

DATA LABEL: Public



## **COUNCIL EXECUTIVE**

### **SITE SELECTION FOR WHITRIGG HOUSE REPLACEMENT FACILITY**

#### **JOINT REPORT BY HEAD OF SOCIAL POLICY AND HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to advise Council Executive of the outcome of an options appraisal undertaken by officers on potential sites for the approved General Services capital investment project to replace Whitrigg House, a residential care facility for children that is currently located in East Whitburn.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council Executive:

1. Notes the outcome of an options appraisal undertaken by officers on potential sites for the approved General Services capital investment project to replace Whitrigg House, a children's residential care facility currently located in East Whitburn.
2. Agrees that Site 1 (Land adjoining Torcroft House, Whitburn) is the preferred location for the new facility and authorises officers to progress delivery of the project on that basis.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on customers' needs, being honest, open and accountable, providing equality of opportunities; making best use of resources, working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and associated regulatory Guidance. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Children (Scotland) Act 2020. Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. The Promise Scotland.
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance indicators</b>	Key performance indicators that will be monitored will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young people are safe and included in line with Getting It Right For Every Child Principles</li> <li>• Numbers of children in residential and secure care are reduced</li> <li>• Outcomes and attainment for children and young people are improved.</li> </ul>

<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.</li> <li>• We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.</li> <li>• People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances.</li> <li>• We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.</li> </ul>
<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources – (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	Total approved capital funding of £992,000 is in place to deliver the new facility during the 2023/24 financial year.
<b>VII</b>	<b>Consideration at PDSP</b>	Feedback on service delivery as part of the Transforming Your Council consultation was discussed at the Health and Care PDSP on 18 December 2017 and the Social Policy PDSP on 21 December 2017.
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Other Consultations</b>	<p>Consultation with staff, managers and young people during the course of the review of the existing services.</p> <p>Housing, Customer &amp; Building Services, NETs Land and Countryside Services.</p> <p>The local elected members for the ward have received a copy of this report for their information.</p>

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

Full council at its meeting on 21 February 2023 approved the Corporate Asset Management Strategy and General Services Ten Year Capital Investment Strategy 2023/24 to 2032/33. This included an approved capital budget of £850,000 in 2023/24 for the delivery of a new children's residential care facility to replace Whittrigg House in East Whitburn. The project also includes an approved capital budget of £142,000 from 2022/23 that will be carried forward into 2023/24, providing at total approved project budget of £992,000.

Whittrigg House in Redmill Court, East Whitburn is a two-storey converted house that provides residential care for children. The property no longer meets Care Inspectorate quality standards and a new, purpose-built replacement facility will ensure a minimum of two young people can be accommodated, with a further two beds for emergency situations, plus ancillary accommodation for support staff. If the approved capital budget permits, it will also be used to deliver additional two-bedroom accommodation on-site that would enable young people to transition to a permanent tenancy of their own, an approach to support and care delivery that reflects recognised service best practice.

### **D.2 Options for delivery of the Whittrigg House replacement facility**

Officers have considered a range of project delivery options (including the potential purchase and conversion of an existing residential property or the purchase of a privately-owned site) and concluded that a new, purpose-built facility on a council-owned site would result in the best service outcomes and enable the project to be delivered in an effective and efficient manner in accordance with approved budgets and required operational timelines.

Under this model, officers from Property Services will design a purpose-built facility with reference to future service needs and acknowledged examples of sector-specific best practice. The facility will be built on a suitable area of council-owned land in an appropriate location and the project will be delivered using the traditional procurement approach.

The current Whitrigg House will continue to be used operationally to support the young people living there until the new replacement facility is completed. It is proposed that a further report will be presented to a future meeting of the Council Executive seeking approval to declare Whitrigg House surplus to requirements and to disposal of that property in accordance with the council's approved Surplus Property Procedure.

### **D.3 Site selection**

Senior managers in Social Policy responsible for service delivery collaborated with Property Services colleagues to establish priority criteria and in doing so confirmed that the new facility would ideally be located close to its sister facility, Torcroft House in Whitburn. This would enable staff to move easily between the two facilities, ensuring the most efficient use of resources whilst delivering the best possible outcomes and care for the children being supported. The site must also be close enough to amenities to enable those young people to feel part of the community, but detached enough to minimise the impact of any potential anti-social behaviour.

