

New firm takes up supported housing project in Livingston

A project to build supported housing for young people in Livingston has been saved with the appointment of a new contractor.

The news came on the day councillors had sought assurances that the project which had stalled in January would continue.

The head of housing told a special budget meeting that delays to completion of the project originally scheduled for late summer would be minimal.

Ogilvie Construction Ltd has been appointed as the main construction contractor to take the project forward to completion via Hub South East, a delivery partner of the council.

Construction works stalled when the Ayrshire-based firm Connect Modular collapsed at the start of the year. A council spokesman confirmed this week that works are set to restart on site imminently.

At Tuesday's budget meeting Linlithgow Councillor Pauline Orr asked for updates on the site at Almondvale Crescent in Livingston.

She said: "You are noting the additional supported housing in Livingston as an achievement, but the contractor has gone bust so where are the council in respect of finding a replacement contractor? How long will the project be delayed and will that be at further cost to the council?"

Julie Whitelaw, the Head of Housing Customer and Building Services told the meeting that the delay “would be minimal”, with no added financial cost to the council.

She added: “The council has been working with Hub South East, our key delivery partners, to find another contractor. Ogilvie has been instructed to take on the work. There will be a slight delay but we’re hoping that will not be a significant delay

“The cost to the council will simply be in that there’s a delay in the units being available for the young people.

“We will report back with the usual update on the capital programme, but we’re pleased to announce that the delay will be minimal- a matter of months.”

After that announcement at the budget meeting George Paul, the Executive councillor for Housing Services said: “It is very pleasing to see a contractor appointed so quickly that will allow work to recommence on site.

“All parties are committed to seeing work continue on this very important project to enhance social housing in the Livingston area, particularly creating specific units for homeless young people. Council officers will continue to work with Hub South East to ensure the remaining elements of the project progress to completion.”

Greig Jamieson, Hub South East’s Commercial Director, said the “flexibility of the Hub programme” had allowed for swift solutions following the collapse of the Ayrshire firm.

“Demonstrating the strength of our supply chain, partnership approach and the flexibility of the Hub programme, in less than eight weeks we have worked closely with West Lothian Council to navigate the complexities of the situation, appoint a new contractor and work is now under way again to provide this much needed supported housing for young people.

“Ogilvie Construction is experienced in the housing sector, and we look forward to working together on this innovative project as we assist in realising our client’s commitment to the delivery of new affordable housing in West Lothian.”

Grier Edmead, Operations Director at Ogilvie Construction said: “We look forward to working with West Lothian Council and Hub South East Scotland to deliver such a significant project that will benefit the community for generations to come. Our team has an extensive and proven track record in the delivery of quality affordable housing developments across Scotland.”

Plans for the supported housing consists of 28 one-bedroom flats in total, with 16 flats designed to be flexible for future use as mainstream housing. Flexible office space will be provided for a maximum of ten staff members along with staff overnight accommodation to provide dedicated space and privacy, whilst still being on hand to assist and support the young people.

The affordable housing element of the project will provide 20 units with a mix of two and three-bedroom houses, along with two and three-bedroom flats.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter