

Division(s):

CABINET – 18 JULY 2017

Transition Fund for Community Initiatives for Open Access Children's Services

Report by the Assistant Chief Executive

Introduction

1. The council has developed a brand new service for 0-19 year olds combining children's social care and early intervention in one seamless service, removing the need for children and families to be referred between the two.
2. As part of the council's continuing investment in early intervention, new teams of 'locality workers' are advising and supporting staff who continue to provide universal services to children and families throughout Oxfordshire – such as teachers in schools, health workers and staff in early years settings. The approach will ensure that children at risk who require support are identified as early as possible and appropriate services are provided to them and their families.
3. Alongside these developments, the council has been holding positive discussions with local communities, town and parish councils and the voluntary sector to encourage community-led solutions for delivering open access services for children and families. The aim is for these local solutions to complement the funded service as part of a safe and effective system that ensures support for the most vulnerable families, while harnessing the work of schools, health services, voluntary and community groups as part of a wider early intervention approach.
4. The 2016/17 budget agreed by Council in February 2016 included the creation of a 'one off' £1m fund to provide pump priming to support community-led solutions for delivering open-access services for children and families.
5. A cross party group of county councillors was established to consider the maximum benefit of this fund. Councillors were nominated for this group by the party leaders. The group consisted of Cllrs Stratford, Mathew, Gray, Hards and Fawcett and met six times between May 2016 and April 2017.

Transition Fund Approach

6. The purpose of this £1m fund is to provide pump priming grants to communities to enable them to create sustainable solutions for open access children's services. The approach has been flexible recognising the different needs across the county. Through the current support provided to community

groups, individual solutions will be developed with differing funding requirements.

7. The working group were keen to ensure that the process is open and transparent allowing as many groups as possible to access the funding. It was felt that a grant scheme would be the most appropriate way to ensure this.
8. Any proposals for funding needed to be supported by a business plan that includes all of the relevant information requested in the guidance document.

Grant Criteria

9. The following were the key criteria used when assessing proposals:
 - Sustainable solution for open access children's services in the local community
 - Ability to self-fund in the long-term, as outlined in the business case
 - Clearly defined costs and timescales for implementation
 - Evidence of the need for the project
 - Community buy-in
 - Engagement, partnership working and collaboration
 - Projects must benefit Oxfordshire communities, be inclusive and provide good value for money.
 - To what extent we can have confidence that the project will have a lasting impact, beyond the funding period.
10. In addition to these criteria, the motion from the 12 July 2016 Council to only fund those centres at danger of closing resulting from the changes in Children, Education and Families transformation project was upheld.

Process

11. The first round of applications closed on the 21 October 2016. In this round 17 bids were submitted for consideration for decision by Cabinet on 22 November 2016.
12. The second round of applications closed on the 9 January 2017. In this round 20 bids were submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 221 February 2017.
13. A future round was agreed at 20 December Cabinet and this third and final round of applications closed on the 14 April 2017. In this round 14 bids were submitted for consideration by Cabinet on 20 June 2017.
14. The applications were assessed by the cross party working group against each of the criteria outlined in paragraph nine above.

15. Applicants, along with their local county councillor were notified by e-mail of the Cabinet decision.
16. Applicants will only have the first year of funding transferred initially with subsequent years funding subject to monitoring compliance.
17. Successful applicants will be expected to comply fully with the monitoring requests from the council and signing of the funding agreement will be viewed as acceptance of these requests.
18. Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the county council.

Review of Chipping Norton Provision

19. At the third round the working group recommended Cabinet not to fund the St Mary's Chipping Norton grant application due to the proximity to the already funded Ace Centre.
20. During discussion Cabinet noted that the issue for the St Mary's bid was the level of duplication with the ACE Centre. A Cabinet Member questioned whether there was that much duplication feeling that the provision from St Mary's was different to that provided by ACE. Councillor Gray suggested that it would be sensible to defer a decision in order to undertake further investigation and review the services available and to be provided with an update at a future Cabinet.
21. Officers were asked to provide clarity on the two projects, specifically what is being delivered at the Ace Centre and whether the proposal from St Mary's Chipping Norton may be a duplication of provision.
22. As part of this work a visit to Ace Centre was carried out on 4th July 2017 by the community coordinator in Children's Services. The findings of this visit are reported below:
23. **Visit to Ace Centre carried out by Cheryl Huntbach, Community Co-ordinator in conjunction with Liz Hutchings of the Ace Centre.**

Overview: The Ace Centre has appointed a worker and are currently delivering the following:

- 'Five to Thrive'
- Health Visitor clinic with advice and support session following
- Support to Child Protection and Children in need families

24. The Ace Centre are not currently delivering the activities as set in their funding agreement, however they tell the community co-ordinator that they are working towards this.
25. It is proposed that further monitoring of the Ace provision takes place in line with the monitoring arrangements as per the signed funding agreement. This

will take the form of a formal monitoring visit by the community co-ordinator and an early completion of the annual return outlining funds spent to date. Appropriate action will be taken if required in line with the funding agreement.

