


Cabinet- Grants Determination Sub-Committee 8 th March 2023	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: James Thomas – Children and Culture	Classification: [Unrestricted]
Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 Grant Payments	

Lead Member	Councillor Maium Talukdar – Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
Originating Officer(s)	Jess Milne - Head of Early Education and Childcare Service Pat Wells - Strategic Quality & Sufficiency Manager, Early Education and Childcare Service Gareth Platt - Business Support, Sufficiency & Cohesion Manager (Report Author)
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Reason for Key Decision	(b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.
Forward Plan Notice Published	N/A
Exempt information	N/A
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	1) Tackling the cost-of-living crisis 3) Accelerate Education 4) Boost culture, business, jobs and leisure

Executive Summary

The aim of the capital funding is to ensure the council meets its' statutory duty, set by the Department of Education, to ensure there are sufficient number of funded and non-funded early education and childcare places in the private, voluntary, independent (PVI) and school based early years sector for families wishing to take this up.

Capital funding of £298K was approved by Cabinet on the 1st of June 2021. Therefore, we seek approval to allow the Early Education and Childcare Service to continue to allocate and pay capital grants to projects in line with the agreed priorities of the Early Years Capital Funding programme 2021-23.

Recommendations:

Grants Determination (Cabinet) Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Authorise the payment of £57,167 capital funding to Stebon Primary School for the project that has been completed.
2. Authorise the Corporate Director Children and Culture to authorise the award and payment of further capital grants in line with the priorities of the agreed Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 programme.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 In 2020/21 Stebon Primary School was awarded £57,167 capital funding to create 64 Early Learning for 2-Year-olds places to support the Council's drive to maximise the take-up of early education by some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families with 2-year-olds in the country.
- 1.2 This award was part of a previous capital funding programme operated by the Early Education and Childcare Service (at the time called the Integrated Early Years' Service), with a signed funding agreement in place detailing the scope of the works to be completed, associated costs and details of committed funding.
- 1.3 Despite assurances to the contrary, this funding was not carried forward into 2021/22 and as a result, additional funding was secured in June 2021 to cover the costs of this project, as well as to allow the funding of further projects to create additional early education and childcare provision to support the Council's statutory duties.
- 1.4 The non-committed capital funding (£240,233) is intended to support the development and to contribute to the funding of capital projects. This is to create new provision, encouraging the take up of funded and non-funded early education and childcare places as well as meeting an increasing demand to support families with very young children.
- 1.5 Approval is being sought to allow the Director of Education to approve the funding of individual projects within the Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 programme, in line with the programme's agreed priorities and within the allocated total funding budget.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Not having the allocated capital funding available for use would mean that the Early Education and Childcare Service would not be able to fund the completed project at Stebon Primary School, which will have a detrimental impact on the school's finances and to the reputation of the council.

- 2.2 Additionally, not having the allocated capital funding available to fund further projects would negatively impact the Council's ability to support the expansion and improvement of childcare and early education settings in line with the Council's statutory duty to ensure the sufficiency of free early education and childcare.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 programme was approved by Cabinet on the 1st of June 2021, the programme made available £298K to contribute to capital development projects in line with the Early Education and Childcare Service's strategic priorities of maximising take-up of the free early education entitlements and meeting the childcare needs of working families.
- 3.2 An award of £57,167 was made to Stebon Primary School in 2020/21 for a project to create an additional 64 Early Learning for 2-Year-Olds places within some unutilised space within the school's building.
- 3.3 A grant agreement was signed on behalf of Tower Hamlets by the previous Acting Head of the Early Years' Service and counter-signed by the school's Chair of Governors and Headteacher in September 2021.
- 3.4 The school completed the agreed works in March 2022 and the new EL2 provision is now operational. Approval is being sought to pay the funding to the school upon the provision of evidence of expenditure.
- 3.5 In addition, approval is being sought to allow the remaining capital funding (£240,833) to be used to contribute to additional projects that support the Early Education and Childcare Service's strategic priorities of maximising take-up of the free early education entitlements and meeting the childcare needs of working families. These projects would be approved by the Director of Education with progress and delivery monitored by the Early Education and Childcare Service.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 programme will help to meet the needs of families with very young children in the borough and provide a wider choice of early education and childcare options for them.
- 4.2 The programme therefore contributes to "**Priority 1: People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities.**" of the Council's Strategic Plan 2021-24. "**Priority 3: Accelerate Education and Priority 4: Boost culture, business, jobs and leisure**" of the Councils Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 The Early Years Capital Funding 2021-23 programme contributes and supports the Council to meet its duties including ensuring the sufficiency of early education and childcare provision as set out in the Childcare Acts 2006 and 2016.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There is currently £298k earmarked in the Capital programme to support the increase in provision of free 2 year old places. The Revenue costs of the additional places would be met from the Early years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) . Funding for Early Years free entitlement is based on take up and therefore if we secure more places we are able to offer these to additional families and revenue funding would increase from the DfE.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 The Council has a legal duty to ensure that there are sufficient appropriate educational spaces in the borough. This report represents one of the ways in which the Council is ensuring compliance with this duty. The Council also has the legal; power to undertake any activity in order to effect any of its legal functions and therefore has the power to undertake the activity referred to in this report.

7.2 The Council has the legal duty to ensure that its expenditure achieves Best Value in terms of economy efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, prior to reimbursing the cost of any works the Council should ensure that where the school has commissioned the works such works represent best value. This should be built into any repayment mechanism and should also inform the verification process with Stebon in particular prior to making the reimbursement referred to in this report. It may be well to have the Council approve the cost of any works prior to the school committing to the works

7.3 The second recommendation is designed to create a standing delegation to be exercised from time to time and at the Corporate Directors discretion. If approved the terms of reference require the exercise of the delegation to be reported back to the committee on a regular basis. Therefore, the rules of the exercise of the delegation should be agreed in advance so the exercise of the

delegation may be reviewed from time to time to ensure that the exercise of the delegation falls within the grant parameters agreed at the sub-committee

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

PID detailing the Early Years Capital Funding programme – approved June 2021:

https://towerhamlets2-my.sharepoint.com/personal/gareth_platt_towerhamlets_gov_uk/Documents/5%20EY%20Capital%20Funding%202021-23/Capital%20Programme%20Management%20Group/06%20PID_THCCP%20EY%20Capital%20Funding%20202122.pdf

[Strategic Plan 2022-26 \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://towerhamlets.gov.uk)

Appendices

- NONE

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Gareth Platt

gareth.platt@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Business Support, Sufficiency & Cohesion Manager (Report Author)

Patricia Wells

Patricia.wells@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Early Years Strategic Quality and Sufficiency Manager

Jess Milne

Jess.milne@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Head of early Education and Childcare Service