

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

22 JUNE 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

DEVELOPMENT OF BRYNMENYN CHILDRENS HUB

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:-

- update Cabinet on developments at Maple Tree House (children's emergency and assessment unit/Children's Placement Hub") in respect of the plans to relocate the service; and
- request Cabinet approval for the Head of Children's Social Care (in their capacity as Responsible Individual for the service) to oversee and monitor the implementation of the plans as set out in this report.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

1. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

3.1 Reducing Children Looked After (CLA) numbers in a safe and appropriate manner is a national priority for Welsh Government, which has had a significant focus recently. Safely reducing CLA numbers is also a key corporate priority for BCBC, when achieved safely this enables positive outcomes for children and young people. The best outcome for children and young people is also the most cost effective, as commissioning suitable quality residential care home placements results in escalating costs and poor value for money.

3.2 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate has reviewed its residential and accommodation services in recent years, which has included the development of two

new Extra Care schemes for older people to replace the residential homes that were in place, as well as a review of BCBC-run children's homes.

- 3.3 The Remodelling Children's Residential Services project was formed in 2017/18 as part of the Remodelling Children's Services Programme. The remit of the project was to review current residential provision (to include residential homes and out-of-county placements) and to develop a new residential and accommodation model which could provide the right quality of assessment, accommodation, care and support within Bridgend County Borough.
- 3.4 A significant amount of engagement took place to inform the proposed new model, which included:
- Research into innovation and best practice across the UK;
 - Reviewing of feedback from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) reports for the residential homes;
 - A multi-agency workshop involving colleagues from Children's Services, health, Police, Education and other key stakeholders;
 - Engagement with current and former residents of the residential homes;
 - In-depth engagement with residential staff members;
 - Engagement with current and former residents of the residential homes;
 - Targeted engagement with all pertinent stakeholders on the final proposed model.
- 3.5 In November 2017, a report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OVSC) outlining the proposed new model. OVSC requested that another report be submitted to OVSC to allow pre-decision scrutiny, prior to the final model being presented to Cabinet for approval in February 2018.
- 3.6 In January 2018, a more detailed report was submitted to OVSC alongside a presentation, which provided further detail on the proposed model. OVSC were also asked to note that a report would be presented to Cabinet in February 2018, requesting approval to implement the proposed new model.
- 3.7 In February 2018, Cabinet approved the implementation of the new model for Children's Residential Services, a fundamental component of which was the development of a Children's Placement Hub. The aim of the Hub is to provide high quality assessment and support in a timely way in order to facilitate move-on to one of the other placement options within the model. This model is essential to really understanding children / young people's needs and planning services which meet those needs as well as meeting the MTFs savings requirements as highlighted later in this report.
- 3.8 When the new model was approved by Cabinet in February 2018, it was reported to Cabinet that the Hub would initially be developed by re-designing the existing children's residential 'estate' and would therefore be based initially at Newbridge House – with alternative longer-term options for the Hub being considered in the future. This was based on the feedback received from key stakeholders during the engagement and consultation undertaken at the time, which had raised concerns in respect of the layout of Newbridge House itself, as well as the location of the home, which is in an urban and residential area of Bridgend.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 In February 2020, a report was presented to Cabinet/Corporate Management Board (CCMB), to provide an update in relation to the service remodelling proposals, which included a proposed new site for the Children's Placement Hub at the Brynmenyn Primary School site. The report detailed the work that had been undertaken alongside colleagues in Corporate Landlord and Housing in determining this site, which was found to be the only viable option for the new Children's Placement Hub, based on the specific requirements of the children and young people, and also recognising the feedback received from the earlier consultation and engagement. CCMB approved that Brynmenyn Primary School should be pursued as the preferred site for the Children's Placement Hub (which will include the Emergency and Assessment Unit currently based at Maple Tree House as well as the Fostering and Placements Team), although more information was requested in respect of the potential for maximizing any capital receipts, before the old site Maple Tree House on Merthyr Mawr Road is disposed of.

Designs and plans

- 4.2 The proposed new development on the former Brynmenyn School site will provide a specially designed and purpose-built Children's Placement Hub, from which the newly implemented service model can be effectively delivered. The new provision will allow for more teams to be located within the Hub (including Bridgend Fostering services), which will enable more seamless working and better outcomes for children and young people, which cannot currently be delivered to maximum effect from the existing site. The new site is also in a much more favourable setting (close to amenities, but not in a built-up residential area) which will also support the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.3 The 'voice of the child' has also been a really important part of the process and design stage, where officers met with young people in receipt of services to understand what was important to them, in order to make the service a real home. Really important feedback was taken from this exercise (such as having a bath, as well as showers) to inform the final build plans, and officers are also looking to involve children and young people in deciding room colours and furnishing options later on in the process.
- 4.4 During 2019/20, progress on this work was unfortunately delayed for a significant period of time due to a Common Land issue, which was outside of BCBC's control. The Common Land issue has since been resolved (in November 2019), and officers were able to carry out the required planning application processes, following which a procurement exercise was undertaken to seek a contractor to carry out the required works – scheduled to commence in the summer of 2021 and be completed in early 2022.

