

TITLE OF REPORT: Use of Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves.

Purpose of the Report

To request the use of Early Years DSG reserves for the Council's Design and Technical Services to prepare concept designs as requested within the Department for Education (DfE) capital grant application to support the extended free entitlement for working parents of three- and four-year-olds.

Background

The extended free childcare entitlement will be available from September 2017 for working parents of three- and four-year-olds and will provide eligible parents with a total of 30 hours of free childcare per week, over 38 weeks or 1,140 hours across more weeks per year.

Officers from Gateshead Early Years Childcare Service (EYCS) submitted an expressions of interest (EOI) to the Department for Education (DfE) in April 2016 to work with local childcare providers to bid for capital funding to expand childcare provision (including schools that currently offer, or plan to offer, provision for 3- and 4-year-olds).

On 1st July 2016 officers received information from DfE requesting applications from Local Authorities setting out specific provider capital projects in their area by 31st August 2016.

Notification was also received of our 'Project Limit' ranking of Medium – 4 projects maximum. This is based on the number of 3- and 4-year-old children that DfE estimate are eligible for 30 hours in the local authority. The figure for Gateshead is 1370 eligible children.

Application Process

Expressions of interest from all providers that are interested in building on the existing 15 hour universal entitlement, and require capital to do so, were requested to be submitted to EYCS by 8th July 2016. For the purposes of this bid round DfE define a place as a 30 hour funded place offered over at least 38 weeks per year. The place may either build on an existing 15 hour place to create a 30 hour place or be an entirely new 30 hour place.

An Officer Group consisting of representatives from the Councils Design and Technical Service, Corporate Finance, Legal Services, educationGateshead and EYCS will apply the DfE assessment criteria to ensure that the four most suitable providers/schemes from Gateshead are submitted to DfE for their consideration. The DfE criterion is divided into to a two stage bid assessment process.

- Stage 1 will assess individual projects against a set of pass or fail qualifying tests based on: track record with Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate; completion date by the end of August 2017; total cost of the project is below £1 million; and a minimum of 25% of the total project cost is funded from alternative sources.
- Stage 2 will assess individual projects that were successful at the initial stage based on the following criteria: evidence of localised sufficiency need, project outcomes, and value for money.

In order to completely fulfil this criterion it is necessary that the Council's Design and Technical Services prepare concept designs, preliminary schemes and estimates of costs. This detail will be completed for the four EOI which the officer group select as the most suitable schemes to go forward to DfE. An allowance of £3,500 for each scheme is needed in order that this work can be carried out.

Successful bids will receive grants awards within financial year 2016-17. Successful bidders will be notified by December 2016.

Options

There are 2 options:

- 1) Not to proceed with the capital applications.
- 2) To proceed with the capital applications. This will involve upfront funding from Early Years DSG Reserves of £3,500 per scheme to prepare concept designs, preliminary schemes and estimates of costs. Four schemes will be submitted for consideration. Should the applications be successful and the grant awarded the upfront outlay from Early Years DSG reserves will be reimbursed.

Recommendation

That schools forum approves the request for £14,000 in order to proceed with option 2 at a total cost of £14,000.

For the following reasons:-

- To submit four capital grant application from Gateshead to the DfE.
- To support the Council to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient places for working parents of three and four year olds in addition to the free 15 hours universal entitlement for three and four year olds and the places for eligible 2 year olds.

CONTACT Gillian Dodds