

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, Executive Member for Growth and Development Leader
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Children & Education (DCS), Strategic Director of Growth & Development
DATE:	Thursday, 7 December 2023

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Growth and Development, Children's Services

WARD/S AFFECTED: Audley & Queens Park; Darwen East;

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT: Blackburn with Darwen Youth Investment Fund

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report asks the Executive Board to note the Council's successful application to the Youth Investment Fund (YIF); in which the Council has been awarded £4,583,074 in grant funding to support renovations and remodelling of two existing young people assets, specifically Darwen Youth Centre and Audley and Queen's Park Children Centre. The report also sets out key next steps.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Note the Council's success in competitively securing YIF funding support for Darwen Youth Centre and Audley and Queen's Park Children Centre, with the Council acting as the accountable body for this grant funding;
- Agree a supplementary capital estimate of £4.583m for the delivery of the projects outlined in the report (funded wholly from the grant provided by the YIF);
- Delegate approval to the Strategic Director of Growth and Development to allocate spend of up to 15% of the grant award on costs associated to feasibility and design of the YIF funded projects; and
- Delegate responsibility to the Strategic Director for Growth and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to appoint a contractor (subject to a formal procurement process) to support construction programme, as set out in this report.

3. BACKGROUND

Established in August 2022 the YIF is a £300m national pot of grant funding awarded by Government, though managed by the Social Investment Business (SIB), on behalf of the Government.

The aim of the fund is to provide significant funding opportunities for the out-of-school youth sector in Levelling Up priority areas, including Blackburn with Darwen. The YIF is designed to enable the

improvement and / or renovation of existing youth facilities or providing direct funding to support the construction of new facilities.

In October 2022, the Council with key partners began work on developing submissions to the second phase of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF). Working with the grant provider, the SIB, it was agreed that the Borough as a place would submit multiple bids to cover the Borough's key youth facilities.

The Growth and Development Department, working alongside the Children's and Education Department, worked at pace to identify Council venues most suitable for a funding bid, with consideration given to estimated cost, current and future service provision and project deliverability within Government's funding timeframe of April 2023 – March 2025. To this end, Audley and Queen's Park Children Centre and Darwen Youth Centre were progressed as the Council's facilities seeking YIF support.

In January 2023, the Council submitted a bid for both of its facilities. The Council was notified that it had been successful in its bid and would receive a total grant award of £4,583,074, subject to a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) between the Council and the SIB. The GFA was signed in July 2023.

It should also be noted that the Council provided strategic leadership and support to the YIF submissions of Blackburn and Darwen Youth Zones and Newground Together, respectively. Blackburn with Darwen Youth Zones secured £3.1m to improve its Blackburn facility; and £620,000 was awarded to Newground Together to support the expansion of their Community Hub in Shadsworth.

In total Blackburn with Darwen secured £8.3m of Round 2 Youth Investment Fund investment, which represents the largest allocation of funding received by any place in Round 2.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Darwen Youth Centre

The £3.38m Darwen Youth Centre project will redevelop the existing Youth Centre at Knott St. The renovation will include the expansion of the Centre to accommodate a second level on the existing one level building, in essence doubling the capacity of the building for the delivery of universal young people provision. The redevelopment will see the introduction of many new facilities such as a wellbeing area, creative workshop space, recording and DJ studio, gaming zone, numerous multi-use spaces as well as a redeveloped outdoor sports pitch with game spaces. The development is anticipated to be completed by March 2025

Audley and Queen's Park Children Centre

The £1.2m Audley and Queen's park project will reconfigure part of the existing Children Centre into a dedicated youth provision for children and young people living in the Audley & Queen's Park ward. The new Centre will provide a 7-days a week, open universal offer, as well as specialist provision around mental health, employability and rehabilitation support. The development is anticipated to be complete by Summer 2024.

Project Specific Risk

With regard to the Darwen scheme. this project will run simultaneously with other developments which are being managed by the Darwen Town Deal Board. Whilst all mitigations will be taken to minimise major disruption during the construction phase, it is likely that some minor disruption will be evident within the locality; especially as the delivery of this project will require the temporary closure of Knott St car park.

During the construction phase, youth provision will be relocated to alternative venues to mitigate disruption to service users.

With regard to the Audley project, part of the existing asset will be closed temporarily. Alternative arrangements will be provided to mitigate disruption to service users.

Programme Risk

These schemes are subject to planning with formal permission anticipated by the end of 2023. Both schemes are also subject to an intensive public procurement process for the awarding of construction contracts. Given demanding Government deadlines, the Executive Board are asked to delegate responsibility to the Strategic Director for Growth and Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to appoint a contractor following the conclusion of a market procurement.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has been awarded a total Youth Investment Fund Allocation of £4,583,074, consisting of a capital grant of £4,284,953 and a revenue grant of £298,121.

The allocated grant award is sufficient for the development and construction of both schemes and no match funding from the Council is required.

Government, via the SIB, will cash flow the scheme, with the Council able to draw-down quarterly amounts based from forecasts of expected expenditure in advance.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Resources will have full oversight of this process.

It is understood that the completion of both projects, but with specific reference to the Darwen scheme, given an increase in space and activity from this site, will potentially have an impact on future operating costs. However, options on future business and funding models regarding the Council's commissioned youth services will aim to reduce on-going operating costs. A further report on these matters will be submitted to the Executive Member for Children's, Young People and Education for consideration and approval, in due course.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The awarding of the Grant, is subject to a Grant Funding Agreement signed by the Council and SIB.

The Agreement makes clear that given the scale of the investment a first legal charge of a period of 15 years will be made by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the Knott St site.

The SIB have yet to outline what, if any, Legal Charge will be made on the Audley and Queen's Park Site.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Internal resources from Growth and Development, Children's Services and Finance will be utilised to manage the defrayment of the grant and the development of both projects.

The first legal charge of 15 years on the Darwen site by DCMS will require that in the first 15 years of operation post-project completion the site will be used solely for the delivery of youth focussed activity. The Council will have an ongoing commitment to ensure that the terms of the Charge continue to be executed during this period.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

Both projects will be subject to full and open public consultation as part of the Planning Application process.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Andrew Barrow, Growth and Development
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DATE:	17/11/2023
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**BACKGROUND
PAPER:**

None