

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting: 27th June 2024

REPORT NO.
7

WHITEHAVEN OFFICE

Purpose: To update members on progress with the Whitehaven office situation.

Recommendations: That the following resolutions are accepted:

- The Authority's solicitors write to Cumberland Council on our behalf setting out our position in relation to Duncan Square, as per the appended draft letter.
- Members give the CEO formal approval to pursue a lease at Marlborough Street and ring-fence £80,000 of General Reserves to fund the move and refit.

1. Ownership of Duncan Square

Our solicitors, Ratcliffe and Bibby, have provided advice on how the Authority should proceed in relation to the ambiguity surrounding the ownership of Duncan Square. Further to the update provided to members at the previous full Authority meeting, I can confirm that, contrary to what I communicated at that meeting, the lease for the property is in fact in Cumberland Council's name, not ours. Daniel Coll from Ratcliffe and Bibby provided a comprehensive verbal overview to the Finance & Personnel Sub-Committee (F&P) on 10th May of the current situation with regards Duncan Square and our options in relation to it. He advised that we write to the Council setting out our position in respect of our occupation and ownership of the property and await their response; F&P members voted in favour of this. A draft of this letter is appended to this report for members' consideration. I recommend that members vote to issue the letter as drafted with a view to opening up a dialogue with Cumberland Council regarding disposal of the property.

2. Marlborough Street

At the F&P meeting on 10th May, I updated members of the sub-committee on progress with informal discussions with the prospective new owner of the property on Marlborough Street in Whitehaven. I also set out an approximate budget for expenses relating to moving to, and modifications of, the property; this was £80,000. F&P members then voted to recommend to the full Authority that we continue to pursue a lease at Marlborough Street and ring-fence £80,000 of our unallocated General Reserves to fund the move, subject to the appropriate procurement processes being followed for any capital works undertaken at the property. I recommend that members vote to ratify this.

Mark Taylor, North Western IFCA CEO, 17th June 2024.