

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Your Fund Surrey Application – CF333 Disability Challengers Surrey Hills Inspired Inclusive Playground
Divisions Affected:	All / List divisions in Surrey impacted 1. Guildford South East – Fiona Davidson
Reason Key:	N/A
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Cabinet/ Committee decision Cabinet 21st July 2020 Min Ref: 112/20 COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND [Item 10] Link

Summary

This decision record sets out the key information for publication on the decision by the Executive Director for Customer and Communities to approve expenditure for a Your Fund Surrey project located in Guildford. The agreed recommendations are set out below on the face of this decision record. Details on the project are set out in the Decision Report as an annex to this record.

Decisions made

It was AGREED:

(Officer Recommendations in consultation with the Advisory Panel)

1. To fund project CF333 for the full £99,000 requested, composed of:

- £99,000 of capital funding towards the groundworks and playground equipment to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend.
- Including £4,950 (5%) to be held by SCC until final evidence of income, expenditure and evaluation is received.

2. To agree the following conditions for the applicant to be included within the funding agreement:

- final evidence of all other funding secured to complete the project
- final evidence of income & expenditure and evaluation prior to release of final payment

- the applicant uses all possible measures identified to increase sustainability and reduce environmental impact during construction and operation of the facility

3. To encourage applicant to consider all reasonable measures which could be undertaken to expand the reach and use of the facility.

Reasons for Decisions:

These decisions are to enable expenditure from the Your Fund Surrey to be awarded to a project which have been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by officers, as set out in Annex 1.

Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding, the project has been further considered by the Your Fund Advisory Panel.

Decisions taken by:	Marie Snelling - Executive Director of Customer and Communities
Decisions taken on:	9 November 2022
To be implemented on:	10 November 2022

Alternative options considered

N/A

Summary of any financial implications

This project that has been approved for funding and has been through the due diligence and agreed governance process.

Cabinet agreed in July 2020 the funding for these projects will be drawn from the £100m of capital funding allocated to Your Fund Surrey within the Capital Programme.

Cabinet agreed in July 2020 to establish a core team to manage the delivery of the fund and risks associated with it, funded from the Corporate Feasibility budget.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Decision taken in consultation with Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart, Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety following Your Fund Surrey Advisory panel review.

Background Documents

Exempt:

Annex 1 – Your Fund Surrey Decision Report CF333 Disability Challengers Surrey Hills Inspired Inclusive Playground

No

Your Fund Surrey - Delegated Officer Decision Report

DATE: November 8th 2022

SUBJECT: YOUR FUND SURREY APPLICATION – DISABILITY CHALLENGERS

PROJECT NAME: SURREY HILLS INSPIRED INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND

CF REFERENCE: CF333

Purpose of the Report:

This decision record sets out the key information for publication on the decision by the Executive Director for Customer and Communities to approve expenditure for a Your Fund Surrey project located in Stoke Park, Guildford.

This is to enable expenditure from Your Fund Surrey to be awarded to projects which have been assessed by Officers to meet the fund criteria and further considered by the Your Fund Advisory Panel. The vision of Your Fund Surrey (YFS) is to bring community-led and place-making projects to life, with a focus on wider community benefit that leaves a real legacy.

Recommendations:

Officer Recommendations in consultation with the Advisory Panel. It is recommended:

4. **To fund project CF333 for the full £99,000 requested, composed of:**
 - **£99,000 of capital funding towards the groundworks and playground equipment to be paid in staged payments, on evidence of spend.**
 - **Including £4,950 (5%) to be held by SCC until final evidence of income, expenditure and evaluation is received.**
5. **To agree the following conditions for the applicant to be included within the funding agreement:**
 - **final evidence of all other funding secured to complete the project**
 - **final evidence of income & expenditure and evaluation prior to release of final payment**
 - **the applicant uses all possible measures identified to increase sustainability and reduce environmental impact during construction and operation of the facility**
6. **To encourage applicant to consider all reasonable measures which could be undertaken to expand the reach and use of the facility.**

Reason for Recommendations

1. This application has been the subject of a rigorous assessment process by officers, as set out in the body of this report. Officers consider the project to meet the aims and published criteria of the fund and to satisfy the requirements to award funding.

