



Report of the Cabinet Member for Children Services

Cabinet – 17 March 2022

Child & Family Services In-house Residential Capital Investment

Purpose:	To approve the Capital Investment to purchase properties to develop an in-house residential solution for Swansea Council and to comply with Financial Procedure Rule 7 (Capital Programming and Appraisals) to commit and authorise a scheme to the Capital Programme.
Policy Framework:	Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 Financial Procedure Rule No. 7
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Cabinet approves the capital investment for an in-house residential solution and its financial implications and adds the scheme set out in paragraph 3 to the capital programme.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Evidence shows that the numbers of children in care has been increasing year-on-year (with the figures now being higher than at any point on record) and an analysis by the County Council Network indicates that the numbers could increase by an additional 20-25% by 2025.

- 1.2. While Swansea has successfully managed to safely reduce the numbers needing to be looked after we are detrimentally impacted by the implications this national trend has on placement availability, particularly for those with the most acute and complex needs.
- 1.3. We presently have one in-house service which offers emergency and short-term placements for up to three young people. When we require additional placements these are commissioned from independent private providers. Over the past three years there have been approximately 30 children living in an independent residential care service at any one point in time.
- 1.4. One of the Welsh Government's priorities is to remove profit from children's residential care. This is being driven at pace with the expectation that the framework and expectations in relation to this priority will start to be implemented during 2022. This is having an immediate impact on an already challenging placement market with some providers (both residential and independent fostering agencies) making the decision to pause planned developments and/or withdraw from offering placements to Welsh children.
- 1.5. As the national demand for residential services was already outstripping supply, and this was already compounded by the higher demand for foster placements than the market is able to meet, this move by Welsh Government has further exacerbated Swansea's ability to deliver its sufficiency strategy. So much so, that since December 2021, 6 children and young people have been placed in a provision in England

2. Use of Capital Funding

- 2.1 The use of the capital funding will be for the purchase of two properties to be adapted into in-house residential provision for children and young people in Swansea.
- 2.2 Individual children's residential care services units need a medium to large family home with 3-4 bedrooms.
- 2.3 As well as the acquisition, there are the costs of adaptation. These will vary from property to property depending on the size and quality of the physical environment (e.g. does it need to be re-wired or a new heating system)
- 2.4 Any residential care service would need to comply with certain requirements such as those associated with fire safety (the installation of alarms, sprinkler systems, fire doors etc) and with those of the regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales.

3. Summary of Proposed Works to be added to Capital Programme

- 3.1. A full financial implications summary and detail for the total capital scheme is outlined in the table below:

	TOTAL 22/23	TOTAL 23/24	TOTAL 24/25
• Purchase a property (1) to be registered and ready to use as standby for emergency placements	£400,000		
• Adaptations to property 1	£350,000		
• Purchase a property (2) to be registered for children with complex needs and disabilities		£400,000	
• Adaptations to property 2			£350,000
TOTALS	£750,000	£400,000	£350,000

Total Capital Scheme is £1.5 Million as noted in Capital Budget 22/23

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

4.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.2 In order to comply with the relevant regulations, an IIA screening has been completed, which highlights that at this point a full report is not needed.

- 4.3 As this scheme progresses and once the locality of the properties is identified a full IIA will be needed along with engagement and consultation of both the community and children and young people who will be impacted by this.
- 4.4 The IIA process takes into account the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which the Council has embedded into the Authority's Policy Framework. UNCRC is relevant as this develops further and will be fully considered within a full IIA report.
- 4.5 The full IIA reporting process will also provide evidence that the initiative complies with Welsh Language Standards: specifically, that we have considered how to maximise any benefits and minimise any adverse effects on:
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 It is proposed that the scheme outlined in section 3 is added to the Council's Capital Programme.
- 5.2 In 21/22 the Directorate received significant additional funding late in the financial year to cover costs we have already borne out of core budgets. We have assessed the situation and the specific guidance to understand how we can maximise this funding to meet the needs via a Capital Investment Programme over the next 3 to 5 years.
- 5.3 A transfer from revenue to capital has been made and will be developed in conjunction with any Regional Capital Funds.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council will need to ensure that all necessary planning consents are obtained.
- 6.2 The Council will need to ensure that it complies with its Contract Procedure Rules and any relevant procurement legislation when procuring any of the works and related contracts referred to above.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - IIA Screening Form