

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 08 October 2019

Report Title: School Nurseries Capital Fund

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Dorothy Flude – Children and Families Portfolio Holder

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe – Acting Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. Cheshire East Council successfully applied to the Department for Education (DfE) for £926,989.95 from the School Nurseries Capital Fund (SNCF), subject to further information being provided. This report seeks approval to accept the funding when confirmed and enable the Council to expand the offer of childcare provision in line with need described in our sufficiency assessment.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1. Approve the addition of Capital Projects for £226,267 in respect of Ash Grove School, Macclesfield and £700,722.95 in respect of Beechwood School, Crewe to the Council's Capital Addendum.
- 2.2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director People to accept the Capital Grants from the Department of Education (DfE).
- 2.3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of People to enter into contract to deliver and manage the works committed by the grant funding on terms and conditions to be agreed with the Department of Education (DfE), subject to approval of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT & Communications and the S.151 Officer to remove the items from the Capital Addendum.

3. Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1. To create 88 new high-quality school-based nursery places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and 85 new wrap around childcare places for school aged children. This will support the delivery of the government's commitment to build more school-based childcare in areas of disadvantage, and boost social mobility.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Council could choose to decline the grant from the DfE, however this would deny opportunities and choice for residents in areas of high need and demand.

5. Background

- 5.1. In September 2018, the DfE invited local authorities to apply for capital funding to create new or extend existing nursery provision in schools in disadvantaged areas.
- 5.2. Applications were invited for projects that met a very clear initial pass or fail criteria set out by the DfE. The criteria were as follows:
 - 5.2.1. The project must be directly linked to a school, and governed by that school or multi-academy trust. (The nursery does not need to be located physically in the school. That is, it could be in a separate building, not necessarily on school grounds).
 - 5.2.2. The school must deliver early years entitlements.
 - 5.2.3. The school must have at least 20% of pupils registered at the school eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in their census data from January 2018.
 - 5.2.4. If FSM data is not available from the January 2018 census, bids should provide evidence that the school has at least 20% of pupils registered at the school eligible for FSM.
 - 5.2.5. The school must have a good or outstanding rating with Ofsted. If the initial inspection result is pending, the local authority or regional schools commissioner will need to provide a statement assuring us that the school is of good quality.
 - 5.2.6. The project must offer wraparound and holiday care, or make the nursery provision available to other early years providers to offer

wraparound and holiday care. If a project cannot deliver this, then they must supply a strong and convincing reason why they cannot.

5.2.7. The project must confirm that their local authority is content that the project outputs will deliver new early years funded places for disadvantaged children, without detriment to existing good quality early years provision.

5.3. The following schools met the pass / fail criteria set out in 5.2 above:

5.3.1. Sandbach Community Primary School

5.3.2. Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery

5.3.3. Beechwood School

5.3.4. Brierley Primary School

5.3.5. Manor Park School and Nursery

5.4. Cheshire East Council Officers discussed the potential viability of expansion at each eligible site that expressed an interest. Viability was assessed in terms of physical space for expansion and sustainability of extended provision.

5.5. Viable schemes were identified at the following eligible schools:

5.5.1. Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery, Macclesfield

5.5.2. Beechwood School, Crewe

5.6. Schemes for the following eligible schools were not submitted:

5.6.1. Sandbach Community Primary School - additional nursery provision unsustainable due to current under occupancy and limited space on the school site for expansion.

5.6.2. Brierley Primary School – no expression of interest received from the school.

5.6.3. Manor Park School and Nursery – no expression of interest received from the school.

5.7. Detailed applications were written in partnership between Cheshire East Early Years officers and the schools. The applications considered:

5.7.1. Deliverability and Sustainability.

5.7.2. Testing and evaluating approaches aimed at closing the disadvantage gap.

5.7.3. Levels of deprivation and need in the area.

5.7.4. Value for money.

5.8. The following applications were submitted to the DfE by the deadline of 22 November 2018:

5.8.1. Ash Grove - £226,267 to extend the existing nursery by 113m². The single storey extension would also provide a multi-functional space to provide wrap around care and holiday provision for school aged children. 49 nursery places and 40 wrap around childcare places.

