

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

CABINET – 7TH JUNE 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PRUDENTIAL BORROWING FAMILY SUPPORT CAPITAL FUND

Executive Summary

- 1.0 This report seeks approval for funding a scheme to modify residential premises owned by Beechwood Ballantyne to support children in foster care, and allow the children concerned to remain in their current provision. This is proposed under the previously approved Prudential Borrowing Family Support Capital Fund (Cabinet 3rd August 2005).

Background

- 2.0 The Director of Social Services presented a Capital Investment Strategy report to Cabinet on 3rd August 2005, which was approved. One of the key elements in this report was an Invest to Save strategy, a principle approved in an earlier Cabinet report on 24th February 2005.
- 2.1 The creation of the Children and Young People's Department has resulted in some elements of the approved Invest to Save Strategy transferring to the new department, including the Family Support Capital Fund. The capital fund is part of the Children and Young People's Department Capital Programme.
- 2.2 The establishment of this capital fund of £500,000, under the Prudential Borrowing framework, is linked to the medium term financial plan target of a reduction in the number of looked after children in residential care of 30. The capital fund is intended to fund major adaptations to residential properties, assistive technologies and "move ups" that will facilitate 10 "difficult to place" young people to be looked after in family settings, rather than being placed in residential care. Access to the fund is approved under council Standing Orders.
- 2.3 This report seeks approval for a further scheme to be funded from the Family Support Capital Fund.
- 2.4 Case D concerns two children who are subject to Care Orders under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and who are in a foster placement with non relative carer at a Wirral address. They are aged 6 and 5. The current home only has three bedrooms. The carer currently has two Foster Children who share a room aged 8 and 11. The carer also has three children of her own one aged 14 who has his own room, one who shares with her mother aged 8 and the third aged 17 who sleeps at a relatives house.
- 2.5 The proposal here is to fund a loft extension at a cost of £19,500. This will enable the youngest child who resides with the carer in her bedroom to move into a room of their own.

- 2.6 Clearly this investment will make for a sustainable arrangement and could in the future expand our foster care provision.
- 2.7 The foster carer intends to apply for a Special Guardianship Order which will mean a reduction in cost over time as the Authority's payments to the carer will reduce. The carer becomes eligible under this Order to claim child benefit, which is deducted from any allowance the Authority pays. In addition after two years there will be a further financial review, and the fostering fee will cease to be paid. In this case the move to Special Guardianship provides greater security and stability for the children which is achievable through this investment supporting the package of care.

Financial and Staffing Implications

- 3.0 The annual reduction in cost arising from the Child Benefit adjustment would be £1,516.
- 3.1 The annual reduction in fees after 2 years would be £5,800.
- 3.2 The Prudential Borrowing costs are £1,852 pa. The investment will reduce the risk to the Council of the placement breaking down, resulting in the need for higher cost alternatives.
- 3.3 Approval of this scheme will leave a balance in the Family Support Capital Fund of £415,190.
- 3.4 The fund when fully implemented is estimated to produce annual savings of £400,000 per annum as part of the target reduction in residential care.
- 3.5 The owner of the property would seek indemnity from the council of any claims or matters arising out of the works to be undertaken at the premises and any additional maintenance or repair costs incurred as a consequence of the extension. The owner would seek reimbursement of any lost rent for the period whilst the tenant was living elsewhere during the conversion works.

Equal Opportunities Implications

- 4.0 There are none arising directly from this report.

Human Rights Implications

- 5.0 There are none arising directly from this report.

Local Agenda 21 Statement

- 6.0 These proposals are intended to be cost effective in terms of maximising existing arrangements.

Community Safety Implications

- 7.0 There are none arising directly from this report.

Planning Implications

8.0 The grant in this case which relates to building adaptations/extensions would be made subject to planning permission being obtained.

Local Member Support Implications

9.0 There are none arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

10.0 Case files held by the Children and Young People's Department

Recommendations

That as part of the approved Prudential Borrowing Family Capital Support Fund, a grant of £19,500 be made in respect of the case outlined at paragraph 2.3 of the report, to fund alteration works and this grant be subject to a formal agreement between the Council and the relevant parties.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services