having their 'own' premises and do not consider the other locations as suited to their needs. It is unknown, however, how both groups would propose to fund their proposed uses and whether any future Council revenue and/or capital funding would be required. The capacity of both groups to take on the lease and occupy and manage the premises is also unknown.
2.7	BCC did not acquire or construct the actual building (which is of modular construction) in Tamar Street and is only acquiring it as part of accepting an early surrender of the Scout Association's lease of the site which was due to expire on 30 September 2019, with an option to break in October 2014.
2.8	BCC had a planning assessment prepared on this site by a planning consultant in December 2010. The site is designated as 'white land' within the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 and as such is free from constraint and may be suitable for development subject to normal development control considerations. The return of the site to BCC may, therefore, facilitate future development along with the adjoining land in BCC ownership. However, if a new lease is entered into for these premises, BCC will not be in a position to develop the site further.
2.9	The premises, which comprise of a pre-fabricated modular building, are over 30 years and considered to be at the end of their useful life and beyond economic repair. They were formerly in the ownership of the Save the Children Fund and previously occupied a site in Carew Street before being relocated to Tamar Street.
2.10	In the event of Members changing their decision to demolish the premises and agreeing to re-let the building, the premises could be placed with an Agent on the open market for transparency reasons and to obtain the best terms for the premises rather than going directly to any individual group in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Finance:</u> The Scout Association paid a rent of £900p.a. for the site as they owned the building and held the site subject to clearance at lease end. Any new letting would be for the building but the rent would reflect the condition of the building. The previous Committee report of 25 April 2012 refers to the cost of demolition. In the event of Members changing their decision to demolish the premises and agreeing to re-let the building to a community based organisation there may well be future requests for revenue funding and /or capital funding.
3.2	<u>Human Resources:</u> Staff resources primarily from Property & Projects and Legal Services. If Member's decide to change their decision to demolish then Community Services staff resource may be involved with any future community related use.
3.3	<u>Asset and other Implications:</u> There are potential longer term redevelopment opportunities for this land given its planning status and its proximity to adjoining Council land. If the premises are re let for community use BCC will be increasing its community estate at a time when there is capacity within the existing premises to suit the needs of the groups expressing an interest in Tamar Street Scout Hall.

4.	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
-----------	---

4.1	The Lower Castlereagh Community Group, Templemore Action Group and the Forward Group currently operate 'community houses', NIHE properties which have been given to these organisations for community use. They consider that these community houses do not allow them to adequately meet community need and they are seeking larger premises that can accommodate larger numbers of young people. The East Belfast Protestant Boys Flute Band draws its membership from the local community.
4.2	In the event of Members changing their decision to demolish the premises and agreeing to re-let the building to any particular group the Council will need to consider the equality and good relations implications from any such letting.

5.	Recommendation
5.1	It is recommended that the previous Strategic Policy & Resources Committee decision of 25 April 2012 remains; i.e. demolition and removal of the modular building on Tamar Street on completion of the surrender of lease from the Scout Association. This recommendation is made on the basis of the capacity within other community premises in the vicinity to meet the needs of the groups interested in Tamar Street and secondly due to the age and condition of the premises.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Director of Property & Projects to ensure lease surrender completed and demolition and site clearance if approved within three months.

7.	Key to abbreviations
	BCC – Belfast City Council

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Committee Minute 25 April 2012 Appendix 2 – Location Map