

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Young People's Services

***Wednesday, 18 October 2023 at 10.30 am
Council Chamber - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND***

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on 25 October 2023 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

October 2023

Committee Officer: committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk .

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9 am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

EXEMPT ITEMS

In the event that any Member or Officer wishes to discuss the information set out in the Annexes to Agenda Items 4 or 5, the Committee will be invited to resolve to exclude the public for the consideration of the Annex by passing a resolution in relation in the following terms:

"that the public be excluded during the consideration of the Annex since it is likely that if they were present during that discussion there would be a disclosure of "exempt" information as described in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and specified below the item in the Agenda".

NOTE: The reports do not contain exempt information and are available to the public.

THE ANNEXES TO THE ITEMS NAMED HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS 'CONFIDENTIAL' BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THEM.

4. **Children's Services Residential Capital Programme: Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton** (Pages 1 - 24)

Forward Plan Ref: 2023/282

Contact: Andrea Benneyworth, Programme Manager REoC Childrens Service, andrea.benneyworth@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Corporate Director for Children's Services (**CMDCEYPS4**).

Part of the approved DFE Match funding bid of £10.45m to provide new homes for children within the county, Greenways is one of 4 new homes OCC will acquire and refurbish as a short-term care home for children.

The information in this case is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed categories:

2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that a negotiation is ongoing and would prejudice the position of the authority in the process of that negotiation and the Council's standing generally in relation to such matters in future, to the detriment of the Council's ability properly to discharge its fiduciary and other duties as a public authority.

Annex A containing exempt information under the above paragraph is attached.

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to

Release funds to:

- (a) Purchase Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton OX13 6BY for **the amount listed in Annex A**
- (b) Cover fees of **amount listed in Annex A** (Stamp Duty Land Tax, valuation, legal etc)
- (c) Cover the adaptation and refurbishment for the **amount listed in Annex A**

5. **Children's Services Residential Capital Programme: Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton** (Pages 25 - 50)

Forward Plan Ref: 2023/283

Contact: Andrea Benneyworth, Programme Manager REoC Childrens Service, andrea@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Corporate Director for Children's Services (**CMDCEYPS5**).

Part of the approved DFE Match funding bid of £10.45m to provide new homes for children within the county, Oathill Lodge is one of 4 new homes OCC will acquire and refurbish as a long-term care home for children.

The information in this case is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed categories:

2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that a negotiation is ongoing and would prejudice the position of the authority in the process of that negotiation and the Council's standing generally in relation to such matters in future, to the detriment of the Council's ability properly to discharge its fiduciary and other duties as a public authority.

Annex A containing exempt information under the above paragraph is attached.

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to

Release funds to:

- a) Purchase Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton for **the amount listed in Annex A**
- b) Cover fees of **amount listed in Annex A** (Stamp Duty Land Tax, valuation, legal etc)
- c) Cover the adaptation and refurbishment for the **amount listed in Annex A**

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Divisions Affected – N/A

**CABINET MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN, EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
18 October 2023**

**Children's Services Residential Capital Programme for
Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton**

Report by Interim Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to

1. Release funds to:
 - (a) Purchase Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton OX13 6BY for **the amount listed in Annex A**
 - (b) Cover fees of **amount listed in Annex A** (Stamp Duty Land Tax, valuation, legal etc)
 - (c) Cover the adaptation and refurbishment for the **amount listed in Annex A**

Executive Summary

2. Approval of the Children's Services Residential Capital Programme was received on 5 December 2022. This was for the acquisition and associated works of four residential properties to be converted to Children's Homes. The property meets the requirements for the Small Solo Children's Home set out in the Business Case to house up to two children.
3. The subject property at Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton (Greenways) has been identified by the service as meeting their needs as a Small Solo children's home. Terms have been agreed to acquire the property for the amount listed in Annex A subject to approval by Cabinet. The offer is below the asking price listed in Annex A as a market valuation supported by the desk-top valuation.

Alignment to relevant strategy:

4. Children We Care for [Sufficiency Strategy](#) 2020-2025

5. To support the departments Sufficiency Strategy for placements for Children We Care For, Children’s Services plan to deliver four additional Children’s Homes which will be operated and staffed by the Council’s experienced Residential and Edge of Care (REoC) service. To support children with the greatest needs CEF plan to purchase four properties from the open market and convert to a specific specification working with the Council’s Property department.
6. To increase the number of residential beds within county, to prevent having to place Children We Care For out of county.