Executive Summary

2. Disability Changers is a charity established in 1979 that gives disabled Children and Young People (CYP) aged between 2-13 the opportunity to play, have fun, and make friends in a safe space. The charity works across Surrey and this application is for their playcentre located in Stoke Park in the Electoral Division of Guildford South East. It is in the Surrey Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile eight and neighbours Westborough and Stoke, both areas of high deprivation and key neighbourhoods for Surrey County Council.

3. Surrey has a slightly higher prevalence of CYP with SEND (4.6%) compared with national data (4%). 30% of CYP in Surrey attend state-funded special schools and a high proportion of Challengers' user group fall into the category. Consequently families have reported missing out on the 'school gate' experience due to the specialist arrangements for each child. This playground would provide these families with a social experience and support them to feel connected to the wider community.
4. The venue benefits from an existing two-storey indoor playcentre and a separate sensory room, in addition to the space dedicated to being a playground. Towards the front of the venue is a free public car park, with capacity to cater for increased usage. The buildings and outdoor space were built specifically with children in mind, providing a space for children and their carers to feel safe and confident. The indoor spaces are available for hire outside of core services; however the charity has ambitions for their playcentre to become a community hub due to its accessible location in Stoke Park.
5. The Surrey Hills Inspired Inclusive Playground project will provide a new fully accessible playground for regular and new visitors to Disability Challengers. The overall aim of this project is to provide a community space where children and young people can play safely together, regardless of disability. The local area has three playgrounds within a ten-minute walk of Disability Challengers, however none of these playgrounds have specific play equipment for CYP with disabilities.
6. The design of the playground has been informed by experienced staff at Challengers consulting with users and observing their style of play and interaction. Challengers staff have also conducted assessments of other local playgrounds to identify what they lack to ensure their design meets a variety of needs. Surveys have also been conducted to get the views of the families that attend Challengers. Their research has allowed Challengers to identify suitable pieces of equipment that can be enjoyed by a wide range of disabled and non-disabled children. The specification also allows for older children to use the equipment, which would extend the time that Challengers can support young people. Challengers have picked a Surrey Hills theme for the playground to celebrate Surrey's history and includes a Brooklands circuit inspired track to further connect the children with their County.
7. The chosen contractor, Kompan, takes environmental sustainability seriously. Materials used in the playground will be environmentally friendly, including Robina wood and pine from sustainable forestry. Each element of the playground also comes with its' own individual carbon footprint, providing a full overview of the playgrounds environmental credentials.
8. The land and buildings are leased to Challengers from Guildford Borough Council (GBC). The ninety-year term was signed in July 2013 and is reviewed every 5 years. If the charity were to dissolve, assets would be transferred to another charity with similar aims and objectives in accordance with their constitution. An existing playground on the site was previously condemned and removed. The new playground would be installed on the same footprint and GBC have no objections to the works but have asked that specific plans are in place to protect trees on site.
9. The playcentre is currently open 9am-3pm during term time for their preschool service. On the weekends and during the school holidays the venue is open 10am-4pm. Challengers plan to extend their opening hours into the evening and Sundays to allow the local community to utilise the facility outside their core services. To start, Challengers will run 'Family Fun Days' twice a month to support the process of turning their centre into a community hub, which is the long-term vision for the organisation. The 'Family Fun Days' will be free of charge, open to the whole community and last five hours each. Challengers have applied for funding from The Community Foundation for Surrey to fund a feasibility study to look at where they can maximise the use of their facilities, including the new playground.

10. Challengers have undertaken a considerable fundraising campaign totalling £155,111 to date, including £7,500 from community fundraising and gift aid. A funding gap of £52,009 remains to complete the project, Challengers are confident they can achieve this through further funding applications and crowdfunding which has previously raised £60,000 for the charity.

