

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet Capital Assets Committee

Date of meeting

Subject: Chippenham – Purchase of Bungalow for St. Nicholas’ Special School

Cabinet member: Councillor Toby Sturgis – Waste, Property, Environment & Development Control Services

Key Decision: No

Proposal

That a bungalow in the vicinity of St Nicholas’ Special School, Chippenham be purchased and, if necessary, adapted for disabled use, to provide a suitable property for teaching life skills for the older students at the school.

Reason for Proposal

To replace a rented property which is not fit for purpose with a suitable freehold property.

Stephanie Denovan
Service Director Schools and Learning

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet Capital Assets Committee

Date of meeting

Subject: **Chippenham – Purchase of Bungalow for St. Nicholas' Special School**

Cabinet member: **Councillor Toby Sturgis – Waste, Property, Environment & Development Control Services**

Key Decision: **No**

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the purchase and, if necessary, adaptation for use by disabled students, of a bungalow to be used for life skills training by St. Nicholas' Special School, Chippenham.

Background

2. St. Nicholas' Special School caters for children and young people with both physical and learning disabilities up to the age of 18. It currently rents a house near to the school for teaching life skills to the older students in order to prepare them for adult life on their own. As this is a two storey dwelling it is not suitable for use by all students. An opportunity has arisen to buy a bungalow near the school to replace the existing provision.

Main Considerations for the Council

3. The existing provision is in rented accommodation, whereas the proposed replacement will be owned by Wiltshire Council. This will result in both the removal of the need to pay rent and increased flexibility of use as (subject to necessary consents) it can be altered to suit.
4. As the existing provision is in a house, students with disabilities which prevent them from climbing stairs are unable to use it. The proposed replacement is a bungalow, which will be accessible to all students.
5. Planning permission for a change of use will be required. If a property which needs to be adapted is bought Building Regulations approval may be required for any works which are carried out.

Environmental and climate change considerations

6. The new property is to be of similar size to the existing one and, like the existing house, will be near the school. Energy consumption is likely to be similar to current levels with any variation likely to be due to the relative levels of energy efficiency of the two properties.
7. As Wiltshire Council will own the new property it will be possible to carry out works to reduce carbon emissions if this should be necessary.
8. The proposal is to replace a house with a bungalow to be used for the same use. Day to day environmental risks and the manner in which they are mitigated will remain the same.
9. Appropriate checks will be made to ensure that risks associated with the long term consequences of climate change are minimised.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

10. Students who are unable to take advantage of the existing facility will be able to use the new property.

Risk Assessment

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

11. The following risks will arise if the decision to buy a new property is not taken.
 1. The existing building is not accessible to all students at the school.
 2. The existing building is held on a tenancy agreement. This means that there is a risk that the landlord may decide to take it back at some time in the future.
 3. Funding for a replacement building may not be available in the future.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

12. The following risk has been identified if the decision to buy a new property is taken.

Risk	Action to mitigate the risk
1. Planning permission for the change of use from residential to school use may be refused	The contract to buy the property will be made subject to planning

Financial Implications

13. There will be a small revenue cost saving as the tenancy of the existing facility can be relinquished.
14. Adequate funding for the proposal has been identified and earmarked from New Deal for Schools (NDS) Capital funds. This is received as grant from the Department for Education so Wiltshire Council will not require any borrowing to undertake this scheme.

Legal Implications

15. None

Options Considered

16. Two options have been considered in this case. These are to continue to rent the existing property (do nothing) or to buy a property to enable the life skills training to continue in a building which is accessible to all students at the school.
17. If the do nothing option is adopted the students with the greatest need will continue to be unable to obtain full access to the building from which life skills training is delivered. In addition, the property is rented, which does not allow the flexibility to carry out works in the future that owning the facility would give.
18. Buying a bungalow will enable the whole building to be accessible to all students, partly because it will be on one level and because if any adaptation works are required the Council will be able to do them without having to obtain the landlord's permission.

Conclusions

19. Although the existing house provides a useful facility for the school it has limitations which would be addressed by the purchase of a bungalow from which to provide the training. Buying a property would also provide security for the future provision of this training. We have a window of opportunity to fund the purchase, from which the students would benefit greatly.

Proposal

20. That a bungalow in the vicinity of St Nicholas' Special School, Chippenham be purchased and, if necessary, adapted for disabled use, to provide a suitable property for teaching life skills for the older students at the school.

Reason for Proposal

21. To replace a rented property which is not fit for purpose with a suitable freehold property.

Stephanie Denovan
Service Director Schools and Learning

Report Author:

John Price, Senior Estates Officer, Tel. 01225 713231

Date of report:

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices

None