Ref no.	Benefit	Measurement
B.01	To provide Children We Care For with complex needs a homely and nurturing environment with specialist trained staff including access to the Council’s Clinical Psychologists to enable them to thrive close to their family and friends.	<i>Reduction in CWCF placed outside of Oxfordshire</i>
B.02	These schemes will support the department to meet their duties under the Sufficiency Strategy to increase the provision of in-county residential placements.	<i>Increase in internal residential provision</i>
B.03	The internal residential expansion programme is an invest to save initiative whereby CEF aim to save between £0.5m and £5.6m per annum which is a cost comparison on current un-registered arrangements and out of county placement spend for children who would be accommodated in these homes based on a 75% occupancy rate.	<i>Reduction in number of children placed in unregistered provision</i>
B.04	Increase in the quality of care afforded to our children	<i>Clear Corporate Parenting oversight of the provisions our children are living within</i>

Exempt Information

7. The information in the Annex is exempt because it contains information that could reveal the identity of an individual (the vendor of the private property) and relates to the business affairs of the vendor (the commercial sensitivity of the purchase of a private property).

Case for Change

8. Before this property was selected as one of 4 properties for conversion across Oxfordshire, a detailed search exercise was undertaken which looked at all

vacant properties owned by Oxfordshire County Council. Unfortunately, none of these were suitable as a prospective children's home. Therefore, an extensive search has been carried out across the county to identify properties on the open market for purchase and conversion. The Service consider each property in light of the particular needs of the children the home will be catering, and Greenways was found to be suitable as a small Solo children's home.

9. The house was chosen as it gives children the opportunity to live and thrive within a settled and safe community within easy reach of universal amenities that are afforded to any other child living within Oxfordshire. Ordinarily there will be no more than 2 children living at the property with 2 - 3 adults caring for them.
10. Oxfordshire currently has 3 children's homes each of which provide a home for up to 6 children at any one time. These homes are well established within their communities and are all registered with Ofsted and rated GOOD at their most recent inspections.
11. Greenways will be offering a short-term home to a maximum of 2 children at any one time as we move away from institutionalised living and offer these children the valued experience of living within a nurturing family setting that supports the recovery from trauma suffered from being unable to live with their birth families.

Constraints and dependencies

Constraints

12. The pool of properties available on the open market within 10 miles of Eynsham suitable for minimal conversion are limited. Greenways offers the accommodation required with minimal conversion work and is within the budget set. If works to this property are not approved, there will be considerable time delay to find another suitable property.
13. Locating a home within 10 miles of Eynsham is a geographical and regulation challenge sufficient parking, mains drainage, suitable amenities and not located near a railway, waterway or main road is a geographical challenge. For reference, Ofsted view railways, main roads and waterways as significant risks to our children and therefore not suitable

Dependencies

14. In the local housing plan for Greenways it refers to looking favourably on properties seeking change of use from C3 to C2, however we recognise this is for the purposes of elderly care due to the increasing elderly population.
15. Planning permission for change of use from C3 to C2 will be instigated once the property has been purchased. The Service have instructed robust pre-app due diligence to ensure the dependency of planning permission is mitigated as much as possible preplanning.

16. Ability to recruit to the volume of residential staff required in the timeframes will be a challenge due to the current national shortage of candidates entering the care sector. This will require a focused recruitment campaign with support from Human Resources, Marketing and Communications Teams.
17. The vendor's agent has stated that elements of the extensions have been underpinned. A structural survey may be required to ascertain the level of risk and the requirement for any further remedial structural work. Should any additional structural work and / or underpinning be required this and the potential cost involved will be discussed with the vendors and the Council will look to re-negotiate the purchase price

Economic case

18. The proposal is to purchase the property at Greenways, Lamborough Hill, Wootton.
19. The house is a two storey 5-bedroom detached dwelling with garden to the rear and parking and garage to the front. The layout is such that no major internal reconfiguration is required, but the building would require a re-fit to suit robustness for use and meet OCC's ligature risk policy.
 - Internal refurbishment to create the required robust, safe environment including fire detection, security etc
 - Replacement doors and windows, upgrade the external fabric/services to ensure improvement in energy efficiency in line with OCC's decarbonisation requirements including ASHP and solar PVs
 - Landscaping at front boundary may need to be scaled back to accommodate required visual splays
 - Removal of external canopy structures, replacement of flat roof with pitched over front elevation
20. This is an initial proposition to inform project costs and facilitate acquisition of the property and will be properly designed at feasibility stage.
21. The preferred option is to purchase Greenways, obtain planning consent for change of use and carry out the refurbishment as required.
22. This is the agreed template as approved by SCB (April 23) and the programme on Greenways will follow the same approach as the first children's home at 79A Lower Icknield Way, Chinnor.
23. The high-level programme is based on carrying out pre-planning application discussions with the planners, local community and residents during the purchase process. The necessary surveys will also be carried out during this period to inform the design work. Once the property is purchased, the planning application will be progressed and submitted to obtain planning consent for change of use before construction works start.

