

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES – 4 NOVEMBER 2009

APPROVAL OF LARGE CAPITAL GRANT PROJECTS FOR EARLY YEARS PROVISION

Report by the Interim Director for Children, Young People & Families

Introduction

1. On 16 September 2008 the Cabinet approved the Oxfordshire Early Years Capital Programme 2008-2011. This sets out the plans for expenditure of £7.8 million that has been made available by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to secure significant investment in early years provision, mostly to benefit children in the non-maintained sector.
2. 59 expressions of interest for Large Grants (> £10,000) were received from early years providers. 39 of these were approved or shortlisted by the Cabinet Member on 5 May 2009 and 7 July 2009. A decision on another 13 projects was deferred.

Development of the shortlisted and deferred projects

3. Council officers have carried out further clarification, development and assessment of these projects, and of the project from Rainbow Pre-school, Bicester (expression of interest received July 2009).
4. Survey reports were commissioned in order to ascertain the current condition of the buildings used by some of the early years providers.
5. On-site visits were arranged for meetings between Council officers, the early years provider and the landowner or school (as appropriate).
6. Advice has been provided by Council legal, finance and procurement officers as to the most appropriate forms of funding agreement and contractual processes for awarding and distributing grants.
7. For 6 of the largest projects on school sites (involving the provision of a new building), the risks are reduced by the Council managing the project on behalf of the early years provider. A new modular (system-build) building will be purchased by the Council and leased to the early years provider on a 25 year lease.
8. 3 projects involve the extension or refurbishment of school premises for subsequent lease to the early years provider. The risks are reduced by the Council managing these projects as part of the capital schemes already planned for these schools.

9. 1 project will be managed by a school on behalf of the early years provider on the school site.
10. 7 projects (estimated cost £25,000 or less) will be managed by the early years provider in conjunction with the landowner, e.g. village hall trustees.
11. 1 project (estimated cost over £25,000) is recommended for shortlisting at this stage and the early years provider will need to submit a full application containing detailed information on the project and the early years provider.
12. 2 projects are recommended for rejection:
 - Whitchurch Pre-school (because the building condition survey report shows that the current building is in a reasonable condition and does not need replacing).
 - Chipping Norton Pre-school (based on needs assessment criteria that take account of the amount of local provision, deprivation within the area, current building condition and suitability).

Financial and Staff Implications

13. The estimated cost of the 18 projects recommended for funding approval or shortlisting totals £2,396,000.

Equality and Inclusion

14. The Early Years Capital Grant is for the improvement of the learning environment in early years settings to support young children's play and learning with a view to raising achievement and narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and the rest.

Sustainability

15. It is recognised that each project (that involves a new building, extension or major refurbishment) will not necessarily match the assessment criteria of the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) it will however seek to meet those principles and seek to achieve the level of 'GOOD'.

RECOMMENDATION

16. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **approve Projects 1-10 in Annex 1 to this report for funding from the Early Years Capital Grant, subject to the Council's Project Approval process for schemes on school sites;**

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- (b) approve Projects 11-17 in Annex 1 to this report for funding from the Early Years Capital Grant, subject to appropriate contractual agreement and**
- (c) shortlist Project 18 in Annex 1 to this report and request the early years provider to submit a full funding application.**

JIM CROOK

Interim Director for Children, Young People & Families

Background Papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Marion Evans, Early Education Development Manager,
Children & Families Tel: Tel: 01865 815115

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