

	Corporate Parenting Committee
	Report from the Corporate Director of Children and Young People
	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools - Councillor Gwen Grahl
An update on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project	

Wards Affected:	Barnhill
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	Brent Childrens Care Home Business Case , Cabinet Report, 22 May 2023 Acquisition of Property Brent Childrens Care Home Project , Cabinet Report 15 January 2024.
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Michelle Gwyther Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Michelle.Gwyther@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on the Brent Residential Children’s Home project.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Committee:

2.1 Notes the progress of the Brent Residential Children’s Home project and are informed of the key milestones to be achieved in the next three (3) months.

3.0 Background

3.1 In June 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) opened applications for its Wave 2 Children's Home Capital Grant Programme. This provided an opportunity for local

authorities to apply for matched capital funding available until March 2025 to create provision for residential children's homes for children and young people in their own local area.

- 3.2 The Council's bid to the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme was submitted on 9 September 2022. On 17 November 2022, the Council received a letter which confirmed the bid was successful. This notified Brent that it would be awarded in principle grant funding of £1.1m for the development of a residential children's care home in Brent subject to 50% match funding from the local authority. This match funding was agreed by the Council's Capital Programme Board in May 2023.
- 3.3 The Brent Residential Children's Home project will deliver a four-bed residential step-down home within Brent for looked after adolescents (aged 12 – 16) with social, emotional and behavioural needs. It will provide three bedrooms for a step-down provision to prepare young people who are in residential settings away from the borough for a move into a local fostering placement, supported accommodation (if 16+) or to return home. The remaining one bedroom will be allocated for emergency placements to enable a short-term response for young people in crisis.
- 3.4 The Council has sourced a six bedroom (6) residential property within the borough which will be re-modelled. Four of these bedrooms will be for young people and the remaining two bedrooms will provide a staff bedroom(s) and office facilities.
- 3.5 Following a consultation process with senior leaders across CYP, a decision has been taken by the Director of Children and Young People that the residential home provision will be run in-house and will not be commissioned out to an external provider to run on Brent's behalf. This is for the reasons of the LA having direct control of the home and the ability to shape and adapt the home to meet the changing needed of young people.

4.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 4.1 The development of a Children's Residential home in Brent aligns with two Borough Plan outcomes, firstly Prosperity and Stability in Brent, and secondly The Best Start in Life. Enabling more children and young people to stay in the borough means they will have greater opportunities to participate in and contribute to the Brent community. They will receive local services to enable them to be fully equipped to succeed in adulthood.

5.0 Detail

- 5.1 A fortnightly cross Council working group has been established with the aim of delivering the children's residential home in Brent. The working group is held to account by reporting to the Children's Residential Care Home Board on a monthly basis and the CYP Senior Leadership Team meeting on a quarterly basis. The project will also start reporting monthly to the DfE from February 2024.
- 5.2 It is expected that construction works will be completed by December 2024 and the home operational by March 2025 at the latest. These are indicative dates and the project plan has some contingency to mitigate against slippage to ensure target dates are achieved.
- 5.3 The project plan has been separated into three (3) workstreams. A progress update and the key milestones to be achieved in the next three months can be found below for each workstream.

Capital Workstream

- 5.4 The Council has identified and negotiated the acquisition of a property in the Barnhill area. The property sale price is identified to be at the appropriate market value for a property of its type and location. Officers have negotiated to achieve the best price possible, and in doing so have ensured the agreed purchase price represents value for money.
- 5.5. At the point of writing this report, the property purchase is scheduled to be completed by the end of January 2024 and then further surveys will be undertaken. These surveys are intrusive and could not be completed prior to purchase and will enable the final scope of works for the property to be established. The scope of works will include remedial work on the roof and may include the requirement for a full roof replacement.
- 5.6 A tender exercise for the building works contractors will go live mid-April 2024 and following this work will commence on the property. The construction works will include some configuration of the home to best suit the operation of a children's residential home, enable the installation of IT infrastructure required for a Council building and address any structural issues found in the surveys.

Recruitment Workstream

- 5.7. The process for recruiting a Registered Manager has commenced who is responsible for the effective operation of the residential home. Whilst the home is being remodelled and not yet open, they will be part of the working group and an integral part of its development. This opportunity will be advertised internally first as it is a good career opportunity for a member of Brent CYP staff.

Registration Workstream

- 5.8 The Director for Early Help and Social Care will be the Responsible Individual for the residential home. They will start the process of being registered with Ofsted in order to meet the requirements of this role under the Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015.