24. A review of potential risks has been carried out by the project team, including the possibility of starting works prior to planning approval. The risk consequence includes potential reputational risk and impact on the relationship with neighbouring residents longer term. Also, if obtained as hoped, planning consent may have conditions precedent that need to be complied with prior to starting works on site. The council would automatically be in breach of the planning consent if work had started prior to consent.
25. Therefore, it was agreed that construction works will be procured during the planning determination phase and once consent is received a contractor will start on site.

Financial Implications

Financial case

Identification of funding source

26. Strategic Capital Board (SCB) approved the Business Case strategy to develop the Children's service Care Home capacity through the purchase and adaptation of 4 children's homes costing a total of £10.450m with 50% match funding by the DfE. The authority capital commitment totals £5.225m. Cabinet subsequently approved the proposal at its meeting December 2022.
27. Purchasing and adapting 3 / 4 of the units in this financial year will enable the service to optimise its claim against the DfE conditions, spend profile and share of funding across 2023/24 and 2024/25. The approach will ensure that the spend is at or above the minimum spend thresholds preventing any risk of clawback of underspend on any individual or combination of units against the DfE 50% share. The approach is reinforced by the DfE policy of paying its share of the costs in full up front leaving the authority to cover the balance and have maximum discretion and flexibility in utilising any underspends
28. The CEF Service confirmed approval for staffing and non-staffing supplementary revenue budget through the January 2023 (P10) Budget Monitoring Report approved at Cabinet in May 2023. Funding for the costs is based on an Invest to Save strategy, further details are listed in Annex A. The rationale and basis for the savings strategy is set out in the original Business Case approved by SCB and Cabinet in December 2022
29. The financial strategy and approach to the purchase and adaptation of the units has been planned and structured to ensure best quality of care for children obtaining best value, maximising the use of the DfE's share and optimum use and return on the investment funds.

Future costs, income, and planned expenditure:

Revenue costs

30. The original business case for the four new homes, including two large homes (of which this is one), set out estimated savings totalling between £0.5m and £1.8m per annum. Recently revised, the potential revenue saving per annum on all four children's homes once operational will be in the order of £1m - £5m per annum. This is based on 10-12 children and a cost saving listed in Annex A. The return on investment is 10%-50% per annum and the capital investment would be fully recovered between 2 and 10 years.
31. Net revenue savings for each home were estimated at between £0.2m to £0.5m per annum. The running costs of a single home have been reduced overall following a reduction in proposed staffing levels, offset by small increases in other costs and an increase of £4,000 for utility costs from £20,000 to £24,000 per annum due to inflation, giving a total of £44,000 for property-related costs.
32. Costs will be incurred prior to the home becoming operational, particularly in relation to the early appointment of staff. These costs are estimated at no more than £80,000 and these can be offset by the savings from more expensive external placement costs. There are also other revenue costs that have been, or will be, incurred that relate to the property acquisition process that cannot be charged to capital. This includes professional costs incurred in preparing a bid for a property that was subsequently rejected. There may be other costs, such as design fees, but these are minimal and can be met from revenue budgets.
33. The estimated full year running costs for the home are £850,000, including £24,000 for property-related costs. These costs will be met from savings in other placement costs as set out in the original business case and incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Plan

Comments checked by: Danny Doherty, FBP, CEF
danny.doherty@oxfordhsire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

34. The legal due diligence will be undertaken in-house by Legal Services.
35. Any additional building and technical surveys required prior to the exchange of contracts will be instructed via existing framework agreements or through a purchase order.