26. Cabinet raised concerns about duplication of provision in such a close proximity to the already funded Ace Centre. For the avoidance of duplication the provision at Ace has been assessed by officers against the proposal from St Mary's Chipping Norton.
27. St Mary's Chipping Norton applied in the third round of transition funding with the following proposals:
28. **Applicant:** St Mary's Church, Chipping Norton
Amount: £10,000 over 3 years
Proportion of proposed budget: 36%

Overview: This proposal is to create an open access service for children under five and their families in partnership with St Mary's Primary School by providing a Family Stay & Soft Play Session & Breakfast and a One-to-One Parent Drop in Session. A sustainable future provision will be managed by St Mary's Church & School.

Delivery: OPEN ACCESS SOFT PLAY SESSION WITH BREAKFAST

On a Friday morning we will offer a Soft Play Session in St Mary's School Hall, starting with breakfast for parents/carers and children (aged 0-5).

ONE -TO ONE DROP IN SESSION FOR PARENTS who need someone to listen to their concerns. Running every Monday morning during term time (8.40-10am) at St Mary's School.

29. Given the outcome of the monitoring visit with the Ace Centre and the proposal from St Mary's Chipping Norton as outlined above, officers feel that there is minimal duplication of provision. This conclusion has been reached based on:
 - The different age ranges being supported by the two groups with Ace concentrating on the 0-2 year olds and St Mary's looking at provision for the 0-5 year olds.
 - The sessions themselves operate on different days of the week as these have been co-ordinated to avoid duplication.
 - Ace Centre are working with the more vulnerable families with CP and CIN whereas St Mary's offers open access to the whole community.

Recommendation: The recommendation from officers is that Cabinet approves this bid for funding.

Update on the Florence Park Proposals

30. On 20th June Cabinet considered the proposals for Florence Park where the panel recommendation was to approve the asset transfer via a lease to Aflah

Nursery and to decline the application for funding from Aspire & The Nature Effect. Cabinet members commented that it seemed further work was needed with all parties to reach a solution, with a further report to be submitted to Cabinet as soon as practicable.

31. "Cabinet considered at length the bid in relation to Florence Park and the proposed asset transfer. Cabinet clarified that Aflah Nursery were not seeking funding under the Transition Fund and that the transfer was proposed under the Asset Transfer Policy which did not exclude organisations for profit. Lucy Butler, Director for Children's Services informed Cabinet of the County Council's statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient supply of nursery provision and that the proposals met a statutory need. Maggie Scott, Assistant Chief Executive explained the background to provision of nursery places during the children's centre process and the current proposal from Aflah Nursery. Cabinet members commented that it seemed further work was needed with all parties to reach a solution."
32. "Councillor Gray proposed that decisions be deferred in respect of Aflah Nursery and the Aspire & Nature Effect bid to enable work with both groups, local councillors and the City Council to see if a solution was possible. He noted that it was a large building and that Aflah Nursery were not seeking the whole of it."
33. Following the cabinet meeting on the 20 June a meeting has taken place (3rd July) with the applicants, Aflah Nursery and Aspire & The Nature Effect.
34. The meeting included local councillors and County Council officers as well as officers and councillors from Oxford City Council. Discussions are ongoing with all parties and it is expected that these will continue over the summer to determine whether a proposal can be achieved.
35. It is proposed that this item is deferred until the September Cabinet meeting taking place on the 19 September for cabinet to take a decision based on the outcome of further discussion.

Recommendation: The recommendation is that Cabinet defers this decision to the September Cabinet meeting.

Financial and Staff Implications

36. The financial implications are set out in the main body of the report.

Further information in relation to the bids recommended for funding is included below:

Centre	Organisation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Funding requested	Funding Awarded
ACE Centre	Ace Centre	£10,841	£9,994	£9,148		£29,983

ACE Centre	St Mary's Chipping Norton	£5,500	£2,500	£2,000	£10,000	
TOTAL					£10,000	£29,983

37. As set out in the previous cabinet report on 20 June 2017 the funding awarded is below. This funding does not take into account any decision made about St Mary's Chipping Norton.

TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE	£1,000,000.00
FUNDING APPROVED IN 1ST ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£162,984.52
FUNDING APPROVED IN 2ND ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£305,883
FUNDING APPROVED IN 3RD ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£258,458**
REMAINING FUNDING	£272,674

** Includes conditional funding allocations

Equalities Implications

38. The Public Sector Equality Duty, under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, places a responsibility on local authorities to exercise 'due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.'
39. There are no equality and inclusion implications arising directly from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

40. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
- (a) Approve for funding the following bids:**
 - a. St Mary's Church, Chipping Norton
 - (b) Defer the decision until September Cabinet for the following bids:**
 - a. Aspire & The Nature Effect (Florence Park Children's Centre)
 - (c) Defer the decision until September Cabinet for the asset transfer for the following proposal:**
 - a. Aflah Nursery (Florence Park Children's Centre)

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July 2017