

# REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 September 2010
<b>Subject:</b>	Teenage Placement Strategy, including change of use of Honey Pot Lane Children's Residential Unit
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures:</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> Costs and savings from the proposed model for Honey Pot Lane <b>Appendix B</b> Risk Register <b>Appendix C</b> Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

**This report sets out;**

- The consultation process and initial outcomes in relation to the change of use of Honey Pot Lane Children's Residential Unit
- The up-dated position regarding the Teenage Placement Strategy

**Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

- Note the overall progress in relation to the Teenage Placement Strategy
- Agree to the closure of HPL as a residential unit and the minor refurbishment of the building to enable it to be a semi-independent unit for CLA
- Delegate to the Director of Children's Services (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder) future decisions in relation to the implementation of the decision to change the use of HPL within the agreed timeline.

**Reason:**

The recommendations allow the implementation of the Teenage Placement Strategy, thereby enabling Children's Services to;

- Improve the choice and quality of placements and support services
- Promote improved life chances and outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.

## **Section 2 – Report**

**Introduction:**

1. This report outlines the progress that has been made in respect of the Teenage Placement Strategy (TPS) and in particular the consultation about the change of use of Honey Pot Lane Children's Residential Unit (HPL).
2. The Council has a statutory responsibility for Children Looked After (CLA) in its care. There is a Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) that is chaired by Cllr. Mitzi Green, Children's Services Portfolio Holder, which champions the needs of CLA and provides challenge and support in respect of all relevant activities concerning CLA. The CPP was advised about the TPS on 21 July 2010.
3. The Council's corporate vision is to become one of the best Councils by 2012. This report contributes to securing better value for money (VFM) and improving the well-being of the community, with particular reference to CLA.
4. The corporate priority to "improve support for vulnerable people" relates to CLA as they are, by definition, additionally vulnerable due to the circumstances that led them to become looked after and the gap that exists between them and their peers in respect of life chances and outcomes.

5. The Teenage Placement Strategy addresses critical issues concerning children's social care placements, specifically in relation to HPL and more generally in respect of related opportunities to develop and create other placement options. It is anticipated that it will deliver improved value for money which is a key consideration in helping the Council become one of the best councils by 2012.

### **Honeypot Lane - Background**

6. On 15 July 2010 Cabinet considered options for the future of HPL, including two service options and 2 site options. Cabinet agreed that formal consultation should be undertaken with users of the unit and the workforce and that a final report should be submitted in September 2010.
7. HPL is currently an Ofsted registered local authority care provision for CLA of either gender aged between 13 and 17 years old. In 2009/2010, Capita undertook a children's placement review, which highlighted that the HPL budget was insufficient to cover the operational costs, the unit was under-occupied and expected income generated from other local authorities had not materialised.
8. The reason why change is needed was outlined in detail in the report for Cabinet on 15 July 2010. In summary the reasons relate to;
  - Continuing pressures on the Children's Services social care placement budget, especially in relation to placements for teenagers
  - Changing demographics of the care population
  - Need to target and develop placement resources within the context of these changes
  - Insufficient budget allocation, under occupancy, high unit costs and resultant overspend at HPL

### **Consultation Results**

#### **9. Consultation on re-locating The Firs**

- Site Option A included two initial options regarding the re-commissioning of the unit. These included consideration of a semi-independent unit or relocation of The Firs or expansion of short break/respite care provision for disabled children.
- In order to evaluate the initial option to re-locate The Firs or expand short break provision the Divisional Director and Service Manager consulted with the Unit Manager of The Firs on 3 August 2010. The Firs is an in-house short break unit for disabled children. The Firs is rated as "Outstanding" by Ofsted. The outcome of the evaluation with The Firs Unit Manager is summarised as follows;
  - The Firs is a high performing provision that is very well established and highly regarded within the local community, with professional partners and Users

- The Firs had no pre-existing plans to re-locate and the current provision and service plans are sufficient to meet the identified need
- The Firs has already benefited from additional funding through the Government's "Aiming High for Disabled Children" transformation programme and provides a number of additional short breaks for local disabled children and their families
- Any additional demand for short breaks will be met through expansion of the "Family Link" scheme which is a foster care short break scheme
- Considerable capital funding has been invested in The Firs to improve and adapt the building and its facilities over the years. A major refurbishment was undertaken in 2006. In early 2010 an up-graded and accessible garden was funded under the "Aiming High" programme and a sensory room is planned for later in 2010.
- The HPL site would require considerable adaptation to meet the needs of disabled children as the design incorporates a lot of glass and offers no perimeter security. There is limited space for a garden.