Comments checked by Richard Hodby, Solicitor, Richard.Hodby@oxfordshire.gov.uk
 (Law and Governance)

Staff Implications

Technical Advice and Refurbishment Works

36. The minor works team will provide detailed surveys and specifications in line with the requirements of the service. Following agreement on the scope of works, a tender exercise will be run in line with CPRs to select a contractor to carry out works.
37. Project management of the tender process and subsequent works will be carried out by the minor works team, who will procure a specialist project manager to complete both the design and completion of the works to the agreed scope and specification.
38. The procurement of this project manager will be carried out via a multi discipline framework ensuring we procure services for both design and project management of this project.

Risk Management

Ref no.	Risk	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Action
R.01	Planning	Approval for change of use not achieved resulting in the need to sell the property	Medium	High	Pre-application engagement will seek to determine response from OCC planners on acceptability of change of use before exchange; in addition, a consultation exercise will be undertaken with neighbours, parish council and local Councillors
R.02	Property Acquisition (1)	Acquisition falls through due to vendor change of circumstances	Low	High	Engagement with vendor through vendor's agent at pre-bid stage to understand circumstances and drivers for sale
R.03	Property Acquisition (2)	Acquisition doesn't proceed due to failure at due-diligence stage	Low	High	Already undertaken pre-bid property, planning and high level technical due diligence
R.04	Staff Recruitment	Unable to successfully recruit the volume of staff needed for the home to be operational in the desired timeframe	Medium	High	High impact recruitment campaign including marketing & comms and the use of social media

NAME

Anne Coyle, Interim Corporate Director for Children's Services

Annex: Annex A

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Andrea Benneyworth, Programme Manager, Residential
Edge of Care, Children, Education & Families,
07720144 860 andrea.benneyworth@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Sept 2023

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Divisions Affected – N/A

**CABINET MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN, EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
18 October 2023**

**Children's Services Residential Capital Programme for
Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton**

Report by Interim Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to

1. Release funds to:
 - (a) Purchase Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton for **the amount listed in Annex A**
 - (b) Cover fees of **amount listed in Annex A** (Stamp Duty Land Tax, valuation, legal etc)
 - (c) Cover the adaptation and refurbishment for the **amount listed in Annex A**

Executive Summary

2. Approval of the Children's Services Residential Capital Programme was received on 5 December 2022, Appendix A. This was for the acquisition and associated works of four residential properties to be converted to Children's Homes. Two of these properties are to be utilised as Larger long-term homes for ASD and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH), comprising 6-bedroom properties to accommodate four children each.
3. The subject property at Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton (Oathill Lodge) has been identified by the service as meeting their needs as a Large children's home specifically for children with complex emotional needs. Terms have been agreed to acquire and refurbish the property for the amount listed in Annex A subject to approval by Cabinet. The offer is at the asking price listed in Annex A and is supported by a desk top market valuation at the same level.

Alignment to relevant strategy:

4. Children We Care for [Sufficiency Strategy](#) 2020-2025
5. To support the departments Sufficiency Strategy for placements for Children We Care For, Children's Services plan to deliver four additional Children's Homes which will be operated and staffed by the Council's experienced Residential and Edge of Care (REoC) service. To support children with the greatest needs CEF plan to purchase four properties from the open market and convert to a specific specification working with the Council's Property department.
6. To increase the number of residential beds within county, to prevent having to place Children We Care For out of county.

Ref no.	Benefit	Measurement
B.01	To provide Children We Care For with complex needs a homely and nurturing environment with specialist trained staff including access to the Council's Clinical Psychologists to enable them to thrive close to their family and friends.	<i>Reduction in CWCF placed outside of Oxfordshire</i>
B.02	These schemes will support the department to meet their duties under the Sufficiency Strategy to increase the provision of in-county residential placements.	<i>Increase in internal residential provision</i>
B.03	The internal residential expansion programme is an invest to save initiative whereby CEF aim to save between £0.5m and £5.6m per annum which is a cost comparison on current un-registered arrangements and out of county placement spend for children who would be accommodated in these homes based on a 75% occupancy rate.	<i>Reduction in number of children placed in unregistered provision</i>
B.04	Increase in the quality of care afforded to our children	<i>Clear Corporate Parenting oversight of the provisions our children are living within</i>

Exempt Information

7. The information in the Annex is exempt because it contains information that could reveal the identity of an individual (the vendor of the private property) and relates to the business affairs of the vendor (the commercial sensitivity of the purchase of a private property).

