

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

10 November 2020



**Subject:** BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S TRUST ACCOMMODATION

**Report of:** Dr Tim O'Neill  
Director for Education and Skills

**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Cllr Kate Booth - Children's Wellbeing  
Cllr Tristan Chatfield - Finance and Resources

**Relevant O & S Chair(s):** Cllr Kath Scott - Education and Children's Social Care  
Cllr Sir Albert Bore - Resources

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 008115/2020		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Birmingham Children's Trust provides contact arrangements for parents whose children have been taken into care. The current arrangements involve colocation of both conferencing and contact arrangements in the same buildings. This can prove challenging at times for families whose children are being considered for being taken into care, meeting alongside families whose children have already been taken into care and have contact arrangements in place to allow them under supervision to visit and have

contact with their own children. This can lead to emotions being high in an already sensitive situation, and on occasion this has caused tension for families and staff. A more effective arrangement would be to separate contact from conferencing to avoid such scenarios. Accommodation for contact also needs to be more fit for purpose and provide a supporting environment for the families and children. There are proposals to replace the current South Access Centre and provide new dedicated contact space in the South of the City.

## **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to; -

- 2.1 Approve the proposal for £2 million capital spend. This proposal seeks to set aside £0.3m of capital to cover the landlord responsibilities of the Council for the property estate currently occupied by the Trust, with a further £0.5m for major improvements to support the separation of conferencing and contact facilities in the East, and £1.2m to enable the creation of a further three dedicated facilities for contact across the remaining part of the City. All of the capital investment is for both the improvement of existing buildings or purchase of new assets that will remain with the Council.
- 2.2 Delegate authority to approve the procurement strategy and award of contracts for the improvement of property estate to the successful provider(s) to the Assistant Director, Development and Commercial Director of Finance and City Solicitor (or their delegates) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.
- 2.3 Authorise the City Solicitor to negotiate, execute and complete all necessary documents to give effect to the above recommendations.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council entered into a service delivery contract for the provision and operation of children's social care services in the city of Birmingham with Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Further detail can be found in **Appendix 1 and 2**.

## **4. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 4.1 The options that have been considered are:

Do nothing: This option would leave BCT with the inappropriate settings in the centres and accommodation issue that in effect was passported to them on establishment of the Children's Trust.

Option	Description	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Summary
1	Do nothing	Maintain current colocation of contact and conferencing across the City	Continued poor feedback about the quality of accommodation and disruption for children and families	Existing accommodation is considered poor quality and not efficient from property management perspective	This option would leave BCT with the inappropriate settings in the centres and accommodation issue that in effect was passported to them on establishment of the Children's Trust. There is a commitment by the trust that where suitable BCC accommodation does become available this will be considered for use if appropriate.
2	Implement but at lower cost (i.e. smaller number of new contact centres)	Variability of quality and experience across the City	Could create pressure on the new facilities and difficult to decide how to rationalise the potential variable investment for each which part of the City	Cheaper to invest in than the optimum but loss of quality	Can be implemented but will not be as effective
3	Recommended option i.e. Implement the proposal with full investment outline d	Remove variability of quality of experience	Excellent feedback from users to tackle known accommodation issues inherited by BCT when set up	Prudent sustainable option	Will provide the quality and service impacts needed to ensure and effective service

- 4.2 These alternate options were rejected on the basis that they do not deliver the maximum benefits as set out in this proposal. The only other feasible option would be private lease of accommodation. However, previous experience has indicated that this has not been a successful option. Also, contact is a court directed activity, so the Trust has to discharge this service (it cannot be delegated).

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 This proposal was considered on August 2020 and then subsequently approved by Capital Board and its membership on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. Furthermore, consultation has been undertaken within the Children's Trust and feedback continues to be provided by conference chairs and other agencies involved in contact and conferencing arrangements. All improvements have been accommodated within the plan for the work.
- 5.2 The proposal was considered by Birmingham Children's Trust Executive Board in December 2019.

## **6. Risk Management**

- 6.1 A detailed risk analysis is provided in the business case. The most significant risk is to the delay in starting the project as the approval process has taken longer than anticipated.

## **7. Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

- 7.1.1 The activity for which the proposal is part of relates to statutory provision for the Council which is delegated to the Birmingham Children's Trust.
- 7.1.2 The successful tenderer for the capital works will be required to sign up to principles of the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility and will need to develop a relevant and proportionate action plan, demonstrating how the principles of the Charter will be implemented to deliver the desired social value outcomes.

### **7.2 Legal Implications**

- 7.2.1 The Children Act 1989 together with associated regulations and guidance provides various powers and statutory duties in relation to the provision of services by a local authority for children in need and others. The service delivery contract between the Council and the Trust
- 7.2.2 Clause 9.2 'Property Assets and Supply Contracts', Service Delivery Contract describes the arrangement for both parties to take such action.

### **7.3 Financial Implications Details**

- 7.3.1 Through the improvement of the BCT accommodation offer there is expected to be an indirect benefit from savings on older / unfit for purpose buildings (e.g. South Access Centre) and cost avoidance from less disruption to both contact and conference time and the underpinning financial assumptions are as follows:

- a) £300,000 for planned maintenance of existing Trust properties including replacement kitchens, bathrooms, boilers
- b) £500,000 investment in improvement to existing property
- c) £1.2m for three new contact centres at some £400,000 each
- d) Running costs associated with the buildings and implementation costs will be met from within the overall contract sum paid to the Children's Trust.

### **7.3.2 Financial Summary**

As noted in the detailed business case, the proposal requires £2 million of capital investment. The funding source for this is the capital element of the Modernisation Fund.

7.3.3 Capital Board support for the proposal was confirmed on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. An outline proposal is attached in **Appendix 1**.

## **7.4 Procurement Implications**

7.4.1 The procurement strategy will be drawn up in collaboration with the Council's Corporate Procurement Services and will include consideration of the social value outcomes that are to be sought.

## **7.5 Human Resources Implications**

7.5.1 None

## **7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

7.6.1 We have undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment and there are no recorded negative effects on people using the buildings within the purview of the proposal regarding protected characteristics.

## **8 Appendices**

- 8.1 **Appendix 1** 2019/ 2020 Accommodation Requirements Presentation v06 (Contact Conferencing)
- 8.2 **Appendix 2** - Business Case
- 8.3 **Appendix 3** - Equality Assessment