

Delegated Officer Report

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| Decision Maker: | Sayyed Osman |
| Date of Decision: | 8th September 2023 |
| Subject: | Library Improvement Fund Round 2 – Northmoor Library |
| Report Author: | Alison Copple |
| Ward (s): | Coldhurst |

Reason for the decision:

This report presents the Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF Round 2) which consists of £15.5 million of DCMS and ACE support to transform library services in England by helping them upgrade their buildings and improve digital infrastructure. Oldham Libraries have been successful in their bid for £151,520 to refurbish Northmoor Library. The funding will enable the creation of a community garden and education programme as well as repairs and reconfiguration of the Portakabin building to create extra space for events and activities by introducing flexible furniture and increasing the number of PCs and supplementary digital devices.

Match funding to the value of £17k in the financial year 2023/24 is required as part of the bid and this can be managed from within the Heritage, Libraries and Arts Budget, due to underspend on staffing budget and income generated from the Build a Business programme.

The report provides details of the project and requests that the grant funding is accepted, and the project progressed.

Summary:

Northmoor Library is housed in a prefabricated building and, having not been updated for a considerable number of years, requires significant adaptation, in order, to make it fit-for-purpose as a contemporary library.

Coldhurst is one of Oldham's most deprived wards. It has a fast-growing population with an unusually young population and nearly 2/3 of the population have Bangladeshi heritage. Levels

of median income, employment rate, life expectancy and school outcomes are much lower than in other wards whilst the levels of overcrowding in households and child poverty are higher. In addition, many asylum seekers live in the area and the population has become quite transient.

In response, Oldham Libraries have run successful projects, and consulted with the community, to improve outcomes for residents:

- Northmoor Library is a Library of Sanctuary, offering an enhanced service for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Our informal English conversation group attracts 20-30 learners each week and up to 70 people take part in family science at monthly Science Saturdays.
- Locally there is an interest in climate issues, and we have delivered a successful education and engagement project entitled Climate Connections
- Pre pandemic, an active gardening group met weekly to develop the land to the rear of the building.

However, this strengthened community engagement has also highlighted evidence of unmet need:

- Digital exclusion has been identified as an issue for many residents, with a significant number having no access to a device other than a mobile phone. Therefore, digital support is in high demand and difficult to meet with current resources.
- There is a need locally for study space for secondary pupils as many are in overcrowded housing and value space away from siblings to study. The existing library layout is unsuitable for this, but a reconfigured space would help us to attract and support more users from this age group.
- As an area of high deprivation, there are many agencies and partners looking to connect with the community, but without a location in the area to do so. These improvements would enable us to offer the library as a venue for meetings and sessions outside of current library opening hours. This would enhance our relationships with local support agencies and create an income generation opportunity for the library service that can be reinvested into the long-term sustainability and improvement of Northmoor library

Accepting the LIF grant would enable Northmoor library to become a space of community engagement with an enhanced digital support offer by:

- Repairs and improvements to the fabric of the building including new doors and windows and work to the roof to make it safe, attractive and more climate efficient.
- Improved signage to make the library more visible

- Reconfiguration of the library and the introduction of flexible furniture to create extra space and incorporate seating for events, a study space and additional PCs
- Providing digital devices and kit to support the activities already taking place and enable us to expand the offer
- Providing equipment for community groups using the space for meetings
- Creating a community garden and education programme, with the opportunity for residents to gain a qualification.
- Providing gardening kit for the maintenance of the community garden

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

Option 1: Don't accept the grant offer

Option 2 Accept the grant offer

Option 2 is the recommended option as it provides a refreshed modern library offer to support vulnerable communities.

Consultation: including any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted.

Cllr Dean and Cllr Jabbar consulted and are supportive of the scheme.

Recommendation(s):

Option 2 is the recommended option

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

The preferred option (option 2) is to accept the Libraries Improvement grant from Arts Council England.

Funding of £151k has been awarded to Oldham Council for the refurbishment of Northmoor Library. Match funding of £17k is required for this project, which can be met from within the Heritage Libraries and Arts base budget.