Case for Change

8. Before this property was selected as one of 4 properties for conversion across Oxfordshire, a detailed search exercise was undertaken which looked at all vacant properties owned by Oxfordshire County Council. Unfortunately, none of these were suitable as a prospective large or small children's home. Therefore, an extensive search has been carried out across the county to identify properties on the open market for purchase and conversion. The Service consider each property in light of the particular needs of the children the home will be catering, and Oathill Lodge property was found to be suitable as a large children's home. Oathill Lodge has already been operating as a Childrens home for 15 years under a private provider, so whilst planning will be required for a change of use this should be a straightforward exercise without any objections.
9. The house was chosen as it gives children the opportunity to live and thrive within a settled and safe community within easy reach of universal amenities that are afforded to any other child living within Oxfordshire. Ordinarily there will be no more than 4 children living at the property with 3-4 adults caring for them.
10. Oxfordshire currently has 3 children's homes each of which provide a home for up to 6 children at any one time. These homes are well established within their communities and are all registered with Ofsted and rated GOOD at their most recent inspections.
11. Oathill Lodge will be offering a long-term home to a maximum of 4 children at any one time as we move away from institutionalised living and offer these children the valued experience of living within a nurturing family setting that supports the recovery from trauma suffered from being unable to live with their birth families.

Constraints and dependencies

Constraints

12. The pool of larger 6-bedroom properties available on the open market within Oxfordshire for our £1.5m budget and suitable for minimal conversion is very limited. In addition, locating such a property with sufficient parking, mains drainage, suitable amenities and not located near a railway, waterway or main road is a geographical challenge. For reference, Ofsted view railways, main roads and waterways as significant risks to our children and therefore not suitable.

Dependencies

13. The existing planning permission is for use as a Children's Home although this use is 'personal' to the current owner and operator (Hillcrest)
14. Planning permission will be required to either transfer the personal use from Hillcrest to OCC, or for full change of use from C3 (residential dwelling house) to C2 (residential institution); planning will also be required for the proposed refurbishment works

15. Ability to recruit to the volume of residential staff required in the timeframes will be a challenge due to the current national shortage of candidates entering the care sector. This will require a focused recruitment campaign with support from Human Resources, Marketing and Communications Teams.

Economic case

16. The proposal is to purchase the property at Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton.
17. The house is a two storey 10-bedroom children's home with a small garden to the side and rear of the property. It is set within a rural location with fields and woodlands to all sides. Proposed accommodation will comprise Ground floor: kitchen/dining room, lounge, games room, staff office and meeting room, and First floor: x4 Children's bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and x2 Staff bedrooms.

Indicative refurbishment works to include

- The interior of the property will require a complete refit and a link will need to be created between the main body of the house and the annex
 - Internal robust re-fit including new heating system and new external windows and doors; small increase in floor area due to new connection between the house and the annex at first floor level
 - Demolition of office building in garden
 - Installation of new fencing and gates at the front of the house and some additional protective barrier fencing at the rear
 - Photovoltaics to roof and increase insulation throughout
18. This is an initial proposition to inform project costs and facilitate acquisition of the property and will be properly designed at feasibility stage.
 19. The preferred option is to purchase Oathill Lodge, obtain planning consent for change of use and carry out the refurbishment as required.
 20. This is the agreed template as approved by SCB (April 23) and the programme on Oathill Lodge will follow the same approach as the first children's home at 79A Lower Icknield Way, Chinnor.
 21. The high-level programme is based on carrying out pre-planning application discussions with the planners, local community and residents during the purchase process. The necessary surveys will also be carried out during this period to inform the design work. Once the property is purchased, the planning

application will be progressed and submitted to obtain planning consent for change of use before construction works start.

22. A review of potential risks has been carried out by the project team, including the possibility of starting works prior to planning approval. The risk consequence includes potential reputational risk and impact on the relationship with neighbouring residents longer term. Also, if obtained as hoped, planning consent may have conditions precedent that need to be complied with prior to starting works on site. The council would automatically be in breach of the planning consent if work had started prior to consent.
23. Therefore, it was agreed that construction works will be procured during the planning determination phase and once consent is received a contractor will start on site.