As a result of the evaluation with The Firs Unit Manager no formal consultation process was undertaken with users of The Firs in respect of re-locating The Firs or expanding short break provision on the HPL site.

### **Consultation of the development of a semi-independent living unit**

#### **10 .Consultation with users and staff at HPL**

In respect of HPL, the stakeholder consultation process has been progressed as follows;

- 19.07.10. Meeting between Divisional Director, Service Manager and Unit Manager
- 21.07.10. Letters sent to all staff, copied to Unison and GMB, and CLA residents and parents/carers
- 22.07.10. Letters to Unison and GMB inviting telephone discussion prior to initial staff meeting
- 28.07.10. Initial staff meeting with Divisional Director, Service Manager and Human Resources. Attended by Unison.
- 29.07.10. Individual interviews with resident CLA and their parents/carers.
- 02.08.10. Formal stakeholder consultation commences. All stakeholders sent a consultation pack with covering letters (see Appendix A)
- 26.08.10. Externally facilitated staff consultation session
- 26.08.10. Facilitated resident's consultation meeting
- 08.09.10. Formal stakeholder consultation comes to an end at 5 pm.
- 09.09.10. Partners/professionals meeting

10.1 Resident CLA and their parents/carers have been offered assistance to provide written responses as part of the consultation process via their allocated social workers and key workers. In addition, the services of the

“Your Voice, Your Choice” advocacy service and Independent Visitor’s Scheme are available to provide additional support and advice, as necessary and appropriate.

10.2 Of the five interviews offered to the residents and their parents/carers, all five residents attended and one parent. Four of the five residents were very positive about the proposals to change the use of HPL to a semi-independent unit. Indeed these four residents were keen to explore whether they would be suitable for a semi-independent placement themselves. The fifth resident, the youngest CLA and most recent admission, was uncertain about the proposal. The Placement Service remains confident that it will be able to identify alternative placement provision for all residents if/when required.

10.3 Resident CLA have been offered the opportunity to have a group meeting with a senior social care manager as part of the consultation process. This will be convened on site to coincide with the externally facilitated staff consultation meeting (which is taking place off site).

## **11. RESULTS OF CONSULTATION**

As the consultation is ongoing at the time of submission of this report a separate summary will be circulated following the closure of the consultation on the 9<sup>th</sup> September so members can be fully apprised of the views of stakeholders in advance of any decisions.

## **12. FINANCES**

The HPL budget totals £611k, made up of £525k for direct costs and £86k for support service costs (SSC’s) which are not controlled by the service.

- The budget has never been aligned to operational costs and due to the under occupancy presents poor value for money
- HPL has longstanding budget pressures with year on year over spends. The overspend in 2007/08 was £178k and in 2009/10 it was £342k.

The development of a semi-independent living unit would result in a full year saving of between £135k and £170k against the existing budget depending on the model of staffing used (see Appendix A for staffing breakdown).

In addition this would remove the current overspend / budget pressure leading to an overall saving of between £397k and £432k

The cost of conversion is comparatively modest involving minor internal adaptations as the building was developed to adapt to a range of uses. Though no survey has yet been undertaken we anticipate that these would be between £50k and £100k though these could be phased to gradually increase the occupancy over time. This will be included in the capital programme once a full survey has been undertaken.

## **Unit Costs**

The Unit cost for Honeypot Lane with its current five residents is £3,600.

If it had full occupancy of seven residents the unit cost would be £2,473.

There has not been full occupancy all year and for several months there were only three residents and one part time resident. At this time the Unit costs were £4,950.

The Unit cost of the Specialist Fostering scheme is £600.

The Unit cost of the proposed Semi Independent Unit with seven residents would be £1,308 if four Teenage Support workers were employed and £1,211 if three were employed.

There would therefore be considerable unit cost savings with the development of the Specialist Fostering scheme and the Semi Independent Unit.

## **13. Conclusion On Future Of Honeypot Lane**

On balance, considering the relative merits of all the options, the semi-independent option provides the most compelling option for future use of the HPL site. This is because it addresses the pressing HPL financial situation, provides options to resolve some of the teenage placement pressures and proposes a flexible on site and outreach support.