There are no adverse financial implications as a result of accepting this grant.

(Jenny Howarth, Senior Accountant/Nicola Harrop, Finance Manager)

What are the legal implications?

Provided any terms and conditions attached to the funding are reviewed by Legal Services and any expenditure of the grant funding is in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, there are no known legal implications to the proposed recommendation. The grant will not be used by the Council in a commercial capacity or for a commercial purpose and,

therefore, the grant is not considered to be an incoming subsidy.

Sarah Orrell – Commercial & Procurement Solicitor

What are the **procurement** implications?

When procuring goods, works or services that are funded in whole or in part by the Grant you must:

- buy these in a way that will give value for money. This means having appropriate policies and procedures for obtaining competitive quotes or tenders for purchasing goods, works or services costing more than £10,000 (inc. VAT) over the whole life of the contract, including any extensions (irrespective of how likely it is that they will be exercised).
- procure in a manner which ensures that suppliers are treated equally, without discrimination and that any procurement process is conducted in a transparent and proportionate manner.
- comply with your obligations under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended or replaced from time to time) (“PCR”), if you are a contracting authority subject to the PCR; for contracts within the scope of Regulation 13 of the PCR, procure in a manner compliant with the PCR (or such other procurement laws as may apply from time to time) and advertised in such a way as to ensure that all interested suppliers in the market are aware of the opportunity to tender for the contract as if you are a contracting authority for the purposes of the PCR; and
- For all other contracts, procuring in a manner which ensures that suppliers are treated equally, without discrimination and that any procurement process is conducted in a transparent and proportionate manner.

You must ensure that any requirement to procure goods, works or services that are funded in whole or in part by the Grant are advertised in such a way as to ensure that all interested suppliers in the market are aware of the opportunity and provided with an opportunity to tender for the contract.

The above provisions shall only apply to contract requirements with a value of £10,000 (ex VAT) or more. You shall not subdivide a requirement.

The funders may request, and we must provide any information they require to satisfy that we have complied with the obligations.

We acknowledge that there may be financial liability if we breach these obligations and that we shall be liable for any losses, costs (including legal costs) damages and any other financial liability as a direct result of such breach.

The acceptance and facilitation of this grant must be cognisant of the grant funding conditions. The early engagement of procurement is critical to ensure sufficient planning for tendering and to ensure timescales can be achieved and in full compliance with the funding conditions.

Dan Cheetham, Procurement.

*What are the **Human Resources** implications?*

There are no Human Resources implications attached to this report
(Andrea Dickinson, Learning, Development and Delivery Manager – HR&OD)

***Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment** attached or not required because (please give reason)*

Not required as provision is in the same location, for the same community, with improvements to service offer.
(Subnum Hariff-Khan, Head of Heritage, Libraries and Arts)

*What are the **property** implications*

The Library building and the land are owned freehold by the Council, so there are no adverse property implications to the proposed recommendation, in accepting this grant funding. The monies will enhance the current building and assist in prolonging its useful life.
Alison Evans – Principal Estates Surveyor

Risks:

There are various opportunities highlighted within this report which will enhance the current provision and provide additional support to residents in the library locality. Consideration should be given to the legal and procurement comments to ensure that any grant conditions around provision of the grant, usage of the funds and timescales are adhered to.

(Vicki Gallacher, Head of Insurance and Information Management)

Co-operative agenda

Investment in improvements to Northmoor Library supports delivery of the co-operative agenda by ensuring we are working in a resident focused way and co-developing services based on resident's needs. The cultural offer delivered through libraries also supports the delivery of priorities within Oldham's cultural strategy 2022-2030.
(Jonathan Downs, Corporate Policy Lead)

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? No

Reason(s) for exemption from publication: n/a

List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers for this report

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| Report Author Sign-off: | |
| <i>Alison Copple</i> | |
| Date: 17/08/23 | |

Please list and attach any appendices:-

| Appendix number or letter | Description |
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In consultation with Sayyed Osman, Deputy Chief Executive, People

Signed : 

Date: 8th September 2023