

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL25 February 2021

Report by Director of Environment and Head of Public Protection and Children's Services  
(CSWO)

PROPOSED LEASE AND IMPROVEMENT OF CAPELRIG IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
CHILDREN 1st

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to enter into a 25 year lease with Children 1st for their pioneering project "Childs House for Healing" (Scotland's first Barnahus) and to acknowledge the benefits to the Council in progressing this project. The project is a joint initiative between Children 1st, East Renfrewshire HSCP supported by the Environment Department. The report also asks the Council to make financial provision of £440,000 in the General Fund Capital Programme for 2021/22 as the council's contribution. Children 1st have also indicated that they wish to proceed quickly and improve and occupy the building by around August/September 2021 if possible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Council:
- a) Notes the terms of the proposed joint financial commitment of the Council and Children 1st to investing up to £879,000 in the Capelrig House/Child's House for Healing project;
  - b) Makes provision within the General Fund capital programme of £440,000 for 2021/22 being the Council's contribution towards the improvements;
  - c) Notes that this expenditure will be contained within existing Environment Department capital resources and any resultant adjustments to the programme will be part of the General Fund Capital Plan report to be considered by the Council in March 2021;
  - d) Approves the proposal to lease Capelrig House to Children 1st for 25 years to deliver the pioneering project (Child's House for Healing);
  - e) notes the benefits in securing the preservation of Capelrig House and the longer term potential financial savings of £950,000 to the Council; and
  - f) Delegates to the Director of Environment in consultation with the Chief Solicitor to conclude the lease and repair/improvement financial arrangements with Children 1st with regard to Capelrig House.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Capelrig House is an 18th-century Category A listed house located in Newton Mearns and situated adjacent to Eastwood High School. The lands of Capelrig can be traced back as far as the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and have been held by numerous parties through time. They were ultimately acquired in 1962 by the then Renfrewshire Council for the construction of the first Eastwood High School. Capelrig House was last used for East Renfrewshire Council offices. However, it has been vacant over the past 10 years.

4. Over the years there have been many attempts to market the building or find alternative positive uses. However, with the Grade A Listing (and the responsibility that comes with this) and its proximity to Eastwood High School (and therefore pupils) this has limited the potential uses and there has been no interest in the building until late last year when Children 1st outlined their pioneering project, House For Healing.

## REPORT

5. Children 1st in partnership with Victim Support Scotland, Edinburgh University and Children England have secured £1.5 million from the People's Postcode Lottery Dream Fund to ensure that every child victim and witness in Scotland and Britain receives support to heal from the first moment they tell someone what has happened to them.

6. East Renfrewshire HSCP is leading the national pilot to develop this approach – known as JII (Joint Investigative Interviewing) in partnership with Inverclyde HSCP. East Dunbartonshire HSCP, Renfrewshire Council and the two police divisions for the area K and G.

7. This partnership aims to create a centre for excellence to develop practice that is shared nationally, so that no child victim or witness ever has to endure long delays to secure safety, care, justice and recovery. The centre will disseminate best practice about what works for children and families as well as providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment for children to give their statements to specially trained staff from police, judicial and social work services and get support to heal from their families.

8. The interview will be recorded and the video will go to court and if any appearance is required this will also be carried out by video link so that any child never has to go to court. Children will also access medical attention if required and a forensic medical examination to be used in evidence gathering. The child will then be able to access support to recover from their ordeal and will be able to come back to the house for healing to be cross examined by video link to court.

9. This will be the first model of its kind in the UK and which, through the use of research and evaluation the partnership will be able to scale up across the whole country. The vision is that the house will be warm, child friendly, accessible and totally conducive to a trauma sensitive journey through the system.

10. Both the Council and Children 1st consider that this is an excellent opportunity to be at the forefront of a step change in the delivery of children's support services within the UK and that Capelrig House and its location and setting is an ideal building from which to deliver this pioneering model and associated research and learning centre.

11. Given the recent interest by Children 1st a fresh condition survey of the building has been undertaken.

12. The survey has identified that extensive repairs are required to the building including roof, external render and stonework and other internal works. Appendix A outlines the full extent of what could be required. It is important to note that irrespective of the interest from Children 1st, the Council would require to consider the issues raised in the condition survey now that they are known. Otherwise the building will fall into further disrepair.

