

# Report



## Cabinet Member for Assets Cabinet Member for Social Services

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### Part 1

Date: 9 November 2020

**Subject** Reappropriation of Parcel of Land at Windmill Farm, Llanvaches

**Purpose** To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Assets and Cabinet Member for Social Services to reappropriate part of Windmill Farm from the County Farm Portfolio to Social Services

**Author** Housing and Asset Manager

**Ward** Langstone

**Summary** Windmill Farm currently forms part of the County Farm Portfolio. The property became vacant in 2018 and the Council agreed that feasibility studies could be undertaken to consider part of the holding as a future home for Children Services. ICF Funding has been applied for and granted and this report seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Assets and Member Development to reappropriate part of Windmill Farm from the County Farm Portfolio to Childrens Social Services.

**Proposal** To reappropriate part of Windmill Farm from the County Farm portfolio to Children Social Services

**Action by** Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing / Head of Children and Young People

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Strategic Director - Place
- Strategic Director - People
- Head of Finance – Chief Finance Officer
- Head of Law and Regulation – Monitoring Officer
- Head of People and Business Change
- Head of Regeneration, Investment and Housing
- Housing and Assets Manager
- Associate Director of Property Services, Newport Norse
- Associate Valuation and Estates Management, Newport Norse
- Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group
- Programme Manager, People Services

**Signed**

## Background

Newport City Council Children's Services are currently undertaking a project to return children from expensive Out of County (OOC) placements, back to Newport. In order to achieve this, they are moving towards the development of smaller four bed residential homes in rural or semi-rural locations that it is believed will more adequately meet the needs of this cohort of children who often have complex needs and challenging behaviour. Long term this development will benefit the children, their families and the wider community by bringing children with complex needs, currently placed out of county, back into Newport, integrating them into their local community and facilitating them receiving the most appropriate local services to support their health and well-being. It will achieve cost savings both in the short and long term by saving on expensive out of county placements and providing a more stable home environment for the children and young people which should prevent long term costs to society. Rose Cottage in Goldcliff has already been purchased, developed and started operating. The Council have recently acquired Rosedale in Langstone and are about to refurbish the property for use. The proposed development of Windmill Farm with Children's Services is a continuation of the work to ensure children can be appropriately cared for as close to home as possible. This plan will provide services for children with complex needs and will meet the objectives of integration, allowing children access to local professionals from social care, health and education more readily than if were placed out of county. The council made a commitment in its Corporate Plan to *'increase educational and social care capacity, so that fewer than ten children are educated out of the city, and the number of out of county social care placements is reduced by 25%'*.

It states that this will be done by building further internal capacity to meet future need. The Windmill Farm proposal is part of a wider initiative to support this commitment and integrate young, vulnerable children with complex needs back into the community.

This proposal also meets the council's Well-being objectives of 'Enabling people to be healthy, independent and resilient' by giving these children the best possible start in life, reintegrating them into the community and providing a safe and secure home environment with appropriate therapeutic interventions to help them build resilience and aspirations.

This proposal also meets the wellbeing goal of a more equal wales" by providing homes for children in order that they can meet their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

Windmill Farm Llanvaches, currently sits in the County Farm portfolio and is owned by the Council. The farmhouse and outbuildings have been identified as a potential opportunity for development as a home and emergency accommodation.

The farm site currently consists of a farmhouse that is in need of complete refurbishment and a number of barns / outbuildings in close proximity to the main house. There is approximately 29 acres of land that forms part of the holding which is currently let on a grazing licence. This land will remain as part of the County Farm portfolio. The area required by Children's Services is edged green on the attached plan. This site has the potential for conversion to form a series of buildings designed to meet the needs of Children who are looked after for many years to come.

The initiative of which Windmill Farm is a part is designed to accommodate children in a stable, family environment which promotes their future health and well-being and prevents ongoing interventions by statutory services into the future. They will be able to easily access local preventative support services such as social care, health and education which assist in resolving problems at an early stage and not escalating into more serious issues into adulthood.

In order to progress this concept, ICF funding was secured to commission a study to explore the viability of the proposal. The study included a full diagnostic and options regarding the feasibility of converting the site.

The Business Change team were commissioned to undertake the study alongside Newport Norse who will be identifying the physical, building requirements and costs associated with the conversion.

In order to objectively evidence and assess the viability of developing Windmill Farm. The Feasibility Study identified:

- Current resources available
- Baseline demand data for each of the areas of demand
- Financial costs and future resources required
- Detailed risk and dependencies
- Benchmarking with other similar services elsewhere
- Gap analysis
- Sustainability

An ICF bid for 1.5 million pounds has agreed submitted (In the long term using the ICF funding to enhance a Council owned asset and remove children from OOC placements will assist by preventing additional cost to the public purse.

