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By: Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director for Families & Social Care

To: Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

Subject: APPLEDORE RECEPTION CENTRE FOR UNACCOMPANIED  
ASYLUM SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This reports the outcome of the consultation on the closure of the Appledore Residential Centre for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people in Cranbrook.

Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee considered and endorse the recommendation to close the service with this being delayed until implementation until October 2012.

The Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services is asked to confirm the decision to close the Appledore Reception Centre.

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## 1. Introduction

(1) The residential unit for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) at Appledore provides a reception service for UASC assessed as vulnerable on arrival at the port of Dover. Appledore is a registered children's home under the Care Standards Act 2002. It is registered to care for 8 young people aged 13-18 years of age of either sex

(2) In January 2012 the Lead Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services agreed the proposal to consult on the closure of the centre. The primary rationale for this proposal was the decline in referrals for placements at the centre. The decline has been due to the ever decreasing numbers of newly arrived UASC in Kent, which in turn is due to the closure of the Sangatte detention centre in France, the policy of returning Afghan boys to Afghanistan and the development of the reception provision at Millbank.

## 2. Background

(1) A formal consultation process was undertaken with staff and external stakeholders from 1<sup>st</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012. A consultation document including details and rationale for the proposed closure was circulated to the stakeholders listed below:

- Dr. Digby and the local GP surgery
- Education Assessment Service (EAS)
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Red Cross
- SUASC Staff, Reception, Duty and Transitions Teams
- The Refugee Council
- UKBA
- Wei Leung Solicitors

Briefing sessions with the staff at the Appledore centre were held during the consultation period and those organisations and individuals consulted were invited to submit their views or comments.

(2) Two formal responses were received from the Red Cross and from a KCC Independent Reviewing Officer working with UASC. The following is a summary of the main points -

- A query from the IRO as to whether it would be more cost effective to maintain the Appledore Centre and close the Millbank Reception Centre as the Local Authority own the Appledore building but not the Millbank facilities in Ashford.
- The Red Cross response largely recognised and supported the need for restructure and reorganisation as numbers decrease and demands change. The response also supported the rationale regarding the suitability of the Millbank Reception Centre in supporting the needs of the majority of UASC.
- Concerns raised by the Red Cross focused on the capacity for reception accommodation and support should there be a future influx of UASC.

(3) The Appledore Centre, while owned by KCC SUASC is on a site rented from KCC Youth Services to which SUASC pay an annual sum. The location of the centre is very isolated and the young people placed there have no access to local amenities or facilities, which limits their independence considerably. For the vast majority of UASC arriving in Kent, the Millbank facility, which is in a central location and offers semi-independent support is more appropriate.

(4) As the numbers of arrivals can fluctuate dramatically, KCC makes provision for any sudden influx in numbers within its business planning process. This includes additional capacity within the Millbank Reception centre. This is currently set up to support 20 young people but the capacity can be increased to 30 if needed. Additional further capacity can also be sought in community placements if needed.

(5) During the consultation period, information was received by KCC to suggest that countries that have hosted the Olympics Games in the past have experienced a significant increase in UASC. In light of this information, a decision has been taken to recommend a postponement of the closure of the centre until after the Olympic Games to mitigate against any possible risk of a shortfall in reception accommodation capacity, should there be an increase in numbers of referrals as predicted.

### **3. Personnel Implications**

(1) The proposal to close Appledore has implications for ten staff, employed on permanent KCC contracts at Appledore. Due to the recommendation to postpone the decision on closure until October 2012, it is the authority's intention to second these permanent staff to other positions within Specialist Children's Services. They would then return to their posts within the Appledore centre, as and when this may be required.

### **4. Financial Implications**

(1) The Residential Unit at Appledore is funded through the Home Office grant to KCC for the support of UASC. The projected savings to be achieved as a result of the closure

were detailed in the Cabinet Paper in January 2012 and are provided again at Appendix 1.

- (2) The proposal to delay the decision on the closure will mean the full year savings will not be achieved. The main costs of maintaining the unit will continue until the Unit actually closes, with the exception of some running costs. Staff have not been seconded into vacancies in other parts of the service. This ensures they are available to be released to their substantive posts immediately should the need arise.
- (3) The projected savings to be achieved through the closure of Appledore were part of the savings targets for the KCC Services for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children budget. These savings are required to cover the shortfall in funding expected as a result of a reduced Home Office grant for 2012-13. The decision to delay closure until October 2012 will result therefore, in additional expenditure. If the unit remains mothballed until September (post Olympic Games) but closes thereafter the cost will be £300k. Should the need for the unit arise, as a result of an increase in UASC numbers, the additional cost of using Appledore as an alternative to using the independent sector would be £100 per night per client. A decision about whether the unit will be required will be able to be taken during September.

## **5. Customer Impact Assessment**

- (1) At the time of writing this report there are no young people placed at the centre. A full Customer Impact Assessment has been completed prior to the formal consultation process

## **Recommendations**

6. (1) The Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services is asked to:
  - a) CONSIDER the outcome of the consultation process
  - b) NOTE the comments by and the endorsement of the decision by the Social Care & Public Health Cabinet Committee on 10 May 2012.
  - c) APPROVE the proposal to close the Appledore Reception Centre.

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## Appendix One – Projected Financial Savings

Average number of Residents	Total Number of Weeks	Annual Cost of Appledore Unit £	Average Weekly Costs £
8	416	916,000	2,202
7	364	883,000	2,426
6	312	850,000	2,724
5	260	817,000	3,142
4	208	784,000	3,769
3	156	751,000	4,814
2	104	718,000	6,904
1	52	685,000	13,173