13. The cost of all these works would be in the region of £879,000. At this stage this is a worst case scenario.

14. Given the unique opportunities that Capelrig House presents Children 1<sup>st</sup> have offered to work jointly with the Council to address the repairs and improvements required, bring the building up to an appropriate standard and allow the project to be delivered. They are willing in principle to share on a fair and approximately equal basis the costs involved (subject to further discussion and clarification with the Council). The Council's share of the capital expenditure would therefore be around £440,000.

15. The current annual running costs incurred by the Environment Department for Capelrig House are approximately £38,000 per annum.

16. In that respect Children 1<sup>st</sup> have also indicated that they would be prepared in principle to enter into a full repairing and insurance lease and meet the annual running costs for the building. However, given the size and the grade A listing the Council would require to be flexible and reasonable should unexpected major external building issues arise in the future.

17. In recognition of the fact that Children 1<sup>st</sup> are prepared to incur significant expenditure to improve Capelrig House and to deliver the right setting for the project it is proposed that a 25 year lease at a peppercorn rent is granted to Children 1<sup>st</sup>.

18. This would provide them with long-term security and put them in a better position regarding other funding applications and the raising of future resources.

#### **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

19. Based upon the existing running costs of around £38,000 per annum the Council has the potential to make revenue savings of up to around £950,000 over the 25 year period (on annual utilities and rates costs as well as internal decoration, repairs and insurance requirements).

20. With regard to the Council's potential capital contribution of around £440,000 it is considered that this could be met from within existing resources through adjustments to Environment Department projects within the current General Fund Capital Programme.

21. The proposed initial joint investment would minimise repair costs for the foreseeable future. Most importantly, this would ensure the repair and improvement and future protection of Capelrig House.

#### **CONSULTATION**

22. The Environment Department has been in discussion with HSCP, Accountancy, Procurement and Children 1<sup>st</sup> and further consultation will be required as part of the planning approval process for undertaking the works as well as consultation on appointment of external architectural consultants.

#### **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

23. This project is a model of multi-level partnership working on a number of levels not only within the Council and the direct partnership engagement with Children 1<sup>st</sup> but within Children 1<sup>st</sup> and their partnership with the other Local Authorities involved in the House For Healing project.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

24. There are no equality, sustainability or other implications associated with this report at this point in time.

## CONCLUSIONS

25. This proposal seeks to deliver a pioneering approach to child welfare within East Renfrewshire through a joint partnership and collaborative approach.

26. The proposals benefit the Council by securing external investment into an a Listed building for which the Council is the custodian and brings a currently empty building back into use which will deliver a benefit to the East Renfrewshire community and beyond.

27. The proposals outlined in the report will have implications for the Council's Capital Programme. However, the benefits of undertaking this project will mean that the essential external works will be undertaken now with part of the costs for upgrading the building being borne by Children 1st.

28. Children 1st will be responsible for all other costs of occupancy.

29. It is considered that this proposal meets the requirements of the Disposal of Land By Local Authorities (Scotland) Regulations 2010 as regards disposals below market value".

## RECOMMENDATIONS

30. It is recommended that the Council:

- a) Notes the terms of the proposed joint financial commitment of the Council and Children 1st to investing up to £879,000 in the Capelrig House/Child's House for Healing project;
- b) Makes provision within the General Fund capital programme of £440,000 for 2021/22 being the Council's contribution towards the improvements;
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Director of Environment

For further information contact: Andrew Cahill, Director of Environment by email [Andrew.cahill@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.cahill@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

February 2021

## APPENDIX A

P&M0020Capelrig House - Refurbishment WorksEast Renfrewshire CouncilTechnical ServicesNON-ELEMENTALBUDGET COST - No.: 2DATE :

20 November 2020

SUMMARYWORKS

Roofing Works	£	127,000
Builders Work	£	6,000
Rot Works	£	55,000
Flat Roof Works to Extension	£	19,000
Stone Repairs and Rendering	£	41,000
Basement Tanking	£	77,000
Electrical Re-wiring	£	252,000
Boiler and Heating Works	£	84,000
Internal Repairs and Decoration	£	116,000

FEES

Professional Fees	PATS	8%	£	62,160.00
	External Consultants	5%	£	38,850.00

**TOTAL COST -****£ 879,000****Excludes:-**

VAT  
 Surveys  
 Internal Repairs  
 Asbestos Removal

**Includes:-**

Prelims 16%  
 Contingency 10%  
 Professional fees 8% + 5%

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