

## Design and Cost Report: Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home

Date: December 2021

Report of: Head of Service – Children Looked After Services

Report to: Chief Officer, Resources and Strategy

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

### What is this report about?

#### Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The purpose of this report is to seek approval to incur capital expenditure of £220,000 from capital scheme number 32453/ALG/000 to deliver a redesign scheme at Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home that will ensure a suitable physical and aesthetic environment as described in the Children's Homes; National Minimum Standards 10.3.
- Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home requires a substantial redesign to ensure that its 'statement of purpose' which is to provide an environment that nurtures children with complex needs can be adhered to.
- Leeds City Council has a duty to offer sufficient and suitable accommodation for all Children and Young People who need to be accommodated and looked after. To ensure Leeds City Council meets this duty a programme of refurbishment and redesign works has been identified following a review of mainstream children's homes.
- Whilst the current level of investment has continued to ensure the homes are safe and secure, the décor in many of the homes is dated and the environment perceived to be not sufficiently 'homely'. The redesign identified within this report will ensure the children's homes within Leeds will keep pace with modern family life and the appropriate domestic changes.
- Leeds City Council's CPM department will provide design and technical services for the proposed scheme, and the internal works will be delivered by the internal service provider, Leeds Building Services.

This scheme will:

- Improve the provision for children and young people who are looked after within the City of Leeds.
- Maintain a local provision that supports a 'Sustainable Infrastructure' by minimising the need for local families to travel an extended distance.

- Support the authority's Health & Wellbeing strategies which strives to improve the outcomes of all citizens of Leeds.
- Ensure children and young people live locally, closer to their families and friends enabling 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.
- 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.
- Reduce the need to use external providers and developing our own local provision will generate annual revenue savings for Children and Families.

## **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer, Resources and Strategy is requested to:

- a) Authorise expenditure of £220,000 from capital scheme number 32453/ALG/000 to undertake the proposed refurbishment and remodelling of Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home.
- b) Authorise to appoint Leeds Building Services to carry out the works in accordance with Contracts Procedure Rule 3.1.4. in the sum of £190,00.

## **Why is the proposal being put forward?**

- 1 To provide background information with respect to the requirement to redesign the children's home. In doing so, the authority will ensure fit for purpose provision is made available for children in Leeds. This provision will specifically cater for children with complex needs.
- 2 To seek 'Authority to Spend' of £220,000 on the redesign of Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home and appoint Leeds Building Services to carry out the necessary works.

## **Background information**

- 3 In July 2013, Executive Board approved the Children's Services strategy to close all large Children's homes and replace them with smaller homes creating a more domestic and less institutional environment and to improve quality, range of services, outcomes for children and reduce dependence on expensive external placements through more suitable local provision.
- 4 To support this continued strategy, Executive Board in February 2020 agreed to re-allocate £1.5M for a programme of Children's homes refurbishments. The refurbishment which is the subject of this report is the first in a rolling programme of refurbishments to be brought forward subject to priority and cost.
- 5 The necessary refurbishment of identified prioritised children's homes within Leeds will ensure Leeds City Council meets national guidance for living standards in children's homes. It will improve the authority's capacity to offer better quality in-house placements, designed to be short term wherever possible, at a lower cost to external residential

placements and provide a more cost-effective range of provision for children who need to be looked after even for a temporary period.

The proposed refurbishment works to Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home consists of the following components:

- Install electric gates to site that have access control from within the children's home. This will provide greater security to site and enable the access to and from the grounds with greater efficiency and effectiveness.
  - Replace the antiquated access management systems with one that is fit for purpose and improves security to site
  - Installing a fit for purpose security/burglar alarm to site to include window and door security features to ensure the site is more secure.
  - Remove, remodel, and replace an old bathroom that is currently not used. This new bathroom with specific equipment for children with complex needs will ensure the home can provide fit for purpose living facilities
  - Remove old outdoor play and nurture equipment with a newly remodelled outdoor play space to ensure outdoor experiences are fit for purpose and can be used in line with children with complex needs.
  - Improve paths around the site so they are wheelchair accessible.
  - Remodel and replace all windows and doors to site including the conservatory.
  - Decorate and improve all internal living spaces to include new carpets and appropriate flooring throughout Acorn Lodge including all bedrooms, living spaces, corridors, and offices
- 6 Through consultation with Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home, consideration was given to numerous options of how the proposed redesign work would best enhance the existing provision and 'design out', wherever possible, the historic challenges and building limitations faced by the staff and young people alike.
- 7 The estimated scheme cost is £220,000; this includes £190,000 for construction and an allocation of £30,000 for other project related costs.
- 8 Planning Permission is not required for this type of refurbishment scheme, but Building Control approval will be sought as required.

