



Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 17th March 2021

Subject: Approval to spend for the new specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs.



Are specific electoral wards affected? Temple Newsam If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

Main issues

- This report outlines plans to spend an estimated £1.858m to build a new specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs on the site of the old Pinfolds Childrens Home, Field Terrace, Halton. The accommodation will facilitate the reintegration of children currently placed outside of the authority back into Leeds. A subsequent DCR / Tender Acceptance report will follow final confirmation of budget requirements.
- This project will support the aims of Children's and Families by providing a fit for purpose specialist children's home that meets the current and future demand within Leeds. The home will ensure that children are able to maintain a close relationship with their families and friends and also transition into adulthood within their local communities.
- The new home will also reduce the ever increasing burden placed on Leeds City Council budgets by reducing the need to pay for extremely expensive out of authority children's placements.

Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- To meet the 'Best Council Plan' the proposed new home will support the 'Child Friendly City' by providing a specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs within Leeds. The new home will ensure children get the best start to life and facilitate contact between families and friends to maintain close bonds

and relationships and maintain social, emotional and mental health as they grow towards adulthood.

- The home will also contribute towards 'Health & Wellbeing' by providing a bespoke living environment so children get the right care, from the right people in the right place.
- In addition, the home will provide 'value for money' by reducing the current number of very expensive packages of support required when placing children outside of the Leeds authority.

Resource Implications

- The estimated cost for capital works is approximately £1.858m (as at RIBA stage 3). This includes all associated costs attributed throughout the scoping, designing, planning and build phases.
- It should be noted that upon completion this home will allow for some of our most complex children placed outside of the authority to return to Leeds and therefore it is estimated that cost savings of £626k will be achieved across a 6 year period, with savings continuing into future years. This contributes to the aims of Leeds City Council to be 'financially resilient and sustainable'.

Recommendations

The Executive Board is requested to:

- a) Note the current project cost estimate of £1.858m for the construction work and associated fees to facilitate the build of the new specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs.
- b) Delegate approval of the Authority to Procure (ATP) and Design and Cost Report (DCR) to Director of Children and Families.
- c) Note that Chief Officer Social Work will be responsible for the appointment of all required staff to the new specialist children's residential home.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

1.2 To provide background information with respect to the requirement to build a new specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs. This new home will be built on the old site previously known as 'Pinfolds children home' situated on Field Terrace in Halton. In doing so, the authority will ensure a fit for purpose specialist provision home is made available for children currently placed outside of the authority and in turn ensure relationships with family and friends are nurtured.

1.3 Alongside this, the report details works to be undertaken at the site of the new specialist children's home and the advantages this will have for some of our most vulnerable children within the City.

1.4 To seek approval for delegation to the Director of Children and Families for the Authority to Procure (ATP) and Design and Cost Report (DCR) for the aforementioned works.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Currently there are a number of our children and young people with complex needs who are looked after and who live in external residential homes as Leeds does not have enough appropriate and specialist provision to meet their needs. This cohort of children typically have learning difficulties, are on the autistic spectrum or have a high level of physical or medical needs. They often display high levels of behaviours that challenge.
- 2.2 There are logistical and wellbeing issues created for our children and young people who live at a distance from their families, friends and communities. This is mirrored by the practical and operational issues for local professionals and the potential negative impact this has on preparing for adulthood and transition to local adult services. We have evidence to suggest that transitions for young people living locally benefit from closer working relationships with their family, support networks and professionals. This improves the quality of the assessment and planning for future needs and required provision therefore improving the young person's life experience and reducing the risk of placement breakdown.
- 2.3 The overwhelming majority of these children and young people are male teenagers with high level complex needs and behaviour that challenges. They have all previously accessed specialist education provision. The background for these children and young people coming into care is almost always a crisis in the relationships at home and/or the family's inability to meet the child or young person's needs. This impacts on the education provision and subsequently the entire situation deteriorates and breaks down.
- 2.4 It is also important to note that placing children outside of their local areas and far away from their families is very expensive and contributes massively towards ever depleting authority budgets and feeds the increasing profits of private providers of child care. Research by the Local Government Association (LGA), published in January 2021 by LocalGov.co.uk outlined this very point. LGA stressed the need for Government to act quickly to ensure greater financial support was provided to children's services to ensure all children could continue to live locally and thus improve outcomes for each individual and decrease the financial burden on every local authority.
- 2.5 Leeds City Council is currently spending **£15,200,000** annually on **63** of our children and young people looked after living in external residential homes. Currently there are **10** children and young people with complex needs with a combined predicted annual cost of **£2,655,000**. Of these 10 children, the **4** children that have already been identified to transition back into Leeds as soon as this specialist provision is built cost the authority approx. **£1,300,000** annually.
- 2.6 Analysis of trend data highlights the steady increase of children and young people entering out of authority placements over the past 5 years however that increase climbs slowly and will reduce when this new specialist provision is in use.
- 2.7 It is important to note that the above information needs to be considered in the context of the population and need growth in Leeds and the fact that our existing

