

## **CABINET– 28 NOVEMBER 2017**

### **TRANSITION FUND FOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVES 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 to support community-led solutions for delivering open-access services for children and families.
2. The purpose of this £1m fund was to provide pump priming grants to communities to enable them to create sustainable solutions for open access children's services. The approach was flexible recognising the different needs across the county. Through the current support provided to community groups, individual solutions were developed with differing funding requirements.
3. Following three successful grant application rounds where 27 community groups have been awarded funding there is now a remaining balance of £232,674 in the budget.
4. Given that the original council decision provided £1m to try to mitigate the gap 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 would be used as the basis for assessing applications which address this gap.

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7. The grant criteria has 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 must be able 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 has been 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 is chaired by the portfolio holder for Local Communities, Cllr Gray.

### *Process*

11. The fourth round of applications closed on the 25 October 2017. In this round 4 bids were submitted for consideration.
12. The applications were assessed by the cross party working group against each of the criteria outlined in the guidance notes at Annex 1.
13. Applicants, along with their local county councillor will be notified by e-mail of the Cabinet decision.
14. Applicants will only have the first year of funding transferred initially with subsequent years funding subject to monitoring compliance.
15. 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.
16. Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the county council.

## Assessment of Applications

17. Having carefully assessed all the bids received against the established eligibility criteria, the cross party working group are recommending the following two bids for funding:
  - Slade Nursery School (Slade & Headington Children's Centre)
  - Leys Community Church
18. A further two bids were considered to require further support to ensure a robust and sustainable model. As such Cabinet is recommended to defer the following bids to the next round of applications:
  - Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee
  - Sutton Courtney Stay and Play Group
19. A summary of all the bids received under the fourth round of applications for the Transition Fund is included below:
20. **Applicant:** Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee (Blackbird Leys)  
**Amount:** £6,200 over 1 year  
**Proportion of proposed budget:** 79%

**Overview:** Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee seeks the resource to deliver two stay and play sessions per week for young children accompanied by parents. The sessions will be delivered by local volunteers supported by a qualified member of staff. The delivery of stay and play sessions needed to address the gap caused by the cut in services previously provided the Blackbird Leys Children & Family Centre. Any grant awarded would support:

- Recruitment of new volunteers and training of new/ current volunteers.
- The delivery of stay and play sessions.
- Two/ three off sight trips within the first year of grant being received.

### Panel feedback:

The panel noted that the application met the criteria in terms of evidencing need.

The panel had concerns for the sustainability of the project and noted that only one year of funding had been requested.

The panel noted that the group had not declared any other funding.

The panel noted that it would not be possible for the group to apply to the Transition Fund again if they were successful in this round of applications.

The panel suggested that a revised application was submitted, demonstrating sustainability and outlining a proposal for a second year.

**Recommendation:** The panel recommends to Cabinet that this bid is deferred to the next round.

21. **Applicant:** Leys Community Church  
**Amount:** £2,750 over 1 year  
**Proportion of proposed budget:** 58%

**Overview:** Toddler Time is a weekly morning playgroup encouraging 'messy' (creative) play with pre-school children and their parents and carers. It fosters a sense of community and mutual support between parents/ carers and encourages healthy dynamics of play and learning through creative activities. The group is open access, with a nominal charge of £1. The group is run on a purely voluntary basis, through parents/ carers, and members of Leys Community Church. Due to increasing demand, it moved to the nearby hall of the Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP) in November 2016. The group is seeking equipment investment due to expanding numbers in the group and the change of venue.

**Panel feedback:**

The panel were supportive of the application overall.

There were concerns with funding refurbishment for a leased in building and landlord/ tenant relations although Councillor Brighthouse advised that the building had been secured as part of a wider community development initiative and she did not think that there would be an issue with the lease.

It was noted that as it would be funding refurbishment the group should be advised to keep receipts for monitoring purposes.

Councillors noted that the application did not include any assurances on policies and procedures and insurances as this expenditure was not identified in the application.

**Recommendation:** The panel recommend that Cabinet approves this bid for funding.

22. **Applicant:** Slade Nursery School  
**Amount:** £42,478 over 3 years  
**Proportion of proposed budget:** 58%

**Overview:** Slade Nursery School consulted with parents who attended the groups at Slade & Headington Children Centre before it closed to identify the activities and groups they would continue. Slade Nursery School is keen to

continue the groups to help parents to have positive relationships with their children in an environment with appropriate provision. To provide these local services they intend to use the current premises of Slade Nursery School as a base for open access provision.

