

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET 18th MARCH 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

EARLY YEARS CAPITAL GRANTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report requests Cabinet approval for Early Years capital grants. These grants will support investment in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, provision has been included in the Capital Programme.

1. Background

1.1 Surestart funding to improve Early Years Quality and Access is included in the Children and Young People's Capital Programme. The grant is for £1,238,960 in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

1.2 The grant has three aims:

1. To improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings.
2. To ensure all children, including disabled children are able to access provision.
3. To enable PVI providers to deliver the extension of the free offer for 3 and 4 year olds and to do so flexibly.

The DCSF expectation is that the majority of the capital grant is used to improve the quality of the environment in PVI settings, both to support lasting and higher quality experiences for young children and ensure that all children can access services.

1.3 Cabinet was informed of the new DCSF Early Years Capital funding stream on 16 October 2008. The grant is primarily, but not exhaustively intended to support capital investment in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. Cabinet approved that for 2008/9 and 2009/10 approximately 50% of the grant would be spent on accommodation renewal schemes in PVI settings based on school sites and 50% be open to all PVI groups to bid against, using DCSF criteria.

The previously approved schemes are at Brackenwood Infants, Brookhurst, Stanton Road and Irby Primary. Schemes at Brackenwood Infant School and Brookhurst Primary School have been completed and handed over to PVI providers. The schemes at Stanton Road Primary School and Irby Primary School are progressing well. Securing the future of these groups helps the LA meet the targets for numbers and distribution of available places.

98 PVI providers have been awarded grants of up to £10,000 to support IT, outdoor learning and the implementation of EYFS.

Next Phase

The total available funding is £3.72m of which £2.32m has been previously been allocated, leaving a balance of £1.4m.

At the Cabinet meeting held on 9th December 2009, Members agreed the recommendation for further consultation and feasibility studies in respect of further

capital development work with Private and Voluntary Independent settings (PVI) and small grants and the recommendation for further consultation on the most effective way of supporting and enhancing the Early Year's provision by local Childminders through the use of capital monies.

This paper gives details of applications for those PVI settings who had not previously made any application for grant funding and makes recommendations for the next 2 PVI settings identified as being a priority for replacement on the same basis as those described above.

Consultation has taken place to decide on the next most appropriate sites to develop enhanced early year's provision. Condition surveys have been undertaken at PVI provision on three school sites with a view to developing a further two accommodation renewal projects:

- Great Meols Primary School
- Somerville Primary School
- Gayton Primary School

As a consequence of these surveys it is recommended that the PVI provision at Great Meols Primary School and Gayton Primary School be included in the third year of development. These are the sites in most need of improvement. The mobile unit situated at Somerville Primary School is also nearing the end of its life but renewal at this site requires consideration of a range of other accommodation issues.

Details of costs and planning implications will be brought to Cabinet at a future date.

This capital funding has the potential to secure the long term future of these groups and greatly improve the experiences, environment and safety and well-being of the young people and the adults who make up those groups.

Grants up to £10,000 are available and providers have been asked to bid for amounts between £2500 to £10,000, against priority areas for development.

1.4 17 applications have been received as follows:

	No of applications	Total amount
Outdoor Learning	17	£98,675
Information technology	10	£18,432
Resources/ Furniture	14	£41,877.
	Total approvals	£158,984

The criteria for approval focuses on the following priorities:-

- Plans to develop outdoor learning environments that will enhance learning and development for young children.
- Development of Information Technology to improve access to digital technology for children and staff.
- Purchase of furniture and other resources to enhance the learning environment in line with the principles of Effective Teaching and Learning.
- Previous grant awards.

Settings are required to demonstrate:-

Ofsted report – satisfactory or better.

Clear justification for spend in line with improving outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage as defined above.

Support and endorsement from the setting Foundation Consultant.

Secure financial position to ensure longer term sustainability.

The applications proposed for approval are set out in the attached Appendix 1.

Two settings that had previously applied for and been approved to receive small grant funding are also included in this report as they did not identify VAT costs in their original application. As a consequence the amount of funding available to each setting was reduced. This report seeks agreement to allocate the amount of VAT (which is not recoverable) relevant to each group. This is in line with other grant payments.

Name of setting	Amount of VAT requested
Mary Manor Nursery	£1272.73
Pitter Patter Nursery	£1557.50
Total	£2830.23

- 1.5 Consultation with childminders regarding the allocation of capital funds is scheduled to be conducted between mid - March and mid-May, with outcomes and recommendations reported to Cabinet during the summer.

Consultation will be facilitated through:-

- Recruits to the newly formed childminder network.
- Informal support group meetings organised and managed through the Childcare Development Worker team.
- An analysis of the childcare market to identify gaps in childminding provision, leading to a strategic allocation of grant to boost recruitment amongst new childminders.
- A survey of best practice from neighbouring Local Authorities.
- Discussion with North West area representatives from the National Childminding Association.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The bids for small grants totalling £158,984 can be met from within the approved Children and Young People's Capital Programme for 2008-09 and 2009-10. Funding is from a ring fenced Capital Grant.

Specific details of the costs associated with recommended developments at Great Meols Primary School and Gayton primary School will be brought to Cabinet at a future date. Costs can be met from within the approved Children and Young People's Capital programme for 2008-09 and 2009 -10. Funding is from a ring-fenced Capital Grant.

3. Staffing Implications

- 3.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

4. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 4.1 This initiative forms part of the strategy to ensure “sufficient provision, distributed appropriately across the authority to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable access by all to Early Years Services”. (DCSF guidance)

5. Community Safety Implications

- 5.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

6. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 6.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

7. Planning Implications

- 7.1 Planning permission will need to be sought for the development of the schemes at Great Meols Primary School and Gayton Primary School.

PVI providers are responsible for seeking planning permission where this is indicated by the nature of their proposals, for example, the intention to erect a canopy to facilitate all year round access to outdoor learning opportunities.

8. Anti-poverty Implications

- 8.1 The capital proposals in this report are intended to secure and support early years education and support for all children and families, which in turn contribute to the Anti-Poverty Strategy. All PVI settings are required to have an inclusion policy setting out “how they will meet the needs of all children” (DCSF guidance).

9. Social Inclusion Implications

- 9.1 All PVI settings are required to have an inclusion policy setting out “how they will meet the needs of all children” (DCSF guidance).

10. Local Member Support Implications

- 10.1 Proposed developments at Great Meols Primary School and Gayton Primary School fall within the electoral wards of Hoylake and Meols and Heswall respectively.

Capital Funding has been bid for by PVI groups across the borough.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 DCSF Capital Guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

- (1) The proposals for allocations of small grants to the 17 PVI settings listed in Appendix 1 be agreed.

- (2) The adjustment to grants for VAT for the 2 identified settings be agreed.
- (3) The proposals for developments at Great Meols Primary School and Gayton Primary School be agreed.
- (4) The plans for consultation with childminders be agreed.

Howard Cooper
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