

Part 1: Basic details

Project title	Direct Care and Support day services – approval to progress to public consultation in the future of Thrift Farm
Is this a new or existing document/service?	Review of previous EIA
Responsible officer	Adam Willison
Job title	Specialist Commissioning Manager
Contact no.	01296 387691 / 07766 697828
Team	Integrated Commissioning
Service	Integrated Commissioning
Business Unit	CHASC
Date started	April 2018, review January 2019
Date completed	January 2019 - updates will continue through development of scheme – Adam Willison Updated 29 th May 2019 – Susie Yapp Updated 24 th June 2019 – Susie Yapp Updated 31 st July 2019 – Susie Yapp

Part 2: Purpose and Objectives

2.1	What is the purpose of the project or change?	<p>The Adult Social Care Transformation Programme contains the work stream relating to the review of Direct Care and Support services. The purpose of this work stream is to review or re-model in-house services to ensure these are effective, outcomes-focussed and support people to maintain or achieve the greatest degree of independence of which they are capable in the context of the County Council's duty to fulfil its obligation under the Care Act 2014. The remodelled services must represent value for money and be financially sustainable.</p> <p>Across adult social care we want to support people to live well at home, maintaining or recovering their independence, and to fulfil their potential, partaking in meaningful day opportunities and supported employment. We want any services we commission to help achieve these aims, to reflect local need now and in the future and to draw on best practice models emerging across the country that offer best value for money. This means our service models need re-thinking.</p> <p>Thrift Farm has been a Council owned farm based day opportunities and supported employment service for service users with a learning disability since the early 1980s.</p>
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The service is not financially sustainable. It costs the Council a lot of money to operate Thrift Farm and when modelling the cost of re-providing alternative services for all the County Council service users who currently use the farm, savings could be made on the existing budget.

In addition, running a farm requires specialist knowledge, which appears to have led to a number of other local authorities with this type of service to de-commission, or re-provide in a different way. There are no local authorities close to Buckinghamshire who are operating adult social care services through Council owned farms. There are some care farms operating across the country. Commissioners spoke to one authority that operates a small care farm and their representative was clear that the basis of operating their care farm was that it was cost neutral to the authority. Others are operated as charities and fundraising is an important aspect of many of their operations.

Whilst there is a market for leisure farms in the local private sector, they do not appear to combine supported employment as part of their business model. Service users attend sessions at Thrift Farm on a daily basis. Placements are also provided for students from Special Schools and other local care establishments. Service users work alongside staff on the farm and acquire skills and experience with the help and guidance of a small, experienced staff team.

There are a number of alternative community based care charities, independent and for profit organisations that provide support services that operate or are keen to operate in the field of horticulture and animal care in Buckinghamshire. The market is developing and now includes Green Dragon Eco Farm (Quinton), Equicate & Thomley (Worminghall), Lindengate (Wendover), Road Farm Country Ways & Missenden Walled Garden (Great Missenden), Horse Wise (Aylesbury), Animal Antiks (North Marston) Cliveden National Trust offering volunteer opportunities (Taplow). All providers go through an internal council registration process. Commissioners must monitor the providers to ensure quality, financial probity and make routine checks to ensure the service is satisfactory. This must be completed before clients are placed by the authority. Some services have capacity and are keen to offer services to people with learning disabilities. However until service users have been reviewed and their care needs clarified, a placement would not be discussed with any potential provider.

A consultation on the future of Thrift Farm was approved by Cabinet on 4 February and the consultation commenced on 13 February and concluded on 9 April.

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Milton Keynes Council, a local authority neighbouring the farm, places approximately 24 clients at Thrift Farm and we continue to maintain regular contact with the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Director of Commissioning to appraise them of the position in respect of the future of the farm.

In 2017 we requested information from the market about the potential to run such a concern with limited response. The subsequent recommendation from procurement colleagues was to invite submission of business plans for the continued operation of the service via the Buckinghamshire Business Portal.

Two such rounds of invitation were held and the first attracted providers, however this process did not result in an award. A second invitation followed which also failed to result in an award. As a result commissioners felt that the opportunity had been exhausted. However the awareness generated by the Cabinet paper in February resulted in significant interest from a much wider cohort of potential providers and Cabinet resolved to undertake further exploration of the market which commenced on 13 February and ran for almost 10 weeks.

If the decision to close the adult social care provision at the farm or transfer to another provider is taken, formal consultation with staff would be required.

Thrift Farm is a 52 acre Council owned farm in North Buckinghamshire, very close to the border with Milton Keynes. It has functioned as a rural supported employment and day opportunity service for adults with learning difficulties since the early 1980's. It is also a popular visitor attraction, including an Animal farm park and picnic area and a Café.

The site contains a house, a number of outbuildings, animal paddocks and meadow.