5.8.2. Beechwood - £700,722.95 to remove the existing modular building and build a new, larger, purpose built 260m² facility and outdoor area. 39 nursery places and 45 wrap around childcare places.

5.9. The DfE announced on 2 July 2019 that they received requests for £66M across 143 projects and 66 projects at an overall value of £22M had been approved. The 2 projects submitted by Cheshire East in this report were approved. A copy of the offer from the DfE is at appendix 1.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. The Council's Finance and Procedure Rules (FPRs 6.26) state that Chief Officers are authorised to submit applications for grant funding and that acceptance of grant funding, shall be in accordance with FPR 2.40 and 2.45. Cabinet therefore need to authorise acceptance of grant funding in excess of £500,000 up to and including £1,000,000.

6.1.2. At present the terms and conditions under which the grant funding is made by the DfE is unknown. Officers will need to ensure that they understand and are aware of the grant conditions attaching to any funding and consider whether the Council's processes and procedures are sufficient to comply with these conditions or whether more detailed processes need to be followed.

6.1.3. Funding will be awarded by the DfE to the Council. Beechwood is a community school and the project would be managed by the Council . Ash Grove is an academy and the project would be managed by an appropriate funding agreement between the council and academy trust.

6.1.4. Works will need to be subject to a tender process that complies with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in terms of the project to be managed by the Council. Suitable conditions to ensure a fair and transparent tender process will be inserted in to the funding agreement for Ash Grove.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The award from the DfE would be required prior to any expenditure, and as noted in 6.1.1 the acceptance of the grants will need to be approved or delegated for approval by Cabinet.

6.2.2. Cabinet are being asked to include each project on the Capital Programme Addendum. Subject to receipt of the funds, and a suitable business case, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT & Communications and the S.151 Officer can then provide approval for the projects to be included within the Council's main Capital Programme.

6.2.3. Spending on these projects will be entirely grant funded so this will not impact on the overall balanced position of the Council's budget.

6.2.4. Anticipated completion timescales:

6.2.4.1. Ash Grove Academy – complete by 30 April 2020

6.2.4.2. Beechwood Nursery – complete by 31 August 2020

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. Supports the sufficiency needs of childcare across the Council.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed by the schools in line with each site.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. Additional teaching and support staff will be required by the school upon project completion in 2020.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. The Beechwood project would be directly managed by Cheshire East Council in line with the Council Capital programme risk management standards.

6.6.2. The Ash Grove project would be managed by a funding agreement between the council and the academy trust including a detailed risk management plan.

6.6.3. All aspects of the capital building projects would be risk managed in line with existing capital development programmes.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities given the sites selected by the DFE.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. Access to high quality school based nursery provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds includes priority places for our most vulnerable children.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. Positive impact on healthy child development in the Early Years will be promoted through this additional provision of high quality childcare places.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. Planned changes to school buildings will require full compliance with the latest building regulations relating to such factors as insulation/heat loss and energy efficiencies. These factors will be key considerations as each scheme is progressed, thus resulting in the reduction in our overall energy consumption/carbon footprint. Closer proximity of high quality childcare in our disadvantaged communities will encourage parents to utilise local centres reducing the need for using cars or public transport.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. Crewe Central – Councillor Anthony Critchley.

7.2. Macclesfield South – Councillor Laura Jeuda and Councillor Brian Puddicombe.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Headteachers and Governors of named Schools consulted with Cheshire East Council as part of the formal application process. In terms of the expansion and availability of sufficient childcare this was also undertaken, going forwards each school will undertake consultation with local parents in

terms of significant changes to the school site although this is not a formal requirement.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Copy of the offer from the DfE is at appendix 1.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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Job Title: Director of Prevention & Early Help

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