

# Norfolk County Council

## Record of Individual Cabinet Member Decision

<b>Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor (Cabinet Member for)</b>  Cllr Greg Peck - Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management-	
<b>Background and Purpose:</b>  <b>The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management is asked to approve the purchase of a property in Toftwood for conversion to training flats for looked after children.</b>  Norfolk has been successful in securing £5m of Department of Education (DfE) funding to enable the development and implementation of New Roads, which is the Norfolk version of the award winning No Wrong Door model.  'Norwich Road' is an existing children's home which is being converted into the Dereham New Roads hub. The hub will be supported with two dedicated semi-independent trainer flats in Toftwood.	
<b>Decision:</b>  <b>The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management is asked to approve the purchase.</b>	
<b>Is it a key decision?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Is it subject to call in? If Yes – Deadline for Call in</b>	<b>Yes</b>  <b>Date: 4pm, Thursday 6 May 2021</b>
<b>Impact of the Decision:</b>  The purchase of this residential property will support the implementation of the New Roads service, ultimately contributing to the desired outcomes for young people the service has been designed to support.	
<b>Evidence and reason for the decision:</b>  The proposed acquisition is in respect of a residential property in Toftwood. It is a four-bed detached property. The full address is included in an exempt report as is to remain confidential, under the Local Government Act 1972	

schedule 12A Part 1, in that it contains commercially sensitive information relating to the authority, namely the purchase price. The public interest test has been applied, and it is recommended to the Cabinet member that the public interest in keeping the information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

The property was identified after a search of potentially suitable detached accommodation with four or more bedrooms in Toftwood, which could easily be converted into two one bedroom trailer flats. This will allow for use by up to two young people at a time. The search was based on criteria such as the location and layout of the properties in terms of their suitability for the service requirements.

Before making our offers, NCC checked the local market to compare similar properties in the area to find out what they sold for. An assessment of comparables suggests that overall the proposed acquisition price is an appropriate and justifiable figure in respect of this property.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

Several alternative properties were viewed and considered prior to this decision however they were all discounted due to location, size or the condition of the property.

**Financial, Resource or other implications considered:**

The purchase price is included within the exempt report.

The County Council will be responsible for its own professional fees which are estimated to be approximately £5,000.

In addition, there will be the cost of furnishing and equipping to operate the property, this is estimated to £20,000.

**Record of any conflict of interest:** N/A

**Background Documents:**

- [No Wrong Door Cabinet Report](#)

**Date of Decision:**

27/04/2021

**Publication date of decision:**

28/04/2021

**Signed by Cabinet member:** Cllr Greg Peck

I confirm that I have made the decision set out above, for the reasons also set out

**Signed: Cllr Greg Peck**

**Print name: Cllr Greg Peck**

**Date: 27/04/2021**

**Accompanying Documents:**

- 

Once you have completed your internal department clearance process and obtained agreement of the Cabinet Member, send your completed decision notice together with the report and green form to [committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)

# Report to Cabinet Member

Item No.

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Acquisition of House in Toftwood for conversion to New Roads Trainer flats for children in care</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>Responsible Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Cllr G Peck Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management</b>
<b>Responsible Director:</b>	<b>Simon George Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services</b>
<b>Is this a key decision?</b>	<b>No</b>
<p><b>Executive Summary/Introduction from Cabinet Member</b></p> <p>Norfolk has been successful in securing £5m of Department of Education (DfE) funding to enable the development and implementation of the No Wrong Door model in Norfolk (now called New Roads). New Roads is a non-traditional approach to working with adolescents experiencing complex journeys - with an innovative residential 'Hub' at the heart of the service. It provides short term placements and edge of care support through a range of specialist and wrap around services to help young people on their journey, supporting the vision to reduce the number of looked after Norfolk Children.</p> <p>The New Roads Service will provide bespoke placements and accommodation which are most appropriate for each young person. As well as the provision of dedicated beds within the hub, New Roads will provide accommodation through hub community family carers, high needs supported lodging hosts , and semi-independent New Roads trainer flats</p> <p>As part of the project, a property in Toftwood, Dereham has been identified as a suitable purchase to become two of the required four semi-independent trainer flats for New Roads</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b>  <b>The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management is asked to approve the purchase.</b></p>	

## 1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. Norfolk has been successful in securing £5m of Department of Education (DfE) funding to enable the development and implementation of New Roads, which is the Norfolk version of the award winning No Wrong Door model.

- 1.2 New Roads is a non-traditional approach to working with adolescents experiencing complex journeys - with a residential 'Hub' at the heart of the service. It provides short term placements and edge of care support through a range of specialist and wrap around services to help young people on their journey, supporting the vision to reduce the number of looked after Norfolk Children
- 1.3 'Norwich Road' is an existing children's home which is being converted into the Dereham New Roads hub. The hub will be supported with two dedicated semi-independent trainer flats
- 1.4 The project team led by Children's Services, with the help of the Corporate Property Team have focused on finding appropriate properties to acquire for conversion into trainer flats to support the Hub.

