

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	12 July 2021
Report Title:	Childcare Sufficiency Capital Grants
Report of:	Ged Rowney, Interim Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/37/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The council awards capital grants, funded by a capital allocation from the Department for Education (DfE), to support the creation of childcare in areas of under supply. The new council constitution impacts on the process to approve these grants. A new policy is required to comply with the latest approvals processes set out in the constitution.
- 1.2. The policy supports the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan as set out in 3.1 of this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Children and Families Committee is recommended to approve the policy for the early years and childcare capital grant (25 June 2021).

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to ensure all eligible children aged 2, 3 and 4 years can access their free early education entitlement, and there is sufficient childcare available to support the needs of parents accessing work and training. Capital funding to address childcare sufficiency may be made available by the Council to assist in meeting statutory duties and support the following corporate objectives:

- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase the opportunities for children, young adults and adults with additional needs

- Ensure all children to have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. There is no realistic alternative to the course of action proposed. The capital funding allocation from the DfE was specifically for this purpose. The options are award grants in line with the proposed policy or return the funding.

5. Background

5.1. The allocation of capital grants to support the creation of childcare in areas of under supply has been well established by the council since 2014. The new council constitution impacts on the process to approve these grants. The new policy is required to comply with the latest approvals processes set out in the constitution.

6. Implications

6.1. Legal

6.1.1. This grant assists with the Authority's delivery of its duty to secure sufficient childcare under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006.

6.1.2. Grants are awards under the terms of a contract between the council and the recipient.

6.2. Finance

6.2.1. The budget available is £66,354. Further funding from the DfE is not anticipated. The policy is consistent with the delegations in the council's constitution.

6.3. Policy

6.3.1. This paper recommends the approval of a policy to meet statutory duties and corporate objectives as outlined above.

6.4. Equality

6.4.1. The opportunity to apply for funding is not limited to particular sections of the community and all children regardless of gender, race, disability, etc, will be eligible to attend.

6.5. Human Resources

6.5.1. None – systems, process and resources are already established.

6.6. Risk Management

6.6.1. To qualify for a grant organisations must meet the criteria listed below:

- Operate within the Cheshire East area;

- Provide value for money;
- Have a set of audited accounts, or as a minimum an organisation bank statement, and are able to provide such information as the Council reasonably requires in order to satisfy the Council as to the organisation's financial position and its need for the assistance requested;
- If a voluntary sector organisation, have a management committee with an up-to-date Governing Document which must be signed by at least two members of the committee who are unrelated to each other;
- Have appropriate safeguarding policies relevant to their organisation, which must include a requirement that staff / volunteers are cleared with the Disclosure and Barring Service where appropriate;
- Have a bank or building society account in the name of the organisation applying with at least two signatories;
- Complete the current application form in full, providing all required information;
- Have not already received a grant from this programme within the current financial year.

6.6.2. All successful applicants will be required to complete a post grant monitoring report.

6.7. Rural Communities

6.7.1. Rural communities may struggle to establish the minimum critical mass of children required to create new childcare provision. Targeted funding via the proposed policy may be vital to these communities.

6.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. The policy directly relates to children and young people, including cared for children.

6.9. Public Health

6.9.1. Availability of the early education entitlements protects and improves health and wellbeing and reduces health inequalities.

6.10. Climate Change

6.10.1. The grant will support the provision of childcare close to where families live, reducing the need to travel.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Mark Thornton, Childcare Development Manager mark.thornton@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07917 084956
Appendices:	Policy for the Early Years and Childcare Capital Grant 25 June 2021
Background Papers:	Childcare Act 2006 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21