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COMMITTEE: SOUTH WEST AREA REF NO: SWAC/17/13

DATE: 16 NOVEMBER 2017

**SUBJECT: FUNDING REQUEST: LET'S TALK READING
PROJECT**

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HEAD OF SERVICE: JENNY DINES

Short description of report content and the decision requested:

This report is for the Committee to consider the allocation of £6,155.00 of funding in support of the Let's Talk Reading project. The project aims to reduce and ultimately eradicate the literacy deficit in Ipswich through support to children, families, libraries and schools. The support will be in the form of books, training, reading schemes and literary events.

List of Appendices included in this report:

Appendix 1 – LTR Impact Summary 2016-17

Appendix 2 – LTR Budget Plan 2017-18

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This report was prepared after consultation with:

Internal consultees

External consultees

John Helleur - Let's Talk Reading Project Board member and Chair of the Steering Group

The following policies form a context to this report:

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

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Let's Talk Reading project is a partnership initiative with the aim of reducing the literacy deficit in Ipswich. The partnership between Ipswich schools, Pupil Referral Units, Children's Centres and the Suffolk Libraries has formed a Project Board incorporating community leaders and local councillors.
- 1.2 The group has recruited a project administrator and addresses child literacy levels by supporting school interventions, guiding parents, offering adult literacy support, community engagement schemes, public events, library programmes and provision of resources and training.

2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of the Let's Talk Reading project is to reduce the literacy deficit in Ipswich. The group identifies low literacy levels as the key factor for poor academic achievement in Ipswich. It argues that poor academic achievement results in poor economic performance of the community, poor negotiating skills, and difficulties in engaging with statutory bodies.
- 2.2 Ipswich Academy in South East Ipswich reports that many children cannot read or comprehend adequately to succeed at secondary school. On entry to Ipswich Academy, nearly 50% of students are more than 2 years behind their chronological reading age, and 21% are over 4 years behind.¹ The catchment areas served by Chantry, Stoke and Ormiston Endeavour Academies show a similar pattern of achievement and need.
- 2.3 These figures strongly align with information from the National Literacy Trust, which estimate that 1 in 7 adults (14.9%) lack basic literacy skills, based on the 2011 Skills for Life Survey². It is reasonable to estimate that at least 20,000 people in Ipswich will lack basic literacy skills.
- 2.4 The Department of Community and Local Government compile the indices of deprivation measures from government data. The indices consider different kinds of need experienced by communities. The index of deprivation for Education, Skills and Training considers a range of factors including primary and secondary school attainment, school absence, adult language proficiency and the proportion of adults with low or no qualifications.
- 2.5 Of the 85 small areas or neighbourhoods (Lower Super Output Areas) that make up Ipswich 25 are in the 10% most deprived for Education, Skills and Training in England. A further 13 are in the 20% most deprived.

¹ 'Let's Talk Reading' Area Committee Expression of Interest Form

² National Literacy Trust - [What is literacy?](#)

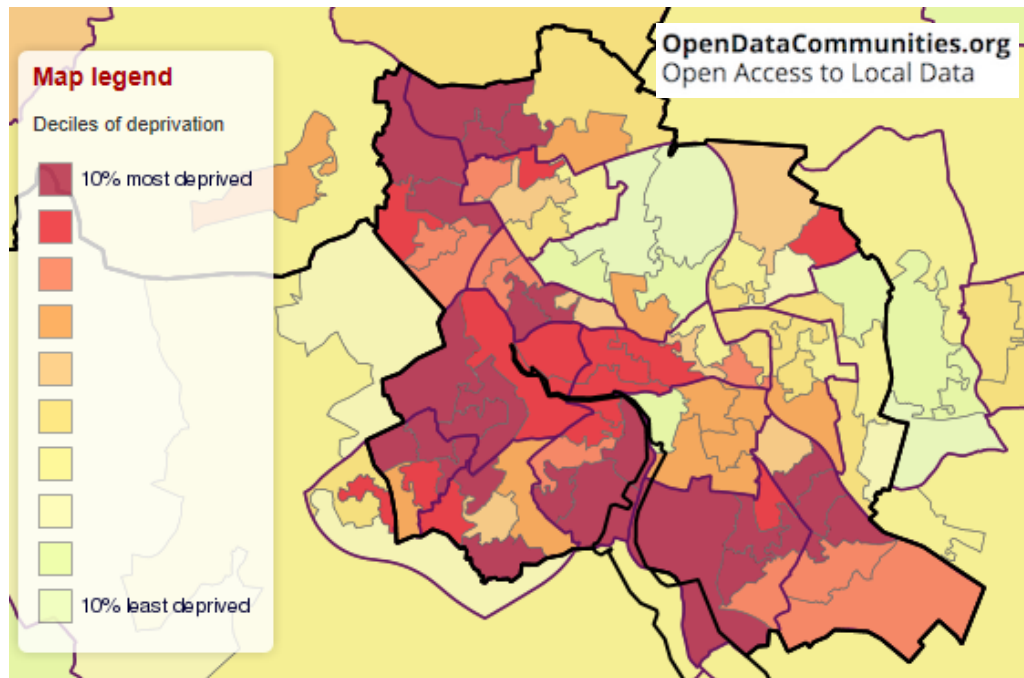


Figure 1 - Indices of deprivation 2015 - Education, Skills and Training Domain, DCLG Open Data Communities

