

CABINET MEMBER LOCAL COMMUNITIES – 22 MAY 2018

TRANSITION FUND FOR OPEN ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Report by Assistant Chief Executive

Introduction

1. The 2016/17 budget agreed by Council in February 2016 included the creation of a 'one off' £1m fund to provide pump priming grants to communities to enable them to create sustainable solutions for open access children's services.
2. The approach agreed has been flexible, recognising the different needs across the county. Through the current support provided to community groups, individual solutions were developed in different areas with differing funding requirements.
3. Following seven successful grant application rounds, where 39 community groups have been awarded funding totalling £870,592, there is now a remaining balance of £129,408 in the budget.
4. Given that the original council decision provided £1m to try to mitigate any gaps left in open access provision as a result of the move to more targeted provision in the new Children & Family Centres, Cabinet agreed on 18 September 2017 to continue to use the underspend as a grant scheme for open access children's services delivering for the 0-5 age range.
5. It was agreed to broaden the existing criteria to allow for other groups to apply for grants for delivering open access services for the 0-5 age range in locations other than previous children's centres. This would also encourage applications from groups in locations where there was previously a children's centre which has been repurposed i.e. nursery provision.

Transition Fund Approach

6. A gap analysis of the current open access provision against what was previously delivered by the children's centres was undertaken. This has helped to identify shortfall by locality area and was used as the basis for assessing applications which address this gap.
7. The grant criteria remained broadly the same, removing the requirement for the provision to be in the same area as a previous children's centre and the addition of not funding previous recipients of the transition fund grant:
 - 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.
8. Applicants had to demonstrate an identified need in their area as a result of the changes in early intervention services, and provide a sustainable business plan beyond the funding period.
9. Previous recipients of transition fund grants would not be eligible to apply again.
10. A cross party group of county councillors was established to consider applications against the criteria. Councillors were nominated for this group by the party leaders. The group consists of Cllrs Gray, Fenton, Matelot, Brighthouse and Webber. The group was chaired by the portfolio holder for Local Communities, Cllr Gray.

Changes and Variations to Previously Awarded Bids

11. As part of the seventh and final round of Transition Fund grant applications recommendations to Cabinet on the 17 April, Cabinet were asked to agree delegated authority to the Cabinet Member Local Communities for variations and changes to projects from previously awarded applicants.
12. Applications for changes/variations to projects have been received from:
- East Oxford Primary School
 - Cutteslowe Community Association (Sunnymede Minnows)
 - Kidlington with Hampton Poyle PCC
 - Witney Children & Families First
13. A summary of all the bids requiring changes or variations to existing projects/awards is included below:
14. **Applicant:** East Oxford Primary School
Amount: £42,454 over 2 years
Proportion of proposed budget: 58%
- Overview:** Outreach and Open Access Services in the East Oxford Area with activities that include:
- Stay, play and learn session with music, speech and language focus for Under 5's.

- Bumps to Babes session to run alongside well-used Baby Café including play, songs and rhymes for babies and toddlers.
- Information and advice.
- CAB weekly clinics for families on housing and welfare.
- Outreach support to vulnerable families.
- Important links with local daycare and EOPS Nursery provision
- Groups for childminders, parents, grandparents and carers.

Officer feedback:

Officers considered this application alongside the comments previously made by the panel and from further information provided following Cabinet on the 17th April 2018.

Officers noted that the group are hoping to use the former Children’s Centre space at East Oxford which is currently only available on a Friday when it is not in use by the Early Intervention Service. Officers have not had formal confirmation that the space is available or the expected levels of rent.

Officers noted that the current match funding is provided in-kind and no alternative income has been secured for the project.

Officers considered that the current request did not provide value for money and considered similar applications to the transition fund with this level of provision and felt that this application was not in line with previous awards and a reduced award is recommended.

