

Acquisition of Children's Home

Date: 08/08/2024

Report of: Land and Property and Children & Families

Report to: Chief Officer Asset Management & Regeneration, and Director of Children & Families

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

Children and Families directorate intend to increase the number of children's homes directly provided by Leeds City Council. This will keep Leeds' children in Leeds, close to home and in our communities.

Private children's homes are more expensive and often result in children having to be placed away from Leeds. This causes additional challenges in children remaining connected with their families and the services that know them well and is something they can struggle with when they return to Leeds. Having additional resources will increase the capacity to keep children in Leeds and therefore will improve long term outcomes for children as well as the council's financial position by reducing expenditure in the costly external residential market.

The vendor has accepted an offer from the Council which is recommended for approval. Once acquired the Council will undertake a limited programme of renovation that will improve both the inside of the property and its presentation to the street. The property does require some upgrading work, but overall it is in good condition.

We want children to feel part of the community they will be living in and recognise the need to build relationships with immediate neighbours.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Children & Families approves the expenditure as outlined in the exempt appendix.
- b) The Director of City Development approves the acquisition of the house on terms set out in the confidential appendix to this report, for use as a specialist residential Home for Children

What is this report about?

- 1 The report, 'New Children's Residential Provision', which gave authority to spend and to procure in relation to the development of the Children's residential estate to establish eight new residential care homes, was approved as a Key Decision by the Director of Children and Families on 03/04/2023, reference no. D56200.
- 2 The Land & Property has identified properties in the specified area. Shortlisted properties were viewed by Land & Property, Children & Families and Housing Leeds, to ascertain that the needs and requirements for these homes were met.
- 3 This report details the Terms provisionally agreed for acquisition of the subject property and seeks authority to spend from the approved budget 33733/ROD/000.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 4 The expected outcome, once the proposal is delivered, is that as a corporate parent, the Council is better able to meet the needs of young people in our care, especially those with complex needs. This property will provide a home for up to 8 children with complex care needs. Longer term this will result in improved outcomes and better overall life chances for those young people

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 5 The health and wellbeing of those young people who will eventually live in the small group living homes will be improved due to the greater suitability of the living and care arrangements to meet their more complex needs.
- 6 Better outcomes for young people will also impact on inclusive growth, with the right support and stability there will be improved opportunity for educational attainment, skills development and therefore future employability and economic activity.
- 7 The homes acquired will undergo refurbishment ahead of occupation, to what level will be dependent on the condition of each property purchased. The work will seek to minimise waste, make use of sustainable materials wherever possible, and create homes that are as energy efficient as possible within cost limitations. The costs of refurbishment of the subject property has been assessed by NPS Leeds and are considered reasonable and will be met by the capital budget 33733\ROD\000.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Calverley & Farsley

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 8 Ward members received a briefing on 2nd July from the Head of Service of Childrens Services, all Ward Members responded supporting the proposed purchase.
- 9 The Executive Member for Resources was briefed on the 02/07/2024 and is supportive of the acquisition.

What are the resource implications?

- 10 The acquisition will be fully funded from capital scheme number 33733\ROD\000. Children's Service, Land & Property and Legal Services, staff resources are required from these divisions.

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

- 11 With any property transaction there is a possibility that the vendor could withdraw and decide not to complete. This is thought to be a low risk, and the risk of withdrawing is considered low. To mitigate this risk, the council are able to complete as quickly as the vendor requires.

What are the legal implications?

- 12 Under Part 3, Section 3E(g) of the Council's Constitution (Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)) the Director of City Development has authority to discharge any function of the Executive in relation to Asset Management.
- 13 The Chief Officer Asset Management and Regeneration, Head of Asset Management, Technical Services Lead (Land and Property) and Executive Manager Land and Property (Deputy) have authority to take decisions in relation to Asset Management as delegated in the Director of City Development's sub delegation scheme.
- 14 The proposal constitutes a Publishable Administrative Decision and is therefore not subject to call in.
- 15 The information contained in the Appendix to this report relates to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, and of the Council. This information is not publicly available from the statutory registers of information kept in relation to certain companies and charities. It is considered that since this information was obtained through one to one negotiations for the purchase of the land/property referred to then it is not in the public interest to disclose this information at this point in time. Also the release of such information would or would be likely to prejudice the Council's commercial interests in relation to and undermine its attempts to acquire by agreement similar properties in the locality in that owners of other similar properties would be aware about the nature and level of consideration which may prove acceptable to the Council. It is considered that whilst there may be a public interest in disclosure, much of this information will be available from the Land Registry following completion of the purchase and consequently the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information at this point in time. It is therefore considered that this element of the report should be treated as exempt under rule 10.4.(3) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules. The Chief Officer Asset Management and Regeneration, Head of Asset Management, Technical Lead and Deputy Head of Land and Property have authority to take decisions in relation to Asset Management as delegated in the Director of City Development's sub delegation scheme.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 16 The Land and Property Service conducted a property search within the areas and requirements (i.e. number of bedrooms etc) identified by Children's Services. The properties were short listed, and Children's Services carried initial external inspections to ascertain the suitability within the location. From this initial inspection, a smaller number of properties were identified to be viewed internally, the viewings were attended by Land and Property, Children's Services and specialist Housing Leeds Colleagues. Following the viewings, an offer was made on the most appropriate property meeting scheme requirements.

How will success be measured?

- 17 Success for the council will be the completion of this acquisition and making operational use of the property to support the Childrens Specialist care provision.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

18 Legal completion of the acquisition of the properties will be commenced upon receipt of approval to the terms reported here. Finance has advised there is sufficient capacity in the budget to fund the proposed acquisitions, associated costs and subsequent works including lifecycle maintenance costs from Capital Scheme 33733\ROD\000.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Confidential Appendix

Background papers

- None.