

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 11 SEPTEMBER 2003**

### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S UNIT AT MONTGOMERY PLACE**

#### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Committee for the development of the new intensive support children's unit at Montgomery Place, Kilmarnock.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Social Work Committee of 30 January 2003 (Item 7, page 2493, 99/03) was advised that a successful bid had been made to the Scottish Executive for the establishment of an Intensive Support service to young people who would otherwise be placed in residential units external to the authority. The Committee approved the development of the service which includes both residential provision and the creation of additional support staff to assist these young people to reintegrate into their family and mainstream service provision.
- 2.2.1 An extensive search was made for available property, or for land on which a facility could be built, that would be suitable to accommodate a four bed roomed residential unit for young people.
- 2.2.2 Sites were considered in both the south and north of the authority area with key considerations for selection including;
- access for staff working on a 24 hour shift pattern, therefore requiring access to public transport
  - access for parents visiting young people resident in the unit
  - accessibility for residents to social and educational facilities to enhance the reintegration of young people into mainstream facilities
- 2.3 Vacant council and privately owned properties were considered in Cumnock, New Cumnock and Auchinleck but were rejected on the grounds of:
- their physical location made access difficult for staff and/or parents
  - the properties did not lend themselves to renovation
  - the cost of purchasing and renovating the property was in significant excess of the grant from the Scottish Executive.

- 2.4 Given the difficulties encountered in identifying suitable properties for renovation to a standard that would meet the registration requirements of the care Commission a search was made for vacant sites where a new build unit could be developed. The criteria for selection remained the same as noted at 2.2.2 above.
- 2.5 The research identified a suitable plot of land in Montgomery Place which met all of the criteria and was in the ownership of the Council. The site has good access to the centre of Kilmarnock which will allow ease of access for staff and parents. The main source of referrals from the reporter to the children's panel is also in the north of the authority and therefore residents of the new unit will, in the main, be more closely located to family, school and social groupings which should improve the opportunities for re-integration.
- 2.6 An Architect has carried out an initial assessment of the site and has indicated that it would be possible to construct a four bed roomed unit within the costs that have been allocated by the Scottish Executive.
- 2.7 The development would be subject to the usual planning regulations.

### **3 LEGAL / FINANCIAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Initial Title investigations over the area of ground in question have so far only identified the Council's Title to part of the ground. Further searches have accordingly been instructed through a Search Company with a view to identifying the Council's Titles to the remainder of the ground and to ascertain if such Titles contain any restrictions which would prevent the ground from being used for the proposed purpose. Any decision by Committee would therefore be subject to the Council's Titles to the whole ground being identified and said Titles not containing any such restrictions.
- 3.2 In terms of Section 70(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, land acquired by a Local Authority for a particular purpose, if not required for that purpose, may be used in the short term for the purpose of any other of the Authority's functions.
- 3.3 Any long-term change of use will, however, require a formal transfer between Departments and will require to be treated as a disposal by one Department to the other.
- 3.4 As the area of ground in question is currently held in the Housing Revenue Account, the formal consent of the Scottish Executive to the transfer is required in terms of Section 203(2) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1** The Committee is asked to approve the site at Montgomery Place as the agreed location for new intensive support unit.
- 4.2** The Committee is asked to instruct the Director of Education and Social Work to seek the appropriate consents regarding the transfer of land to the Department of Education and Social Service

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Director of Educational and Social Services  
BE/AGW  
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25 August 2003

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**

For further information please contact Bill Eadie, Principal Officer, Children and Families and Criminal Justice Services, Council Offices, Civic Centre, Kilmarnock. (Tel 01563 576728).

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: BILL EADIE**