Details

Description of project benefits

11. The project aligns closely with several of Surrey County Council's ambitions, particularly that all CYP are safe and feel safe and are confident. Play is an important part of child development and by having a purpose build playground suitable for a wide range of abilities, the project would significantly contribute to this ambition.
12. Officers consider the project contributes towards the following areas of the SCC priorities 2021-2026:

Tackling health inequality

- Increased physical and mental health for young people with disabilities
- Improved mental health for families and carers of young people with disabilities

Empowering communities

- Improved social cohesion and understanding between disabled and non-disabled children

Project Timeframes

13. The project timeframes are approximately 8 weeks, comprised of:

- 13.1. Playground groundworks
- 13.2. Installation of equipment

Management of the project

14. The project will be managed by the charity's CEO who will have overall responsibility, supported by Head of Services, Facilities Manager and Centre Manager. This group of managers will work in conjunction with the chosen contractors to ensure the project is delivered efficiently.
15. Once installed, different elements of the playground will be covered by varying warranties ranging from lifetime to two years. A yearly inspection will be carried out by the contractors to ensure the equipment is safe and fit for purpose.

Project Lifespan

16. Different elements of the playground all have their own warranties and will be maintained and replaced as required. Overall the provider of the equipment provides warranty for up to 15 years and with good maintenance the equipment can be expected to last at least 20 years.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

17. YFS funding is requested to contribute towards the groundworks and playground equipment.
18. Table 1. Financial Summary details the total project cost of £306,120.
19. As with all applications, there is a risk that construction and purchase costs will increase between application and approval due to the current economic environment. This is mitigated by the contingency (which will only be released if there is demonstrated need). The applicant has secured quotes that support their costing, and will ultimately be funded based on evidenced, actual spend, up to the amount awarded.

Table 1. Financial summary

Amount applied for:	£99,000
Total project cost:	£306,120
Percentage of cost against total:	32%
Have other funding sources been secured?	Yes
Other funding:	£115,111 from grant applications, donations and fundraising Funding gap of £52,009, applicant expects to have all funding in place by the end of December 2022.
Volunteer contributions	Yes £3,600
Is there a commercial element to the project?	Yes
Amount suggested for funding:	£99,000

Table 2. Project Cost breakdown and Grant Utilisation:

Activity	Total Cost	YFS Contribution
Groundworks	£146,340	£49,500
Playground equipment design and installation	£104,578	£49,500
Full cost recovery	£25,092	£0
Evaluation	£5,018	£0
Sub-total	£281,028	£0
Contingency	£25,092	£0
Total	£306,120	£99,000

Expert Hub Review

22. Finance - The funding of this playground is being sought from a wide variety of funders, with YFS being requested to make up 32%. The project is well planned and considered and should deliver a lasting asset that will benefit the users for a long period of time.

23. It is noted that there is a high level of unrestricted reserves held by the charity. There are two unrestricted reserves totalling over £3m, of which £2.4m is designated for property and development and over £1m in undesignated general reserves. They have confirmed that the general reserves are in line with their policy.

Advisory Panel Comments

24. The Advisory Panel functions in an advisory capacity and its role is intended to assist the formal decision-making processes which sit outside the Panel. The role of the YFS Advisory Panel is to review shortlisted applications and to advise and inform the final officer recommendations to the appropriate decision-maker.

25. The Advisory Panel met on 1st November 2022 and CF333 was discussed. Panel Members were extremely positive about the project and the support the Charity offers young people with special needs. They agreed that the target user groups, and their families, are deserving of this new facility and it will provide considerable benefits. The Divisional Councillor for Guildford South-East was in attendance and provided a clear explanation of the benefits of this project for families throughout Surrey. The panel members present unanimously agreed this project should receive funding.

Consultation

Summary of Support

Have your say, which had the Surrey Hills Inspired Inclusive Playground Project featured on the Commonplace website, received positive 335 comments. No negative comments were received.

26. The Divisional Councillor Fiona Davidson has commented:

'I understand that Challengers, a very well-known and long-established charity in Guildford, has applied to Your Fund Surrey. Challengers provides play and many other social facilities for disabled children and young people, enabling them to make friends, and challenge their disability. They are seeking funding to rebuild their playground at their centre in Stoke Park in my division, and I would like to confirm my very strong support for this application. Challengers is not only a fabulous centre for disabled children and young people and their families, but its work on improving inclusivity is outstanding. The playground is where both disabled and non-disabled children have fun, get to know each other and learn to develop their capabilities. I have personal experience of what a wonderful environment it is - I used to take my son to play at Challengers. I would like to support this extremely worthwhile application in any way I can.'

