

Cabinet – 14 April 2010

Early Years Capital programme – Planned Expenditure

Portfolio: Councillor Walker, Children's Services

Service: Walsall Children's Services - Serco

Wards: All wards

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 The report sets out the expenditure plans for the improvement of early years environments in the private, voluntary and independent sectors in Walsall. The Department for Schools, Children and Families has allocated capital funding, over the financial period 2008 to 2011, for this specific purpose and the phased approach for development was agreed by Cabinet in October 2008.
- 1.2 **Appendix A** of this report details schemes already approved by cabinet

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet approves:

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the schemes and budgets set out in **Appendix B** of this report, including permission to seek tenders and appoint contractors on council owned properties and Cabinet delegates to the Director of Children's Services authority to awarded contracts (including authorising execution/signature of the contract and ancillary documents) to the most suitable contractors having regarding to Best Value for the works/services as set out.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the schemes and budgets set out in **Appendix B** of this report, including permission to make grant awards for those settings that are privately owned and Cabinet delegates to the Director of Children's Services authority to awarded the grants (including authorising execution/signature of the contract and ancillary documents) as set out in **Appendix B**.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has allocated funding to Local Authorities to develop and improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings. The expectation is that the majority of the grant is to make improvements in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI)

settings, although spending on the maintained sector is not precluded. The aims of the grant are:

- to improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities; and ICT resources;
- to ensure all children, including disabled children, are able to access provision; and
- to enable PVI providers to deliver the extension to the free offer for 3 and 4 year olds and to do so flexibly.

- 3.2 In October 2008, Cabinet approved the phased approach to improve the quality of early years environments. The first phase was the bulk purchase of equipment to satisfy the grant definition for capital expenditure. The second phase was to improve the outdoor learning environments in the children's centres. The third phase is extend this to the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector by enabling them to access funding to improve the quality within more settings, requiring grant procedures to be established.
- 3.3 The tendering of the equipment for all early years sectors is now complete and orders are being placed with suppliers. Cabinet approved a budget allocation of £726,900 and the procurement of these items is now underway.
- 3.4 Cabinet approved a budget allocation of £250,000 for the improvement to outdoor learning environments at existing children's centres and the design process is now underway. The scheme at Alumwell/ Pleck children's centre requires further work to provide level access from the crèche facility. It is recommended that an additional £5,000 is allocated from the Early Years Capital to this scheme and that the overall contingency of £10,000 is maintained.
- 3.5 Cabinet approved a budget allocation of £150,000 from the children's centre capital grant at Chuckery Primary School to complement the investment already made in the extended services building and enable the facility to be extended / modified to make it suitable for the delivery of integrated children's centres services.
- 3.6 Since that initial allocation all children's centres have been invited to bid for additional resources to improve the quality of their outdoor play area via the Childcare Quality and Access Grant, designed specifically to improve the quality of the learning environment in early years settings to support delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with particular emphasis on improving play and physical activities. An additional allocation of £50,000 is recommended to enable the outdoor area at Chuckery to be developed into an innovative learning environment, in line with other children's centres.
- 3.7 Family access to information on high quality early years provision is essential, therefore, it is recommended that an allocation of £65,000 is made to purchase 13 electronic information kiosks. These will be located in the new Phase 3 children's centres, libraries, health and leisure service facilities.
- 3.8 As agreed by Cabinet in December 2009, funding applications were invited from the PVI sector and these have now been assessed by the capital working group.

All applications were assessed against the same set criteria and based on the information submitted, grant awards with a 15% increase for fees are recommended in Appendix B. Individual schemes will require further detailed designs and, where relevant, recommendations from the capital group to be addressed. Therefore, the grant awards are indicative at this stage. Any variations that require an increase in funding will be referred back to Cabinet.