## **14. Proposed Timeline for Implementation**

- Consultation concludes 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010
- Cabinet decision 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010
- Implementation plan agreed October 2010
- Change of Use and re-registration with Ofsted January 2011
- Fully operational April 2011

## **15. Review placement support needs** (targeted “team around the child” outreach services to CLA and carers)

HPL already has some established partnerships with other internal and external partners and professionals. If a decision is made to create a semi independent unit , it is proposed that a new Teenage Support Team is set up to provide on-site support to residents living semi-independently, outreach support to other CLA and their carers placed elsewhere and family support to teenagers and their parents. It is anticipated that the Teenage Support Team will work together with other internal and external partners, collaborating and co-ordinating packages of support to meet identified needs and circumstances. The TPS aims to strengthen and develop the existing internal and external partnerships and formalise a “Team Around the Child” approach. The HPL consultation and proposal for a Teenage Support Team provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen and extend current partnerships, developing closer and more co-ordinated support for teenagers and their parents/carers.

## 16. Other Aspects of the Teenage Placement Strategy

In respect of the other elements of the TPS the current situation is as follows;

- **16+ year old CLA Placement Challenge Panel** to review current placement arrangements and establish a CLA needs profile of key themes and issues.

Three 16+ Placement Challenge Panels were convened and chaired by Catherine Doran, Corporate Director – Children’s Services, in June 2010. As a result of this exercise a CLA needs profile of key themes and issues has been created and £400k savings have been identified. The themes and issues arising from the Placement Challenge Panels are already being addressed and feed into other areas of the TPS identified below.

- **Leaving Care Team LEAN Review** (facilitated by CAPITA)

The LEAN Review is underway in the Leaving Care Team. The first phase including consultation with young people and staff has been completed.

- **Review placement choices** (including residential provision, mainstream foster care, specialist foster care scheme, semi-independent placements, supported lodgings & housing tenancies)

As a result of the 16+ Placement Challenge Panels a clearer picture has been formed of the placement challenges for teenagers. This exercise has confirmed that;

- All providers caring and supporting teenagers need clear and explicit expectations about strategies to assist young people to acquire appropriate life skills to equip them to make the transition to young adulthood and independence in a timely and effective way
- The ability to assess the readiness of each CLA and Care Leaver for semi-independence and full independence is a key factor in meeting their needs and managing resource and budget pressures
- Overall there is an increasing number of CLA that are cared for by in-house foster carers which is reducing the reliance on private and voluntary sector providers
- However, there is a need to increase the number of in-house mainstream foster carers and the specialist foster care scheme providing care for teenagers
- The number of teenagers in private and voluntary residential and foster care is likely to be further reduced through the recruitment of mainstream and specialist foster carers for teenagers

- However, it is likely that there will continue to be some demand for residential care going forward but this should only be for more specialist residential provision, offering on-site education, health/therapeutic services and criminal/anti-social behaviour support and intervention, for the most challenging and hard to place teenagers
  - CLA in stable foster care placements benefit from the option to remain with their identified foster carer after they turn 18 years and that Supported Lodgings arrangements need to be clear and explicit
  - A high proportion of CLA aged 16 and 17 years old require semi-independent provision as a stepping stone towards full independence
  - There is a clear need to ensure that the demand for Care Leaver housing nominations (via LOCATA) receives the highest priority and can be met promptly as soon as possible after young people turn 18 years old
  - Care Leavers that have additional needs (most commonly mental health, learning disability and/or substance misuse) require early identification and collaboration with Adult Services to ensure a smooth and supported transition
- **Review of life skills training** in terms of providers, quality, content, frequency and cost)

The current life skills training provision has been mapped. A review of the findings has identified some gaps in the current provision. There is a need to provide additional provision, in a range of ways on a more frequent basis. The intention is to provide directly, and procure from other providers, a range of life skills training provision, delivered flexibly on a one to one and small group basis, to meet the needs and circumstances of teenagers. It is anticipated that the future provision of Life Skills Training will need to meet agreed standards and include the key foundations for life (education, training & employment, health, relationships, finance, practical and housing/accommodation). This model of approach will be reviewed with all providers and additional training and support will be offered to in-house mainstream and specialist foster carers will be reviewed

