

CABINET

14 JANUARY 2020

REVIEW OF THE OLD VICARAGE CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION – ADDENDUM REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Lead Member)
Report from:	Ian Sutherland, Director of People – Children & Adults Services Jean Imray, Interim Assistant Director, Children's Social Care James Williams, Director of Public Health
Author:	Jackie Brown, Head of Business Change (People) and ICT Andrew Willetts, Head of Children's Partnership Commissioning

Summary

This report was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2020. This addendum report sets out the draft comments of this Committee.

1. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 January 2020 Draft Minute

- 1.1 The Director of People – Children and Adult Services, introduced the report which provided information on the feedback from public consultation in relation to the proposed closure of the Old Vicarage Children's Home. He confirmed that plans were in place for the young people currently residing in the Old Vicarage, who would be transitioning in any event as they were all approaching adulthood. He explained that in recent years it had become increasingly difficult to place or sustain placements of young people in the Old Vicarage as it was not able to meet the needs of the increasing number of young people with complex needs. It was therefore considered most appropriate for the Council to use the opportunity to reinvest the resource in a way to support more young people and particularly in "edge of care" arrangements to help support children and their families which in turn would result in fewer children coming into care.

- 1.2 Councillor Etheridge then addressed the Committee as Ward Member. He welcomed the public consultation but stated that he had not been consulted as Ward Member. He raised concerns about closing the facility, which was rated outstanding by Ofsted and the impact this would have on the young people in the facility and on the availability of placements if the provision closed.
- 1.3 Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:
 - 1.3.1 **Staffing** – concern was raised about Medway losing the staff at the provision who had excellent skill sets and could have been retained if the process had been conducted differently, for example with more detailed discussions and ideas about what new provision would be, before consultation. Officers confirmed that redeployment exercises were in place for the staff and where possible the staff were being placed in other services within the Council, such as the Youth Service and Early Help, as examples.
 - 1.3.2 **Reduction in availability to place children** – officers responded to concerns that by closing the provision this would increase pressure on placements for young people. They explained that evidence demonstrated there was adequate provision available to place children and that very often, children could not be placed at the Old Vicarage because their needs were too complex and they could not therefore be supported at the provision, which was why the provision had been running under capacity for some time.
 - 1.3.3 **Impact on current residents** – officers confirmed that all young people currently residing at the Old Vicarage would be moving on by March 2020 in any event because they were all at or approaching 18 years of age and were therefore transitioning into adulthood. All of the young people had good arrangements in place and some of the residents had already transitioned, with all of them being supported to transition to their new arrangements by the end of January.
 - 1.3.4 **Losing a provision rated ‘outstanding’** – the Interim Assistant Director, Children’s Social Care explained she had much experience in residential care and that it was possible for a residential home to receive an outstanding Ofsted judgement with no residents in the home, particularly as in such scenarios, the provision was not measured on its ability to work with children with challenging behaviour or complex needs. The Old Vicarage was rated outstanding, but in a context where the most vulnerable children with complex needs were not having their needs met because the provision in its current form was unable to do so.
 - 1.3.5 **Engagement with Ward Members** – it was confirmed that the Director of People – Children and Adults and officers had met with Ward Councillors to talk through the consultation and proposals. Reference was also made to the call-in of the decision to consult on the proposals, which was considered by this Committee at a meeting on 11 November 2019.
- 1.4 The Committee recommended to Cabinet the proposed closure of the current provision at the Old Vicarage Children’s Home, with continuation of care pathways for current residents at the home, finding suitable provision that meets their eligible needs, with the aim of minimising disruption to their care pathways.

- 1.5 The Committee recommended to Cabinet that a provision is developed that ensures a greater number of children and young people receive the right intervention at the right time, a need highlighted during the ILACS inspection.

Lead officer contact

Jackie Brown, Head of Business Change (People) & ICT:
jackie.brown@medway.gov.uk

Andrew Willetts, Head of Children's Partnership Commissioning:
andrew.willetts@medway.gov.uk