

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

22/00065

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Multiply Project

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- (i) Accept the £7.5m UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grant for use over a three-year period and in line with the guidance published by Department of Education and relevant terms and conditions.
- (ii) Commence a procurement to tender for a service, award a contract(s) and develop robust contract management for oversight of the contract performance.
- (iii) Delegate authority for the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to award a contract(s) and implement the Decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

1. Introduction

1.1 The Department for Education has recently announced that it has allocated a total of £7.5m to Kent County Council to raise numeracy levels amongst adults in the County. These funds are to be spent on an annual basis over a three-year period, ending in March 2025.

1.2 Multiply is the first priority of the Government – UK Shared Prosperity Fund and focuses on improving adult's numeracy skills. The expectation is that KCC can use this funding to measurably improve functional numeracy levels.

2. Background

2.1 The funds form part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. To successfully access these funds, the Council has been required to complete and return a Multiply Investment Plan to the Department for Education by 30 June 2022. This is a detailed Plan which requires the Council to show, against specific categories, what outputs and outcomes it will achieve on an annual basis over the next

three years.

2.2. The project seeks to promote numeracy across the County through the following categories of interventions:

- Courses designed to increase confidence with numbers for those needing the first steps towards formal numeracy qualifications
- Courses designed to help people use numeracy to manage their money
- Innovative numeracy programmes delivered together with employers - including courses designed to cover specific numeracy skills required in the workplace
- Courses aimed at people who can't apply for certain jobs because of lack of numeracy skills and/or to encourage people to upskill in numeracy order to access a certain job/career
- New intensive and flexible numeracy courses targeted at people without Level 2 maths, leading to a Functional Skills Qualification
- Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children, and help with their own progression
- Numeracy courses aimed at prisoners, those recently released from prison or on temporary licence
- Numeracy courses aimed at those 19 or over that are leaving, or have just left the care system
- Numeracy activities, courses or provision developed in partnership with community organisations and other partners aimed at engaging the hardest to reach learners - for example, those not in the labour market or other groups identified locally as in need
- Additional relevant maths modules embedded into other vocational courses.

2.3 Once the Department for Education is satisfied with the contents of KCC's Multiply Investment Plan, it will then formally contract with KCC for delivery of the Plan, with the first payments expected to be received from September this year

3. Proposed Delivery Options:

3.1 A full business case is underway scoping and evidencing the delivery options for the Programme once the funding is confirmed. This builds on the data and information contained in the Multiply Investment Plan described above. This includes identifying:

- a) How much of the delivery we can do ourselves (expected to be approximately 15%)
- b) Whether there are options for the delivery to be undertaken by The Education People, or whether the tender would be open for them to be able to bid against
- c) Whether there are existing frameworks in place in other parts of the Council to access for the delivery (identifying any limitations)
- d) Whether and what proportion of procurement activity is required with training providers, colleges etc (expected to be 85%)

3.2 With the expectation of procurement activity being in the region of 85% (£6.375m over the three- years), a Key Decision is sought to allow the Council to enter into contracts, following a compliant tender process.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Multiply is to be funded from a DfE grant, and so the project is expected to be cost neutral to the Council. The Multiply Investment Prospectus specifies that 10% of the funds can be spent on administration of the project, with the remainder on delivery.

4.2 Any funds not consumed by the Project will be declared and returned to the DfE at the end of each financial year.

4.3 Receipt of the £7.5m will be accounted for within the Council's funds and will be reported against the Community, Learning & Skills Revenue Budget line. There are no capital implications.

5. Legal implications

5.1 Funding must be used in accordance with the guidance set by Government, and the terms and conditions of the grant. KCC will apply appropriate legal mechanisms as part of issuing or deploying any grant monies to ensure any partners or third parties in receipt of grant funding remain compliant.

5.2 Clarification notes published by the DfE confirmed that, where Local Authorities need to contract out the provision, that the Public Contract Regulations 2015 are followed with robust contracting arrangements in place to test value for money, ensure delivery and performance management throughout

6. Equalities implications

6.1 An EqIA for this project has been undertaken and show no adverse effects of the adults accessing the programme.

7. Other corporate implications

7.1 CLS will work with Strategic Commissioning to develop and finalise the business case for approval to spend the grant once received. This will confirm the proportion of activity that can be undertaken in-house and the expected commissioning of the independent sector. This in turn will identify and confirm future governance in implementing the programme.

7.2 Furthermore, the development of the business case will identify whether there are other areas of KCC that could be part of, or influence, the programme and its effectiveness.

8. Governance

8.1 Following the Key Decision and compliant procurement process, the contract will be awarded by the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

8.2 Once funding has been contractually agreed by the DfE, KCC will then form a governing body to monitor and scrutinise all aspects of the project's progress. This body will be composed of elected members, CYPE officers and independent members outside of KCC.

8.3 Day to day management of the project (including financial management and mandatory data returns to the DfE), will be undertaken by Community Learning and Skills.

9. Alternatives considered

9. Conclusions

9.1 The Multiply Investment Programme represents a significant opportunity for KCC to lead on the development of adult numeracy skills in the County over the next three years, having the potential to not only underpin a number of workforce development plans, but also to benefit thousands of adults for whom low numeracy skills are an obstacle in their work and domestic lives.

9.2 With over £7m being provided by the DfE over three years, this project is expected to be cost neutral to the Council.

9.3 With funds directly allocated to KCC, failure to lead on this project also carries a reputational risk for the Council.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee will consider the decision on 19 July 2022

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Should KCC decide not to accept these funds, there is a reputational risk in failing to demonstrate its ability to deliver on an important project for central government.

As these funds are intended to raise adult numeracy skill levels in the County, there is a risk that many Workforce Skills Plans (such as those of KCC and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce's Local Skill Improvement Plan) may not be fully realised.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

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signed

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date