

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 27TH APRIL 2009

REPORT ON: STRATHCARRON HOUSE REPLACEMENT

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 233 - 2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks Committee approval to the mechanisms for providing a replacement for Strathcarron House, Residential Unit for Young People.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work & Health Committee approve a partnership model for the provision of the replacement new build.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council has approved capital expenditure of £1.4m over 2007/08 to 2009/10 within the current approved Capital Plan.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 There is a need to replace the existing Strathcarron Young person's unit. The building will become unfit for purpose over the next few years and will not meet the standards of care set by the National Care Standards Committee.

4.2 Report 190-2009 (23 March 2009) agreed the acceptance of the Agreed Maximum Price (AMP) submitted by Hadden Construction Ltd., Aberuthven.

4.3 An option appraisal had been completed prior to report 190-2009 to determine the most appropriate mechanism to provide a replacement to the current residential accommodation.

4.4 Project Objectives and Constraints

Project's strategic Context

The objectives for the Social Work Department with regard to looked after children are:

- o To ensure that any child is only looked after away from home as long as is necessary
- o To ensure that the child's experience should be as near as possible to a family upbringing
- o To improve the quality of care provided for looked after and accommodated children in order to enhance their life chances.
- o To meet the standards of care set by the National Care Standards Committee. These standards are for children and young people who receive a service described in Section 2(3) of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. The standards are also taken into account by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care ('the Care Commission') in the registration and inspection of residential services.

4.5 Strathcarron Young person's unit provides long term care for 5 young people aged between 12 and 16 who cannot live with their own families. The unit is staffed by experienced and qualified social care officers twenty four hours a day. The unit is inspected annually by the Care Commission and is a registered care provision.

4.6 Objectives

- 4.6.1 To fulfill statutory obligations to young people and their families.
- 4.6.2 To maintain the current level of in-house provision and maintain standards required by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.
- 4.6.3 To maintain control over provision: given the projected trends in terms of the increasing number of children requiring accommodation: and the increasing lengths of time young people are remaining in residential provision.
- 4.6.4 To fulfill the Departments vision for Dundee's children by giving them choices and the best possible life chances in their own communities.
- 4.6.5 To maintain the current record of better outcomes for young people coming through in-house residential provision than external provision.
- 4.6.6 To achieve a cost effective option.

4.7 Constraints

- 4.7.1 Availability of options within the budget cost restraints.

4.8 Options

- 4.8.1 Option 1 - Close the service and use alternative care providers

4.8.2 Assessment - Not feasible.

It is recognized that for the majority of these children their educational and emotional needs can be met in their own communities and by keeping close contact with families, this is evidenced as good child care practice. External residential school is therefore not an option for these young people and the demand for such a resource already outweighs our current in house provision. Nationally the demand for specialist foster care currently outweighs provision and foster care is not always the most appropriate option for some young people.

- 4.9 Option 2 - Contract the service to an external care provider

4.9.1 Assessment - Not feasible.

An arrangement whereby an external care provider would operate one of the Council's residential units was investigated a few years ago and discounted as there would have been no financial savings to the Council to compensate for the loss of control over the resource. It is not anticipated that a further review would result differently. Current inspection reports suggest that the standard of residential care provision in Dundee is good and is a positive experience for Children and young people.

- 4.10 Option 3 - Upgrade the building

4.10.1 Assessment - Not feasible.

The building is in a poor condition, beyond its useful life in terms of materials used in construction and not considered technically viable for upgrade.

- 4.11 Option 4 - Replace building

4.11.1 Assessment - Feasible.

The £1.4m costs of the replacement building proposed are based on the square metre cost of replacing a similar unit in Balgowan Avenue with The Junction. Operationally, and functionally the design of The Junction has been successful. Council owned land is available for development in a suitable location. Revenue costs of a replacement will be in line with budgeted provision with energy efficiency measures being incorporated into the design.

4.12 **Impact Statement** - Achieving best value for budgeted funding.

OBJECTIVES	OPTION			
	1	2	3	4
To fulfill statutory obligations to young people and their families.	v	v	v	v
To maintain the current level of in-house provision and maintain standards required by the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.	X	X	X	v
To maintain control over provision: given the projected trends in terms of the increasing number of children requiring accommodation: and the increasing lengths of time young people are remaining in residential provision.	X	X	v	v
To fulfill the Departments vision for Dundee's children by giving them choices and the best possible life chances in their own communities.	v	v	v	v
To maintain the current record of better outcomes for young people coming through in-house residential provision than external provision.	X	X	v	v
To achieve a cost effective option.	X	X	X	v

4.13 The preferred option emerging is for the Council to replace the building. There is an increase in the number of children requiring to be accommodated by the Local Authority. It is important to adopt a strategy that will maintain the level of resources available in-house. In doing this it will give young people the opportunity to remain in their own communities, improve their life chances and receive a quality of care in keeping with the Vision for Dundee's Children. The chosen building design has been proven as effective in meeting the service objectives of the department, is consistent with good child care practice and is meeting all the requirements stipulated by the Care Commission.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance have been consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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Director of Social Work

DATE: 13th April 2009