Between April 2013 and December 2016, Thrift Farm was managed by Buckinghamshire Care Limited (BCL). During this time, significant investment was made in order to improve the Farm as a commercial visitor attraction e.g. building a new café. When the Council took the decision to close BCL, staff and services at Thrift Farm were transferred back in house in order to continue operating.

Thrift Farm has operated as a traditional type of social care service. Some service users have been accessing services at the farm for a considerable period of time, some having attended for over 30 years. For some this is a safe place

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		<p>which gives them an experience of working at a farm whilst staying within a safe environment. It has helped people to develop their skills across a range of opportunities. What it hasn't been able to do is create a stepping stone for many people into the working world or enable greater independence. For some this is not a reality and the farm operates more as a day opportunity for many clients rather than supported employment.</p> <p>The location of the farm creates transport difficulties for many Buckinghamshire service users, as it is not accessible by public transport, and is only accessible by car or client transport. Most service users are taken by client transport and being located in the far north east of the county creates a barrier for service users from the south who may wish to access it.</p> <p>Thrift Farm as a visitor attraction does have income generation potential. The greater the income, the lower the cost to the council of operating the service. However this is unlikely to be realised without significant capital investment which has not been identified. The Council has not been hugely successful in operating a visitor attraction to generate income to offset the running costs. Despite significant investment by BCL between 2013 and 2016 in the catering facilities, the commercial income and out-of-county placement income are such that the running costs for Thrift Farm borne by the county council remain very high and it is possible to commission from other providers similar care at a much lower outlay for the council. Consequently, providing care and support at Thrift Farm does not represent value for money to the County Council. To develop Thrift Farm into a viable commercial venture the Council would need to invest significant capital. Making Thrift Farm a commercially viable proposition does not sit within the Council's current area of expertise.</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p>What are the key objectives of the project or change?</p>	<p>The objective of this project is to achieve ongoing adult social care provision at Thrift Farm whilst reducing the financial pressure of operating adult social services at the farm from the adult social care budget, either through decommissioning or by identifying an alternative provider who has a viable and sustainable proposal. Ultimately we want to ensure that service users are able to access suitable services to meet their identified needs, whilst promoting independence and engagement in meaningful activities.</p> <p>The objectives of this project are aligned with those of the wider Direct Care & Support Services Transformation Programme which aims to supports people to access the most appropriate type of support to meet their needs within sustainable and value for money services.</p>

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		Transferring the operations at Thrift Farm to an alternative provider or decommissioning the service will contribute to sustaining adult social care provision in Buckinghamshire within defined budget.
2.3	Which other functions, services or policies may be impacted?	Staff and resource required from Communications, HR, Finance, Direct Care & Support, Operations, Property and Transport.
2.4	Who are the main stakeholders impacted by this project or change?	Existing clients of Thrift Farm, potential service users, including those funded by other local authorities (mainly Milton Keynes Council), members of staff (this will be subject to a separate consultation and EIA), service users' carers and families, Talkback, Carers Bucks, members of the public who visit the farm, volunteers and community alternative providers.
2.5	Which other stakeholders may be affected by this project or change?	Local Members

Part 3: Data and Research

3.1	What data and research has been used to inform this assessment?	<p>There are no local authorities in the area known to commissioners operating care farms, combining adult social care services and Council owned farms, although some exist further afield e.g. Nottinghamshire Special Schools and other local care establishments. There are however care farms that are operated by alternative providers e.g. Church Farm Ardely (Stevenage) operates as a not for profit organisation, Mares (Amersham) is a charity. Service users work on the farm with the help and guidance of a small, experienced staff team. There are different models and we are aware of one local authority, operating in the north west which provides a range of supported employment opportunities across many different venues and businesses, people have the opportunity to work in a variety of active businesses including catering outlets, a brewery, a hair salon, a goat farm and shop mobility. This will help inform future work in relation to supported employment in Buckinghamshire. A visit has been arranged to understand their operational model to inform future day opportunities developments.</p> <p>There are alternative community services in Buckinghamshire which provide outdoor day opportunities, volunteering and work experience. The market is developing and the range of opportunities is increasing. New and existing providers are positioned to offer similar types of service and there are now a number of providers across the county who may be able to offer people who currently use Thrift Farm opportunities which they would find fulfilling, meaningful and enjoyable. Services are developing their offer to improve quality and accessibility, for example Road Farm Great Missenden is installing hoisting</p>
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		<p>equipment for people with more complex needs.</p> <p>The service has been running at a significant cost to the council and this is not sustainable.</p> <p>Many of the clients who attend Thrift Farm have been attending to service for many years. The cohort is generally static and move on is not possible for many of the service users. Some current service users may have become entrenched in the service, remaining at Thrift Farm for a long time and finding the prospect of moving into a different service offer very distressing.</p> <p>This proposal is part of the Direct Care and Support Transformation Programme, which does not have targeted or intentional impact on any single or specific group of service users.</p> <p>Thrift Farm provides services to people predominantly with learning disabilities and some with mental health difficulties. As of February (2019), there were 66 people attending the service, 39 (60%) are Bucks clients, 24 clients (36%) are from Milton Keynes and the remaining 3 clients are from other local authorities. The numbers do fluctuate slightly, but are broadly at this level.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire service users are predominantly male (74%) Most service users live in Aylesbury or the north of the county although there are a small number who do travel from the south of Aylesbury.</p> <p>In February 2019, the age range was considerable. The breakdown was as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="596 1429 1481 1697"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age range</th> <th>Numbers</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-34</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-44</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The cohort who access services at Thrift Farm is generally static, with few people moving out of the service and no capacity to take on new clients. Some people have been at the farm for many years.</p>	Age range	Numbers	18-24	8	25-34	26	35-44	13	45-54	10	55-64	5	65+	4
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3.2	<p>Have any complaints on the grounds of discrimination been made in relation to this</p>	<p>No</p>														

