

CABINET

11 FEBRUARY 2014

RELOCATION OF THE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES' TEAMS

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Finance

Report from: Perry Holmes, Assistant Director Legal & Corporate Services.
Phil Watson, Assistant Director Children's Social Care

Author: Noel Filmer, Valuation & Asset Management Manager

Summary

This report seeks authority to take a lease or leases of premises and ancillary parking to relocate the Children's Social Care Services' Teams. It is further proposed that the three existing Children's Social Care Services Teams' premises at Woodlands Place Gillingham, The Redvers Centre Chatham and The Elaine Centre Strood be declared surplus so that they can be disposed of or let on the best terms reasonably obtainable and that Full Council makes an addition to the Capital programme to fund the moves.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 As the rent payable for the property or properties to be leased will be above £20,000 per annum per property, but below £1,000,000 per annum per property, the delegation of authority to take a lease or leases is a matter for Cabinet.
- 1.2 As the disposal value of the existing properties is over £100,000 but below £1,000,000 per property, the delegation of authority to declare them surplus is a matter for Cabinet.
- 1.3 As the rental value of the existing properties is likely to be over £20,000 per annum per property but below £1,000,000 per annum per property, the delegation of authority to grant leases at the properties is a matter for Cabinet.
- 1.4 The council's policy and budget framework requires Full Council approval for additions to the council's capital programme.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council owns in excess of 1,000 property assets and, next to staff, property is the Council's largest single cost. Effective management is therefore essential if the Council is to fulfill its core objectives and provide good quality, value for money services.
- 2.2 To ensure that the Council's property assets contribute to its priorities, outcomes, objectives and key actions, as set out within the Council Plan, all properties are considered in the context of rationalisation.
- 2.3 This report brings forward proposals to lease new premises in order to relocate the three existing Children's Social Care Services Teams.

3.1 Woodlands Place Gillingham.

- 3.1.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above premises as shown edged black and the long leasehold interest of the premises shown hatched black on the plan at appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.1.2 The premises have been used as accommodation for a Children's Social Care Services' team for over 7 years. The premises are no longer considered to be fit for purpose due to their age, layout and condition.

3.2 The Redvers Centre Chatham.

- 3.2.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above premises as shown edged black on the plan at appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.2.2 The premises have been used as accommodation for a Children's Social Care Services' team for over 7 years. The premises are no longer considered to be fit for purpose due to their age, layout and condition.

3.3 The Elaine Centre Strood.

- 3.3.1 The Council owns the freehold of the above premises as shown edged black on the plan at appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.3.2 The premises have been used as accommodation for a Children's Social Care Services' team for over 7 years. The premises are no longer considered to be fit for purpose due to their age, layout and condition.

4. Options

- 4.1 The council can either retain the existing premises, which are used by the Children's Social Care Services' teams or acquire new premises and dispose of or let the old premises.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1 The three existing premises are no longer fit for purpose and moving to alternative premises will result in efficiencies and service improvements. As a result, it is proposed that new premises are secured and authority is delegated to officers to let the existing premises or declare the existing premises surplus so that they can be disposed of.
- 5.2 A screening Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) is attached at Appendix 2 to this report, this concludes that:

“ Whilst some groups, particularly people with disabilities, some due to their age and some low income families may be inconvenienced and/or disadvantaged by the proposed changes, it is believed this will be a relatively small number. Many people, young, old and disabled, do use the current services whilst having to travel to the centres from their homes and for some of these the new location would be closer to their homes. It is believed that the benefits to all users that will come from an improved service justify the changes.”

6. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Adverse reaction to relocation proposals	Service Users and staff react badly to the proposals.	Consultation with staff and service users.	D3
Empty properties are expensive and difficult to manage pending disposal	Empty properties become a target of antisocial behaviour /vandalism / squatters pending disposal.	Dispose of or let the properties as soon as possible after they have become vacant.	C3
Less access for service users.	The new premises are not well located for service users.	If new premises are located away from a public transport hub the Council will provide “satellite” premises (Probably at Eagle Court Rochester which is already council owned) to improve public access.	D3

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with the service directorate, which in turn has consulted its staff and a screening Diversity Impact Assessment is attached as appendix 2 to this report. No objections to these proposals have been received.

8. Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 The estimated running costs for the new premises are £195,000 per annum, which will generate revenue savings compared to the current operational costs of the existing buildings. These savings are dependent on the disposal or lease of those buildings. This is alongside the potential capital receipts from the disposal of the present premises. Disposal or letting of the three existing premises will also reduce the council's potential maintenance commitment by £954,500.
- 8.2 The capital cost of moving to the new premises (including the new furniture which is needed) is estimated at £185,000. It is proposed that this cost is funded by the capital receipts from the sale of the surplus properties. If the surplus properties are let on a long term basis the capital investment will need to be funded from the revenue savings / rental income.
- 8.3 Under Part 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, the decision to:
- Take a lease of new premises is one for Cabinet as the rent payable will be over £20,000 per annum.
 - The disposal of or letting of the existing properties is one for Cabinet, as the disposal value of the properties is likely to be over £100,000 per property but less than £1,000,000 and the rental value of the properties is likely to be over £20,000 per annum.
- 8.4 The Council has power under section 120 Local Government Act 1972 to acquire land for any of its functions, including Children's Services.
- 8.5 The Council has a duty under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable when it disposes of property, unless the disposal is by way of a lease for a term of 7 years or less or consent is obtained from the Secretary of State.
- 8.6 In considering whether to relocate Children's Services to new premises, Medway Council must comply with its duties in section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations. Attached as appendix 2 to this report is a copy of a screening Diversity Impact Assessment, (DIA) and the conclusions of this are discussed in paragraph 5.2 above.

9. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 9.1.1 Delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Legal and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to take a lease or leases of premises and ancillary parking to relocate the Children's Social Care Services' Teams to on the best terms reasonably obtainable.
- 9.1.2 Delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Legal and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to declare surplus Woodlands Place Gillingham, so that it can be disposed of or let on the best terms reasonably obtainable.
- 9.1.3 Delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Legal and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to declare surplus the Redvers Centre, Chatham so that it can be disposed of or let on the best terms reasonably obtainable.
- 9.1.4 Delegates authority to the Assistant Director, Legal and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to declare surplus the Elaine Centre, Strood so that it can be disposed of or let on the best terms reasonably obtainable.

Recommends to Full Council that it:

- 9.1.5 Adds £185,000 to the capital programme, funded by the capital receipts generated by the disposal of the present premises, for the 'fitting out' and relocation costs in moving the Children's Social Care Services' teams to new premises.

10. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 10.1 In order to reduce revenue costs, improve service delivery, realise capital receipts, reduce the council's maintenance requirement and gain investment in the Medway area.

Lead officer contact:

Noel Filmer, Asset & Property Services
Telephone: (01634) 332415

Email: noel.filmer@medway.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Corporate Property Strategy, approved by Cabinet on 4 April 2006.
<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=2047>