Various departments at Newport City Council, along with Newport Norse have worked together in a collaborative way to get the scheme to this important stage.

To progress with this scheme this report seeks approval to reappropriate part of Windmill Farm (house and outbuildings, edged green on attached plan) included in the proposal from the County Farm portfolio to Childrens Social Services. As detailed above the land that forms the remainder of the holding will remain in the County Farm portfolio.

There are no staffing implications with regard to the reappropriation of the farmhouse and buildings.

Potential service users have not yet been identified due to the timeframes and so have not yet been consulted. Once completion timeframes are known children and families will be consulted. There will also be consultation through the planning process.

## **Financial Summary**

There are no financial costs associated with the reappropriation. The County Farm portfolio will lose a small proportion of the income previously received, however the remaining land will be let by way of a farm business tenancy in order to continue to receive income from the remaining asset. The outbuildings will transfer to Childrens Social Services to enable phase 1 to progress. Childrens Social Services will be responsible for ensuring that the children cannot access the outbuildings by putting in place appropriate fencing and demolition of any dangerous dilapidated structures as part of the capital works.

## **Risks**

This report only seeks approval to reappropriate the buildings from the County Farm Portfolio to Social Services. The risks are therefore minimal. If the project does not progress the property could be reappropriated back to the County Farm portfolio.

## **Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

Increasing social care capacity, the number of out of county social care placements is reduced by 25%.

## **Options Available and considered**

- Take no action. The Farm buildings remain within the County Farm Portfolio and a new tenant is secured for the holding.
- Reappropriate the land edged green from the County Farm portfolio to Childrens Services in order that the proposed project can be progressed.

## **Preferred Option and Why**

Reappropriate the land from the County Farm portfolio to Social Services in order that the proposed project can be progressed.

## **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

There are no financial costs associated with the reappropriation of this land to Social services. The County Farm portfolio will have a reduction in income of approximately £2.5k per year which will have to be managed as part of the MTFP. However, the reappropriation will allow Children's service to bring some children which are currently on expensive placements out of county, back into Newport.

## **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

The proposed action is in accordance with the Council's statutory power to re-appropriate property assets in accordance with section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972. The existing farm buildings at Windmill farm are current vacant and are not subject to any agricultural tenancy. Therefore, this part of the County farms portfolio is capable of being re-appropriated for alternative Council purposes. The remainder of the farmland is subject to an ongoing grazing licence and would continue to be held for these purposes. The re-appropriation of the buildings for use by Children and Family Services as a children's home and emergency accommodation is consistent with Corporate Plan and MTFP objectives in relation to bringing back out of county placements. However, the use of this property as a children's home will require planning permission for change of use and redevelopment. If this is not forthcoming, then the property would need to be re-appropriated back for use as part of the county farms portfolio.

## **Comments of Head of People and Business Change**

From an HR perspective, there are no staffing implications to this proposal at this stage.

This proposal fully supports the ethos of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the report writer has detailed how it meets the well-being goals, well-being objectives and sustainable development principle in the body of this report.

## **Comments of Cabinet Members**

Cabinet Member for Assets has been briefed on this report.

Cabinet Member for Social Services is supportive of this report.

## **Local issues – Comments of Ward Members (Langstone)**

No comments received.

## **Scrutiny Committees**

N/A.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership. The new single duty aims to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the regular business of public authorities. Compliance with the duty is a legal obligation and is intended to result in better informed decision-making and policy development and services that are more effective for users. In exercising its functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Act is not overly prescriptive about the approach a public authority should take to ensure due regard, although it does set out that due regard to advancing equality involves: removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics; taking steps to meet the needs

of people from protected groups where these differ from the need of other people; and encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

### **Children and Families (Wales) Measure**

Although no targeted consultation takes place specifically aimed at children and young people, consultation on planning applications and appeals is open to all of our citizens regardless of their age. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, applications are publicised via letters to neighbouring occupiers, site notices, press notices and/or social media. People replying to consultations are not required to provide their age or any other personal data, and therefore this data is not held or recorded in any way, and responses are not separated out by age.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

This proposal meets many of the wellbeing goals, in particular “a more equal wales” by providing homes for children in order that they can meet their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. The five ways of working that public bodies are required to take into account when applying sustainable development are covered in the body of the report.

### **Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

### **Consultation**

Comments received from wider consultation, including comments from elected members, are detailed in each application report in the attached schedule.

### **Background Papers**

Site plan attached.

Dated: 26 October 2020

