

## **Meeting of Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services**

1 February 2011

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities and Culture)

### **The Better Play Grant – Funding Allocation**

#### **Summary**

1. This report seeks approval for:
  - the purchase of play services through service level agreements for the funding period 2011–2014
  - the reallocation of some funding in the current funding period

#### **Background**

2. City of York has a long tradition of working in partnership with others in order to deliver key services and this has been acknowledged and further strengthened by the York Compact. In addition the Council has a responsibility to secure best value in the procurement of services.
3. The Play Team based in Communities and Culture has, over a number of years, supported the Voluntary and Community Play sector through its Better Play grant funding. This funding has supported a variety of play projects and enabled organisations to provide play services and programmes in the city. The funding relationship is formalised in service level agreements.
4. To qualify for funding, applicants are required to be constituted organisations with policies and procedures in place that are appropriate for working with children and young people.
5. In 2009, three organisations received funding above £30,000 per year for a two-year period through the Better Play grants, namely SNAPPY, Bell Farm Adventure Playground and Playspace. Smaller grants supported play settings to extend and enhance the play opportunities they offer children and young people. Projects included: The development of an gardening area where children enjoyed outdoor physical play by growing their own fruit and vegetables, the purchase of play equipment to offer more risk and challenge.

#### **The Process for 2011-14**

6. The context for awards is Taking Play Forward, York's play policy that sets clear play priorities for the city. The policy has recently undergone a refresh which was formally approved by the Executive member for children and young people,

on 9 November 2010. Organisations are asked to apply for funding for projects that meet the following priorities from York's policy:

- Training to improve skills and quality: So that each play setting in York will have a workforce trained to the new Playwork standards.
  - Raising the quality and inclusiveness of play provision: So that all settings are confident to assess individual need, adapt working practice, and make young people feel involved.
  - Supporting risk and challenge in all play activities: So that settings (including the involvement of parents/carers) can be confident in providing activities that excite and allow children to test boundaries and assess risk for themselves
  - Listening to children and young people: So that settings are serious about embedding and valuing the play needs identified by children and young people
7. The scheme of delegation in respect of service level agreements is as follows:
- Delegated authority for officers to approve grants up to £5k
  - Delegated authority for Executive Member to approve grants of more than £5k and up to £50k
  - Grants of more than £50k to be approved by the Executive
8. The Better Play Grant funding for 2011-14 was advertised through the voluntary sector-funding booklet, produced and distributed by the Neighbourhood Management Unit. In addition, information was sent to play settings accompanied by a number of briefing sessions and the offer of one to one support for settings that were unable to make the briefings. In line with York Compact, organisations were offered the option to apply for funding for up to a three year period.
9. The Play Team received 23 applications totalling £242,380 year one, £183,565 year 2 and £159,833 year 3. The application total in year one is greater than years two and three because it includes the applications that are under £5k which are for one year only. The amount of funding expected to be available through the Better Play grants for 2011/12 is £112k (a 13% reduction on the previous year – subject to the Council's budget setting process).
10. Of the 23 applicants, 12 organisations requested amounts over £5k. Grants of over £5k are normally made for 3 years in line with the York Compact. The other 11 applications are for grants of £5k or less and have been allocated using officers' delegated authority (see the list attached at Annex A). These grants are for one year only.

### **Consultation**

11. Consultation for the new policy, Taking Play Forward, captured the views of a number of boards, organisation, groups and individuals, including children and young people. These included the YorOK Children's Trust Board, the Taking Play Forward Strategic Board, the Out of Schools Club Network and well as an online questionnaire through the YorOk website. It is from this consultation that

the policy was able to clearly identify and set key priorities to develop play in the city, which provide the criteria for this round of Better Play Grants.

### **Applications for Grants of over £5k**

12. In line with the priorities set in the Taking Play Forward policy, the Play Team recommends that grant funding of over £5k is awarded where the Council:
  - has evidence to suggest that the organisation has the ability to deliver good quality services to local people over a period of time
  - has identified the need for the particular service to be provided by the organisation within a statutory or local council strategy throughout the agreement
  - is a major partner in the provision of the service in terms of its financial investment
  - can supply evidence to suggest that the organisation has robust governance arrangements

13. The following 5 organisations are able to meet these criteria.

#### **Bell Farm Adventure Playground:**

14. Bell Farm Adventure Playground is a unique outdoor adventure play setting in York providing activities for local children and young people. Over the last funding period the Better Play grant was allocated £31k per annum to cover costs including staffing and operational materials. However, over the past 12 months the committee has experienced a number of challenges including failure to replace the lead playworker and the long term sickness amongst assistant playworkers, leading to the committee taking a direct role in the operational issues of the Playground. This has resulted in the committee being unable to meet a number of milestones outlined in the service level agreement. Due to this, the third and fourth quarter payments of the grant have been withheld, totalling £15k.
15. For 2011/14 they have requested £36,500, per year to continue the service. It is recommended that Bell Farm Adventure Playground are offered £20k on a 1 year agreement in the first instance, extending to a further 2 year agreement following a full organisation health check by CVS to ensure that this organisation continues to develop and provide evidence of robust governance arrangements. The consequence of having less funding will require the committee to review its current operating times, the staffing required to run the sessions against operational overheads including insurance, and operational materials.

#### **SNAPPY:**

16. SNAPPY have been working in the city for many years providing distinct play services which offer children and young people with a range of disabilities a variety of quality play and recreational opportunities. In 2009/11 SNAPPY were allocated £36,600 for much need provision in the Easter and summer holiday period, through working in partnership with other organisations within the city, including, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. This method of working has allowed the

organisation to expand its range of activities, developed through consultation with service users, parents and carers.

