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| Item No. | Classification: Open | Date: 24 March 2020 | Meeting Name: Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Adult Care |
| Report title: | | Three-month grant award for Children's Centres April - June 2020 | |
| Ward(s) or groups affected: | | All wards | |
| From: | | Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services | |

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the cabinet member for children, schools and adult care approve the grants to the lead agencies named in paragraph five for the delivery of the Children's Centres programme for the period 1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020. This is for a total sum of £583,779.
2. That the cabinet member for children, schools and adult care note that it is anticipated that Children's Centres will move from a grant-funded arrangement to four individual contracts from July 2020. The purpose of the three-month grant award is to allow for the formal contracting process to be completed, while allowing financial stability for Children's Centres in the interim period.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Children's Centres are places where families with children aged under five can access a range of services and information and get help and advice from health, education and social care professionals. Their core purpose is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in child development, school readiness, health outcomes and life chances.
4. Each Children's Centre lead agency employs a manager and staff team with a mixture of administrative support, family support and early years practitioner roles, and also works in close partnership with agencies including the council's Family Early Help services and NHS partners to deliver services including:
 - a) Family Support - 1:1 casework for families with complex needs who are referred by partners or stepped down from Children's Social Care.
 - b) Parenting programmes to support attachment and improve family relationships.
 - c) Targeted groups to meet identified needs e.g. domestic abuse, low income families or fathers group.
 - d) Play, learning and development – including baby and toddler groups, stay and play (universal and targeted).
 - e) Bookstart sessions and promotion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

- f) Education, Skills and Training, in partnership with Southwark Works, DWP and other employment support services, to support parents into employment, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic/functional skills, volunteering opportunities, vocational accredited skills, GCSEs/NVQs, and First Aid.
 - g) Advice and guidance on issues affecting children and families.
 - h) Health services (hosted by Children's Centres but delivered and resourced by NHS partner agencies) including antenatal and postnatal groups and activities, support for mental health and postnatal depression; nutrition/dietetics; breastfeeding support, speech and language support.
5. In 2015, all Children's Centres were invited to express an interest in becoming a lead agency for their locality. The new arrangements were implemented from 1 April 2016. Children's Centres who expressed an interest in becoming lead agencies were invited to develop a proposal and to present this to a panel chaired by the director of education. Following this process lead agencies were agreed as follows:
- i. Borough, Bankside and Walworth: 1st Place Children and Parents Centre in partnership with Coin Street Community Builders.
 - ii. Bermondsey and Rotherhithe: Pilgrims Way Primary School and Children's Centre.
 - iii. Camberwell and Dulwich: Dulwich Wood Nursery School and Children's Centre.
 - iv. Peckham, Nunhead and Peckham Rye: Ivydale Primary School and Children's Centre.
6. A service level agreement (SLA) is in place with each Children's Centre lead agency setting out what they are expected to deliver in return for their grant funding. These inform performance monitoring which is currently carried out by the council's Family Help Service.
7. Children's Centres are integrating well with the Family Early Help service, driving the development of the Keeping Families Strong approach and events are being delivered to build collaboration with the community and partners.
8. The Ofsted Single Inspection of Southwark Children's Services in June 2017 highlighted the positive provision in Children's Centres, stating that 'Younger children who have emerging and additional needs are helped through an extensive range of services clustered around Children's Centres'.
9. The council's Fairer Future Commitments state that they will continue to invest in early intervention and keep Children's Centres open.
10. The funding amount the Children's Centres receive is approximately £2.35m per annum and this has been awarded annually since 2016-17. The three month period of this grant award would be £583,779 across all four localities.

11. In 2015 the government suspended the Ofsted inspection of Children's Centres, pending a consultation concerning the future of Children's Centres. As yet there has been no further mention of the consultation, and as such the inspection suspension still stands. However, the new Ofsted framework for inspection; Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) which includes inspection of the Early Help offer states: 'these inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements: to help and protect children'. It is highly likely that the inspectors will again request to review the Children's Centre offer, as they did in 2017.
12. Southwark is represented at the Children's Centre Lead Officer London network. Two local authorities thus far have undergone an Ofsted inspection under the new framework; during both inspections the inspectors requested that a visit to a Children's Centre be arranged; this visit included in-depth case discussions with Community Family Workers.
13. An Ofsted preparation work stream is in place with the Family Support Service, this is being led by the Transformation Lead alongside the Delivery Manager. This work is linked to the Ofsted preparation work being undertaken by the Children's Services senior management team.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

