



CABINET – 17TH JANUARY 2024

SUBJECT: PURCHASE OF A PROPERTY TO DEVELOP SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR CARE LEAVERS

REPORT BY: HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the plans to purchase a property to develop supported accommodation for young people leaving care who are aged 16-18 years and to confirm the purchase price which is above the independent market valuation.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Cabinet received a report in July 2022 outlining the plans for Children's Services to expand both residential children's homes and supported accommodation options for young people making full use of Welsh Government grant funding available through the Regional Integration Fund (RIF).
- 2.2 Whilst the availability of suitable properties in suitable locations has hampered progress, the strategic commitment to expand in-house care options has continued to be a priority and has been further strengthened by Welsh Government's (WG) pledge to eliminate profit from children's care.
- 2.3 A suitable property for development to offer supported accommodation for young people aged 16 to 18 years has now been identified and purchase negotiations have commenced. In line with WG funding criteria, the grant can only cover the market value of the property which is not necessarily the estate agents or vendors valuation. In this instance there is a difference of £50,000 which Cabinet are asked to approve.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to note the content of this report and confirm their support of both the purchase price and the intended future use of the property.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Cabinet is fully aware of the service development and supports the

acquisition of the property for £50,000 over the independent market valuation.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 As stated above, Cabinet has previously approved plans for the expansion of care and accommodation provision for Children Looked After, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 5.2 Since approving the plans, two solo placement children's homes have been purchased, two annexes in existing children's homes are being extended to provide crisis / move on placements and the development of a new build property in Rhymney is progressing.
- 5.3 The search for properties has been ongoing and a suitable house for conversion to become supported accommodation has been identified in Park Place, Newbridge. The house offers 7 bedrooms in the main house with a further 2 bedrooms in a self contained annex. It is a large detached property in its own grounds with ample off road parking and is in close proximity to the town and transport links.
- 5.4 Although too large to develop as a Registered Children's Home, the house is ideal for the provision of supported accommodation for young care leavers – offering an important step on their journey to independence. Children's Services is under growing demand for accommodation options for young people aged 16 to 18 years. Current provision includes foster care, supported lodgings and both supported and unsupported houses ie staffed or not.
- 5.5 It is proposed that this development will be staffed 24 hours a day with the support being commissioned from an independent 'not for profit' provider specialising in providing supported accommodation for young people. Effectively, whilst the Council will own the property, the service will be run by the independent provider. Such arrangements are already in place in Children's Services with both Llamau and Pobl.
- 5.6 The property was marketed by the estate agents at £1.25 million. Following viewings by officers including Children's Services and Properties, it was confirmed that the property was suitable to meet the needs of the service and an independent market valuation was commissioned in line with financial and procurement requirements. This independent market valuation concluded a value of £1.05 million.
- 5.7 In line with the capital grant funding criteria, WG are only able to fund up to the level of the market value and therefore the Council offered £1.05 million to purchase the property. This offer was rejected but the vendors confirmed they would accept £1.1 million.
- 5.8 Due to the Christmas holiday period commencing, the Head of Children's Services sought verbal agreement from the Leader, Cabinet Member, Deputy Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to fund the shortfall of £50,000 from Service reserves. The offer was subsequently made and has been formally accepted subject to the usual surveys, searches and confirmation from WG.
- 5.9 Whilst the funding amount falls within the Delegated Decision Making process, it was recommended that Cabinet be sighted on the matter and provide their approval.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 This report assumes the allocation of £1.05 million WG Capital Grant funding via the Gwent Regional Partnership and an allocation of £50,000 from Social Services reserves.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The provision of suitable accommodation options for Children Looked After and young people Leaving Care is a statutory requirement and any additional provision is therefore of great benefit to those specific groups of children. Where the need for accommodation has been assessed, the individual needs of that child or young person have to be met including any additional protected characteristics. On that basis there are no intended or unintended adverse impacts resulting from this development and the Council's full Integrated Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As stated, the development is reliant on the allocation of £1.05 million WG grant funding and £50,000 Council funding through the use of Service reserves.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel or HR implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects the views of consultees. In light of this report being presented to Cabinet, consultation with the relevant Ward Members for Newbridge has commenced.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014

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Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Councillor Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Councillor Elaine Forehead, Cabinet Member for Social Care
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Mark S. Williams, Director of Economy and Environment
Richard Edmunds, Director of Education and Corporate Services
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer

Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
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