A range of potential sites were identified and considered jointly by officers from Social Policy and Property Services.

Officers undertook joint inspections of each site and thereafter considered the respective advantages and disadvantages of each. Deliberations included consideration of the surrounding environment, any practical and physical limitations relating to design potential and service delivery, along with potential implications on project costs. The following three sites were subsequently shortlisted as being most suitable.

<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Address</b>
1	Land adjacent to Torcroft House, Raeburn Crescent, Whitburn
2	Land at King George V Park, Whitburn
3	Land at Dixon Road, Whitburn

A high-level feasibility study was then undertaken to demonstrate that the proposed new facility could be accommodated on each of the three shortlisted sites.

### **D.4 Recommendation**

Having fully considered the available options, officers have reached a clear consensus view that Site 1 (Land adjacent to Torcroft House at Raeburn Crescent, Whitburn) should be taken forward as the preferred site for the new facility. The extent of that site is shown hatched in black on the location plan at Appendix 1.

Officers consider this site's location immediately adjacent to the existing facilities at Torcroft House provides a unique opportunity for enhanced operational and service delivery benefits than no other site can offer. Specifically, it would result in improvements around staffing contingency and matching with the young people using our services, with that enhanced consistency in turn resulting in recognised benefits for those young people. Co-location would also offer opportunities for enhanced workforce training and development, improved networking and the introduction of additional professional services to support the young people.

The site is located within and is well served by an existing community and there is the long-established presence of Torcroft House at this location. Positive communication with members of the local community has taken place around service delivery in recent years and it is intended that there will be service led engagement with relevant parties in respect of this new facility.

The site is owned by the council and is held on Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Head of Housing Customer and Building Services has confirmed she is in principle prepared to transfer the land to General Services account (subject to Tenant's Panel approval) to enable the project to proceed. General Services account would, either from the approved project budget or by way of an excambion (i.e. a land swap), recompense HRA for the transfer of that land. The value of the land would be independently determined by the District Valuer in accordance with established practices.

The site is currently held as an open space asset and comprises an unused former kick-pitch that is no longer considered fit for purpose. The NETs Land and Countryside Services Manager has confirmed he would welcome this area being re-purposed as the site for the new facility.

Approximately two thirds of the site is designated as open space in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 and, as with any potential site, planning permission would be required to enable the project to proceed. The adjoining land at Blaeberry Park provides public open space in this locality and it is considered by officers that the proposed new investment would represent a marked improvement on the existing, unused former kick-pitch.

Officers have discussed the proposed model of locating this new facility next to Torcroft House with representatives from the Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate are supportive of that approach and have acknowledged the clear service-focused benefits of doing so.

Officers recommend that Council Executive agrees Site 1 (Land adjoining Torcroft House, Whitburn) as the preferred location for the new facility and authorises officers to progress the delivery of the project on that basis.

## **D.5 Indicative project delivery timelines**

If Council Executive approval is secured to proceed with Site 1 as the preferred location, officers anticipate that the new facility could be delivered within the following indicative timescale:

<b>Programme stage</b>	<b>Anticipated Timescale</b>
Design Start Date	21.03.2023
Stage 2 Client Sign off on Concept Design	24.07.2023
Planning Consent	25.09.2023
Building Warrant	27.11.2023
Tenders out	17.01.2024
Tender return	22.02.2024
Site Start	20.03.2024
Site Completion	09.01.2025

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Whitrigg House, Redmill Court in East Whitburn no longer meets Care Inspectorate quality standards and the council is committed to delivering a new, improved facility that will meet the needs of our children and young people going forward.

Officers have considered a range of delivery options and concluded that a new, purpose-built facility on a council-owned site would result in the best possible service outcomes and enable the project to be delivered in an effective and efficient manner in accordance with approved budgets and required operational timelines.