14. The Council Plan (2018-2022) includes eight priority themes which are led by the council's Fairer Future vision. The sixth priority theme is 'a great start in life' which includes a series of commitments which states that the council will 'continue to invest in early intervention and keep children and families' centres open'.
15. Funding the Children's Centres for a three month period, would allow time to move towards a contracting arrangement as opposed to a grant award in future, to allow for a more robust monitoring and governance process, as well as certainty of funding for the lead agencies.
16. It is proposed that for the three months from April to June 2020, the council continues to fund the existing providers via a grant, to allow for the single supplier negotiation, writing of gateway reports and contracting arrangements to take place.
17. Of the four lead agencies, three are community schools, where the chair of governors is nominated by the local authority. The fourth is a partnership between two voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners who have a long history of providing services to Southwark residents.
18. It is proposed that the lead agencies remain as is. Since the reorganisation of the service to a hub and spoke model in 2016, there are no other Children's Centres in Southwark that could deliver services.
19. Each lead agency is working closely with the council's transformation lead and delivery manager to create a core offer and to stabilise the data in order to be able to evidence impact of services delivered and monitor performance more reliably. Any change at this point would be detrimental to the progress already made. The recent performance review is being evaluated with a report due on this by February 2020, which will inform the future direction of travel.
20. This is a key decision. This is because it is a grant award greater than £10,000.

Policy implications

21. The Childcare Act 2006 (“the Act”) places a range of duties on local authorities in relation to the provision of early childhood services (which includes early-years provision and health and social services for young children, parents and prospective parents, together with employment and other advice for parents and prospective parents).
22. In April 2011 the Government removed the ring-fence from Sure Start funding and introduced the Early Intervention Grant (EIG). From 2013-14, the EIG was absorbed into the ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
23. The council is under a general duty to improve the well-being of young children in their area and reduce inequalities between them, in relation to matters such as physical and mental health and emotional well-being; protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation; the contribution made by them to society; and social and economic well-being.
24. The Council Plan 2018 – 2022 sets out its commitment towards a Fairer Future vision including priority themes for ‘a great start in life’ and ‘a healthier life’. The provision for under fives and families delivered through Children’s Centres directly supports these commitments.
25. The council’s Fairer Future Commitments state that they will ‘continue to invest in early intervention and keep children and families’ centres open’.
26. As this is a grant funding arrangement, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place with each Children’s Centre lead agency setting out what they are required to deliver in return for their grant funding. The SLAs were refreshed in January 2020 to have clear KPI and outcome measures to inform future performance monitoring.

Community impact statement

27. The Public Sector Equality Duty, at section 149 of the Equality Act, requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard when carrying out their activities to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those with none. The council’s Approach to Equality (“the approach”) commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business.
28. “Protected characteristics” are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful - the characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.
29. As the Children’s Centres programme is focused on young children and their families, the decision to continue to resource it would be expected to have a particularly positive impact on:
 - a) Children under the age of five.
 - b) Parents of young children, in particular women who make up the highest proportion of parents using Children’s Centre services.
 - c) The communities amongst whom young children are concentrated.

- d) Children from BME backgrounds. More than half of the population of Southwark children aged 0-4 years is of BME background
- e) Children from low income families. 24.7% of children aged 0-4 are from low income families.

30. There are currently 16 Children’s Centre buildings. As part of the review of the buildings available, it has been identified that use is not maximised by either children’s services or partners. This review has also identified that health services are using the buildings without contributing towards the running costs, so a plan is in place to implement SLA’s with health and other partners to support sustainability and maintenance of the buildings. Maximising the income available will benefit the community in several ways; opening up use of the buildings to other children and family services means that services can be delivered to the whole family rather than just under 5’s, that buildings will be open longer, more activities will be provided in communities as well as further benefits yet to be realised.

Resource implications

31. The recommendations of the report fall within the budget framework; financial issues, budget issues and staffing issues are as follows:

Financial issues

32. The funding for the additional three month extension is based on the 2019-20 budget. If funding for the April – June 2020 period was to be delayed, there would be a negative impact on service delivery.