Funding

- 4.5 Capital funding totalling £2.25 million has been secured for the development of the new Hub, broken down as below:
- A BCBC Capital Bid of £600k has been approved, which was originally included in the Capital Programme for 2018/19, and subsequently rolled forward as a result of the delays outlined above;

- £750k has been ringfenced from BCBC earmarked reserves; and
- BCBC have also been allocated ICF (Integrated Care Fund) Capital Funding of £900k, made up of £164k in 2020/21 and £736k in 2021/22.

Governance

4.6 A Children's Residential Hub Project Board has been established to monitor plans and milestones. The Board is supported by the Corporate Project Team and is represented by; Children's Services, Commissioning, Finance, Corporate Landlord, regional partners (ICF), and other areas (such as ICT) as required. This Board reports into the Improving Outcomes Board, which is chaired by the Corporate Director for Social Services and Wellbeing, to ensure sufficient oversight.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 The tender process in order to select a contractor to carry out the required building work has been undertaken in accordance with BCBC's Contract Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has been undertaken which identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics or the use of the Welsh language.

6.2 The Screening also gave consideration to any potential socio-economic disadvantage resulting from the proposed new development on the former Brynmenyn School site and identified that this would have a positive impact as having access to improved facilities in the newly built children's home will potentially increase young people's engagement with services such as health, social care, education and the local community.

6.3 As no negative impacts were identified during the screening there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

Long Term – Social Services is demand led and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 focusses on sustainable prevention and wellbeing outcomes for the future. The new build will support the development of a psychologically informed environment which will enable children and young people to recover from traumatic experiences during their early years. This will be achieved through a more structurally suitable environment in a location that can support opportunities to develop positive relationships between staff and young people.

- **Prevention** – This development is key to Childrens Social Care’s aspirations in respect of the “No Wrong Door” model, which at its heart has a Residential Hub providing short-term placements and outreach support. The goal is to reduce the number of young people coming into care, and to support those in care to find permanence in a family setting through long-term foster care, reunification with their families or independence. The Hub will also provides the opportunity to prevent (where possible and appropriate to do so) the need for Out-of-County Residential placements – which are both costly and do not always enable the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- **Integration** – the implementation of the SSWBA requires local authorities to work with partners, to ensure care and support for people and support for carers is provided. The development of the new Hub brings a variety of internal services, such as Outreach Workers, Placement Support Workers and Re-unification Workers, together and will also include the fostering and placement team who will be based on-site.
- **Collaboration** – Elements of the strategic planning and (partial) funding of the new development has been undertaken on a regional basis where best practice and learning can be shared with regional partners and others.
- **Involvement** – The key stakeholders are the young people who use social care. Children and Young People were consulted during the intial stages of the design and planning stage and where possible their views have been incorporated into the new hub (including having a “games room”). We remain committed to engaging with children who are looked after throughout the construction stage to ensure their wishes and feelings are central in trying to create a homely environment and that they are able to provide feedback in respect of proposed plans and options.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 As described in the funding section of paragraph 4, capital funding of £2.25 million has been secured – which is sufficient funding in order to cover the building costs and associated professional fees.
- 8.2 BCBC officers have also submitted a Discretionary Capital Bid to secure additional funding from regional ICF Capital in 2021/22, in order to fund the furnishings required for the new scheme – estimated to cost in the region of £40k. The regional Transformation Leadership Programme Board (TLPB) approved the application for funding, but Welsh Government have requested that the overall project cost for the total scheme be amended to reflect the additional funds needed, with a case to be made as to why additional funds are needed and justifying the additional costs. BCBC officers are working with the regional team in order to make the necessary changes. Should this additional funding not be forthcoming the service will manage this through seeking alternative sources of funding for furnishings and maximising the capital funding currently available.
- 8.3 Implementing the new model has already resulted in recurrent MTFS savings of £245k, and the service is fully committed to the new model in the expectation that additional savings can be made in the future, as well as enabling a reduction in the dependence on high-cost Out-of-County placements.

- 8.4 Developing the new Hub will also increase capacity by creating an additional emergency bed. This placement type currently results in a high-cost/out-of-county placement being made – costing in the region of £180k per annum. With each bed in the new Hub costing in the region of £100k per annum, there is now the potential for cost avoidance in the region of £80k per annum.
- 8.5 As this is a new location for an existing (budgeted) service which will be in a better condition than the existing building, and as there are no changes being proposed to the staffing establishment, it is not envisaged that there will be any additional revenue cost implications associated with the new development.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Cabinet is requested to:

- Note the contents of this report; and
- Approve for the Head of Children’s Social Care (in their capacity as Responsible Individual for the service) to oversee and monitor the implementation of the plans as set out in this report

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Background documents

- Equality Impact Assessment Screening document