

## Redevelopment of Riddle's Court

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### Education, Children and Families Committee

15 March 2011

#### 1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Committee to proceed with the redevelopment of the former Riddle's Court Community Centre in partnership with the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust.

#### 2 Main report

- 2.1 Riddle's Court is a listed 16<sup>th</sup> century building of historical significance located in the Royal Mile. The building was formerly used as a community centre and it is now in urgent need of upgrading. The building which links the Royal Mile and Victoria Terrace also houses the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and the Youth Café (6VT).
- 2.2 The Children and Families Department is keen to ensure the long term future and redevelopment of the building as a community resource. At the invitation of the Council, the Cockburn Conservation Trust (part of the Alba Conservation Group) undertook an Options Appraisal on Riddle's Court, working in partnership with CEC, WEA and the Friends of Riddle's Court. This was completed in 2009.
- 2.3 The preferred scheme arising from the appraisal is for Riddle's Court to be restored and adapted to form a 'Learning Centre' which would be operated in line with the principles and philosophy of Patrick Geddes, the famous Scottish pioneering town planner, conservationist and founder of a university summer school and student residence in the building. The aim of the project is to redevelop the building as a centre for learning and conservation securing its long term future.
- 2.4 Patrick Geddes was an internationally known educationalist and a Centre offering programmes based on his philosophy will attract participants from the local area and further afield. It is intended that the learning centre will attract people from a range of backgrounds and interests ranging from scholars studying the Geddes philosophy to those currently not participating in educational provision through a range of events and summer schools. It is hoped that a research library showcasing the work of Patrick Geddes may be

developed in the building. An important part of the provision will also link into the inclusive work of other Adult Education providers in the City such as WEA and the Adult Learning Programme (ALP).

- 2.5 Following the re-structuring of the Alba Conservation Group, the project is now being managed by Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) who due to their charitable status can access funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore old buildings. Access to this funding is not available to the Council. The group has an excellent track record of delivering this type of redevelopment, bringing old buildings which have fallen into disrepair back into productive use. Recent examples of the work of the Trust include the redevelopment of the Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness and the Greenlaw Town Hall in the Borders.
- 2.6 It is proposed that SHBT would occupy the building under a long term lease agreement with the Council, the term of which is commensurate with the requirements of capital grant funding. Appropriate break points would be negotiated and it is envisaged that an initial 5 year lease would be granted while SHBT apply for funding to undertake the capital redevelopment of the building.
- 2.7 SHBT propose to occupy the former second floor janitor's flat at Riddle's Court and use this as their Edinburgh Headquarters. Following the capital redevelopment of the building they would remain as anchor tenant. It is understood that the WEA and 6VT, who also occupy space in the building, would also remain in situ after the refurbishment.
- 2.8 One option under consideration as part of the capital works would see a lift installed between Victoria Terrace and the main Riddle's Court building providing full disabled access. It is recognised that the installation of this lift, which would exit in the Youth Café, may cause some disruption while building works are undertaken and this would be handled as sensitively as possible, with full screening, safely segregating the Café from the works. Access to the Café premises may, however, be required during the period of construction works, as and when required.
- 2.9 Officers in Children and Families and City Development are in the process of developing an outline Heads of Terms for Agreement between the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) and the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) for the future repair, conservation and management of Riddle's Court. The SHBT would become an anchor tenant for both the initial lease and an extended lease and would remain as managers of the building once the capital project was complete. The existing janitor may require to be redeployed. The future use of the building by CEC and other parties would be reflected in this agreement.
- 2.10 The establishment of Riddle's Court as a 'Centre for Learning and Conservation' can only be made possible through grants from Historic Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund and other key funders. In order to utilise fully the grants and obtain full benefit from them it will be necessary for all parties involved in the building to use all reasonable endeavours to work

together, in a spirit of co-operation, for the enhancement, care and promotion of Riddle's Court and its availability to provide an ongoing public benefit. Future financial and governance arrangements relating to the building and its management, both during the restoration project and beyond, will be documented at the outset.

### **3 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 CEC would, under this proposal, pay to SHBT an annual sum of £44,000 to manage the building. The costs can be funded within the current budget for Riddle's Court and will result in a saving of at least £9,000 per annum to the Children & Families Department. This fee would be paid for the initial five year lease term, and can be extended until Practical Completion of the capital project (to a maximum period of 10 years duration).
- 3.2 This management fee would cover all outlays on the building, based on the current costs of the building to CEC of £53,000. As a charity SHBT qualify for rebated rates to the value of £14,000. The sum payable to them reflects this but includes an additional £5,000 towards maintenance and repair per annum.
- 3.3 The management fee would be paid annually on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year for the duration of the initial 5 year, commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. Any extension of the initial lease period, after completion of the capital project, to upgrade the building would be fully managed by SHBT with no further contribution from CEC.
- 3.4 For the duration of the Initial Lease, SHBT would be entitled to all income from current office rents and public/meeting room hire.
- 3.5 The building would remain a CEC property. CEC use of the building would be protected within the lease agreement under terms to be agreed and the initial management payment would be contained within the current premises budget for Riddle's Court.

### **4 Environmental Impact**

- 4.1 The project would see the upgrade and preservation of a listed historic building in the heart of Edinburgh's old town.

### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that Committee:
  - a) Authorise the Directors of City Development and Children and Families to conclude an initial 5 year lease with the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust for the occupation of Riddle's Court;

- b) Agree to receive updated reports when the final scope of works and the associated position re capital funding to redevelop Riddles court is known;
- c) Note that a lease beyond an initial 5 year term will require to be approved by the Finance and Resources Committee.

**Gillian Tee**  
Director of Children and Families

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Appendices	None
Contact/tel/Email	David Robertson 0131 469 3149 d.robertson@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	Ward 11 City Centre
Single Outcome Agreement	National Outcome 12
Background Papers	