



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

***Wednesday, 6 November 2024 at 2.00 pm  
Room 3 - 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves  
Chief Executive

October 2024

*Committee Officer:*

*Note: Date of next meeting: 11 December 2024*

**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](mailto: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.

### 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 2)

The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 and to receive information arising from them.

### 5. Age Range Extension of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School (Pages 3 - 10)

*Cabinet Member: Children, Education and Young People's Services*

*Forward Plan Ref: 2024/301*

Contact: Janine Foulkes-Williams, Principal Officer – Early Years Organisation  
([Janine.Foulkes-Williams@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Janine.Foulkes-Williams@oxfordshire.gov.uk))

Report by Director of Children's Services (**CMDCEYPS**).

**The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the age range extension of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School down from 3-5 to 2-5, from 1 January 2025.**

#### **EXEMPT ITEM**

In the event that any Member or Officer wishes to discuss the information set out in the annex to Agenda Item 6, 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 report does not contain exempt information and is available to the public

THE ANNEX TO THE ITEM NAMED HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS 'CONFIDENTIAL' BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THEM.

## **6. Children's Services Residential Capital Programme for 6 Great Mead, East Hagbourne, Didcot (Pages 11 - 32)**

*Cabinet Member:* Children, Education and Young People's Services

*Forward Plan Ref:* 2024/314

Contact: Andrea Benneyworth Andrea Benneyworth, Programme Manager, Residential Edge of Care, Children, Education & Families  
([andrea.benneyworth@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.benneyworth@oxfordshire.gov.uk)),

Report by Director of Children's Services (**CMDCEYPS**).

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.

The annex exempt information under the above paragraph is attached.

### **1. The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**

- a) **Approve entering the contract with E. W. Beards for them to carry out construction services on the refurbishment of 6 Great Mead, East Hagbourne, Didcot.**

- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Property & Assets in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer to complete the work.**

## **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.

# Agenda Item 4

## **DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Wednesday, 9 October 2024 commencing at 2.00 p.m. and finishing at 2.06 p.m.

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor John Howson – in the Chair

**Officers:** Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)  
Jack Nicholson (Democratic Services Officer)  
Andrea Benneyworth (Programme Manager)

*The Cabinet Member considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda No. 1)

There were none.

### **20 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

### **21 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda No. 3)

There were none.

### **22 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

(Agenda No. 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **23 CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESIDENTIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR OATHILL LODGE, ENSTONE, CHIPPING NORTON**

(Agenda No. 5)

At this point in the proceedings, the Chair resolved 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.

The Chair agreed to the recommendations in the report.

**The Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Young People's Services  
RESOLVED to:**

- a) Approve entering the contract with E. W. Beards for them to carry out construction services on the refurbishment of Oathill Lodge, Enstone, Chipping Norton.**
  
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Property in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and the Deputy Monitoring Officer to complete all necessary legal documentation to give effect to this contract award.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....



### DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

6 NOVEMBER 2024

### AGE RANGE EXTENSION OF GRANDPONT MAINTAINED NURSERY SCHOOL

#### Report by Director of Children's Services

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to approve the age range extension of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School down from 3-5 to 2-5, from 1 January 2025.

#### Executive Summary

2. The Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School have reviewed the delivery model of their nursery and linked childcare provision. They propose that funded 2-year-old places should be included on the nursery school roll and no longer under governors' community powers.
3. Age range changes for community nursery schools require a statutory consultation and decision-making process. The decision must be made in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and decision makers must have regard to the statutory guidance, "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools", October 2018 ("the Guidance"). The Regulations require that the LA should decide a proposal within two months of the end of the Representation period, otherwise it will fall to the Schools Adjudicator.
4. A statutory notice (Annex 1) and Statutory Proposal (Annex 2) have been published, and the required representation period ended on 18 October 2024; a decision is therefore required by 18 December 2024, if it is not to fall to the Schools Adjudicator. While the Governing Body can propose this change, the decision-maker is the local authority.

#### Introduction

5. This report follows the publication of a Statutory Proposal/Notice (Stage 1) and a Representation (Stage 2 formal consultation) period relating to the county council's 'prescribed alteration' proposal to expand the age range of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School. The proposal is made with the support of the school's leadership team and Governing Body. The Cabinet Member is now required to decide on the proposal in accordance with the statutory prescribed alteration procedures.
6. Further details of the proposal are provided in the Statutory Proposal, Annex 2.