specialist residential home, Acorn Lodge, dealing with children with similar complex needs is always full.

- 2.8 Acorn Lodge is consistently judged as outstanding by Ofsted and is recognised as being innovative, personalised with outcomes focussed care and support for all of the children and young people that live there.
- 2.9 The new specialist provision will use the best practice and living environments of Acorn Lodge to inform its design.

3. Main issues

Design Proposal and Full Scheme Description

- 3.1 Childrens and Families Leadership Team considered a report sponsored by the then Chief Officer – Partnerships which sought approval to the proposal for Leeds City Council to build a new residential children’s home on a ‘spend to save’ basis. The new home would specifically cater for children and young people with high level complex needs who are currently accommodated in out of area placements.
- 3.2 In 2019 the proposal to proceed was allocated to a project manager work was initiated with the subsequent identification of a project team consisting of relevant professional colleagues working alongside NPS Leeds Ltd.
- 3.3 The project team continued to work at risk during the pandemic to ensure the project maintained momentum prior to final consideration for approval by Executive Board. This level of risk was deemed acceptable as continued updates were provided to senior leaders with Children and Families’ Services. In addition a Councillor Briefing was issued in November 2020.
- 3.4 The project team has consequently undertaken a substantial amount of work to identify how this new provision needs to look and function in order to meet the specific needs of those children with autism and complex needs. Design has been informed from the learning of running Acorn Lodge, an outstanding children’s home for children with complex needs, as well as Rainbow House which is a ‘short breaks’ home offering care for children with the most severe and complex needs similar to those that we already know will move into the new specialist provision.
- 3.5 The current working title of the new home is ‘Acorn Lodge 2’ however this will change as we near completion and we engage on a consultation exercise with the new staff team, local community and children and young people moving into the new provision.
- 3.6 The proposed ‘Acorn Lodge 2’ specialist children’s home will have the feel and look of a standard 5 bedroom home with the inclusion of parking spaces and specific outdoor play areas. The home will have 1 main entrance for children, young people and families and a more discrete entrance for working professionals. The environments include:

Children environments

- 4 bedrooms all ensuite
- Sensory play room
- Rebound room

- Wet play room
- Sensory bathing room
- Arts and Crafts room
- Internal courtyard (to offer outdoor play within a safe environment)
- Kitchen
- Living room
- Dining room
- Open lounge area

Professional environments

- 1 bedroom ensuite
- Office space
- Meeting rooms
- Medical room
- Family room

Outdoor environments

- The external design strategy will cater for the varying needs of the children and the different social and physical requirements that autism presents. The design will help to meet the complex needs and aspirations of the children in a supportive environment alongside being low maintenance spaces.
- Separated areas, or 'garden rooms', will be designed with specific activities assigned to each, providing a clear structure to the garden with distinct and understandable sections separated by consistent and rhythmic planting throughout. Areas being defined not only by degree of activity but also level of stimulation.

