

## RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME DEVELOPMENTS

**Responsible Officer:** Sonya Miller, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding

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### 1. Summary

In February 2019, full Council meeting endorsed the plan by Children's Services to open and run three new children's homes to be run by Shropshire children's services. These homes would specifically focus on the more complex, hard to place and therefore more costly children, and those who were in the process of being able to return home or step down to foster care. This report provides an update on progress so far.

### 2. Recommendations

That Members of the People Overview Committee note the content of this report.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB this will include the following: Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, Environmental consequences and other Consultation)

### 4. Financial Implications

The total capital costs extracted from the original Financial Case included likely acquisition, planned refurbishment and fit out as follows:

Acquisition cost:	£1.300m
Legal Advice Stamp Duty and Other Fees:	£0.175m
Adaptations and fit out:	£0.525m
Total	£2.0000

An update on costs so far for each individual home is set out at 5.7 below.

## 5. Background

5.1 In February 2019, full Council meeting endorsed children's services plan to open three new children's homes to be run by Shropshire children's services. The focus was agreed to specifically focus on those more complex, hard to place and therefore more costly children, and those who are in the process of being able to return home or step down to foster care. The project remit was to require the acquisition initially of two new properties, in semi-rural locations, followed by a 3-bedded short stay home for children where there is a high likelihood of them being able to return home or step down to foster care as this would enable intense work with the family/foster family to effect positive transitions.

5.2 The project deliverables were agreed as the following

- Placement stability for a greater number of children within Shropshire where they can access school, health and leisure services and maintain ongoing relationships with their family of origin.
- A skilled and experienced residential workforce who can manage the needs of our more complex young people.
- The ability to support our young people to develop their independence skills whilst remaining in a residential resource, this is especially important for our young people who may be have additional needs and who need a more robust and supported approach to their preparation for independence which is often not available with other semi-supported accommodation providers.

## 5.3 Project update

The search for appropriate properties commenced immediately following full council approval. The first two properties were identified and offers accepted on both properties in April 2019.

- 5.4 In May 2019, the Residential Project Manager commenced their post, their remit was to manage the purchase and set up of the residential homes from a procedural, regulatory and budget perspective.
- 5.5 The sale of the first two properties was completed at the end of June 2019. The first manager was appointed at the end of May and is instrumental in ensuring the Ofsted criteria and regulatory framework is adhered to for both homes. The Ofsted registration process for the first home commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019. The second manager has now been identified, they will commence post once the renovations are underway. The registration process for this property will commence by mid-November 2019.
- 5.6 Shropshire Council Property Services Group (PSG) have been consulted with throughout the process of purchase and now subsequent plans to renovate the two properties.
- 5.7 Update on individual homes:**
- 5.7.1 Home No 1. - Devon, Montford Bridge.**
- The Renovation quote has come in under budget at £ 87,056.66. £1000,000 was allocated in the budget for this. The remaining £12,943.34 is a contingency fund for any extra renovations which may be required after Ofsted have inspected the property prior to opening.
- 5.7.2 Renovation work commenced on 28/10/19 and is scheduled to complete by 31<sup>st</sup> January at the latest, if not before. (This includes a two week 'tools down' holiday period for the contractor between 24<sup>th</sup> December 2019 – 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020.) There was some initial delay due to the identification of bats in the loft.
- 5.7.3 Recruitment of staff for the homes commenced in mid-September. 14.2 FTE staff are required for each home. 9 positions have currently been filled for the Devon home and interviews are scheduled over the next fortnight to fill the remaining 5 positions. Staff are scheduled to start employment on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to complete 3 weeks of induction training before the opening of the home.
- 5.7.4 Ofsted registration stages 1 & 2 and have been submitted, only stage 3 is outstanding. This must be processed once all of the renovations have been completed and the property can be inspected. Ofsted have provisionally booked in the date of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 for the inspection visit to complete the registration.

