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**COMMITTEE:** NORTH WEST AREA REF NO: NWAC/17/12  
**DATE:** 9 NOVEMBER 2017  
**SUBJECT:** FUNDING REQUEST: IPSWICH COMMUNITY  
PLAYBUS  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** SIMON LANNING  
**HEAD OF SERVICE:** TOM MINNICAN

***Short description of report content and the decision requested:***

This report requests that the North West Area Committee considers allocating funding of £2,500 in contribution to running costs of the Ipswich Community Playbus. The Playbus is a double-deck bus that provides play sessions at locations across Ipswich throughout the school year. The provision benefits children and families in areas of need through opportunities for learning and play.

***List of Appendices included in this report:***

*Appendix 1 - Visitor number charts*

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***This report was prepared after consultation with:***

*Internal consultees*

*External consultees*

*Mandy Potter – Coordinator, Ipswich Community Playbus*

*Bob Whitehead – Treasurer, Ipswich Community Playbus*

***The following policies form a context to this report:***

*(all relevant policies must also be referred to in the body of the report)*

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 This report requests that the North West Area Committee considers allocating funding of £2,500 in contribution to running costs of the Ipswich Community Playbus. The Playbus is a double-deck bus that provides play sessions at locations across Ipswich throughout the school year. The provision benefits children and families in areas of need through opportunities for learning and play.

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## 2. Background

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- 2.1 The Ipswich Community Playbus is a charity (number 278061) run by voluntary trustees for the benefit of Ipswich families with children under 5 years old. The Playbus was first registered in 1979 and was relaunched in October 2003.



**Figure 1 - Exterior view**

- 2.2 The double-deck bus, named 'Maggie' is equipped to be a stimulating learning environment for young children. The mobile play centre incorporates a messy play area with sand, a painting area, baby area, built-in slide, themed home corner, a soft-play area and toilet facilities.
- 2.3 The Playbus is supported by two full-time members of staff, who are fully 'Early Years' qualified, CRB checked, First-Aid trained and have had 'SAFE-child protection' training. Each term the staff support activities which are themed; looking at colours, numbers, seasons, celebrations and others as discussed with parents.



**Figure 2 - Interior views**

2.4 The Playbus currently runs eight free play sessions or 'stops';

- Ravenswood, Priory Heath, South East
- Griffin Wharf, Bridge, South West
- Bramford Road, Westgate, Central
- Congreve Road, Castle Hill, North West
- Kelly Road, Gipping, South West
- Downside Close, Stoke Park, South West
- Moffat Avenue, Rushmere, North East
- Ulster Avenue, Whitehouse, North West

2.5 Each play session last two hours and takes place once a week during term time. Families wishing to use the facilities on the Playbus do not need to pay or book to do so. They are able to attend and sign in when the bus 'stops' in their neighbourhood. This makes the play sessions accessible to any family in need regardless of income or transport.

2.6 Recent Government changes in the entitlement to free to access early years childcare will have an impact on the available provision for deprived families within Ipswich. It is not clear at this point how many of the families served by the Playbus would be entitled or able to access the provision. The Playbus will continue to meet the needs of low-income families without access to nearby free to access childcare or transport to the same. It will also supplement the provision for those families entitled to 15 free hours or less.

2.7 The value of the sessions to families mean that many attend play sessions for years until the children start at school. The Playbus currently has 573 adults and children in total registered on the contact list from their session sign-ins.

- IP1 - 215 adults and children
- IP2 - 109 adults and children
- IP3 - 110 adults and children
- IP4 - 102 adults and children

- Other - 37 adults and children

2.8 Keeping the Playbus running and providing the play sessions has cost on average £54,182.05 per year over the last five years. On average £33k of this pays for staffing. Approximately £10k has been paid each year for the running and repair of the bus. The remaining £11k being made up of equipment, materials, rent, admin, promotion and fundraising.