## Background

7. Grandpont Nursery in Oxford is one of seven maintained freestanding nursery schools in Oxfordshire. It's most recent Ofsted inspection in 2022 graded the nursery as Good.
8. Admissions to the nursery school are governed by Oxfordshire County Council's Nursery Schools Admissions policy. 104 part time equivalent places were available in the 23/24 academic year, offering both universal 15 and extended 30 hour funded places to children aged 3 and 4 years.
9. Grandpont Childcare also operates within the same site and buildings as the nursery school. It has a separate Ofsted registration and is open each weekday, from 8am to 6pm, all year round. It provides full or sessional day care, with the addition of wraparound care during term time in the form of a breakfast club and after-school club. The most recent Ofsted inspection in 2022 resulted in a Good grading.
10. The Childcare provision offers places for children from the age of 10 months and above. These are offered under the Governors' Section 27 community powers and children are not on the nursery school roll.
11. The Governing Body has reviewed the provision on site and propose to extend the nursery school age range down to 2-year-olds. The nursery is seeing increased demand for term time only funded places for this age group, and it will streamline admissions to have children on the nursery roll at age 2. Extension of the school age range would aid the long-term sustainability of a nursery school that provides high quality teacher-led provision within the heart of Oxford city.
12. Grandpont Nursery will review their number of year-round places and offer some funded provision for the 9 months to 23 months age group. This new entitlement for working families is part of the Government childcare strategy and introduces 15 hours of funded childcare for children from 9 months old, starting in September 2024. The entitlement was expected to extend further to 30 funded hours a week for eligible children from September 2025 but is subject to confirmation by the new Government.

## Objectives and expected outcomes

13. Under Sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act 2006, Oxfordshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare available to enable families –
  - a) to access the funded entitlements for their child
  - b) to take up, or remain in work, or
  - c) to undertake education or training which could reasonably lead to work
14. The proposed age range extension to the nursery would:
  - Create Council-maintained spaces for funded 2yr olds
  - Be supportive of delivering high educational standards and parental choice.
  - Provide better term time only continuity of provision for families with younger children.

15. The Council's most recent assessment of sufficiency for funded childcare places indicates that in September 2025 there will be a 30-place deficit for 2-year-olds in the Oxford Grandpont and New Hinksey Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA), therefore demand for the proposed places is expected to be good.
16. The proposal is not expected to affect other providers within the area as it is largely a change in governance and not creating new places. Due to the new working parent childcare entitlements Council officers expect growth in demand generally and are supporting providers to review and extend their offer to support this change.

## Financial Implications

The following financial implications have been checked by Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner, Financial and Commercial Services. Contact: [jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

17. There are no capital costs for implementing the proposal. The school will continue to use the spacious purpose-built building, which fully meets the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (January 2022).
18. Revenue costs will be covered by termly headcount funding claims through the Council's Early Years Portal.

## Legal Issues

The following legal implications have been checked by Paul Grant, Head of Legal. Contact: [paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

19. The proposals set out in this report involve a legal process which the Council has followed, including statutory consultation. The recommendation for a change of category results in a change of legal status for the school.
20. A change of category is covered by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations') which should be read in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 and Schedule 3 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 (as amended by the Education Act (EA) 2011) and the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
21. The proposed change is subject to the "Guidance", as set out in "Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to maintained schools" last updated January 2023. This Guidance is for proposers and decision-makers. The Guidance states that the statutory proposal must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change. The proposal should be accessible to all interested parties and should therefore use 'plain English'. The full proposal must be published on a website (e.g. the school or LA's website) along with a statement setting out:
  - how copies of the proposal may be obtained;
  - that anybody can object to, or comment on, the proposal;
  - the date that the representation period ends;
  - and the address to which objections or comments should be submitted.
22. A brief notice (including details on how the full proposal can be accessed e.g. the website address) must be published in a local newspaper. Within one week of the date of

publication on the website, the proposer must send a copy of the proposal and the information set out in the paragraph above to the Governing Board and any other body or person that the proposer thinks are appropriate.

23. The representation period must last for four weeks from the date of the publication. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the LA to be considered by the decision-maker. It is also good practice for representations to be forwarded to the proposer to ensure that they are aware of local opinion.