## **Implications of the Recommendation**

### **17. Staffing/workforce:**

The workforce issues associated with the HPL consultation are being managed in accordance with the Council's Protocol for Managing Organisational Change (PfMOC). The initial meeting with HPL staff convened on 28 July 2010 was held in accordance with the suggested agenda outlined in the PfMOC. The PfMOC has informed the arrangements for the consultation process and all staff have received advice from Human Resources explaining the Council's emphasis on re-deployment. The



proposed operational model proposes a smaller staff team working to different job descriptions. Sample job descriptions were included in the consultation pack with the agreement of staff who indicated that this would be helpful. It is not likely therefore that all staff will be employed in the proposed Teenage Support Team and re-deployment options will need to be explored.

#### **18. Legal comments:**

- The Council's primary duties towards CLA are set out in the Children Act 1989. Section 22 states that it is the duty of the local authority in relation to CLA to safeguard and promote their welfare and make such use of services available to other children as appears to be reasonable. The duty includes a specific duty to promote the child's educational achievement.
- Before making any decision with respect to a CLA, the local authority shall, so far as is reasonable practicable, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child, his/her parents (or person with parental responsibility) and any other person as relevant.
- When making decisions with respect to CLA, the local authority must give due consideration to:
  - (a) having regard to age and undertaking, to such wishes and feelings of the child as the local authority is able to ascertain;
  - (b) such wishes and feelings of any person referred to above and;
  - (c) to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.
    - Section 22C states that if a CLA is unable to be accommodated with a parent or other suitable person (as defined by the section), the local authority must accommodate the CLA in placement which is the most appropriate placement available, including foster carer, placement in children's home, placement in accordance with other arrangements (as set out in regulations).
    - When considering placements, the local authority must, so far as reasonably practicable, allow the CLA to live near their home, ensure the CLA's education or training is not disrupted, enable siblings to live together, ensure the accommodation meets the needs of disabled CLAs. Unless it is not reasonably practicable, the placement should be within the local authority's area.
    - When making a decision on the future of HPL, Cabinet must take account of the following:
      - (a) the statutory duties set out above;
      - (b) duties under the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights refers to a right to respect for private and family life and home. The Council should only interfere with this right if such an interference is in accordance with the law, necessary for one or more of the following reasons – economic well-being of the country, protection of rights & freedoms of others, protection of health & morals (only relevant paragraphs referred to). Therefore, it is appropriate to take account of financial considerations and the rights of other people when making a decision on the future of HPL, but these must be balanced with the rights of the current

occupants of HPL and the decision must be proportionate to the aim the Council is seeking to achieve.

- (c) Other relevant information including the responses to the consultation from users, parents and staff.

### **19. Financial Implications:**

The financial implications were fully outlined for Cabinet on 15 July 2010. In summary, the key issues are as follows;

- The HPL budget totals £611k, made up of £525k for direct costs and £86k for support service costs (SSC's) which are not controlled by the service
- The budget has never been aligned to operational costs and due to the under occupancy presents poor value for money
- HPL has longstanding budget pressures with year on year over spends. The overspend in 2007/08 was £178k and in 2009/10 it was £342k.
- The current operational model for HPL has been costed and can be found at Appendix A. The proposed operational model would deliver the financial benefit of eliminating the overspend to bring the spend back in line with the operational costs of the provision.
- Full costings for the minor capital works have yet to be completed but are estimated to be in the region of £50- £100 k

### **20. Performance Issues**

- The report for Cabinet on 15 July 2010 provided full details of the performance implications. There are no significant changes to the performance information already submitted to Cabinet.
- However, HPL received an unannounced inspection from Ofsted on 10 August 2010. The outcome of the inspection was very positive and resulted in an improved overall judgement of "Good".
- Ofsted inspectors were provided with copies of the relevant documentation regarding the Teenage Placement Strategy and implications for the change of use of HPL.
- The relevant Service Manager will be preparing a formal notification to Ofsted about the proposal and implementation of a change of use and will clarify the regulatory and inspection requirements to ensure that these are complied with.