## **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 The proposed acquisition is in respect of a residential property in Toftwood. It is a four-bed detached property. The full address is included in an exempt report as is to remain confidential, under the Local Government Act 1972 schedule 12A Part 1, in that it contains commercially sensitive information relating to the authority, namely the purchase price. The public interest test has been applied, and it is recommended to the Cabinet member that the public interest in keeping the information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.
- 2.2 The property was identified after a search of potentially suitable detached accommodation with four or more bedrooms in Toftwood, which could easily be converted into two one bedroom trainer flats. This will allow for use by up to two young people at a time. The search was based on criteria such as the location and layout of the properties in terms of their suitability for the service requirements.
- 2.3 The size of the house provides space for conversion into two one bedroom flats. Work will include new kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, heating, garage conversion and partitions to create two separate units. Other works required would largely be to meet statutory or service standards, such as fire doors and alarm systems.
- 2.4 The Local Member has been consulted on this matter confirmed they are not unhappy with the planned project.
- 2.5 A condition survey will be undertaken prior to exchange of contracts, to identify any significant grounds for concern and as a lead in to programme of works expected.
- 2.6 Planning advice is being sought through the architects working on the project to establish if planning permission is required for the conversion, additionally, legal advice will also be sought. If planning permission is required, it will be applied for once the purchase is complete.

### **3. Impact of the Proposal**

3.1 The purchase of this residential property will support the implementation of the New Roads service, ultimately contributing to the desired outcomes for young people the service has been designed to support. The objectives of the New Roads will be to:

- Build on and enhance family networks to support more children in being able to live with their families
- Meet the strategic objective of a reduction in looked after children, and a reduction in the numbers of children in residential settings
- Deliver the expectations of the Strengthening Families Protecting Children programme requirements in 2020/2021
- Provide an enhanced support service to some of our most vulnerable young people

### **4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

4.1 Children's Services considered the location of this house to be ideal due to its proximity to the Dereham New Roads hub, and its easy access to local facilities.

4.2 The size and layout of the house also means that conversion to two flats would be relatively straightforward.

4.3 Before making our offers, NCC checked the local market to compare similar properties in the area to find out what they sold for. An assessment of comparables suggests that overall the proposed acquisition price is an appropriate and justifiable figure in respect of this property.

4.4 Police checks were run on this location to ensure that it is safe for the planned use.

### **5. Alternative Options**

5.1 Several alternative properties were considered prior to this decision, however they were all discounted due to location, size or the condition of the property.

### **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 The purchase price was negotiated and agreed, this is detailed within the exempt report.

6.2 The estimated cost for alterations and work required and to meet statutory standards is £155,000.

6.3 In addition, there will be the cost of furnishing and equipping to operate the property, this is estimated to £20,000.

6.4 All these costs as outlined will be funded from the capital programme.

## **7. Resource Implications**

7.1. **Staff:** None

7.2. **Property:** Acquisition of freehold

7.3. **IT:** None

## **8. Other Implications**

8.1. **Legal Implications:**

Legal advice will be sought regarding planning requirement.

8.2. **Human Rights implications:**

None.

8.3. **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):**

8.4. Childrens Services are responsible for undertaking any EqIA required for the project

8.5. **Health and Safety implications**

None

8.6. **Sustainability implications**

None

8.7. **Any other implications**

None

## **9. Risk Implications/Assessment**

9.1 In the event that NCC seek to obtain planning permission on the property and was unsuccessful, there would be costs as the council would seek to mitigate the situation by reselling the property. Set out below are the likely total costs in this scenario:

9.2

Item	Cost
<b>Purchase costs previously incurred:</b>	
• Stamp duty	£13,200
• Professional fees/ surveys	£3,000
• Legal fees	£2,000
<b>Holding costs:</b>	
• Design/Planning fees	£17,500
• Holding costs of security/maintenance	£5,000
<b>Re-sale costs</b>	
• Agents fees	£3,000
• Legal fees	£3,000
<b>Total potential loss to NCC of buying/holding/ reselling</b>	<b>£46,700</b>

(Assuming the same sale price was achieved as was originally purchased.)

## **10. Recommendation**

- 10.1. The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services and Asset Management is asked to approve the purchase.

## **11. Background Papers**

- 11.1. [No Wrong Door Cabinet Report](#)  
[December 2020 Cabinet Meeting Summary of Decision](#)

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, please get in touch with:

**Officer name:** Eleanor Longworth      **Tel No:** 01603 222090  
Estates and Commercial  
Surveyor Apprentice  
**Email address:** Eleanor.longworth@norfolk.gov.uk



If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.