An options appraisal of potential sites has been undertaken and officers recommend that Site 1 (Land adjoining Torcroft House, Whitburn) should be agreed by Council Executive as the preferred location for the new facility and that officers should be authorised to proceed with project delivery on that basis.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

West Lothian Council – 21 February 2023 - Corporate Asset Management Strategy and General Services Ten Year Capital Investment Strategy 2023/24 to 2032/33.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 – Location plan

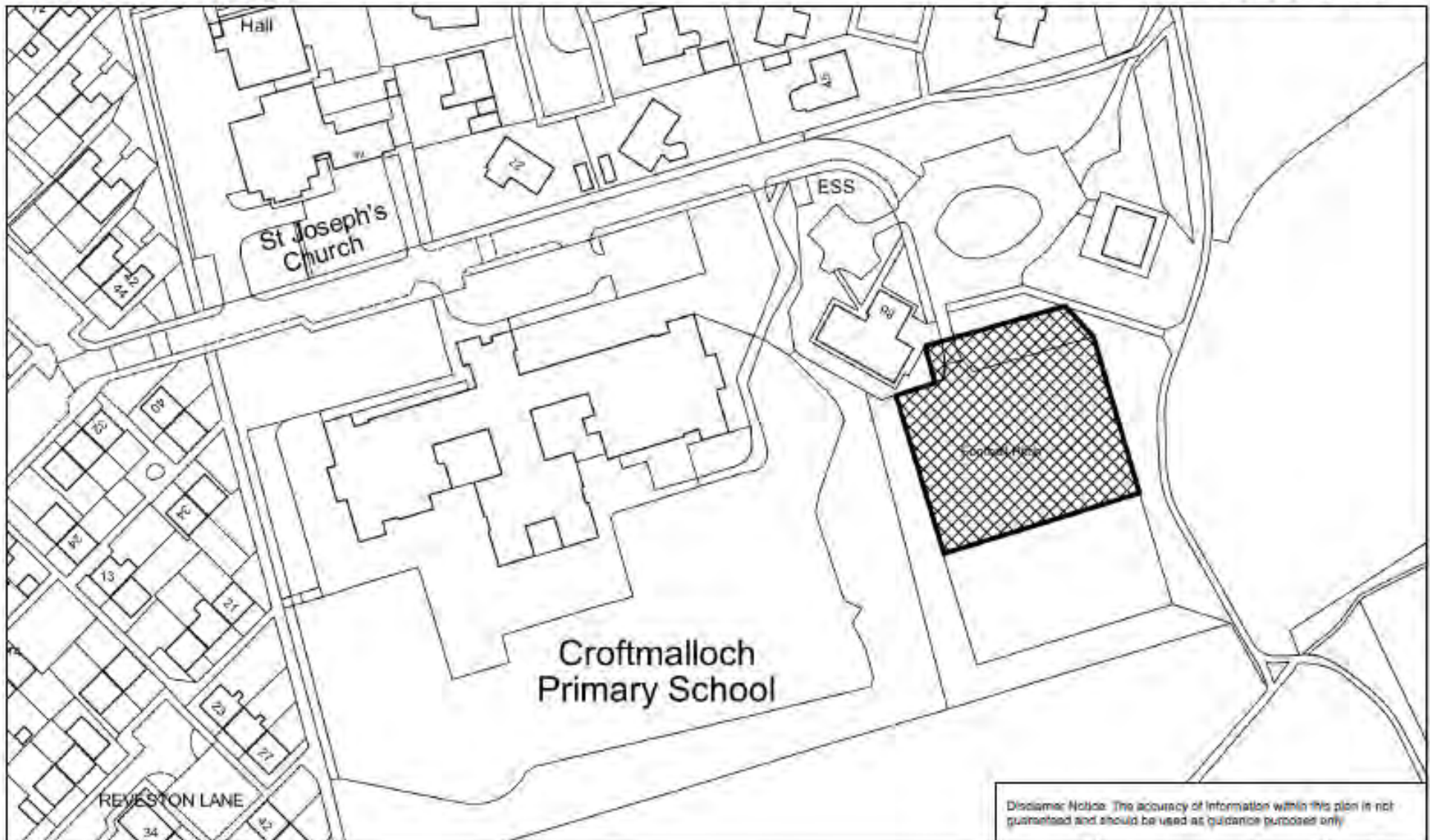
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**21 March 2023**

**APPENDIX 1 - Location Plans**



	<p><b>Site 1 - Land adjacent to Torcroft House, Raeburn Crescent, Whitburn</b></p> <p>Property Management, West Lothian Civic Centre, Livingston, EH54 6FF</p>	<p>Not to Scale</p>	<p>A4</p>	<p>N ↑</p>
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