

**20 July 2015****Agenda Item: 5c****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSPORT, PROPERTY &  
ENVIRONMENT****OAKDALE LEARNING CENTRE, WESTFIELD LANE, MANSFIELD****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform the Finance and Property Committee of the imminent closure of Oakdale Learning Centre, Mansfield.
2. That approval be given to a lease on terms set out in the exempt appendix.

**Information and Advice**

3. This report contains an exempt appendix, which is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (Information relating to any individual and the business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information)). The exempt appendix provides details of the terms agreed. Disclosure of this information would prejudice the parties' commercial interests.
4. The Oakdale Learning Centre is a traditional brick construction property with a sheet metal roof which was purpose-built in 2007 for the Pupil Referral Unit and provides 857 sq m of accommodation (9221 sq. ft.). The building is in good condition.
5. It currently serves 5 schools in the west of the County and is commissioned to provide 26 places for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school, or who are currently not in other schools as a result of their behaviour.

**Current Situation**

6. In 2012 the County Council carried out a review of the provision it made for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and from that review developed a strategy which established a collective responsibility for arrangements between partnerships of schools, individual schools and the County Council in order to deliver the required changes. The strategy was called 'Five Steps to Collective Responsibility'.
7. Since September 2013, there have been a number of significant developments in relation to the implementation of this strategy including the establishment of an approved database of providers of alternative education; the establishment of

secondary behaviour partnerships (SBAPs) across the County; the transfer of funding to these partnerships underpinned by a Memorandum of understanding (MOU); and more latterly the establishment of primary behaviour partnerships.

8. The role of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) has been re-defined and new relationships between the PRU and partnerships of schools have been developed. As a result of these new relationships the number of permanent exclusions has decreased and the corresponding reliance on the PRU has reduced. Exclusions have seen a reduction of 81% from the academic year 2011-12 (118 exclusions) to 2014/15 (22 exclusions). As a consequence the service provided by PRUs was reviewed and in 2014 a decision was made to close both Daybrook and Bassetlaw PRUs.
9. The projected number of places at Oakdale Learning Centre required for September 2015 will be at an all-time low of 13; prior to the reduction in numbers of exclusions Oakdale had operated at its physical capacity of 26, with many further students educated off-site. In recognition of this decline in usage of the Oakdale provision, a report was presented to the Children's & Young People's committee in March 2015 recommending closure of the service with effect from 31 August 2015. This was on the grounds of the service being no longer viable.

### **Specialist and Alternative Provision**

10. Historically, a number of pupils who were placed in PRUs following their permanent exclusion have ended up being educated in special school or specialist provision. This is in recognition of underlying special educational needs. Nottinghamshire currently commissions specialist placements from other local authorities and from the independent non-maintained sector. It is recognised that this is often expensive, can be of variable quality, and in many cases is located some distance from the young person's community.
11. Given the constraints affecting both school and Local Authority budgets, and the limited opportunities for future growth, it was important to establish a future model for specialist SEBD provision which is financially realistic and viable. The new model is looking to establish primary, secondary and special school provisions for the north, centre and south of the County.

### **SEBD Provision for the Centre of Nottinghamshire**

12. In September 2013, following an unfavourable Ofsted judgement for Beech Hill special school, Brunts Academy became the sponsor for the newly founded Beech Academy; the resulting partnership had The Evolve Trust as its overarching governance. In April 2014 all special schools were invited to express an interest in expanding capacity to develop SEBD provision for pupils with special educational needs. Derrymount, Orchard and Beech Academy were the only special schools who agreed to plan for this increase in their capacity.
13. As Beech Academy is the only central school that has agreed to increase its capacity, in principle terms have been agreed subject to Committee approval that grants The Evolve Trust a lease of the Oakdale PRU building. This will enable Beech Academy to increase capacity from 70 to 100 placements by the end of a three year period. Terms of the proposed Lease are outlined in the exempt section of this report.

## **Other Options Considered**

14. There are two primary alternative options for the future re-use of the property.

- Re-use the building to accommodate County Council staff currently located in Chadburn House and Byron House both of which are leased properties and in Mansfield. In summary there would be revenue savings of around £385,000 per annum.
- Disposal of the asset in order to secure a capital receipt
- The other option is to let the property on the open market for office use but this would not support the corporate objectives of the other two options.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

15. There is a clear and urgent need to provide special school spaces by the start of September 2015. The SEND Policy & Provision service has responded to changing student numbers and budgetary restrictions and has identified benefits in the Evolve Trust providing the spaces via a letting of the Oakdale Centre. This would support Corporate Priority Five – young people who are most vulnerable are supported to reach their potential.

16. The re-use of the property for corporate office need would provide greater revenue savings. However, given the yet unassessed detailed cost of making the property fit for purpose represents an unknown variable and financial risk. In addition while this property does provide an opportunity for relocation it is unlikely to represent the only opportunity as further work is progressed under the one public estate initiative to re-use surplus space of partners. The Adoption Service accommodation needs to be in a location which is discrete and safe for both staff and service users and could present a challenge to find appropriate accommodation. Any move would also be premature in advance of conclusions established from the Smarter Ways of Working programme which will help inform the type, location and amount of corporate space required in the future.

17. The sale of the asset is an opportunity to support the Council's capital receipts programme however the property is clearly not surplus to requirements due to internal service need and at this present time is not available for sale.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) To inform the Finance and Property Committee of the imminent closure of Oakdale Learning Centre, Mansfield.
- 2) That approval be given to a lease on terms set out in the exempt appendix.

**Jas Hundal**

**Service Director – Transport, Property & Environment**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Elizabeth Sanders 0115 977 2080**

**Constitutional Comments (SOM 16/6/2015)**

19. This decision falls within the scope of decisions that may be approved by the Finance and Property Committee.

**Financial Comments (TR 17.06.15)**

20. The financial implications are set out in the exempt appendix to the report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

21. None.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

22. Ward(s): Mansfield West  
Member(s): Councillor Darren Langton, Councillor Diana Meale

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SP: 2877

Properties affected: 02616 - Oakdale Learning Centre

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