

Meeting:	Decision Session – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
Meeting date:	23 May 2024
Report of:	Martin Kelly, Corporate Director of Children and Education
Portfolio of:	Councillor Webb - Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

Decision Report: EARLY YEARS CAPITAL GRANT TENDER FOR LOWFIELD GREEN

Subject of Report

1. The Executive Member for Children and Young People is asked to approve the awarding of the tender for the creation of early years and childcare places at Lowfield Green.

Benefits and Challenges

2. The benefits of awarding the tender are that sufficient good quality places will be created to meet demand from parents living at Lowfield Green and giving local children access to forest school provision.

Policy Basis for Decision

3. Education and Skills: High Quality Skills and Learning for All. All ages will have access to learning throughout their lives to equip them with the skills to succeed commercially, socially, locally and nationally.

Financial Strategy Implications

4. The scheme of £104k will be added to the Children & Education Capital Programme, fully funded from a developer contribution. This amount has already been received and is available to spend immediately to fund the creation of new early years and childcare places.

Recommendation and Reasons

5. The Executive Member is asked to approve the tender and £104k capital to the provider for the creation of early years and childcare places at Lowfield Green.

Background

6. Where the Education Support Service can evidence insufficient early years and childcare places to support forecasted increase in demand from a new housing development, a request is made to the housing developer for a contribution for capital funding to support the education infrastructure.
7. Earlier in 2022, the service successfully secured £104K capital funding to support the expansion of 16 early years and childcare places to meet forecasted parental demand that will arise from the new sustainable development in the Lowfield Green area of the city.
8. A paper was taken to Decision Session – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education in September 2021 (<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=739&MId=12666&Ver=4>) to seek approval for the setting up of a review panel to oversee the commissioning of new early years and childcare places. It was agreed that a review panel be set up and on completion of the tender process, a further report be submitted to consider the panel's recommendations and give formal approval to the successful bids for Lowfield Green.
9. During the autumn term 2022, a capital tender procurement was launched to existing early years childcare providers across the city, including schools, to provide 16 new full time equivalent early years and childcare places within a 1 mile radius of the Lowfield Green housing development.

Local Process

10. All early years and childcare providers in York, including schools, were invited to express an interest and complete a detailed application form by the deadline of Friday 9th December 2022. An application form and scoring criteria were developed and advice and guidance from the Procurement Service has been followed as appropriate.

11. A Scoring Panel was set up with representation from the Education Support Service, Early Years and Childcare Quality Improvement, Finance and Housing Delivery.

Award Criteria

12. The award is for 16 high quality early years and childcare full day care places to include a focus on prioritising and encouraging places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable children aged 0-5.
13. A price: quality ratio of 40:60 is to select the most economically advantageous bid.
14. Quality questions are scored on a scale of 0 to 5 using the following scoring criteria:

Score	Criteria
0	Complete failure to grasp / reflect the issue or does not provide a proposal
1	Serious weaknesses, or doesn't address the question in any meaningful way
2	Proposal falls short of expected standard and reflects limited understanding missing some aspects. Significant weaknesses or risks associated with answer
3	Proposal meets the required standard in most material respects, but is lacking or inconsistent in others
4	Good understanding and interpretation of requirements
5	Excellent understanding and interpretation. Innovative and proactive with sound strategy.

15. The price submission is assessed based on three elements; the total cost of the bid, the number of new places to be delivered and the range of places to be offered (age range, funded/ non-funded places, places for SEND/vulnerable children, weeks per year places to be delivered), with a percentage allocated to each. The three elements are scored with the best value in each instance scoring the maximum percentage available, with all other bids scored pro rata of this. The three percentage scores for each supplier are added together to calculate their price submission score. The maximum score available is 40%.

16. Best Value is defined as;
 - Total cost as a percentage of number of new places to be delivered – highest percentage.
 - Number of new places to be delivered – highest number of places.
 - Range of places to be delivered – greatest range of places.
17. The score from the quality and price evaluations are combined to produce a total final score.

Tender Outcome

18. Initially, two bids were received however, due to incomplete applications, the tender was republished, and the two bidders invited to re-submit an application with the required further details.
19. Following republication of the tender, only one application was submitted.
20. The application received is for the development of a forest/nature school on the site of the applicants existing nursery in the Poppleton area of the city. A dedicated 18-seater minibus will provide transportation from the Acomb nursery to allow 16 children to visit the forest school each day releasing 16 extra places within the current nursery. The forest school will form part of the settings inclusive provision, offered to all children, including vulnerable children, children with SEND and those only accessing a funded place, at no additional charge. The forest/nature school will use Tentipi tents, which are waterproof, windproof and will have full timber flooring, ventilation, heating and cooling hence for all year-round provision. Outdoor learning areas will support a range of activities such as Bushcraft, Nature & Ecology, Arts & Crafts and Literacy and Numeracy. Staff will receive training Level 3 Forest School Training to ensure adequate staffing qualifications and skills. The applicant is also looking to offer wider community use of the facility via Family Learning Days and utilising the space for wider staff training for other professionals in the city. Planning permission has been sought by the preferred provider and has been agreed.

Consultation Analysis

21. A rigorous procurement process was undertaken inviting all early years providers in York to express and interest in creating the places and this was promoted via YorTender and the Family Information Service.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

22. The options are:
- a) To award the grant to the applicant so that local parents have access to good quality early years and childcare including forest school provision.
 - b) To go back out to tender with the risk of a lack of places in the Lowfield Green to meet demand from local parents.

Organisational Impact and Implications

- 23.
- ***Financial***, contact: *Chief Finance Officer*.
The proposed scheme of £104k will need to be added to the Children & Education Capital Programme, fully funded from the S106 developer contribution. This amount has already been received and is available to spend immediately to fund this scheme.

Risks and Mitigations

24. The key risks identified are:
- No LA contingency will be available for project cost overruns. Any project cost overruns must be met by the applicant.
 - The provider becoming financially unviable and no longer able to complete the project or continue to operate once complete.
25. To mitigate, the LA scoring process was robust and included an assessment of key areas including price, project plan, quality of provision, financial risk and inclusive provision to meet the needs of children with additional needs.

Wards Impacted

26. The wards affected are Acomb, Holgate and Westfield.

Contact details

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Background papers

Decision Report – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, 14 September 2021 – Early Years Capital Grant Tender for Lowfield Green.

Annexes

None.