#### What impact will this proposal have?

**Wards Affected:**

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 9 Ward member briefings will be undertaken in due course along with community consultation events alongside communication exercises as deemed required.

#### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 10 The redesign programme has been the subject of extensive consultation with Children's Services Officers, the staff and young people in the home, Leeds Building Services, LCC Building Control, West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service and Finance Officers.
- 11 Whilst no planning approval is required for the internal redesign of the homes, meetings have been held with the aforementioned officers to ensure the proposed changes, designed



#### Financing costs

- 20 The proposals are financed through the re-allocation of £1.5m for a programme of Children's Homes refurbishments, from existing resources within the capital programme and incorporated into the budget approval provided by Executive Board in February 2020. The refurbishment which is the subject of this report is the second in a rolling programme of refurbishments to be brought forward subject to priority and cost

#### Revenue Implications

- 21 No additional revenue costs are expected to arise from this project.

#### What are the legal implications?

- 22 The approval of this report constitutes an 'Executive (Significant Operational) Decision' and as such will not be subject to 'Call-In'.
- 23 Technical support and design services have been provided by the CPM department.
- 24 There are no other legal implications or access information issues arising from this report.

#### What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 25 Risk will be managed through application of 'best practice' project management tools and techniques via the City Council 'PM Lite' risk methodology.
- 26 Project management resource from CPM and Childrens and Families is tasked with ensuring the project remains within the predetermined risk tolerances.
- 27 A joint risk log will be developed with LBS to ensure all construction related risks for the project are identified together with the relevant owner of the risk.
- 28 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 Projects and Programmes and Regeneration teams of City Development alongside the Childrens Residential Services Project Team.

#### Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth                       Health and Wellbeing                       Climate Emergency

- 29 Following changes to legislation, quality standards and compliance towards the Ofsted inspection framework, a review of both the mainstream children's homes and homes for children and young people with complex needs and disabilities has identified capital requirement in respect of suitability and whole scale condition issues. Leeds has a duty to offer sufficient and suitable accommodation for all children and young people who need to be accommodated.

- 30 This scheme will improve the provision for children and young people who are looked after within the City of Leeds.
- 31 Maintaining a local provision that supports a 'Sustainable Infrastructure' by minimising the need for local families to travel an extended distance.
- 32 Support the authority's Health & Wellbeing strategies which strives to improve the outcomes of all citizens of Leeds.
- 33 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.
- 34 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.
- 35 Reducing the need to use external providers and developing our own local provision will generate annual revenue savings for Children and Families.
- 36 The current global climate challenge is a concern and efforts are in place to address this. This project contributes 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
  - The redesign works will improve the thermal efficiency of the buildings through better insulation and general building repairs to improve air tightness.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **a) What other options were considered?**

- 37 No other options available at this time due to the very specific nature and design of this complex needs residential children's home.

### **b) How will success be measured?**

- 38 Success will be measured through the improved living environments and nurture facilities available for some of Leeds most vulnerable children with the most complex of needs.

### **c) What is the timetable for implementation?**

- 39 The proposed refurbishment of Acorn Lodge complex needs children's home will commence January 2022. The schedule of works will be delivered in one phase over a 12-week programme.
- 40 The proposed works will be project managed by Leeds City Council Projects and Programmes. Children's Services will provide governance oversight and decision making. Technical support and design services will be provided by CPM department.

## **Appendices**

41 None

## **Background papers**

42 None