Budget issues

33. The budget for Children’s Centres for April 2019 – June 2020 is as follows:

| Locality | Lead Agency | 2019-20 Whole Financial Year Budget | April - June 2020 Grant Award |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bermondsey and Rotherhithe | Pilgrims Way Primary School | £533,235 | £133,309 |
| Borough, Bankside and Walworth | 1st Place Children and Parents Centre | £420,463 | £105,116 |
| | Coin Street Community Builders | £133,966 | £33,492 |
| Camberwell and Dulwich | Dulwich Wood Nursery school and Children’s Centre | £594,963 | £148,741 |
| Peckham, Peckham Rye and Nunhead | Ivydale Primary School | £652,487 | £163,122 |
| Total | | £2,335,114 | £583,779 |

34. The anticipated budget for the three month length of the grant award is: £583,779. This covers the period 1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020.

Staffing issues

35. No staffing or organisational changes are proposed.

Legal implications

36. The majority of services delivered to the council are subject to a procurement process and the rights and obligations of the parties are then captured in a formal contract containing legally binding rights, responsibilities and obligations, following approval secured through Gateway reporting. However, it has been determined at strategic level that the services required for the short term noted in this report should be regulated by way of grant, involving lighter touch monitoring arrangements and less rigorous service conditions, and therefore the arrangements will fall outside the ambit of the council's Contract Standing Orders and the decision to approve the grant awards is reserved to the Cabinet Member under the council Constitution.

Financial implications

37. Please see financial concurrent in paragraph 43.

Consultation

38. There is regular engagement with Children's Centre providers through monthly meetings and the Under 5s Partnership Board to provide strategic oversight.
39. Consultation on services with parents occurs through the Children's Centres parents' forums.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

40. This report seeks approval of the award of further grant funding to the lead agencies named in paragraph five for the delivery of the Children's Centres programme for a three month period from 1 April 2020, whilst arrangements are put in place for the introduction of new contracted service provision which will come into effect from 1 July 2020.
41. The decision to approve the report recommendation is one which is expressly reserved to the cabinet member under Part 3D of the council constitution. The proposed grant award is consistent with the council's statutory duties and powers (notably the Public Sector Equality Duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010) and with corporate policy, in particular, the Fairer Future Commitments.
42. Officers consider it appropriate for these short-term services to continue to be regulated by way of conditions of grant funding rather than by more formal commercial contractual conditions. However, the report confirms that the existing service level agreements with the lead agencies have been reviewed and revised in order to include more rigorous and defined performance indicators and outcomes.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (CAS19/025)

43. The value of the three-month grant is £584,000 which will be funded from the existing budget. There is no additional cost to the council.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

| Background Documents | Held At | Contact |
|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Grant Award to Children's Centre Providers 2019-20 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=6795 | | |
| Update on Children's Centres Programme 2015 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link (please copy and paste into your browser): http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s62052/Report%20Childrens%20Centres%20Programme.pdf | | |
| Sure Start Children's Centres Statutory Guidance 2013 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678913/childrens_centre_stat_guidance_april-2013.pdf | | |
| Southwark Children and Young People's Mental Health and Well-being Transformation Plan 2015-20 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://www.southwarkccg.nhs.uk/our-plans/mental-health-services/children-and-young-people-mental-health/Documents/Southwark%20Local%20Transformation%20Plan%20Refresh%20October%202018%20Final.pdf | | |
| Southwark Council Fairer Future Commitments 2018 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/fairer-future-commitments?chapter=7 | | |
| Southwark Council Budget Book 2019-20 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/9153/Children-and-Adults.pdf | | |
| Fairer Future Procurement Framework 2019 | Children's and Adults' Services Commissioning, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH | Andrew Tregidgo 020 7525 3682 |
| Link (please copy and paste into your browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/9153/Children-and-Adults.pdf | | |

APPENDICES

| No | Title |
|------|-------|
| None | |

AUDIT TRAIL

| | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| Lead Officer | David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults Services | |
| Report Author | Andrew Tregidgo, Interim Senior Commissioner | |
| Version | Final | |
| Dated | 24 February 2020 | |
| Key Decision? | Yes | |
| CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER | | |
| Officer Title | Comments Sought | Comments Included |
| Director of Law and Democracy | Yes | Yes |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Governance | Yes | Yes |
| Cabinet Member | Yes | No |
| Date final report sent to Constitutional Team | | 23 March 2020 |