6.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools has been kept informed of all developments in relation to the residential home.
- 6.2. The Barnhill ward members were informed about plans to purchase a property in the Barnhill area for the purposes of operating a children's residential home on 9 January 2024.
- 6.3. Officers will work with ward members to address any questions or concerns local residents have now or in the future about the residential home. This could include providing ward members with information about key developments and being part of discussions between ward members and local residents about the children's home.

7.0 Financial Considerations

- 7.1 The purchase of the property will be funded by a combination of DfE grant funding and capital borrowing.

- 7.2 The project budget is £2.2m, £1.1m funding from the DfE and £1.1m from the Council, and the Council will fund its 50% contribution from borrowing. The borrowing costs for this have been included in the running costs for the children's home as detailed in the business case approved by Cabinet in May 2023.
- 7.3. The placements budget over the past few years has been under significant pressure, and the ability to set up an in-house residential home provision would enable the local authority to be able to manage these pressures. The residential home is expected to save approximately £291k per year on the placement budget.

8.0 Legal Considerations

- 8.1 A children's residential care home run by Brent Council directly supports the local authority in delivering a range of statutory duties as laid down the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 8.2 Following submission of the bid to the DfE's Children's Home Capital Programme, the Council secured endorsement from individual Cabinet Members in relation to their portfolio area in consultation with the Leader in accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution, for the submission of bids for additional resources from government.
- 8.3 The Corporate Director of Children and Young People has delegated authority pursuant to paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution and Financial Regulation 8.2.2 of Part 2 of the Constitution to enter into a grant funding arrangement. In doing so, the Corporate Director must ensure that the objectives of the grant agreement are consistent with the Council objectives and priorities in accordance with Financial Regulation 9.1.2.
- 8.4 Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that for the purposes of (a) any of the Council's functions under this or any other enactment or (b) the benefit, improvement or the development of the Council's area, the Council may acquire any land whether situated inside or outside its area.
- 8.5 Legal Services will be required to undertake the necessary legal due diligence including examining search results and the title for the property. Enquiries before contract will be raised and the purchase will be subject to satisfactory results of the searches, a good and marketable title and a satisfactory survey and valuation result.
- 8.6 The development of a children's residential care home in accordance with the project business case will require the procurement of a range of construction and consultancy services contracts, all to be procured in compliance with the Council's Constitution and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

9.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 9.1 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,

pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 9.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 9.3 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.4 There is no prescribed way the Council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary. The proposals set out in this report aim to ensure that there are sufficient and suitable residential care home placements for all Brent children and that their diverse and special educational needs are met.

10.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 10.1 Any remedial works to the property will use carbon reducing technologies and materials. These could be enhancements to the property's insulation levels, energy efficient electrical fittings and low carbon heating systems.
- 10.2 Young people will also be encouraged to use green sources of travel, i.e., walk, cycle, scooter etc. Bicycle and electric scooter storage will be provided as part of the external landscape.

11.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 11.1 The property is purchased on the open market. The Council will be the freeholder of the property.
- 11.2 Brent Council will run the residential home directly under the Children's Homes (England) Regulations, as is the case for the Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre.
- 11.3. New posts will be created to manage and run the children's residential home directly. This includes a Registered Manager, Deputy Manager and Residential Child Care Officers. These are all new posts and will not impact any existing postholders within CYP and therefore the inclusion of these posts will not be subject to any restructure requirements.

12.0 Communication Considerations

- 12.1 Officers are in the process of finalising a communications strategy in relation to the development of the residential home to ensure all relevant stakeholders are kept apprised about key developments.
- 12.2. There will be on-going consultation with young people throughout the development of the children's home, with different methods of engagement deployed to maximise the number of young people who are involved. The aim is to understand young people's preferences on different areas of a residential home including the design, personalisation of private spaces, how best to use communal spaces, what makes a home feel safe, and the operation of the home. The feedback will be interwoven

throughout the planning of the home, and they will be informed how their contribution has been used.

- 12.3. A survey has been circulated to Brent CYP currently in a residential home or who have had residential home care experience. It will be open until the end of February and includes questions on design preferences, personalisation of bedrooms, use of communal spaces, safety and how communal rules should be communicated.
- 12.4 Two focus groups will be held, one in person on 12 February 2024 and a second online on 15 February 2024 for young people aged 16-21 who have current or previous experience of residential homes. The sessions will cover a range of topics as described above and ask young people for their input through discussions and polls. This will be followed up with a trip to Ikea for young people to highlight items that would be preferential in a residential home.
- 12.5 A drawing competition is planned to target young people aged 11-16 who are currently in residential homes. This will go live over the February 2024 half term and ask young people to design a bedroom. This will allow them to be creative and the designs will help to see what common items young people would like in their bedrooms and how they would decorate the space.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People