2.9 The Playbus gathers a small amount in donations and has previously covered the remaining cost through Service Level Agreements, from reserves and through grant applications. Previous Service Level Agreements from the County Council have come to an end and will not be renewed and the financial reserves are diminished compared to previous years. Grant awards are, now more than ever, a necessity for the Playbus to secure its future.

2.10 In previous years the Playbus has received support from Ipswich Buses which is not within the accounts in Section 9 (see Para 9.3). From this year this will be covered through a grant of up to £15,000 from Ipswich Borough Council. The Playbus has also been financially supported by Ipswich Borough Council's Community Cash Grants up to and including 2017-18 (£5,000 this year).

2.11 A 'Children in Need' grant (£18,067 over three years) and through other smaller grants including Suffolk County Councillor Locality awards have contributed to recent years and are likely to continue to be part of the funding provided.

2.12 The Playbus is seeking £10,000 towards costs across all five Area Committees, in proportion to the play sessions provided to each Area. The funding will be used toward the expense of maintaining the bus and supporting the play sessions. The amount requested of each committee is;

- North West – 2 'Stops' - £2,500
- North East – 1 'Stop' - £1,250
- Central – 1 'Stop' - £1,250
- South West – 3 'Stops' - £3,750
- South East – 1 'Stop' - £1,250

2.13 **The total amount requested of the North West Area Committee is £2,500**

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### **3. Relevant Policies and Area Action considerations**

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3.1 Building a Better Ipswich underlying principles:

- Priority 3: An Enjoyable Place to Live, Work and Study

3.2 To alleviate deprivation in the domain of Income deprivation affecting Children.

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### **4. Options Considered / Under Consideration**

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- 4.1 **Option 1** – Approve the allocation funding of £2,500 to the running costs of the Ipswich Community Playbus.
- 4.2 **Option 2** - Approve the allocation of an amount less than £2,500 to the running costs of the Ipswich Community Playbus.
- 4.3 **Option 3** - Do not fund.

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## 5. Consultations

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- 5.1 All children are accompanied by their parents or carers on the Playbus. The Playbus staff members actively involve them in the choice and planning of themed activities.
- 5.2 The Playbus trustees have been consulted by the Treasurer in the process of this application.

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## 6. Risk Management

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- 6.1 The risks attached to the safe running of the Playbus belong to the Ipswich Community Playbus staff and trustees.

Risk Description	Consequence of risk	Risk Controls	Probability of risk occurring taking account of controls (1 – almost impossible 6 – very high)	Impact of risk, if it occurred taking account of actions (scale 1 – negligible; 4 – catastrophic)	Actions to mitigate risk
Risk of injury to young people through activities	Emotional or physical harm to young person  Threat to operation of Playbus	Playbus held risk assessment of individual activities  Policy  Staff training	1	4	Playbus to risk assess and manage the project.  Trustees to ensure safeguarding, safe-guarding, confidentiality and Health & Safety policies are in place.  Staff members are trained in Early Years provision.
<b>This risk is owned by the Ipswich Community Playbus.</b>					

Introduction of free early years hours for some families leads to a drop in Playbus attendance	Funding is ineffective as need is met through alternative provision	Monitoring of attendances  Reputation and family dedication to the Playbus sessions	3	1	Ipswich Community Playbus to provide one year of attendance figures for each stop as part of the monitoring process
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## **7. Environmental Impact Assessment**

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- 7.1 The Playbus is large diesel run vehicle and as such there is a negative environmental impact identified, this is minimised by the relatively low number of miles travelled.
- 7.2 The materials used in the play sessions are of negligible impact on the environment. No other impacts are identified in the funding proposed here.

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## **8. Equalities and Diversity Implications**

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- 8.1 The access to the Playbus is open to pre-school children and their guardians. It is open to children and families of all backgrounds. The Playbus is accessible on the lower deck and a modification to allow the upper deck to be fully accessible is not practical.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the proposed provision. No negative impacts are anticipated in regard to characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.

