

## MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

**COMMITTEE:** Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny

**REPORT OF:** The Director of Children's Services

**DATE:** 13 November 2008

**SUBJECT:** Quality and Access Grant

### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of the plans for the quality and access grant.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Members note the progress with the plans.
2. Members note the role of the local authority in administering the grant to the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector (PVI).

### FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue budget has been identified for project management costs and revenue fees associated with capital planning.

### FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET

The City Council has been allocated £6,539,841, in capital funding for the period 2008-2011. The majority (at least 51%) has to be administered to the PVI sector.

### CONTACT OFFICERS

Pam Tideswell      Head of Early Years and Sure Start  
[p.tideswell@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:p.tideswell@manchester.gov.uk) 0161 274 3276  
Chris McLoughlin      District Manager. Children's Services.  
[c.mcloughlin@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:c.mcloughlin@manchester.gov.uk) 0161 219 2439

### WARDS AFFECTED

All

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

none

### IMPLICATIONS FOR:

**ANTI POVERTY**

Yes

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Yes

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Yes

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Yes

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Quality and Access Grant is a three-year capital grant allocated from April 2008 to March 2011. £2,179,947 is available every year for three years totalling £6,539,841, but there is new flexibility allowing unspent grant to be carried over into 2009 and 10. This has been a helpful amendment and gives us time to ensure correct processes are in place.
- 1.2 The LA has the duty to administer the grant but the majority must go to the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors. A three-year capital plan includes planning for this grant and includes some improvements to Children's Centres across the city where they meet the conditions of grant. The expenditure is monitored through DCSF. We have secured dedicated capital project management time through the general revenue grant.

### 2. Conditions of grant

- 2.1 The quality and access grant is ring fenced to improve access for disabled children to daycare provision; to improve access to the flexible free entitlement to nursery education; and to improve the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage indoors and outdoors. More than 50% of the grant must go to the PVI sector.
- 2.2 The needs of disabled children can differ and many early years settings can cater for children's various needs. The grant will enable settings to purchase equipment or make adaptations to spaces to ensure needs are fully met. There are currently some revenue grants available to assist settings with staffing resources but this grant will provide for capital needs of settings.
- 2.3 The free entitlement is currently 12.5 hours of nursery education for all three and four year olds delivered as 2.5-hour sessions over five days. The expectation is that by 2009/10 this will increase to 15 hours per week delivered more flexibly; for example, parents may choose three 5-hour days. This has implications for smaller providers such as playgroups who may find they are required to provide a mid day meal for children. The grant could therefore be used to improve or provide a kitchen. The city will also begin delivery of the free entitlement to two year olds in deprived areas from September 2009 and their needs will have to be considered.
- 2.4 The Early Years Foundation Stage is a statutory framework setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five years. The grant places particular emphasis on the quality of outdoor provision for children. The Local Authority has a duty to

improve outcomes for children and raise quality in all settings. There are a number of Early Years Development Workers working across the sectors who can readily highlight the needs of settings.

### 3. Governance

- 3.1 A capital board has been established reporting to the Deputy Director of Children's Services and focussing on all capital allocations to early years and extended services in schools. There is a strong alignment to the Primary Capital Strategy ensuring that all planning is joined up and there is an underpinning best value principle. The terms of reference of this board are attached as appendix 1.
- 3.2 There are two groups that report to the board. The steering group progresses the practical tasks via a capital project manager to ensure projects move from concept to design and delivery as effectively as possible. The steering group signs off small projects and the board signs off larger projects. Representation at both groups includes key stakeholders and users. The board follows the usual project management process with a mandate, risk log, communication plan and identified work streams.
- 3.3 The other key group currently reporting to the board is exploring the many issues related to the city council role in administering the grant to the private, voluntary and independent sector. There is some experience of this and officers are drawing on this. Key issues being identified are the options for capital works to be carried out in house or through grant hand over, the distribution of equipment and the arrangements that will need to be in place for asset management. The working group have involved officers from land and property section as well as legal services. We expect to have a clear and robust process in place by the end of the year. Once the method for allocating grant to the PVI sector is formalised a communication strategy will be put into place to ensure a fair and transparent process. The confirmation that grant can be carried over into next year has enabled us to take a more measured approach.

### 4. Current position

- 4.1 A programme for a three-year capital strategy including phase 3 capital for Children's Centres, Extended Schools capital and the Quality and Access Grant has been outlined. Phase 3 proposals are attached as appendix 2 for information.
- 4.2 There is a working group developing a robust and legally acceptable methodology for administering the grant to the PVI sector ensuring financial regulations are followed and the process is transparent and stands up to challenge.

- 4.3 Expenditure on Children's Centres in 2008/09 is focussed on meeting DDA requirements, improving outdoor areas and improving phase 1 and 2 buildings.
- 4.4 The next phase of planning will concentrate on the PVI sector and will involve District based development workers in making assessments with the providers regarding needs and priorities. This work is currently underway and will be completed in early 2009.
- 4.5.1 This capital strategy sits alongside a wider review of Early Years provision in Manchester and informs the vision of an integrated service where families receive high quality services in their locality.

5. Conclusion.

There has been good progress in the arrangements for ensuring the grant is spent in a timely and transparent manner. The confirmation from DCSF regarding roll over into 2009/10 has been helpful although we have plans in place for expenditure this year. By December we will have a thorough and legal method in place for distributing grant to the PVI sector. Expenditure on city council provision is linked to a wider capital strategy ensuring best value.