**Panel feedback:**

The panel agreed that the application was strong in terms of demonstrating need and inclusivity.

The panel agreed that allocation of nursery places for two year olds was a separate issue and that there may have been confusion about this as a result of discussion around this at the September 2017 Cabinet meeting.

Councillors noted that given the amount of money requested, increasing the number of Stay and Play sessions would offer greater value for money. Councillor Brighthouse thought that there was scope for further sessions once volunteers had been trained but noted that this outcome could be guaranteed.

The panel raised concerns regarding the co-ordinator salary not being a professional role. Councillor Brighthouse thought that this might be linked to the role of one of the existing employees and thought that a full-time employee was needed rather than a part-time employee.

Councillors noted the inclusion of Social Care contact sessions within the application and that this should not be funded via the transition fund for open access children's services.

The panel noted that six months of the current financial year had already passed and the full year funding was being requested.

**Recommendation:** The panel recommend that Cabinet approves a reduced budget of £30,341 phased as Yr1 £12,136.50, YR2 £12,136.50, YR3 £6,068.25 for funding.

23. **Applicant:** Sutton Courtney Stay and Play Group  
**Amount:** £1,418 over 1 year  
**Proportion of proposed budget:** 78%

**Overview:** Sutton Courtenay Stay and Play Group is launching on 1 November 2017 in Sutton Courtenay Village Hall. This group is intended to provide an environment for parents/carers to share in educational play with their babies and toddlers with other parents/carers and their children. South Abingdon Children's Centre ran a similar 'stay and play' group held in the Village Hall until December 2016. The group is requesting funding to cover the first 12 months of operation, to end October 2018, in which they will run 45 group sessions. The group believe that they will generate sufficient revenue year on year to cover these ongoing costs and to fund ongoing investment in equipment.

**Panel feedback:**

The panel were supportive of the application and agreed that there was evidence of need in the area, based on levels of deprivation and the support previously provided by South Abingdon Children's Centre.

The panel was concerned about the amount of money being requested and the way that funding would be used. It was suggested that further support and guidance could be provided from the Community Coordinator for the area.

**Recommendation:** The panel recommends to Cabinet that this bid is deferred to the next round.

**Financial and Staff Implications**

24. The financial implications are set out in the main body of the report.
25. Further information in relation to the groups applying for funding is included below:

Organisation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Funding requested	Funding Awarded
Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee	£6,200	£-	£-	£6,200	£-
Leys Community Church	£2,750	£-	£-	£2,750	£2,750
Slade Nursery School	£24,273	£12,136	£6,068	£42,478	£30,341
Sutton Courtney Stay and Play Group	£1,418	£-	£-	£1,418	£-
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£52,846</b>	<b>£33,091</b>

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

<b>TOTAL FUNDING AVAILABLE</b>	£1,000,000.00
<b>FUNDING APPROVED IN 1<sup>ST</sup> ROUND OF APPLICATIONS</b>	£162,984.52
<b>FUNDING APPROVED IN 2<sup>ND</sup> ROUND OF APPLICATIONS</b>	£305,883
<b>FUNDING APPROVED IN 3<sup>RD</sup> ROUND OF APPLICATIONS</b>	£268,458**
<b>FUNDING APPROVED FOR FLORENCE PARK</b>	£30,000
<b>REMAINING FUNDING</b>	<b>£232,674</b>
<b>FUNDING RECOMMENDED UNDER 4<sup>TH</sup> ROUND OF APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>£33,091</b>

\*\* Includes conditional funding allocations

27. The panel when making its recommendations have ensured due diligence in assessing the applications and ensuring value for money is achieved. This has resulted in a proportion of the funds remaining unspent as outlined in the body of the report and further rounds are planned for 2017/18.

### **Equalities Implications**

28. 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.'
29. There are no equality and inclusion implications arising directly from this report, the protected characteristics have been considered when assessing both proposals.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

30. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
- (a) Approve for funding the following bids:**
    - a. Leys Community Church
    - b. Slade Nursery School
  
  - (b) Ask that further work is conducted to develop more robust business plans and reapply for funding under the next round of applications:**
    - a. Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee
    - b. Sutton Courtney Stay and Play Group

MAGGIE SCOTT  
Assistant Chief Executive

Annex: Transition Fund Guidance Notes & Transition Fund Application Form.

