



BAIRNS HOOSE PROJECT UPDATE

Report by Head of Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer

PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Report provides an update in relation to the development of a Bairns Hoose and highlights the potential change in location.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the February series of meetings it was reported that the Outer Hebrides had been successful in applying to be one of the six Bairns Hoose pathfinders in Scotland. Members were informed that it was intended to locate the Bairns Hoose on the ground floor of the St Lennans Centre. This proposal required the relocation of groups currently using the facility and remodelling of the interior to the required specification.
- 2.2 Whilst progressing this work, the service has recently been informed by Comhairle planning officers that there could be planning issues or restrictions with this location.
- 2.3 To ensure that the pace of the project can be maintained, the project team are in the process of considering the Education Development Centre (EDC) on Kenneth St/Cromwell St as an alternative location.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note Report and the potential change of location from St Lennans Centre to the Education Development Centre for the Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose.**

Contact Officer:	Jack Libby, Head of Children's Services/Chief Social Work officer.
Appendix:	None
Background Papers:	Report to Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee 6 February 2024

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	£500,000.00 has been received from the Scottish Government to further develop an Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose.
Legal	n/a
Staffing	n/a
Assets and Property	If St Lennans is not used as the location of the Bairns Hoose, then Children's Services may vacate the 1 st floor of St Lennans leaving that floor vacant.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	n/a
Equalities	n/a
Corporate Strategy	Safeguarding the most vulnerable in our communities.
Environmental Impact	n/a
Consultation	Services currently using Pointers are being consulted with re what alternative locations can be used for delivery of their services, with The Bridge Centre being a possible option for many of these services.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 At the February series of meetings it was reported that the Outer Hebrides had been successful in applying to be one of the six Bairns Hoose pathfinders in Scotland. The intended location for the Bairns Hoose was the ground floor of St Lennans Centre, retaining the Children's Services workforce on the first floor.
- 5.2 Following the February series of Comhairle meetings, work commenced on moving forward with the project.

DETAIL

- 6.1 The original plan was for the Bairns Hoose to be located on the ground floor of the St Lennans Centre. The Service has been informed by planning officers that there could be planning issues with this location. The Bairns Hoose Implementation Group are actively considering whether to proceed with the St Lennans option despite the inherent risks of delay or settling on an alternative location.
- 6.2 The project team carried out pre-application consultation with Comhairle planners in relation to the St Lennan's ground floor proposal. Planners advised that St Lennan's is within the mapped 'Stornoway Town Centre Retail Area' as set out in Policy STY1 of the Comhairle's Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (2018). The policy states that "*Ground floor uses should fall within Use Classes 1, 2 and 3*". Planners confirmed that the Bairns' Hoose model does not align with its current use or fall within use classes set out in Policy STY1. Therefore, any proposed development would require planning use permission that is contrary to policy. A change of use application would be subject to statutory process including public consultation. The application may also have to be reported to the Planning Applications Board.
- 6.3 There is a risk being considered by the Implementation Group that, by continuing with the St Lennans option, there will be a project delay, resulting in having to return monies to the Scottish Government and there has been no guarantee that further monies will be made available beyond 24/25.

- 6.4 As an alternative, and to allow maintenance of project timescales, an initial scoping exercise was undertaken at the Education Development Centre (EDC) and it would seem at first sight that there is potential, given the significant amount of unused space at the EDC, to develop a proposal that is compatible with the original Bairns Hoose design. This would require some repurposing of a small number of rooms on the 1st floor.
- 6.5 Staff from Early Years, ASN and from Library Services would need to be consulted with, as would the Bairns Hoose Implementation Group.
- 6.6 No decision can be made regarding the EDC being the preferred location until such time as Technical Services colleagues complete their survey work and staff currently using the EDC have been consulted with.
- 6.7 The benefit of considering the EDC as an alternative location is that it would offer children and families accessing the service a central location with good public transport links, in addition to being discreet in that many children and families enter this location every day, offering children who do access the Bairns Hoose anonymity.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Service is in a position in where it must decide whether to accept the risk of attaining planning permission to use St Lennans as a Bairns Hoose or to avoid any potential delay and funding short-fall and progress with securing an alternative location. Members are asked to note the current position and a further Report will be presented in June, detailing the preferred location and the timeline to progress with the project.