Financial Implications

Financial case

Identification of funding source

24. Strategic Capital Board (SCB) approved the Business Case strategy to develop the Children's service Care Home capacity through the purchase and adaptation of 4 children's homes costing a total of £10.450m with 50% match funding by the DfE. The authority capital commitment totals £5.225m. Cabinet subsequently approved the proposal at its meeting December 2022. The table below provides a summary of the budget for each of the units together with a breakdown of the purchase and adaptation (construction) costs.
25. Purchasing and adapting 3 / 4 of the units in this financial year will enable the service to optimise its claim against the DfE conditions, spend profile and share of funding across 2023/24 and 2024/25. The approach will ensure that the spend is at or above the minimum spend thresholds preventing any risk of clawback of underspend on any individual or combination of units against the DfE 50% share. The approach is reinforced by the DfE policy of paying its share of the costs in full up front leaving the authority to cover the balance and have maximum discretion and flexibility in utilising any underspends
26. The CEF Service confirmed approval for staffing and non-staffing supplementary revenue budget through the January 2023 (P10) Budget Monitoring Report approved at Cabinet in May 2023. Funding for the costs is based on an Invest to Save strategy, further details are listed in Annex A. The rationale and basis for the savings strategy is set out in the original Business Case approved by SCB and Cabinet in December 2022
27. The financial strategy and approach to the purchase and adaptation of the units has been planned and structured to ensure best quality of care for children obtaining best value, maximising the use of the DfE's share and optimum use and return on the investment funds.

Future costs, income, and planned expenditure:

Revenue costs

28. The original business case for the four new homes, including two large homes (of which this is one), set out estimated savings totalling between £0.5m and £1.8m per annum. Recently revised, the potential revenue saving per annum on all four children's homes once operational will be in the order of £1m - £5m per annum. This is based on 10-12 children and a cost saving listed in Annex A. The return on investment is 10%-50% per annum and the capital investment would be fully recovered between 2 and 10 years.
29. Net revenue savings for each home were estimated at between £0.2m to £0.5m per annum. The running costs of a single home have been reduced overall following a reduction in proposed staffing levels, offset by small increases in other costs and an increase of £4,000 for utility costs from £20,000 to £24,000 per annum due to inflation, giving a total of £44,000 for property-related costs.
30. Costs will be incurred prior to the home becoming operational, particularly in relation to the early appointment of staff. These costs are estimated at no more than £80,000 and these can be offset by the savings from more expensive external placement costs. There are also other revenue costs that have been, or will be, incurred that relate to the property acquisition process that cannot be charged to capital. This includes professional costs incurred in preparing a bid for a property that was subsequently rejected. There may be other costs, such as design fees, but these are minimal and can be met from revenue budgets.
31. The estimated full year running costs for the home are £850,000, including £24,000 for property-related costs. These costs will be met from savings in other placement costs as set out in the original business case and incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Plan

Comments checked by: Danny Doherty, FBP, CEF
danny.doherty@oxfordhsire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

32. The legal due diligence will be undertaken in-house by Legal Services.
33. Any additional building and technical surveys required prior to the exchange of contracts will be instructed via existing framework agreements or through a purchase order.

Comments checked by Richard Hodby, Solicitor, Richard.Hodby@oxfordshire.gov.uk
 (Law and Governance)

Staff Implications

Technical Advice and Refurbishment Works

34. The minor works team will provide detailed surveys and specifications in line with the requirements of the service. Following agreement on the scope of works, a tender exercise will be run in line with CPRs to select a contractor to carry out works.
35. Project management of the tender process and subsequent works will be carried out by the minor works team, who will procure a specialist project manager to complete both the design and completion of the works to the agreed scope and specification.
36. The procurement of this project manager will be carried out via a multi discipline framework ensuring we procure services for both design and project management of this project.

Risk Management

<i>Ref no.</i>	<i>Risk</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Likelihood</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigating Action</i>
R.01	Planning	Approval for change of use not achieved resulting in the need to sell the property	Medium	High	Pre-application engagement will seek to determine response from OCC planners on acceptability of change of use before exchange; in addition, a consultation exercise will be undertaken with neighbours, parish council and local Councillors
R.02	Property Acquisition (1)	Acquisition falls through due to vendor change of circumstances	Low	High	Engagement with vendor through vendor's agent at pre-bid stage to understand circumstances and drivers for sale
R.03	Property Acquisition (2)	Acquisition doesn't proceed due to failure at due-diligence stage	Low	High	Already undertaken pre-bid property, planning and high level technical due diligence
R.04	Staff Recruitment	Unable to successfully recruit the volume of staff needed for the home to be operational in the desired	Medium	High	High impact recruitment campaign including marketing & comms and the use of social media

		timeframe			
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NAME
Anne Coyle Interim Corporate Director for Children’s Services

Annex: Annex A

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Andrea Benneyworth, Programme Manager, Residential
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Sept 2023

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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