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150A ITEM NO. 15000

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: MODERNISATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S HOMES IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 12 January 2006	Ref: ZM/DM	

1. Purpose of Report / Introduction

This report advises Committee on progress made to modernise residential care for looked after and accommodated children in North Lanarkshire.

2. Background

2.1. Social Work Committee approved a report entitled "The Modernisation of Children's Homes in North Lanarkshire" on 30 October 2003. It highlighted the Council's legal responsibility under the terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to accommodate children and young people who, for reasons of care and/or protection, are no longer able to live safely at home. The plan aimed to:

- Progressively create more community based alternatives to residential care
- Reduce the overall number of residential care home places
- Build, initially, three new purpose built homes of high quality design specification
- Reconfigure existing provision so that over time, no home will accommodate any more than six young people
- Produce a more appropriate geographical spread of service across North Lanarkshire

2.2. The plan to modernise children's homes in North Lanarkshire was set out in four phases. Phase four required the identification of sites for the new six bedded homes in Motherwell/Bellshill and Airdrie to replace the existing provision.

3. Progress

3.1. The plan to modernise Children's homes in North Lanarkshire was set out in four phases:

- A five bedded unit was opened September 2004 at Buchanan Street, Coatbridge, to replace Cecil Street
- Day services at Kirknowe were re-established at Cecil Street, Coatbridge and a new purpose built six bedded was planned for the Kirknowe site at Cambusnethan
- The completion of the new unit at Cambusnethan is scheduled for February 2006 and will involve closure of Pine Court, Cumbernauld
- Proposals to build new six bedded homes at Katherine Street, Airdrie and Albans Crescent, Motherwell were approved by Social Work Committee on 19 May 2005
- Designs have been developed for the new homes and preparation of planning applications are well advanced.

- 3.2. Ground surveys and topographical studies were carried out on the Katherine Street site but Network Rail has subsequently identified a substantial part of the site as their only viable option for a "Park and Ride" station arising from plans to re-open the Airdrie to Bathgate railway line.
- 3.3. Network Rail made a presentation to elected members on their plans for the relocation of Drumgelloch Station to the proposed site on Katherine Street on 24 November 2005.
- 3.4. Following discussion with the Department of Planning and Environment, it is proposed not to submit a planning application for the development of a residential children's home on the Katherine Street site, and instead continue to explore alternative site options. The outcome of this process will be the subject of a future report to Committee.

4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1. The cost of the proposed developments has been set aside in the Council's capital plan for Social Work.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Committee is asked to:

- (i) invite the Director of Social Work to explore alternative site options in the Airdrie area; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
19th December 2005

For further information on this report please contact Duncan Mackay, Head of Social Work Development TEL: (01698 332024)