Officers recognised that this is an area of deprivation and cultural issues that may prevent people coming to a centre, however were not keen to see funding support outreach as this is outside of the Open Access Sessions for which the pump priming was established to support.

Whilst officers recognise the valuable service that the CAB can offer to these families, this falls outside of the eligibility criteria for this grant funding.

Recommendation: Officers recommend that the Cabinet Member for Local Communities funds the bid in line with previously funded organisations offering the same level of provision.

This means the total funding across the two years would be £20,000, structured as follows: Year 1 - £10,000 and Year 2 - £10,000.

15. **Applicant:** Sunnymead Minnows (Cutteslowe Community Association)
Amount: £30,000 over 3 years

Variation/ Change Requested: Cutteslowe Community Association have only been operational for 6 months of the full year grant was awarded and are requesting that the remaining balance of £2,024 is carried forward to year 2. The carry forward would then support an additional session due to increased demand.

Officer feedback:

Officers have assessed the additional information from the group including a revised set of accounts that show externally generated income of £3,237 that should not have been included in the original request for carry forward.

Officers noted the additional planned activities stated on the annual monitoring form including:

1. Running costs like room hire and salaries;
2. The monthly "Family Fun" Group will incur unexpected costs. This was always planned to do this for free in a school building. However this is not practical because of location of toys and it will now need to run in the Community Centre, incurring room hire costs;
3. Subsidising a local summer trip, which is what the Children's Centre always provided;
4. The group are hitting maximum capacity at the Thursday and Friday play sessions. Demand is very high (regularly hitting 25-30 children in these sessions) and there is a very real need for a third session;
5. The group would like to hire an additional community room and purchase art supplies to provide holiday activities for older siblings during the Thursday Stay & Play session;
6. There is a need to relocate the Bumps to Babies session when they bring on line the breast - feeding support sessions and there are no suitable side rooms in the School Aquarium room; and
7. There is an identified need for upskilling our volunteers and the group are looking into running training sessions for the volunteers.

Recommendation: Officers recommend to Cabinet Member Local Communities that the group should be able to use the carry forward of £2,024 to deliver these activities and that this forms part of the group's year 2 monitoring.

16. **Applicant:** Kidlington with Hampton Poyle PCC
Amount: £30,000 over 3 years plus £5,000 capital

Variation/ Change Requested: Kidlington with Hampton Poyle PCC have requested carry forward of the £5,000 capital monies. Work has been unable to begin whilst the group seek the relevant planning consents from the landowners the Diocese of Oxford. Work is expected to begin in late summer/early autumn.

Officer feedback:

Officers have assessed the annual monitoring return and all other expenditure and delivery in is line with the original application. Delays have occurred due to issues outside of the groups control.

Recommendation: Officers recommend to Cabinet Member Local Communities that the group should be allowed to carry forward the £5,000 capital allocation for the outdoor play area and to defer delivery until late summer/early autumn.

17. **Applicant:** Witney Children & Families First
Amount: £30,000 over 3 years

Variation/ Change Requested: Home-Start Oxford was recently approached by the Witney Family & Children First group ('the Group'), to consider taking on the lead role for this Transition funded project, following the closure of Base 33.

The focus of the approved Transition Fund bid, for a part-time Co-ordinator to sustain open-access sessions for 0-5's and their families in Witney, is unchanged.

Home-Start Oxford submit this outline summary of the modest amendments anticipated, and key questions on which they request the Committee's views. Given the fast development of our involvement, this paper is submitted on the proviso that it is, as yet, subject to approval by Home-Start Oxford's Board of Trustees.