### **21. Environmental Impact**

The council's climate change strategy sets an overall target to reduce carbon emissions by 4% a year. This proposal offers an opportunity to contribute to this overarching policy by addressing the following issues: -

- HPL is a relatively recent building designed to good standards of insulation and with an underfloor heating system. . As part of the change of use and resultant refurbishment, the existing control systems may need to be reviewed

- It is not clear how the change of use will affect the requirement for hot water. At present hot water is supplied via a storage tank which is heated using immersion heaters. If affordable future consideration may include for the introduction of solar hot water heating system (or, alternatively, a solar pv system) to reduce the overall carbon emissions.

## 22. Risk Implications

- The risk implications for the change of use of Honeypot Lane are now included in a project Risk Register and attached at Appendix B.
- The key risks and opportunities associated with the decision to change the use of HPL are;
  - Staff displacement as a result of the proposed new structure
  - Existing CLA residents needing to be placed elsewhere as a result of the proposed change of use of the provision
- The current controls (in place, underway or planned) to mitigate the risks are;
  - Staff displacement;
    - Adherence to the Council's Protocol for Organisational Change
    - Emphasis on re-deployment opportunities in the proposed new team, Children's Services or the Council
    - Opportunity for Voluntary Severance Scheme (from September 2010)
    - Engagement of staff, Union representatives and Human Resources
    - Formal Stakeholder Consultation including staff and unions from 2 August to 8 September 2010
    - Externally facilitated staff consultation meeting scheduled for 26 August 2010
  - CLA resident's placements;

Consultation with all CLA and their parents/carers via letter and meeting

- a. Formal Stakeholder Consultation including CLA residents and their parents/carers
- b. Engagement of allocated social workers, independent advocacy service and independent visiting service for additional advice and support
- c. Opportunity for CLA resident group consultation meeting
- d. The Placement Procurement and Commissioning Team are very confident that any/all CLA resident can be appropriately placed elsewhere

## 23. Equalities implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will be kept under review for the duration of this work. The initial Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix C. The key issues relate to;

- **Risk:** Socio economic status of staff that are at risk of being displaced
- **Opportunity:** Disability Discrimination Act compliance in respect of any refurbishment of the ground floor

- **Opportunity:** Future workforce planning will allow consideration of the gender balance within the team to meet the needs of looked after young men

The EIA will be kept under review if a decision is made to close HPL as a residential unit in terms of risk assessing the implementation process. The results of the staff consultation have fed into the EIA. It is anticipated that staff will be redeployed into the proposed new team, elsewhere in Children's Services or the Council. The launch of the Voluntary Severance Scheme may also provide additional opportunities for staff.

Future workforce planning will provide an opportunity to consider the gender balance within the team and will consider strategies for recruiting more male staff to balance the team and meet the needs of young men who are looked after by the local authority. The current gender breakdown is two thirds male and one third female.

Any refurbishment to the building will allow compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act in terms of accessibility. This will be clarified through a viability assessment which would enable the current bedroom capacity to be increased from 7 beds to 10, by creating 3 additional bedrooms on the ground floor.

The results of the consultation with CLA and their families has fed into the EIA.

The Placement Procurement & Commissioning Team remain confident about placing all/any current CLA resident in suitable alternative accommodation as required, although several of the residents are keen to be considered for a semi-independent placement at HPL. This potential disruption to the current CLA is assessed as negligible although this will be kept under continual review.

#### 24. Corporate Priorities

This report incorporates the corporate priority to "improve support for vulnerable people" as it deals specifically with children looked after and care leavers who are, by definition, some of the most vulnerable people in need of support in the community. They are particularly vulnerable as a result of the issues that led them to become looked after and also because of the significant gap that exists between them and their peers. This is particularly evident given the over-representation of adult ex-care leavers who are homeless, unemployed, mentally unwell and/or in prison.

### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 1 September 2010		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 20 August 2010		

## **Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance**

Name: David Harrington



on behalf of the  
Divisional Director  
Partnership,  
Development and  
Performance

Date: 23 August 2010

## **Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance**

Name: Andrew Baker



on behalf of the  
Divisional Director  
(Environmental  
Services)

Date: 2 September 2010

## **Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact: Gail Hancock, Divisional Director – Safeguarding, Family Placement & Support, Children’s Services. Tel: 0208 863 5544.

Consultation documents

Written responses from stakeholders

Ofsted Inspection reports for Honey Pot Lane and The Firs

**Call-In Waived by the  
Chairman of Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**NOT APPLICABLE**