## **Staff Implications**

24. There are no staffing implications to this proposal. This proposal would utilise existing qualified and experienced staff with a solid understanding of child development.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

25. Reflecting their location in deprived areas, previous evidence has shown that maintained nursery schools deliver services to a higher proportion of vulnerable children and families than other Early Years providers (Early Education, 2015). These include children who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), have English as an Additional Language (EAL), have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. According to Blanden et al., 2017, maintained nursery schools are more likely than other provider types to be used by FSM children, children from disadvantaged areas and EAL students.
26. Maintained nursery schools are required to have a qualified Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) teacher who provides support, advice and training for non-expert staff to support high quality early education and care for children with SEN. Maintained nursery schools also have SEN policies and accessibility plans (Butler, 2016).
27. Early Education (2015, p.11) highlighted that one of the key differences between the maintained nursery school sector and other early childhood education & care provision is the extent to which the maintained nursery school sector is able to support disadvantaged children and families through bespoke programmes, often providing outreach into the home. This aspect of the maintained nursery school sector, which connects the child and the family within the community to promote a “joined up approach” for effective learning through an “open culture”, is a notable attribute of many maintained nursery schools (Callanan et al., 2017, p. 52).
28. Early Education (2015) recommended in its ‘Maintained nursery schools: the state of play report’, that priority should be given to maximising take-up of high-quality provision in nursery schools, for the most disadvantaged children including funded 2-year-olds.

## **Sustainability Implications**

29. Extension of the school age range would aid the long-term economic sustainability of a nursery school that provides high quality teacher-led provision within the heart of Oxford city. Local authority sufficiency data indicates need in the local area need has shifted away from term time only provision for 3–4-year-olds towards all year-round care. The nursery school’s linked provision, ‘Grandpont Childcare’ is increasing its capacity to offer more all year-round spaces. However, new government funding initiatives have also increased the demand for term time funded spaces for 2-year-olds.

30. Economically sustainable early education and childcare is an important contributor to social sustainability in improving access to education, reducing inequality and supporting community cohesion.
31. The change in age range should deliver positive environmental sustainability impacts by reducing travel distances to local education provision.

## Risk Management

32. There are no risk management issues.

## Consultations

33. A statutory notice (Annex 1) and Statutory Proposal (Annex 2) have been published, and the required representation period ended on 18 October 2024.
34. Two responses to the consultation were received. Both strongly supported the proposal.

Lisa Lyons  
Director for Children, Education & Families

Annex 1: Statutory Notice

Annex 2: Statutory Proposal

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Jane Maharry, School Organisation Service Manager.  
Email: [jane.maharry@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jane.maharry@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

November 2024



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Annex 1**

# PUBLIC NOTICE

## Proposed Change of Age Range at Grandpont Nursery School from 3-5 to 2-5

Notice is given in accordance with [The School Organisation \(Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) that Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School, intends to make a prescribed alteration to Grandpont Maintained Nursery School, Whitehouse Road, Oxford, OX1 4QH effective from 1 January 2025.

The Local Authority, working with the governing body of the nursery school is proposing to extend the age range from 3-5 years to 2-5 years.

This Notice is an extract from the full proposal, which can be viewed at [letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/grandpont-nursery-extension-of-age-range](http://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/grandpont-nursery-extension-of-age-range). Copies can also be requested by emailing [school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this Notice, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Local Authority using the online feedback form on the above website, or by email to the above address.

**Signed: Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services**

**Publication Date: 20 September 2024**

**Annex 2**



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

# **FULL STATUTORY PROPOSAL**

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations  
2013

## **Change of Age Range at Grandpont Nursery School from 3-5 to 2-5**

### **1. School and LA details**

**School:** Grandpont Maintained Nursery School

**Address:** Whitehouse Road, Oxford, OX1 4QH

**Local Authority:** Oxfordshire

### **2. Description of alteration**

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School proposes to extend the age range of Grandpont Nursery School from age 3 to 5 down to age 2 to 5.

### **3. Evidence of demand**

Under Sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act 2006, Oxfordshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare available to enable families –

- d) to access the funded entitlements for their child
- e) to take up, or remain in work, or
- f) to undertake education or training which could reasonably lead to work

The Council's most recent assessment of sufficiency for funded childcare places indicates that in September 2025 there will be a 30-place deficit for 2-year-olds in the Oxford Grandpont and New Hinksey Medium Super Output Area in which the nursery is located.

### **4. Objectives**

The proposed alteration would:

- Create teacher-led spaces for 2yr olds
- Be supportive of delivering high educational standards
- Provide better term time place continuity and choice of provision for families with younger children
- Improve the financial viability of the nursery school

### **5. The effect on other educational institutions within the area**

The proposal is not expected to affect other providers within the area as it is largely a change in governance for a small proportion of the childcare provision delivered on site. Due to the new working parent childcare entitlements, Council officers expect growth in demand generally and are supporting all providers to review and extend their offer to support this change. The proposal is therefore in line with this agenda.

### **6. Project costs and funding**

There are no capital costs related to this proposal as the Nursery already has suitable space and capacity for 2-year-olds in the existing building. No new staff are required but increased revenue costs will be supported through the normal termly headcount return and place-funding payments

## **7. Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation**

The nursery proposes to admit 2-year-olds onto the school roll from 1 January 2025, with no further implementation stages.