- 3.9 The Action for Children building at Pool Street is currently being used to deliver children's centre services for the Chuckery area. It is recommended that £50,000 is allocated to improve the outdoor and indoor learning environments to offer a high quality facility in line with other children's centres.
- 3.10 The new extended services facility at St Michaels CE (C) Primary School will provide nursery, wraparound, before and after school club and community facilities. It is recommended that an additional £15,000 is allocated to this scheme to retain the planned outdoor canopy and provide an outdoor learning environment for the children accessing the nursery.
- 3.11 All grants will be made between Walsall Council and the Provider. Legal agreements will be prepared by Walsall Council legal services and signed before any payments are awarded.
- 3.12 As directed by the grant guidance, the funding has been focused on supporting improvements in the Early Years PVI sector. However capital funding remains available in this financial year and further applications will be encouraged from those PVI settings who did not meet the assessment criteria. Applications will be widened to include high priority schemes in the maintained sector. A further report will be presented to Cabinet detailing these proposals.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 A total of £3,045,651 capital has been allocated by the DCSF through the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant, across the financial years (2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11). The allocations to Walsall are made in equal amounts of £1,015, 217 in financial year with payments made on quarterly basis, based on predicted expenditure and adjusted in the following quarter for actual expenditure.
- 4.1.2 No expenditure was incurred during 2008-09, however, the DCSF have confirmed that Local Authorities can carry-forward unspent capital both from 2008-09 into 2009-10 and from 2009-10 into 2010-2011. We are unable to approve carry-forward of unspent amounts beyond 2010-11. Local authorities will be expected to utilise all their capital funding by the financial year 2010-11.
- 4.1.3 The Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Grant is not available for pooling in the Area Based Grant or Local Area Agreements.
- 4.1.4 Schemes where the providers are operating on Walsall Council owned sites will be managed by Walsall Council property services who will ensure compliance with all Walsall Council finance and contract rules.

4.1.5 Schemes where the provider owns, or leases the site from a private landlord, will be awarded grants with robust legal agreements in place to protect the asset liability required under the grant.

4.2 **Legal:**

4.2.1 Walsall Council property services will manage the tendering process to ensure that procedures satisfy the financial and contract rules.

4.2.2 Where grant awards are to be made to private, voluntary or independent providers, Walsall Council legal services will prepare the legal agreements.

4.3 **Staffing:**

There are no direct staffing implications as a result of this report.

5. **Citizen impact**

The adoption of this strategy will impact on the learning, health and social care of children, young people and their families in Walsall. It will contribute to making Walsall a place where “growing up is as good as it can be” by ensuring families can access high quality early years provision in their local area.

6. **Community safety**

The EYFS includes numerous references to the provision of quality outdoor experiences for young children, to include risk taking in a safe and secure environment, giving children skills and the ability to protect themselves from harm both within a setting and in their wider community.

7. **Environmental impact**

Being outside has a positive impact on children’s sense of health and well being and supports all aspects of children’s development. Quality outdoor environments give children the freedom to explore use their senses and be physically active and exuberant.

8. **Performance and risk management issues**

8.1 **Risk**

Failure to complete capital projects within the DCSF prescribed timescales would result in loss of unspent grant funding.

There are specific grant criteria established by the DCSF that must be met.

8.2 Performance management:

Project management systems will be employed to ensure the DSCF requirements are met and progress will be overseen by The Early Years Capital Grant Steering Group.

The allocation of good quality resources and supporting settings to improve environments will have a positive impact on childcare practice; reflected in Ofsted findings and outcomes for children.

9. Equality implications

The Early Years Foundation Stage is for all children regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability. The statutory guidance states that children should have the opportunity to experience a challenging and enjoyable programme of learning and development in indoor and outdoor environment. The planned expenditure will impact directly on ensuring equality of opportunity for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

10. Consultation

The implementation of this approach to the allocation of capital resources will require detailed consultation with individual settings in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sector, including children's centres. This will be conducted through a series of workshops and individual site meetings to establish the requirements for high quality early years environments.

Background papers

Report to Cabinet 22 October 2008 - Early Years Capital programme 2008 to 2011

Report to Cabinet 15 July 2009 – Education Capital Programme – further schemes

Report to Cabinet 16 December 2009 - Early Years Capital programme – planned expenditure

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Receipt

Tony Staine

Signed:
Executive Director: Pauline Pilkington
Date: 31 March 2010

Signed:
Managing Director, Walsall Children's
Services, Serco
Date: 31 March 2010

Walker

Signed:
Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Walker
Date: 31 March 2010