Programme

3.7 The key milestones to achieve this programme are set out below (milestone in *italics* undertaken at considered 'risk' prior to Executive Board Approval):

- | | |
|--|---|
| - <i>Submit planning application</i> | <i>7th December 2020</i> |
| - <i>Planning determination period ends</i> | <i>26th February 2021</i> |
| - Approval by Executive Board | 17 ^h March 2021 |
| - Issue authority requirements & tender period | 12 th April to 3 rd June 2021 |
| - Appoint successful contractor | 18 th June 2021 |
| - Progress and agree final design | 19 th June to 18 th July 2021 |
| - Commence construction | 16 th August 2021 |
| - Handover | *21 st January 2022 |

* *Date for handover is dependent on proposed procurement route and the final solution proposed however the aspiration remains January 2022.*

- 3.8 Approval of this report represents the critical path identified on the current programme and is therefore essential to ensure delivery of the project in accordance with the dates set out above.
- 3.9 The proposed works will be project managed by Leeds City Council alongside governance and decision making. Technical support and design services will continue to be provided by NPS Leeds Ltd. Through the use of the YorBuild Framework, Contractors will be invited to bid for the work which will be assessed on a price and quality split criteria.
- 3.10 It is anticipated that the project will be delivered through the appointment of a contractor using an approved framework agreement in line with Leeds City Council's Contract Procedure Rule (CPRs) 3.1.5.
- 3.11 Currently the project team are liaising with a number of approved framework providers to identify the most appropriate framework containing contractors with experience of undertaking this kind of specialist build. Upon completion of this exercise, an expression of interest will be sought from the contractors to ensure that there is sufficient interest to undertake a competitive procurement exercise.
- 3.12 However, it should be noted that some of the frameworks being considered have the option to undertake a direct call off which is a frequently used method of appointing a contractor and is in accordance with Leeds City Council's CPRs. This option is also being considered because it has been used successfully in the past on previous construction schemes.
- 3.13 In the event that a direct call off or that there are insufficient numbers of expressions of interest submitted then a restricted tender via constructionline will be considered. The council has used this route successfully in the past for a number of construction projects.
- 3.14 Subject to approval of this report, a separate approval from the Director of Children and Families will be sought to the use of the proposed procurement method. The report will include an options appraisal of all of the above options and will also seek approval of the assessment criteria.
- 3.15 In accordance with CPR 3.1.4, whilst there is an Internal Service Provider (ISP) who can carry out the work, they have advised that due to other commitments, they are unable to carry out the works required on this occasion.
- 3.16 In accordance with CPR 3.1.5., there is no existing exclusive contractual agreement entered into by the council for construction projects of this type.
- 3.17 The estimated pre tender scheme cost of the proposed works as at the end of RIBA stage 3 is £1,857,835 including construction costs, additional ancillary works (including surveys, planning and project contingency) and design & consultants fees. It is important to note that this figure is an approximate figure and costs at this time. Additionally the project team are trying to secure various Salix and Green funding grants.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The project team made up of colleagues from within Childrens Residential Services, Childrens Health and Disabilities Services, Occupation Health Services, Social Work Services, Asset Management Services and NPS have agreed the design and have developed the project up to completion of RIBA stage 3. Statutory obligations have been addressed and pre planning consultation with the Planning Department and LCC Highways was undertaken. Subsequent planning and tender application have also now been submitted.
- 4.1.2 The Chief Officer Asset Management & Regeneration and the Head of Asset Management are involved in the progress of the proposals via the Asset Management Board and the Project Risk and Control Group.
- 4.1.3 Senior Officers within Children and Families are briefed regularly as are Cllrs via Cllr briefings.
- 4.1.4 A Cllr Briefing Note was issued in November 2020.
- 4.1.5 Further Ward member briefings will be undertaken in due course along with community consultation events and further communication exercises as deemed required.
- 4.1.6 Children and Families Services have also remained in communication with Adult Social Care Services throughout their project to build a much larger home for adults with similar complex needs. During the conception design phase of the new specialist children's home various considerations were taking into account including:-
- establish the validity of placing both homes on the same site
 - utilising the same design and build process
 - identifying economies of scale
- 4.1.7 Ultimately each project identified a need to run to its own critical path however established communication and shared learning continues between both schemes and regular comparisons and advice are obtained to the benefit of both directorates.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The recommendations within this report do not have any direct nor specific impact upon any of the groups falling under the remit of the equality legislation and the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. A screening document has been prepared to this effect and an independent impact assessment is not required for the approvals requested. The screening document (appendix 1) has been sent to the Equality Team to be approved, publishing and held on-file.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The proposed new home for children and young people with autism and complex needs will support the City's priorities which focus on matters such as supporting families to give children the best start in life.
- 4.3.2 Maintaining a local provision that supports a 'Sustainable Infrastructure' by minimising the need for local families to travel an extended distance.
- 4.3.3 Support the authority's Health & Wellbeing strategies which strives to improve the outcomes of all citizens of Leeds.