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	project?	
3.3	Please provide evidence of these.	N/A
3.4	What <u>positive</u> impacts have been established through research findings, consultation and data analysis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other similar services are available within the county that will be able to provide similar and stimulating opportunities and the numbers of services working in the area of horticulture and with animals has expanded in the last 12 months • Some other services are more accessible using public transport • Adult social care will be able to support people in accessing suitable services, which offer better value for money, whilst reducing the cost to adult social care • There will be more opportunity to address the potential for move on for individuals who have remained in traditional services such as Thrift Farm for very long periods of time. Service users will have the opportunity for new and meaningful experiences
3.5	What <u>negative</u> impacts have been established through research findings, consultation and data analysis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thrift Farm is not easily accessible by public transport and is generally only accessible via car or client transport • Many service users have been at Thrift Farm for many years and they and their carers are extremely anxious and upset about the possibility of Thrift Farm closing and a maybe having to move. If the decision is to close the farm, all clients will be reviewed. Transition plans would be developed for every client and any transition would be managed safely and the support we provide will be very important. • Carers are anxious about moving their cared for person who is accustomed to the farm experience and may be unsettled by change and any transition would be planned carefully with their input listened to and reflected as appropriate • The service is well regarded and used by service users and the wider community and if Thrift Farm is decommissioned it will reduce the extent of choice for that location however extensive market development over recent months has considerably broadened the options available • If the farm should be decommissioned, the travel implications of the proposed move cannot be fully understood until clients have been reviewed and suitable placements found. • Some service users may elect to access placements which are more expensive than those which social care can source to meet identified need and the service user may be required to pay the difference.
3.6	What additional	If the decision is taken to decommission adult social care

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<p>information is needed to fill any gaps in knowledge about the potential impact of the project?</p>	<p>provision at the farm, clients will be reviewed and alternative provision which considers home location, needs and likely interests of existing clients will be undertaken; and as necessary further work with providers of potential alternative services to look at how needs can be met in a way which supports people to develop their independence.</p> <p>If the decision is taken to decommission adult social care provision at the farm, detailed travel planning will need to take place as part of the transition planning for both services and for individuals.</p>
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Part 4: Testing the impact

<p>Within this table, please indicate (✓) whether the project will have a positive, negative or neutral impact across the following nine protected factors and provide relevant comments.</p> <p><i>Note 1: Listing a negative outcome does not mean the project cannot continue.</i></p> <p><i>Note 2: This is an opportunity to identify and address issues for improvement</i></p>						
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	What evidence do you have for this?	Improvement Actions Required
4.1	Age			✓	There are service users across the age range using this service	Ensure market place is developed to be able to provide suitable alternatives to meet individual needs.
4.2	Disability		✓		Potential reduction of day support and supported employment choices for clients with a learning disability or autism	Ensure market place is developed to be able to provide suitable alternatives to meet individual need. Refer individuals through to supported employment where appropriate
4.3	Gender			✓		
4.4	Marriage / Civil Partnership			✓		
4.5	Pregnancy / Maternity/			✓		

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	Paternity					
4.6	Race			✓		
4.7	Religion/ Belief			✓		
4.8	Sexual Orientation			✓		
4.9	Transgender			✓		
4.10	Carers		✓		<p>Potential reduction in day support and supported employment could lead to more pressure on carers with potential for difficulty accessing the new service location</p>	<p>The project will need to ensure people's needs are appropriately met and that carers needs are considered as part of the assessment process.</p>

Part 5: Director / Head of Service Statement

<p>I am fully aware of the duties required of Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) under the Equality Act 2010 and I have read our Equality Strategy.</p> <p>I am satisfied that this Equality Impact Assessment shows that we have made every possible effort to address any actual or potential unlawful discrimination.</p>	<p>Name</p> <p>Jane Bowie</p>
	<p>Signature</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>J. Bowie</i></p>
	<p>Date</p> <p>19/08/19</p>