17. For 2011/14 they have requested £40k to continue this same level of service. The recommendation is to allocate £35k over a 3 year period; this will provide the organisation future sustainability and sufficient funds to deliver their Easter and summer scheme.

**Playspace:**

18. Historically, Playspace have delivered a large number of quality play projects and initiatives in the City. Over the past 2 years, the organisation has used the allocated £36,600 Better Play Grant to fund their targeted Chill Out Zones scheme in 3 areas of the city including Moorlane and Tang Hall Youth Centres and Tang Hall Community Centre. Whilst numbers at Tang Hall have been consistently high, attendance at the other two sites have fluctuated.
19. In 2011/14 they have requested £36,300 each year to delivery 3 Chill Out Zones. The recommendation is to allocate £24,000 which would look to support 2 Chill Out Zones over a 3 year period.

**Space 109:**

20. This is an organisation that the Play Team have previously supported through the Shine programme and is based in an area of disadvantage. The organisation requested £12k for a 3 year period to deliver community based play projects with local children and young people. The recommendation is to allocate £6k to develop 1 of their proposed projects.

**Council for Voluntary Service – Capacity Building:**

21. This organisation is able to provide much needed support to the voluntary and community sector play organisations to ensure that they have the necessary governance arrangements in place and to ensure their future sustainability. The recommendation is to allocate £12k, over a 3 year period, to this organisation to work with targeted play organisations, offering support and guidance related specifically to governance arrangements, with the intention of raising awareness about responsibilities and building more robust organisations.
22. Of the 23 application there were 7 organisation that applied for funding over £5k that either are not recommended to receive funding, or, are recommended to receive funding under £5k. These are as follows:

**Organisations not recommended to receive funding:**

- York Playspace, Volunteering in Play – A relatively new project. It was unclear from the application how many volunteers the funding would support and the impact it would achieve.
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Running Wild – Other applicants made a stronger case for working with harder to reach groups.
- York City Knights Foundation, Ruggercise – The application was sports focused and was unable to clearly demonstrate how it linked to the play criteria.

- North Yorkshire Music Therapy, Music, My Voice, Portage and Music therapy – A very specialised area. The play focus was not strong enough.
- York Boxing Club – Again this was a sports focused application unable to clearly demonstrate its link to the play criteria.

**Applicants receiving a lesser amount than their application:**

- Preschool Learning Alliance, Supporting Better Play in early Years – A strong application. It is recommended that this organisation is allocated the same amount of funding as the previous funding year which will enable them to continue to provide this project.
- Young Groves – The organisation requested a number of projects within their application. It is recommended the funding is allocated to support 1 of these projects which will focus on providing outdoor risky play in a much needed area of the city.

**Options**

23. The options available to the Executive Member are:
- to accept officers' recommendations
  - decide on an alternative allocation of the available funding

**Playbuilder**

24. Bell Farm Adventure Playground has been allocated £43k of Playbuilder funding to redevelop the site and install a new and exciting capital scheme to provide permanent fixed play equipment on site. For the last 12 months officers from the Play Team, Parks and Open Spaces and Council for Voluntary Services, have provided extensive support to the committee, as they strive to enhance current provision, gain stability for the committee and raise the quality of activities on site. It is therefore recommended that the £15k withheld during 2010/11 be reallocated to contribute to the re development of the site through the Playbuilder initiative. This contribution to the Playbuilder scheme will further enhance the site making it a more attractive and vibrant play space for the enjoyment of local children, young people and the wider community.

**Corporate Objectives**

25. The allocation of the Better Play Grants contributes to the following Corporate Objectives:
- Sustainable City – by promoting the creation or improvement of local places to play
  - Inclusive City – by involving children, young people and their community in the design of their spaces
  - Healthy City – by improving and promoting the outdoor places for children and young people to enjoy healthy and active lifestyles

## Implications

### Financial

26. The grant funding available for 2011/12 is expected to be £112k (depending on the outcome of the budget process). The recommended allocations are shown in the table below:

Organisation	Requested 2011/12 £	Recommended Allocation 2011/12 £
York Playspace Chill Outs	36,362	24,000
CVS	16,196	12,000
SNAPPY	40,000	35,000
Space 109	12,000	6,000
Bellfarm Adventure Playground	36,500	20,000
Applications under £5k		15,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>242, 800</b>	<b>112,000</b>

27. Should the budget not be reduced by 13% in the Council's budget process it is recommended that applications be revisited to identify suitable projects.
28. As part of the funding application process, organisations were asked if they have the necessary legalisation policies in place in relation to inclusion and diversity. Those recommended to receive Better Play Grant funding will monitored through a service level agreement which includes organisations being able to evidence having in place, and working to, the necessary policies and practice in relation inclusion and diversity.
29. There are no human resources, legal, property, crime and disorder or IT implications.

### Risk Management

30. All successful applications to the Better Play Grant are monitored against the Taking Play Forward policy by the Policy Development Worker. Formal contracts are drawn up with each setting with regular visits, reports and monitoring, forms part of the agreement. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, we consider that such monitoring means that the risks associated with the recommendations of this report are negligible, and certainly well below 16 in terms of the risk score. In addition organisations receiving funding above £10k will receive an organisational health check by CVS.

### Recommendations

31. The Executive Member is asked to agree:
- o the grants of over £5k set out in paragraph 26 above for the period 2011-14

- o agree a reallocation of £15k to the Bell Farm Adventure Adventure Playground Playbuilder scheme.

Reason: To continue funding quality play provision across the city in line with the Taking Play Forward policy priorities.

## **Annex**

Grants of up to £5k

### **Contact Details**

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**Report Approved**  **Date** 21 Jan 2011  
Sally Burns, Communities and Neighbourhoods

#### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

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#### **Wards Affected:**

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**