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November 2017

## ANNEX 1

## REVISED GUIDANCE NOTES

TRANSITION FUND  
COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOR OPEN ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

September 2017

**Background**

In February 2016 the council agreed to set aside £1m for creating a transition fund to provide pump-priming grants for establishing universal provision of children's services in communities across Oxfordshire.

Further details about the council's decision are available at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2016/feb/joint-statement-budget-political-leaders-oxfordshire-county-council>

This approach supports the council's commitment to a new way of delivering open access services across communities. Under Oxfordshire Together we have been working with town and parish councils, voluntary sector organisations and local community groups to encourage the continuation of open access sessions such as stay and play and youth group sessions where the council can no longer provide funding for these services. Further information about this work is available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/childrens-services>.

Having funded majority of the previously owned OCC Children's Centres, Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> September have agreed that the underspend can now be used to extend the grant scheme to organisations delivering open access services for the 0-5 age range. Read the full details of the decision here:

<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=5023&Ver=4>

**Our approach**

The purpose of this £1m transition fund is to provide pump priming grants for sustainable community solutions for open access children's services. In awarding the grants, our approach will be flexible, recognising the different needs across the county. We will work with community groups on an individual basis to develop individual solutions, so if you would like to apply for a grant you are advised to contact us at an early stage. To get in touch with us, please email us at: [localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Any proposals for funding will need to demonstrate sustainability and the ability to self-fund in the long term. This will be a key criterion for assessing all applications. In addition match funding is strongly encouraged, and we will be asking all applicants to put together a robust business case showing how the project will self-fund in the long-term.



There will be four rounds of applications with deadlines in October 2017, December 2017, February 2018 and March 2018, so if your bid is not successful in the first round, we will be happy to work with you to help develop a strong business case and re-apply for funding. Further rounds of applications will be considered, if there are remaining funds, post-March 2018.

### **What do we fund? (eligibility criteria)**

Funding is available for sustainable community solutions for open access children's services. As the county council is withdrawing funding for some non-statutory children's services, we want to see communities come forward with their proposals for open access services for children and their families, reflecting local need and priorities.

It is entirely up to each community to decide what the new arrangements might look like. In order to be eligible for transition funding, projects must meet a number of key eligibility criteria, and we require all applicants to submit a fully developed business case that demonstrates how the criteria will be met.

If you need help developing the business case, you can contact OCVA, who will be able to offer guidance, or you can consult the government's advice on writing a business plan at: [www.gov.uk/write-business-plan](http://www.gov.uk/write-business-plan).

To make sure you have included all the relevant information in your business case we have put together a suggested checklist:

- Description of the project/ activity
- Needs analysis
- Desired outcomes & beneficiaries
- Costs
- Sources of funding & long-term sustainability
- Performance Measures (how results will be monitored)
- Governance

### **Grant criteria**

- 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.

We want to see projects which are rooted in their communities and which have grown out of a specific local need. All applicants must work closely with their local community to ensure their project is properly connected locally, responds to recognised need and does not duplicate other provision. We would also ask to see evidence of a strong buy-in from the local community, and any successful initiative would need to be accessible, inclusive and open to all.

Funding will only be awarded on a one-off basis and must be spent within a maximum of 2 years or 31 March 2020 whichever is sooner (*depending on your business plan, it could be by end of financial year; set number of years or as per the milestones identified in the business case*).

Funding can be awarded for salaries and overheads if these were part of the sustainable business plan. It is important to emphasise though that the grant will be a one-off payment so organisations need to take this into account when building their business case.

#### **Who can apply:**

**In order to be deemed eligible for funding, applying organisations must have a committee and/or a constitution or appropriate rules setting out aims and objectives and how the group will operate, and a bank account<sup>1</sup>.**

- Not-for-profit community groups
- Town and parish councils
- Schools
- Social enterprises
- Charity organisations
- Community associations
- Companies limited by guarantee
- Parent teacher associations
- Cooperatives
- Friendly societies
- Youth Clubs

#### **What don't we fund?**

##### **Organisations:**

- Previous recipients of transition fund grants would not be eligible to apply again.
- Groups that have previously received Transition Funding
- Individuals or sole traders
- Profit-making organisations

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<sup>1</sup> Please note we will not make any payments into individuals' bank accounts, so it is very important that your group has a bank account.

