



Operational Officer Decision Record

Where the decision has a financial value of between £100k - £350k and does not have a **significant** impact on two or more wards

1. Subject and details of the matter (to include reasons for the decision and detail of any previous cabinet decision)

The development of the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy, completed in Summer 2024, identified a need to increase access to local children's homes, to enable the Authority to provide sufficient placements for children in our care who need the care and support of a children's home within the borough. Following the completion of the strategy, an analysis was undertaken to understand our children's homes sufficiency. This identified that our current in-house children's homes are consistently well-utilised, with no identified opportunities to increase the number of placements that can be provided within the current provision. Equally, the quality of care, practice and our workforce has improved, recognised through our Ofsted inspections undertaken in the last 12 months. External children's homes are often a significant distance away from North East Lincolnshire, with the market nationally known to charge a range of fees which is not consistently aligned with the level and quality of the care provided. In its 2022 report, the Competition and Markets Authority found that, among the largest 15 private residential home providers, profit margins averaged 22.6% in children's homes. We are seeking to develop our local children's home placements offer to provide sufficient in-area provision for children in our care, via a flexible landscape that includes increasing our in-house children's homes placements and working with commissioned providers to develop and manage new children's homes within the borough. Cabinet Decision

Record 11th December 2024 provides approval to proceed with this project, including the delegation of authority to complete acquisitions.

A multi-disciplinary project board has been managing delivery of the residential transformation project sponsored by Paul Cowling, Service Director Regulated Services. This project board includes significant input and support from our Corporate Estate's Team, Finance, Strategy, Policy and Performance with regular updates being shared with Children's Leadership Team and the Business Development Group. The completion on the property will complete a previous property purchase made in July 2025 and will enable phase 1 of our project delivery to be completed.

2. Decision being taken

That the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, purchase the property 12 Welholme Avenue, Grimsby North East Lincolnshire, DN32 0HP for the value of £340,000 to provide a Children's Home for Children in Care.

3. Anticipated outcome(s)/benefits

The purchase of this property will enable the development of a local children's home to proceed, creating additional in area and in house places for 3 children in care. This development will enable more children in care to live in their home town, ensuring strong connections can be maintained with their support networks, including those provided by local partners.

4. Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer when making the decision

Do Nothing - This option would not enable local placements of the required types to increase within our borough. Doing nothing would continue the use of the same number of out of area children's homes, and continue to require significant resources to sustain via a market that is known to be 'provider-led' with commissioning local authorities having relatively little direct control over the fees charged for these placements.

Fully Externally Commissioned Offer – This option would require extensive procurement arrangements and for providers to have established properties within the borough that can meet local needs. This option could not be achieved within the required project timescales.

5. Background documents considered (web link to be included or copies of documents for publishing)

[Cabinet Report 11th December 2024](#)

[7.-Decision-Notice-Cabinet-11th-December-2024.pdf](#)

[Officer Decision Notice – 3 Buddleia Close](#)

[3.1-Deposited-Plans-and-Applications-Comments.pdf](#)

6. Does the taking of the decision include consideration of Exempt information? If yes, specify the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A and the reasons

No.

7. Details of any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member who was consulted by the officer which relates to the decision (in respect of any declared conflict of interest, please provide a note of dispensation granted by the Council's Chief Executive)

No conflicts of interest have been raised.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments (Monitoring Officer or nominee)

The decision is constitutionally an operational decision. It remains consistent with the will of Cabinet regarding the overall children's home transformation project.

9. Section 151 Officer Comments (Deputy S151 Officer or nominee)

The purchase of the property is in line with previous cabinet decisions and within the expected budget envelope.

10. Human Resource Comments (Head of People and Culture or nominee)

There are no direct HR implications arising from the contents of this report. Staff resource may need to be reviewed once purchase of the children’s home is complete and the home ready for new residents.

11. Risk Assessment (in accordance with the Report Writing Guide)

The purchase of this property managed through the Residential Transformation Project and its Project Board. A comprehensive project risk log and decision log is maintained, and regular updates are provided by the Project Sponsor to Senior Leaders of the Organisation, and the Portfolio Holder.

The purchase of this property follows the Organisation securing the required planning permission for a change of use to enable the home to be lawfully operated.

12. If the decision links to a previous one taken by Cabinet, has the Cabinet Tracker been updated?

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13. Decision Maker(s):

Name: Paul Cowling

Title: Service Director – Regulated Services

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 18/09/2025

Name: Sharon Wroot

Title: Interim Chief Executive

Signed: REDACTED

Dated:18.09.25

**14. Consultation carried out with
Portfolio Holder(s):**

Name: Councillor Marget Cracknell

Title: Portfolio Holder for Children and
Education

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 18th September 2025