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## **9. Financial Considerations**

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- 9.1 The Ipswich Community Playbus, like many other charities, has found the funding environment of recent years to be challenging.

<b>Income</b>					
Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Gifts	£3,005.74	£1,256.76	£1497.42	£1079.18	£1075.71
Grants	£56,502.00	£45,367.00	£42,170.59	£9,100.00	£23,575.00
SLA	£24,500.00	£14,023.85	£13,080.00	£11,563.85	£7,000.00
Other	£16.22	£30.02	£33.21	£27.31	£11.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>£84,023.96</b>	<b>£60,677.63</b>	<b>£56,781.22</b>	<b>£21,770.34</b>	<b>£31,662.37</b>
<b>Expense</b>	<b>£54,656.10</b>	<b>£55,382.64</b>	<b>£59,860.39</b>	<b>£51,082.61</b>	<b>£49,928.51</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>£29,367.86</b>	<b>£5,294.99</b>	<b><u>-£3,079.17</u></b>	<b><u>-£29,312.27</u></b>	<b><u>-£18,266.14</u></b>

9.2 Grant funding is critically important to the continued operation of the Playbus. The 2016-17 accounts are not yet published but at the end of 2015-16 the net assets held by the Playbus was £23,833.68. This includes the fund for replacing the bus at the end of its life (which is not anticipated to be for at least eight years given that it has recently had a new engine and other major component parts replaced.)

9.3 In previous years Ipswich Buses has partly subsidised the running of the Playbus by absorbing some of the maintenance costs. As such they have not been fully accounted within the Playbus costs. For transparency from this year this will be fully invoiced to the Playbus which will receive up to £15,000 through a grant from Ipswich Borough Council. The grant will cover invoices for labour, routine maintenance, MOT and up to £1,000 for parts and this support will be costed within the 2017-18 accounts onwards.

9.4 £5,000 has been granted through the Council's Community Cash Grants toward the running costs for 2017-18. The Children In Need three-year award will provide £6,022.33 for the year. The Playbus treasurer continues to apply to other grants.

9.5 The Playbus is seeking £10,000 across all five Area Committees toward the running costs for 2017-18, projected to be approximately £50,000. The request is divided in proportion to the play sessions provided to each Area.

9.6 The amount requested of each committee is;

- North West – 2 ‘Stops’ - £2,500
- North East – 1 ‘Stop’ - £1,250
- Central – 1 ‘Stop’ - £1,250
- South West – 3 ‘Stops’ - £3,750
- South East – 1 ‘Stop’ - £1,250

9.7 The total amount requested of the North West Area Committee budget is £2,500

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## **10. Legal Considerations**

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10.1 The Council has the power to make grants to community projects through the Area Committees. The Area Committees have delegated Executive powers and devolved budgets.

10.2 Area Committees have the power to award grants in accordance with part 3, section 2 of the Council’s Constitution i.e. the Area Committee terms of reference.

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## **11. Performance Monitoring**

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11.1 The contact register provides information on which communities are accessing the play sessions. The daily attendance sheets monitors the popularity of the ‘stops’ and the volume of people reached. This information is to be supplied as part of the standard monitoring under the Area Committee grant process.

11.2 Monitoring of the provision across all stops for the 2017-18 is to be provided to the committee and the Playbus coordinator or manager may be invited to report to the Committee.

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## **12. Conclusions**

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12.1 The Ipswich Community Playbus is a long established and valued ‘Early Years’ provision for families across Ipswich and beyond. It requires significant funding to continue to provide. The Area Committees are asked to allocate funding to help secure the future of the Playbus.

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## **13. Recommendations**

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**13.1 That the North West Area Committee considers the options set out in section four and decides on the allocating funding.**



Reason: To determine the merit of providing Committee funding to the Ipswich Community Playbus for running costs to provide 8 weekly play sessions during term time.