

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

15 May 2019

Relinquishment of the Beechfield Secure Unit

Report by Executive Director Children Adults Health Families and Education and Director of Education and Skills

Summary

Beechfield is a secure children's home owned and run by West Sussex County Council and is located in Copthorne, near Crawley. Historically, the secure unit provided placements for up to 7 vulnerable young people with highly complex needs.

Beechfield has been closed since October 2016 following an Ofsted inspection rating of "inadequate", which highlighted significant concerns. Work has been undertaken to look at the potential to operate the unit and understand the approach other local authorities are taking.

The demand and need analysis for the cohort of young people that would benefit from this type of care is not significant enough to justify the running of the unit as part of the Council's residential estate and therefore, it is considered no longer financially viable as an option. In addition, even if a unit such as this was required, the current building and location are considered unsuitable.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision reports and provide comment to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People prior to a formal decision being taken later in May 2019.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Beechfield is a secure children's home owned and run by West Sussex County Council, located in Copthorne, near Crawley. It has historically provided secure placements for up to 7 young people with highly complex needs aged between 10 and 17.
- 1.2 In October 2016, Beechfield was closed following an Ofsted inspection rating of 'Inadequate', highlighting a number of significant concerns regarding its management, operational practice and physical environment. The current Beechfield building is not fit for purpose in the long term, due to building deterioration and stricter physical requirements for the provision of secure accommodation services. Improvements to the building have been made as an interim measure; however, a new build is required to meet Ofsted requirements in order for provision to continue.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed to permanently cease operations at Beechfield with the intent to, where possible, redeploy staff into existing vacancies to minimise potential redundancies. This will enable the building to be declared surplus by the service and be relinquished back to the corporate stock to ascertain any potential usage for or to be declared surplus to the Council's requirement.

3. Resources

- 3.1 To undertake the full clearance of the Beechfield site, minimal resource will be required. It is currently estimated that it will take 2 members of staff no longer than 2 months to fully clear the site. Additional support will be requested to enable the re-location of equipment to other sites to be reused.

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 4.1 The Committee is asked consider the attached draft Cabinet Member decision report, which has been informed by a period of engagement with stakeholders. Issues members may wish to explore include;
- a) Why the building has been deemed inadequate to provide a cohesive service
 - b) The current level of demand for secure accommodation by WSCC children
 - c) The efficacy of the proposed model moving forward of avoiding secure and providing emergency and other accommodation for high risk complex adolescents
 - d) Issues around the geographical location of the service
 - e) Issues around securing the necessary members of staff for the unit
 - f) Alternative models of provision nationwide

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Proposals have been published in the County Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and the draft Cabinet Member report sets out the methodology and process of engagement which has been undertaken with stakeholders and elected members.

6. Risk Management Implications/Other Options Considered/Equality Duty/Social Value/Crime Disorder Implications/Human Rights Implications

- 6.1 These sub headings are addressed in the individual draft Cabinet Member decision report (Appendix A).

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