Early Years Capital - Childcare, Quality and Access - Previously Approved Schemes			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Setting	Project	Project Cost	2008/09 Allocation	2009/10 Allocation	2010/11 Allocation
All Primary Schools	Wooden Blocks, Waterproof clothing, shade, Laptop / digital cameras / printer / cartridges	233,200	233,200		
Bloxwich West Children's Centre	Enhancement of external play area at Mossley Primary school site	20,000	20,000		
Brownhills Children's Centre	Enhancement of external play area at St James Primary school site	35,000	35,000		
Childminders	Wooden Blocks, Waterproof clothing, shade, Laptop / digital cameras / printer / cartridges	325,500	325,500		
Early Years Private, Independent and Voluntary Settings	Wooden Blocks, Waterproof clothing, shade, Laptop / digital cameras / printer / cartridges	168,200	168,200		
Park Hall Community Association	Replacement of Playgroup Facility	400,000	233,317	166,683	
Alumwell / Pleck Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	15,000		15,000	
Bloxwich West Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	10,000		10,000	
Edgar Stammers Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	30,000		30,000	
Fibbersley Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	15,000		15,000	
Greenfields Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	35,000		35,000	

Early Years Capital - Childcare, Quality and Access - Previously Approved Schemes – Continued			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Setting	Project	Project Cost	2008/09 Allocation	2009/10 Allocation	2010/11 Allocation
Hatherton Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	10,000		10,000	
Leighswood Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	5,000		5,000	
Lighthouse Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	35,000		35,000	
Palfrey Children's Centre	Improvements to outdoor play environment	20,000		20,000	
The Children's Centre at Bentley West	Improvements to outdoor play environment	10,000		10,000	
Contingency	Improvements to outdoor play environment	10,000		10,000	
Brownhills Children's Centre	Remodel of main entrance	50,000		50,000	
Total			1,015,217	411,683	0

Early Years Capital - Childcare, Quality and Access			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Allocation			£1,015,217	£1,015,217	£1,015,217
Commitments			£1,015,217	£411,683	£0
Remaining Balance			£0	£603,534	£1,015,217
Setting	Project	Project Cost	2008/09 Allocation	2009/10 Allocation	2010/11 Allocation
Parkside Playgroup	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	17,250		17,250	
Almozene	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	40,250		40,250	
Adventureland	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	23,000		23,000	
Beeches Day Nursery	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	34,500		34,500	
CJs Little Angels Playgroup	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	11,500		11,500	
Bright Eyes Day Nursery	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	23,000		23,000	
Busy Bees	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	23,000		23,000	
Charlie Caterpillars	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	46,000		46,000	
Early Birds	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	40,250		40,250	
First Friends	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	31,050		31,050	
Gables Day Nursery - Aldridge	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	11,500		11,500	

Early Years Capital - Childcare, Quality and Access			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Allocation			£1,015,217	£1,015,217	£1,015,217
Commitments			£1,015,217	£411,683	£0
Remaining Balance			£0	£603,534	£1,015,217
Setting	Project	Project Cost	2008/09 Allocation	2009/10 Allocation	2010/11 Allocation
Gables Day Nursery - Rushall	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	69,000		69,000	
Headstart	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	28,750		28,750	
Honey Pot	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	21,850		21,850	
Hundred Acre Playgroup	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	23,000		23,000	
Little Green Dragons	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	92,000		92,000	
Little Fishes	Equipment	2,500		2,500	
Little Professors	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	34,500		34,500	
Little Rascals	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	107,500		30,634	76,866
Little Stars	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	49,450			49,450
Millfields Neighbourhood Nursery	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	23,000			23,000
Mayfield Preparatory School	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	46,000			46,000

Early Years Capital - Childcare, Quality and Access			2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Allocation			£1,015,217	£1,015,217	£1,015,217
Commitments			£1,015,217	£411,683	£0
Remaining Balance			£0	£603,534	£1,015,217
Setting	Project	Project Cost	2008/09 Allocation	2009/10 Allocation	2010/11 Allocation
Nippers Playgroup	Improvement to Outdoor Learning Environment	34,500			34,500
St Thomas	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	51,750			51,750
Sunflowers	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment	28,750			28,750
Chuckery and Paddock Children's Centre facility at Pool Street	Improvement to indoor and outdoor learning environment				50,000
Alumwell / Pleck Sure Start Children's Centre	Additional funding to provide level access	5,000			5,000
Chuckery Primary - Children's Centre Facility	To create an Outdoor Learning Environment	50,000			50,000
St Michaels Extended Services Facility	Additional funding to retain Canopy and outdoor play environment				15,000
Children's Centres / Libraries/ Leisure Services	Purchase of 13 information kiosks	65,000			65,000
Total			0	603,534	495,316
Balance Available			0	0	519,901