- 4.3.4 Children and young people living locally closer to their families and friends enabling closer, increased contact as appropriate. This can support continuity of relationships and links with communities in Leeds which in turn should positively impact on the wellbeing needs of the children and young people. Living locally also means we are more likely to be able to build on this continuity of relationships to support reunification work with an increased potential for success.
- 4.3.5 Living in Leeds would facilitate coordinated preparation for adulthood amongst key partners to support effective transition to appropriate adult services, reduce unnecessary costs and improve outcomes/quality of life.
- 4.3.6 Opportunity to build on and grow the existing proven and recognised experience and expertise to develop world class centres of excellence.
- 4.3.7 Reducing the need to use external providers and developing our own local provision will generate annual revenue savings for Children and Families. Detailed savings outlined further within the body of the report.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.8 The current global climate challenge is a concern and efforts are in place to address this. This project is committed to making Leeds carbon neutral by 2030. The plan includes but is not limited to:
 - “promote a less wasteful, low carbon economy
 - and build sustainable infrastructures.” LCC
- 4.3.9 Attaining Passivhaus certification for the proposed development is seen as a direct effort towards the climate challenge of today and supports Leeds City Council’s commitment. Briefly, Passivhaus is a rigorous and advanced approved system which achieves high levels of thermal comfort whilst using very little energy. Some of its benefits can be seen to be directly suited to an autism-friendly environment. These include:
 - High levels of occupant comfort and maintained even environment.
 - Reduced manual controls and apparatus which may otherwise be susceptible to damage.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 The capital investment required to build a new specialist home for children with autism and complex needs is £1.858m.
- 4.4.2 Over the 6-year profile the scheme delivers savings of £179k for the Children and Families budget and £447k for the dedicated schools grant (DSG). In total, the savings across both budgets total £626k. This is a cautious average figure and could potentially understate the level of savings that will actually be achieved.
- 4.4.3 In addition there will be a reduction in travel time for Social Workers as there will be shorter distances to travel to visit young people in their placements. This will help to ensure that Social Worker time is available for work with children and young people that leads to improved outcomes.

4.4.4 The Revenue Business Case has been approved by FPG Financial Performance Group as the recognised approval process for spend to save schemes. FPG are satisfied that the prudential borrowing can be funded from the revenue savings and that the business case is sufficiently robust.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

4.5.1 The approval of this report constitutes a 'Key Decision' and subject to 'Call-In'.

4.5.2 Technical support and design services have been provided by NPS Leeds Ltd.

4.5.3 The YorBuild Framework will be utilised to appoint a preferred construction contractor.

4.5.4 There are no other legal implications or access information issues arising from this report.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 Risk has been managed through application of 'best practice' project management tools and techniques via the City Council 'PM Lite' risk methodology.

4.6.2 Project management resource from City Development and Childrens and Families is tasked with ensuring the project remains within the predetermined risk tolerances.

4.6.3 A joint risk log will be developed with the appointed contractor to ensure all construction related risks for the project are identified together with the relevant owner of the risk.

4.6.4 The Council's project risk log will continue to be maintained and updated throughout the project and escalation of any risks that sit outside of the agreed tolerances will be managed via the Asset Management and Regeneration team, City Development alongside the Childrens Residential Services Project Team.

5. Conclusions

5.1 In order to ensure Leeds City Council provides specialised residential provision for children with Autism and complex needs that supports local families in Leeds, and reduce the current costs attributed to external placements. It is necessary to undertake the design and build of new specialised residential home and to appoint the required staff team to manage the home.

5.2 The delivery of the proposed new specialist children's home will be jointly managed by City Development's Asset Management and Regeneration team and Childrens & Families' Services.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Executive Board is requested to:

6.2 Note the current project cost estimate of £1.858m for the construction work and associated fees to facilitate the build of the new specialist children's home for children with Autism and complex needs.

6.3 Delegate approval of the Authority to Procure (ATP) and Design and Cost Report (DCR) to Director of Childrens and Families.

6.4 Note that Chief Officer Social Work will be responsible for the appointment of all required staff to the new specialist children's residential home.

7 **Background documents**¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.