5.7.5 Costings to furnish the home with toughened furniture have been quoted as £11,175.50. Another £9,000 will be required for other furnishings e.g. – T.V. curtains, cutlery etc. = £20,000 approx. spend. Funds are also required for I.T. equipment and internet set up which is currently being processed by the I.T. department. The budget allocated for total furnishings is £50,000, so the total cost of all of furnishings should remain within budget.

5.7.6 Neighbourhood engagement has commenced. Neighbours have been informed of the set-up of the home and a consultation is being arranged to provide the local community with more information and to answer any questions residents may have.

### **5.7.7 House No. 2 - 3 Wilcott, Nescliffe**

5.7.8 We are awaiting completed building, electrical and mechanical schedules of work from Property Services Group (PSG). There was some delay in the confirmation of the work needed to be undertaken on this house due to some fire safety concerns, these have now been addressed having been assessed by two separate fire officers. The renovation works must then go out through the tender process for a fortnight once the schedules have been completed. Once tender quotes have been received, we are hoping for renovation works to commence in December 2019.

5.7.9 We are aiming to open the Nescliffe home in March 2020. A Registered Manager has just been confirmed for the Nescliffe home, therefore Ofsted stages 1 & 2 can be submitted shortly, leaving only stage 3 to be processed once the renovations have been completed, Ofsted are aware of our plans and regular communication has been maintained with the nominated Ofsted officer. She is awaiting the completion of stage 1 & 2 so that she can commence the registration process.

5.7.10 Neighbourhood engagement – A neighbourhood consultation has been arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to provide the local community with more information and to answer any questions residents may have.

## **5.8 Recruitment:**

5.8.1 Recruitment for staff has been for all 3 homes in the project, however positions are to be filled in order of priority, therefore to fill the Devonian home primarily and then Nescliffe and the third home. Recruitment was identified as a priority at the last project board meeting to avoid the homes opening without sufficient staff and therefore incurring extra expenditure due to hiring agency staff to fill the void. Advertising expenditure was approved to aid recruitment.

- 5.8.2 Posters and flyers have been distributed across the Shropshire region, a news story was aired on Shropshire Radio's breakfast show. Two recruitment open days have taken place which provided more information for potential candidates. Adverts have been placed in the jobs section of the Shropshire Star, The Express and Star and 5 other weekly publications. The vacancies have been advertised on the council's Facebook and Twitter page.
- 5.8.3 A further radio news story is to be recorded at the homes soon and radio adverts maybe utilised if required.
- 5.8.4 Neighbourhood engagement – A neighbourhood consultation has been arranged for 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to provide the local communities with more information and to answer any questions residents may have.

## **5.9 Home No. 3 – To be purchased**

- 5.9.1 We are actively searching for the third larger home. The third home is a 5-6 bedded property to house 4 young people. 4 properties have been viewed however, they were not suitable due to close proximity to other neighbours, amount of renovations required etc. Estate agents have been contacted and are actively suggesting properties to the project manager according to the desired requirements.

## **5.10 Ifton Heath Home**

- 5.10.1 Renovations were completed as requested by the Ofsted inspection. Ofsted registration was completed and approved on the week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019. This is now registered as a solo provision children's home.

## **6. Concluding comments**

- 6.1 Significant progress has been made with the project to date, whilst we are yet to acquire the third home, we are confident that we will secure a third property either by the end of 2019 or very early into 2020. The requirements for the third home are different to the first two and is therefore taking longer to source. Whilst some properties have been viewed, these have not fulfilled the criteria we are looking for.
- 6.2 The first two homes are well under way despite some initial delay due to fire safety concerns at property number two and the identification of bats in property number one. Staff recruitment is progressing and key posts have now been offered and filled initially for property and number one, the focus will soon move to recruitment for property number two.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
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28 February 2019 Exempt Council Report: Growth of Residential Children's Services for Shropshire Council
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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b>
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Cllr Ed Potter
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<b>Local Member</b>
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All Members
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<b>Appendices</b>
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None
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