- 2.6 The Let's Talk Reading project identifies poor literacy levels as a key factor in poor educational achievement and life chances, reinforcing deprivation. In order to tackle this problem in the most affected areas of Ipswich the organisation has an ambitious strategy to work with all ages.
- 2.7 The project launched in the summer of 2016 as a partnership between education and social care partners underpinned by a commitment from Suffolk Libraries to hold funds and manage staff. Since the launch;
- 10 schools (including the Hospital School Unit), 3 Pupil Referral Units and 4 children's centres have signed up to the pledge and delivered additional literacy activities. This has contributed in part to a significant improvement at Key Stages 2 & 4 reading test and 19 non-readers at Ipswich Academy becoming readers.
 - Several Early Years settings have agreed to host presentations to staff and parents and to distribute book-bags to 2 year olds. The book bags will provide guidance and appropriate reading material to families on limited incomes, who might otherwise find books harder to purchase. 1,000 book bags have been designed and purchased.
 - Over 120 midwives, health visitors, family support practitioners, housing officers and Home-Start volunteers have received briefings on communication and reading issues for adults and children and guidance on identifying & referring adults with low literacy.
 - The Wolsey Theatre has provided literacy workshops at the Lindbergh Centre and Ipswich Academy.

- 200 ‘Teach a Friend to Read’ books have been distributed
- 1,000 ‘Reading with Your Toddler’ pamphlets, which include nursery rhymes and guidance, have been purchased and are being distributed.

2.8 An impact summary has been prepared by the project group and is available in Appendix 1.

2.9 In 2017/2018, in the target areas of South East, North West, South West and Central Ipswich Let’s Talk Reading works to support literacy for young children by:

- Creating and delivering book bags to priority 2-year-olds via early years’ settings.
- Providing early years agencies with support for new parents on talking and reading with their children.
- Produce training materials for midwives, health visitors, Family Support Practitioners and Home-Start³ volunteers on advising parents.
- Work with Suffolk Babies⁴ to establish ante-natal advice on reading and link to the Suffolk Libraries’ “Bump Booster” programme.

2.10 The project plans to strengthen literacy mentoring in the same areas by:

- Working with Got to Read⁵ to develop local hubs in each area and help grow its volunteer base to staff these hubs. The project will provide support and funding to the Got To Read and refer volunteers and “struggling” adult readers.
- Working with the “Beanstalk” charity⁶ to establish itself in Ipswich and provide volunteer reading mentors for schools and early years settings.
- Creating database of volunteer readers to support schools and individual adults. This will be supported by a part-time administrator, training courses and by DBS checks for volunteers.

2.11 The project continues to work with schools to:

³ Home-Start is a support charity that helps families with young children facing challenge <https://www.home-start.org.uk/about-us>

⁴ Suffolk Babies is a non-profit company providing education for antenatal, postnatal and early childhood <https://suffolkbabies.co.uk/about-us/>

⁵ Got To Read is an Ipswich charity that support adults to be more confident in their reading, writing and speaking <http://www.gottoread.org.uk/>

⁶ Beanstalk is a national charity that provides one-to-one literacy support to children who struggle with their reading ability <https://www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/whatwedo>

- Sign up to and display the Reading Pledge to make literacy the highest priority and to ensure that “no child will leave school unable to read effectively”.
- Involve and help parents to read with their children and signpost parents who struggle with reading to tutoring sessions.
- Purchase and implement literacy improvement schemes
- Ensure books are available that will engage all children
- Improve reading areas in schools
- Purchase teacher training to help them deal with low literacy levels.
- Improve reading progress measurements and share best practice through case studies, videos and newsletters.
- Encourage and facilitate the development of checks of primary school pupils who are struggling with reading for poor eye-sight, dyslexia, short-term memory problems & Irlen syndrome⁷.

2.12 In order to work with the communities in each area the project aims to:

- Produce book-bags for disadvantaged families.
- Distribute free copies of the “Teach a Friend to Read” adult literacy support manual to community venues such as the library, hairdressers, and cafes.
- Involve local businesses by raising awareness, distributing “Teach a Friend to Read” books, directing employees to adult literacy help and by asking for funding donations.

2.13 In order to deliver these aims the Let’s Talk Reading project has identified activities with a combined cost of £111,100 for the 2017/18 year. Details of the costs and funding sources are set out in Section 9 and in Appendix 2. The project is seeking £20,000 across four of the Area Committees.

