



SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL
CHILDREN'S HOME WITHIN THE COUNTY BOROUGH**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Scrutiny Committee of the proposals to utilise Welsh Government Integrated Care Fund Capital monies to establish an additional residential children's home within the County Borough in line with the strategic plan to increase in-house provision.
- 1.2 To advise Scrutiny Committee of additional capital funding that has been allocated in principle through Service Specific Reserves.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee is fully aware of the current development of Ty Isaf, a four bedded children's home utilising ICF capital grant funding. This is on schedule to be operational from the autumn, a Registered Manager has been appointed and the staff team is in the process of being recruited. Four children currently placed out of county have already been identified to transfer to the home when it becomes operational.
- 2.2 Children's Services applied for additional ICF Capital in 2019/20 to establish a third residential children's home. This bid was successful and Caerphilly County Borough Council was awarded £750k. Unfortunately, appropriate properties were unable to be identified and the monies were unable to be spent so Children's Services requested that the capital allocation be carried forward into 2020/21 which was agreed by Welsh Government.
- 2.3 This report serves to apprise Committee Members of the overall strategic plan for children's residential care in Caerphilly and update Committee on developments to date.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 For Scrutiny Committee to note the strategic plan to increase in-house residential

care provision for children and young people.

- 3.2 In line with the above, for Scrutiny Committee to endorse the proposed development of an additional residential children's home within the County Borough.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Scrutiny Committee is fully aware of the proposed plan to expand in-house residential care capacity for children and young people.

5. THE REPORT

Children's Residential Care in Caerphilly:

- 5.1 Scrutiny Committee is fully aware of Ty Ni, a long established four bedded children's home in Penyrheol.
- 5.2 Committee will also recall that in 2017, the Council was placed under huge financial strain due to the costs of an individual Court Ordered residential placement which was made because there was no alternative placement in the UK at the time. In order to reduce these costs and improve the quality of care for that child, the Council endorsed a plan to staff a suitable property in order to provide care in-house. The revenue costs of the in-house provision would represent a significant saving on the basis of this individual placement alone.
- 5.3 A potential property, Hillcrest, was identified and recruitment of a Registered Manager and staff team commenced. Unfortunately, whilst being refurbished, the house suffered significant water damage that set the plans back by several months and meant it was no longer feasible. An alternative placement was eventually identified for the specific child thereby reducing the immediate financial burden.
- 5.4 However, as a result of the national residential placement shortage and the extreme costs associated with such placements, it was agreed that Children's Services would continue with the plan to increase in-house residential provision and a bid for ICF capital grant funding was made to establish a second children's home. This bid was successful and in 2018 £700k was awarded to the Council to purchase a property.
- 5.5 Whilst trying to identify suitable properties, a second child with extremely challenging behaviours was unable to be placed anywhere in the UK and Children's Services had to create an in-house bespoke placement. Utilising a Council owned domestic property and the staff team that had been previously recruited for Hillcrest, a single placement home was established in Newbridge. Known as Ty Coed, the home is now fully registered with CIW and the intention is that it will be maintained after the specific child moves on in order to manage any future challenging children where placements cannot be identified or where children need to be placed on their own.
- 5.6 Subsequently, the ICF grant purchased the property known as Ty Isaf in Llanbradach in March 2019 and plans for refurbishment to meet registration standards were drawn up. Unfortunately, these plans had to be put on hold because Children's Services had to use the property to accommodate yet another single child in the absence of any alternative residential provision anywhere in the UK. This child was positively supported to move to a long term placement in January 2020. Building work

commenced but had to be halted in March due to Covid-19. Work recommenced in June and is on line for completion in October.

- 5.7 As part of the longer term strategy to increase residential provision in Caerphilly, a second bid was made for £750k ICF capital in 2019 and was successful. Due to the lack of available properties in the County Borough, Welsh Government agreed that the capital allocation could be rolled forward into 2020/21.
- 5.8 In summary, the final residential provision planned for children in Caerphilly is three 4 four bedded children's homes and one single bedded home thereby offering up to 13 in-house placements.

Update on developments:

- 5.9 For obvious reasons, given the nature of the service provided and the potential opposition within communities to any such proposed development, a property needs to be detached within its own grounds and preferably with some level of isolation. To accommodate four children and meet registration requirements the property has to be large enough to offer a minimum of four bedrooms and two bathrooms in addition to spacious living accommodation and outside space.
- 5.10 Whilst there is no doubt that Covid-19 impacted on the housing market, it continued to prove difficult to identify suitable properties within the Borough within the budget allocated.
- 5.11 Committee will be aware that due to a positive financial outturn for Social Services, Service Specific Reserves have been able to be allocated to numerous developmental projects across the Directorate. One of the Children's Services requests was to add capital funding to the ICF grant in order to support expanding the search for suitable properties.
- 5.12 As a result, Children's Services has been allocated an additional £250k from Reserves to bring the overall budget up to £1 million.
- 5.13 Searches are ongoing using Right Move and independent estate agencies together with building personal links with local agents in an attempt to identify potential properties in advance. All possibilities are being explored but most are ruled out because of proximity to neighbours. Despite the increased investment available, to date an appropriate property has yet to be identified and secured.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The expansion of the residential estate is based on the assumption that the revenue funding is already allocated or has to be allocated for children currently placed or planned to be placed in residential care. This revenue will be transferred to the in-house provision as children are returned to Caerphilly from out of area placements or are placed in Caerphilly.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014
- 7.2 Regulation & Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016

- 7.3 Children's Services Commissioning Strategy
- 7.4 Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
- 7.5 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023.** The content of this report contributes towards Well Being Objective 6: Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

8.1 The content of this report contributes to the following Well Being Goals:

- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

and is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council's full Equality Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The revenue costs for the residential homes will be funded through diverting existing placement costs to in-house provision as children are returned to Caerphilly or are placed in Caerphilly.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Personnel or HR implications arising from this report

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The views of consultees are incorporated into the report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2014

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