

# CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Date of decision – 30 August 2019

## Children's Supported Board and Lodgings - Rivendell

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### Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr A C Roberts

### Relevant Officer

Director of Children, Families and Communities

### Local Member(s)

Mrs S Webb

### Recommendation

**The Director of Children, Families and Communities recommends that the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families approves that Rivendell is re-opened as a supported board and lodgings placement, as outlined in the report below.**

### Background

1. On 18 October 2018, Cabinet approved the recommendations set out in the report entitled 'Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes'.
2. That report recommended the development of an Edge of Care Service as a key part of a revised strategic approach to supporting families to stay together. Development of this service has been informed by engagement with young people, families, carers, professionals and the public through a range of surveys completed in December 2018.
3. That report also recommended development of a revised approach to in-house children's homes and a review of sufficiency of placements for children in care and care leavers. Cabinet approved in principle the recommendation of that report and the decision-making in relation to proposals for specific children's homes was delegated to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.
4. A report outlining the findings from consultation and setting out recommendations in relation to specific in-house children's homes was approved by the CMR December 2018.

### Rivendell

5. Rivendell was a mainstream children's home in Bromsgrove for children with complex social and emotional difficulties. It is a three-bed house. The decision approved in December 2018 was for Rivendell to close. As such, Rivendell was closed as a children's home in April 2019. All children moved out of the home in line with their care planning needs and staff were released to onward employment, with

some securing Outreach Worker positions in the new Edge of Care Service, or Voluntary Redundancy.

6. This report outlines the recommendation for the future use of the building following closure as a children's home.

7. It is recommended that Rivendell is converted to a supported board and lodgings placement for four young people (looked after or care leavers) aged 16 to 18 years.

8. For clarity, the placements are used for young people up to the age of 18, and may continue to be used for a short period following their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday whilst alternative accommodation is arranged. Young people are not required to leave supported board and lodgings placements on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

9. Work has continued to review our sufficiency in relation to the provision of placements and specifically supported board and lodgings accommodation for children in care and care leavers. Rivendell has been identified as a suitable property to provide much needed accommodation, now and in the future, for those young people 16-18 years transitioning from care to independence.

10. Supported Board and Lodgings is accommodation that Local Authorities offer to Young People aged 16 to 18 years. Accommodation and support are provided to Young People who are Looked After (in the care of the Local Authority) and care leavers transitioning to independent living. The young people live in semi-independence with a package of support around them to promote independence to prepare them for when they turn 18 and move to hold their own tenancy.

11. This differs from a children's home residential home setting where the young people are looked after and cared for 24 hours a day by residential care staff.

12. We currently have a total of 31 young people residing in Supported Board and Lodging accommodation. 17 of those young people are placed in internal supported board and lodgings accommodation owned by the Council, at an average cost of £278 per week. However, we have insufficient in-house provision to meet need and as such currently 14 young people live in an externally commissioned supported board and lodgings arrangements, and each placement costs an average of £660 per week.

13. Current data indicates that, in addition, we have 30 young people in residential placements who are aged 16 or 17 years. A high proportion of these young people are likely to require a supported board and lodgings placement as they transition from being looked after to independence.

14. The suitability of Rivendell to offer supported board and lodgings is as follows:

- The location of the property offers access to Worcestershire and Birmingham through public transport and allows access to work or college without the need to use taxis. We support care leavers to use public transport or their own transport, such as a bike, as part of their transition to independence.

- The property has three bedrooms with potential to convert one room to create a fourth. This would enable the placement of up to four young people together in one property, reducing isolation. Young people would be appropriately matched to live in the property together and would be supported to work through shared living social /relationship challenges as part of life skills.

15. Whilst the young people who would reside in Rivendell are transitioning to independence, and as such we do promote their day to day independent living skills, we do recognise their vulnerabilities. The young people will be supported on a daily basis with outreach staff undertaking visits to the young people at the premises and outreach staff will use the premise as a “locality office base” providing a regular presence.

16. In addition, a member of staff will be onsite for an overnight sleep in shift every evening from 10pm until 8am. This is in addition to the Social Worker and or Personal Advisor that each of the young people have allocated to them, who will also visit on a regular basis. As part of the living agreement young people can have visitors, but they are not allowed to have people staying overnight and the sleep-in staff will be present to manage this.

## **Financial Analysis**

17. The estimated cost of internal refurbishment is £15k. This includes the conversion of one room to a fourth bedroom as outlined above. The £15k cost can be met from the existing agreed capital allocations for Social Care.

18. The October 2018 cabinet paper included a savings figure for Rivendell, based on closing the home entirely. The estimated savings figure was £375k, as it was expected that the 2018/19 budget of £472k could be reduced to £96k for 2019/20. The £96k budget was to pay for staff and premises costs until the home was completely closed. Rivendell is expected to outturn within budget for 2019/20, so the £96k saving previously declared can be considered to have been achieved.

19. The ongoing costs of operating Rivendell as a Supported Living unit are expected to be lower than the £96k current budget. Costs for internal supported living properties are typically around £25k per year.

20. As stated above, the current average weekly cost of an internal supported board and lodgings placement is approximately £278 per young person, compared to approximately £660 per young person for an external supported board and lodgings placement so increasing our internal provision will make a financial saving to the service. This saving is not a budget reduction, but rather a cost avoidance that helps to offset some of the underlying pressures in the overall placements budget.

21. Consideration will be given to opportunities to sell a proportion of the large extended garden as this will not be a requirement of the supported board and lodgings living arrangement and is surplus to requirement.

## **Next steps**

22. Implementation of any decision can follow once the 5 day potential call-in period has passed.

## **Legal and HR Implications**

23. The Council has a general duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked-after children within county and which meets their needs. As far as reasonably practicable this should be within county, near home, not disrupt education/training, and be suitable for any disabilities.

24. If the Council is unable to decide to place looked-after children within family, it must make arrangements for what it considers the most appropriate placement available.

25. HR implications have been considered, particularly in light of the fact homes have been closed within the past six months with some staff being redeployed and others being made redundant. We are satisfied however that there are no HR implications. The roles occupied by staff when the home was previously open was that of Residential Support Worker (RSW); there are no new RSW roles in this provision and the existing Outreach service will manage this additional accommodation.

## **Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments**

26. No particular impacts upon privacy or public health have been identified.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

27. In considering the recommendations set out in this report the Cabinet Member has taken the Requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty into account. An Equality Relevance Screening has been carried out in respect of the proposed use of the property and no specific Equality Implications have been identified. No individual children are yet identified for this accommodation. Pathway planning will take account of and meet any needs linked to any relevant Protected Characteristics of each young person.

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points<sup>1</sup>

County Council: 01905 763763

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### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for Cabinet 18 October 2018

CMR Decision – Residential Children's Homes, 13 December 2018