Risk Management and Implications:

27. This application for funding has been through the due diligence and agreed governance process. As part of this process the applicant has provided an overview of risks against the project. This is summarised in Table 3 below. Officers consider there to be adequate control measures in place. The overall project delivery is deemed low risk.

Table 3. Summary Table of Risks and Key Mitigations

Risk description	RAG	Mitigation action/strategy
Risk of incident / injury using playground		Playground equipment will meet rigours health and safety standards. Challenges staff trained to work safely with children who may require additional support. Equipment inspected regularly by Challengers staff and yearly by contractor.
Playground not used widely by general public		Playground is part of a wider plan for the site to become a community hub in the area. Challengers have plan to run community events to promote use of the facility. However Initial wider community use will be limited. Mitigation for this is to have a community use policy in place.

Section 151 Officer commentary:

28. Although significant progress has been made to improve the Council's financial position, the financial environment remains challenging. The UK is experiencing the highest levels of inflation for decades, putting significant pressure on the cost of delivering our services. Coupled with continued increasing demand and fixed Government funding this requires an increased focus on financial management to ensure we can continue to deliver services within available funding. In addition to these immediate challenges, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2022/23 remains uncertain. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term.

29. The long-term sustainability of the projects funded by Your Fund Surrey is a key factor in assessing their suitability. Certain projects are relatively straightforward, where ongoing sustainability relies only on identifying a modest and reasonably secure source of funds to maintain an asset.

30. The finance and commercial assessment is set out in paragraphs 20 and 21, along with a summary of risk and mitigations set out in paragraph 25. These factors set out alongside the expected benefits of the project have been scrutinised and challenged by officers and are deemed acceptable in this instance. An important consideration is that Your Fund Surrey is a key part of the Council's Empowering Community approach focused upon enabling communities through investing in a meaningful and lasting way. Therefore, the success of Your Fund Surrey will set against establishing a different relationship with communities, empowering them to be more self-reliant. In forging that relationship, the success of individual projects will vary within the benefits delivered by the programme as a whole. Learning points from successful and unsuccessful projects will be taken and used to inform the development and evolution of the fund over time.
31. The borrowing costs associated with the fund have been fully built into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
32. This project has been reviewed financially and has been adequately planned and is supported by a variety of funding sources.

Equalities and Diversity:

33. Your Fund is designed to provide investment in schemes that encourage community participation, reduce isolation, and develop the potential for social wellbeing and economic prosperity. As such it is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on a number of those who may rely on or gain support from within the local community and those within protected characteristics that may be more likely to experience social and economic exclusion.
34. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced for YFS and was circulated as an Annex to the YFS Cabinet Report 26th January 2021.

Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:

35. The report sets out the information and steps for the consideration of the application further to the Council's governance arrangements for Your Fund Surrey.
36. Further to those arrangements, if approved, the Council and the organisation will enter into a comprehensive funding agreement which will include the performance measures that will be put in place to ensure the funding is used as intended as well as clearly describing any support or additional conditions agreed as part of the funding award.

Other Implications:

37. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Implications for council priorities and policy areas

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No direct implications
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children & adults	Disability Challengers have their own safeguarding policy and procedures.
Environmental sustainability	Use of timber from sustainable forestry. Full carbon footprint of each playground element provided.
Public Health	The project has a positive impact on wider health determinants with specific reference to users with disabilities being encouraged to use outdoor space and increase their physical activity. The project also seeks to enhance social cohesion.

What Happens Next:

- Following Delegated Officer approval of the funding a notice of the records of decisions taken under delegated power, will be published within 3 days of the decision being made. A note of this decision will be included in the YFS Decision Tracker and the next Cabinet report containing an update on Your Fund Surrey.
 - Officers will prepare the relevant schedules and funding agreements to enable payment of funds and monitoring and evaluation of the project against its outcomes.
 - The YFS Team officers will then issue a provisional offer of funding to the applicant, including a copy of the draft Funding Agreement incorporating any additional conditions.
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Consulted:

Division County Councillor

Corporate finance

Sources/background papers:

Your Fund Surrey Governance Document