## **8. Objections and comments**

Comments or objections must be received by the local authority by **18 October 2024**

Respond by:

using the online questionnaire at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/grandpont-nursery-extension-of-age-range>

- 
- or emailing [school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk) (*please quote 'Grandpont Nursery age range consultation' in the header*)
- handing in a written response at the reception office of Grandpont Nursery School
- posting a written response to **Emma Daisley, Access to Learning, Oxfordshire County Council, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, County Hall, Oxford OX1 1ND**

## **9. Decision-making**

The decision-maker for this proposed expansion is Oxfordshire County Council. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services at a meeting which is open to the public and publicised on the county council's website. The decision must be made within a period of two months of the end of this representation period and is currently expected on **Wednesday 6 November 2024**.



## Divisions Affected –

### **DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

**6 NOVEMBER 2024**

#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESIDENTIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 6 GREAT MEAD, EAST HAGBOURNE, DIDCOT**

#### **Report by Director of Childrens Services**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - a) **Approve entering the contract with E. W. Beards for them to carry out construction services on the refurbishment of 6 Great Mead, East Hagbourne, Didcot.**
  - b) **Delegate authority to the Director of Property & Assets in consultation with the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer to complete the work.**

### **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 Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH), comprising 6-bedroom properties to accommodate four children each.
3. A further Key Decision was approved to release these approved funds for acquisition and refurbishment of Great Mead on 17 January 2024.
4. The property at Great Mead was purchased on 17 May 2024 and will be a large long-term children's home specifically for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs.
5. Planning permission was submitted on 3 October 2024 for change of use from C3 (residential dwelling house) to C2 (residential institution) and for the proposed refurbishment. Determination is expected December 2024.

### Alignment to relevant strategy:

6. Children We Care for [Sufficiency Strategy](#) 2020-2025
7. 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.
8. To increase the number of residential beds within county, to prevent having to place Children We Care For out of county.

<b>Ref no.</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
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

9. 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 (the commercial sensitivity of the purchase and contract details of a private property).

### Case for Change

10. 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 look at each property considering the particular needs of the children the home will be catering, and Great Mead is suitable as a large children's home.
11. The home 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.
12. 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.
13. Great Mead 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

14. 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

15. Planning permission is being sought for full change of use from C3 (residential dwelling house) to C2 (residential institution) and for the proposed refurbishment works
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. To note: Ofsted Registration, an external driver and requirement for securing children in the home, is taking 17 – 25 weeks for completion. The registration cannot start until the keys are handed to the service at completion of refurbishment works. This will impact the realisation of revenue savings until nearly 6 months after completion of refurbishments.

### **Economic case**

18. The proposal is to refurbish the property 6 Great Mead, East Hagbourne, Didcot.
19. The house is a two storey 6-bedroom family home with a off-street parking to the front and side of the property and a large garden to the rear of the property. It is set within a rural location with fields and 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.

Refurbishment works include:

- Internal robust re-fit including new heating system
- Installation of new fencing and gates at the front of the house and boundary fencing

### **Financial Implications**

The following financial implications have been checked by Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources. Email: [lorna.baxter@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:lorna.baxter@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

### **Financial case**

#### **Identification of funding source**

20. 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.
21. 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

22. 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
23. 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

24. 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.
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. 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

### **Legal Implications**

The following legal implications have been checked by Sarah Hayes, a solicitor in Legal Services. Contact: [sarah.hayes@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.hayes@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

28. The legal due diligence has been undertaken in-house by Legal Services.

29. The decision will enable legal services to draft and finalise relevant contractual documentation on behalf of the Council so that the project can proceed.

## Staff Implications

### Technical Advice and Refurbishment Works

30. Project management of the works will be carried out by the minor works team, via a specialist project manager to complete the works to the agreed scope and specification. The cost for this Project Manager is included in the project capital budget.

## 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 & WODC 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.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
R.05	Match Funding	Unable to successfully spend the required amount of funding from DfE within the required timescale	High	Med	Escalation of risk to timescales given in July 24 and shared with DfE to ensure change control for programme can be managed appropriately.
R.06	Ofsted Registration	Unable to secure Ofsted registration for the home resulting in lack of revenue savings	Low	Med	Ofsted registration, at the time of writing, is taking 17 – 25 weeks per home to complete and will impact the timing of the anticipated revenue savings.

NAME Lisa Lyons, Director for Children, Education & Families

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](mailto:andrea.benneyworth@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

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