Changes to Note

- Salary level for Co-ordinator reduced to fall into line with Home-Start Oxford / NJC salary levels. Hours increased from 15 per week to 16 per week to attract maximum number of candidates. Project management, supervision, safeguarding structure and evaluation now costed in; delivered by HSO Senior Co-ordinator.
- Projections for community and trust fundraising increased, with associated time from HSO Fundraiser costed in to achieve this and support local team of volunteers.
- Projections for earned income from session 'charges' scaled back given delayed timeframe. Funds raised in excess of these modest projections would be held as ring-fenced funds, towards project sustainability / reserves.
- The original proposal had not costed in supervision from Base 33 (to be provided pro bono). This is now costed, along with direct project management, induction and training, supervision and evaluation. This does not fully reflect the costs that would be borne by Home-Start Oxford – additional non-funded contributions of overall management, strategic/business planning, premises and in-kind contribution of Trustees would all be committed to this project.

- The group are in consultation about whether the budget would allow for delivery at different project locations, as first intended. The main venue will remain the Methodist Church.
- Frequency of group sessions: The group propose that the budget would allow for 3 sessions per week to be delivered by the Co-ordinator in the first instance, with additional support (e.g. safeguarding, session planning) being provided as needed to other volunteer-led groups at the Methodist church and in the community. As the project gets underway and volunteers are recruited, set up time could reduce to potentially allow for an additional session to be added to the timetable. This allows adequate time for the community networking, outreach to families, set up of a monitoring framework for the groups and session planning, supervision etc.

Officer feedback:

Officers have assessed the changed proposal against the original application and the criteria for the grant scheme.

Officers have noted the reduction in salary costs to bring this into line with the Home Start salary levels and this is offset against the management costs from Home Start.

Sustainability has been addressed in the current proposal with dedicated fundraiser time from Home Start.

Costs and timescales have been amended to reflect the later start date but it is considered that this still provides value for money for the number of open access sessions being provided.

With the exception of the lead organisation the steering group have not changed, engagement and partnership working has been strengthened with additional track record of Home Start in delivering projects.

Recommendation: Officers recommend to Cabinet Member Local Communities that the group should proceed on Year 1 & 2 budget as per the original plan.

This means the total funding across the two years would be £22,500, structured as follows: Year 1 - £12,500, Year 2 - £10,000.

Financial and Staff Implications

18. The financial implications are set out in the main body of the report.
19. Further information in relation to the groups applying for funding and changes/ variations to funding is included below:

Organisation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Funding
East Oxford Primary School		£10,000	£10,000	£20,000
Kidlington with Hampton Poyle PCC	£16,000	£10,000	£9,000	£-
Sunnymead Minnows (Cutteslowe Community Association)	£14,000	£7,000	£6,000	£-
Witney Children & Families First	£12,500	£10,000	£7,500	-£7,500
TOTAL				£12,500

20. A breakdown of the current expenditure to date along with the recommendations made in this report is provided below:

TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE	£1,000,000
FUNDING APPROVED IN 1ST ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£162,984
FUNDING APPROVED IN 2ND ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£305,883
FUNDING APPROVED IN 3RD ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£258,458**
FUNDING APPROVED FOR ST MARYS	£10,000
FUNDING APPROVED FOR FLORENCE PARK	£30,000
FUNDING APPROVED IN 4TH ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£33,091
FUNDING APPROVED IN 5TH ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£15,089
FUNDING APPROVED IN 6TH ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£13,100
FUNDING APPROVED IN 7TH ROUND OF APPLICATIONS	£41,986
REMAINING FUNDING	£129,408
FUNDING AWARDS CHANGES RECOMMENDED UNDER VARIATIONS	£12,500

Equalities Implications

21. 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.'
22. There are no equality and inclusion implications arising directly from this report, the protected characteristics have been considered when assessing all proposals.

RECOMMENDATION

23. The Cabinet Member Local Communities is **RECOMMENDED** to:

(a) approve funding for the East Oxford Primary School application; and

(b) approve changes/variations to the following previously awarded projects:

- Kidlington with Hampton Poyle PCC
- Sunnymead Minnows (Cutteslowe Community Association)
- Witney Children and Families First

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Background papers: Transition Fund Guidance Notes & Transition Fund Application Form.

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May 2018