- Organisations not established in the UK
- Organisations that give funds to other charities, individuals or other organisations

### **Projects:**

- Projects that duplicate an already existing service
- Activities which a statutory body is responsible for
- Activities with a religious or political purpose
- Activities that contradict or act against any of the Council's agreed policies such as [Equalities](#) and [Safer Recruitment](#), or fail to comply with all the other relevant statutory requirements, such as health and safety legislation

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and if you are not sure whether you are eligible for funding you should get in touch with us at: [localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

### **How to apply**

#### **Application process:**

- 1) Application form & business case
- 2) Review of bid by transition fund cross party group with recommendations to Cabinet
- 3) Assessment of bid by Cabinet
- 4) Decision
- 5) Notification to bidders

#### **Deadlines**

There are four applications round, with deadline dates of:

- 1) TBC October 2017
- 2) TBC December 2017
- 3) TBC February 2018
- 4) TBC March 2018

We encourage applicants to contact us early with their expressions of interest or any questions they might have, to avoid any delays in the council assessing the bids and making a decision. There is a limited amount left in this budget and early applications are encouraged to avoid disappointment.

### **How will applications be assessed?**

We will assess your application against the key criteria set out above and we may also seek feedback from community stakeholders and the local county councillors.

A cross party panel will review all applications and then make recommendations to Cabinet. The final decisions will be made by Cabinet meeting in public on 28 November 2017 (first round), 23 January 2018 (second round), 20 March 2018 (third round), 17 April 2018 (fourth round). The Cabinet will judge each application on its own merits, giving due regard to local circumstances and need.

Cabinet decisions can be called-in by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, which can decide to approve the decision, ask Cabinet to reconsider, refer it to full council for further debate, or require further information of further work to be done.

### **Awarding the grant**

Applicants, along with their local county councillor, will be notified by email of the Cabinet's decision within a week of the decision being made.

Successful applicants will be asked to sign a legal agreement with the council (for any grants over £5,000). Once the legal agreement is signed, we will then transfer the funding into the organisation's bank account.

For larger grants/ where appropriate, funding might be phased depending on the outcomes achieved following the first stage of delivery.

Unsuccessful applicants will be offered feedback on their proposal and, where possible, we will work with organisations to help them identify alternative funding opportunities.

### **Monitoring**

Successful applicants are expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the Council and must agree to this when signing the funding request form.

All successful applicants need to be prepared for a review of their project.

This may include:

- Receipts recording how the money was spent
- Reports on the activity funded
- Feedback from individuals impacted
- Any other record of the activity funded (e.g. promotional flyers and posters)

Successful applicants will be strongly encouraged to keep us informed about the progress of their projects. Any setbacks to the implementation of the projects should be reported to the Transition Fund Team. Delivery of the projects will be monitored as per milestones identified in the business case/ project proposal.

Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the county council.

### **Other sources of support and funding available**

- Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA)
- Oxfordshire Community Foundation
- Community First Oxfordshire

**Contact us**

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## GRANT APPLICATION FORM

### TRANSITION FUND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FOR OPEN ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

#### The Scheme and Guidance

In February 2016 the council agreed to set aside £1m for creating a transition fund to provide pump-priming grants for establishing universal provision of children's services in communities across Oxfordshire.

In awarding the grants, our approach will be flexible, recognising the different needs across the county. We will work with community groups on an individual basis to develop individual solutions, so if you would like to apply for a grant you are advised to contact us at an early stage. To get in touch with us, please email us at: [localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:localities@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

Any proposals for funding will need to demonstrate sustainability and the ability to self-fund in the long term. This will be a key criterion for assessing all applications. In addition match funding is strongly encouraged, and we will be asking all applicants to put together a robust business case showing how the activity will self-fund in the long-term.

Please read carefully the **guidance notes** available on the Council's website to check whether your organisation or the activity you wish to fund is eligible for funding under the scheme's criteria.

#### The Application Process

- 6) Application form & business case
- 7) Review of bid by transition fund group with recommendations to Cabinet
- 8) Assessment of bid by Cabinet
- 9) Decision
- 10) Notification to bidders

#### Deadlines

There are four applications round, with deadline dates of:

- 5) 25 October 2017
- 6) TBC December 2017
- 7) TBC February 2018
- 8) TBC March 2018

#### Contacting Us

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