2.14 The amount requested of the South West Area Committee is £6,155.00

3. Relevant Policies and Area Action considerations

3.1 Building a Better Ipswich underlying principles:

- Priority 1: A Strong Ipswich Economy

3.2 South West Area Action plan priority to alleviate deprivation in the domain of Education, Skills and Training

⁷ Irlen syndrome affects the way the brain processes visual information and can affect reading. <http://irlenuk.com/about-irlen-syndrome.htm>

4. Options Considered / Under Consideration

- 4.1 **Option 1** – Approve allocation of funding of £6,155 to the Let’s Talk Reading project towards the overall costs until September 2018.
- 4.2 **Option 2** – Approve allocation of funding of a lesser amount up to £6,155 to the Let’s Talk Reading project towards the overall costs until September 2018.
- 4.3 **Option 3** - Do not fund

5. Consultations

- 5.1 The Let’s Talk Reading project has consulted widely on its programme of activities with partner organisations, including the Suffolk Library Service, Suffolk County Council, Early Years providers and in the third sector Got To Read, Home-Start, and Beanstalk.
- 5.2 The programme of activities funded through Let’s Talk Reading and the Raising the Bar funding is developed in partnership between each school and the project. Each programme is bespoke to the school signing up to the reading pledge and receiving funding.
- 5.3 Let’s Talk Reading has worked with the National Literacy Trust in establishing itself and developing its aims and activities.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 Those risks associated with the delivery of project activities belong to the project partner organisations and the steering group. The Council owns the risk associated with the correct allocation of public funds and there is a corresponding responsibility for the Project Group to provide accurate information.
- 6.2 The Suffolk Library service hosts the Let’s Talk Reading Project group. The service is formally constituted as an Industrial and Provident Society (company number [IP031542](#)) with a named bank account and publicly available accounts⁸. The project group has named posts and has provided a business plan for the next year in the form of Appendix 2 - LTR Budget Plan 2017-18.

Risk Description	Consequence of risk	Risk Controls	Probability of risk occurring taking account of controls (scale 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

⁸ Suffolk Libraries public documents <https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/about/documents/>

Safeguarding and vulnerability of children	Emotional or physical harm to children	Disclosure and Barring Checks Safeguarding training and reporting obligation	2	1	The library service, schools and pupil referral units have in place training, policy and reporting to protect the safety of children. It is the responsibility of the 'Let's Talk Reading' project steering group to properly risk assess and safeguard events outside of the schools or libraries.
Funds are not used as directed	Misuse of public funds Other deserving beneficiaries may not receive funding	Monitoring Reporting	3	3	The steering group is required to provide a short report to the committee on the elements costed within this request.

7. Environmental Impact Assessment

- 7.1 There is not assessed to be a significant direct impact on the environment from the activities planned with in the project.
- 7.2 There will be a demand on resources for the books, training documents and promotional materials associated with the project activities. The environmental impact of this is additional demand is not major in the context of that necessary for the library and school service delivery.

8. Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 The project aims to create additional literacy support for children and adults within Ipswich from all backgrounds.
- 8.2 The project promotes reading through materials and training in English, as most Ipswich households speak English. For those without strong language skills this will make the project activities more challenging but also more necessary.
- 8.3 The schools and libraries involved in the partnership have a duty and possess the experience to provide extra support where needed in the delivery of activities.

9. Financial Considerations

- 9.1 The Let's Talk Reading project board raised £100,500 in contributions for the 2016-17 programme, including a significant award through the Suffolk County Council Raising the Bar programme.
- 9.2 The forecasted costs for the Nov 2017- Sep 2018 programme total £111,100 (See appendix 2). The project board has identified and contacted funders for up to £199,000. Of this, £44,000 has been committed to date, a further £87,000 was been applied for and talks are underway with the remaining funders.

Initiative	Timeframe	Comments	Cost £
Book-bags for 2-year-olds	Nov17 – Jul18	500 book-bags each with book and guidance notes	3,000
Family book bags	Nov17 to Jul18	100, assuming 6 books per bag	3,000
'Teach a Friend to Read' books	Oct17 to Jul18	200 books at £3 each	600
'Got to Read' hub	Apr18 – Aug18	Resources for volunteers to mentor non-readers, including room hire	1,500
Training materials and guidance	Nov 17	For midwives, health workers, family support practitioners, parents etc.	600
Initiatives in schools		3 schools funded by Pyramid project	0
Additional books for pupils	Oct 17	Particularly free books to struggling readers	1,000
Health checks in schools	Feb18 to Jul18	Part-time; include all local schools: eye-sight, dyslexia, Irlens etc.	5,000
Reading volunteers & database	Jan18 - Aug18	Part-time administrator recruitment, salary and training.	3,000
Improving ante/post-natal advice	Apr18 – Aug18	Working with 'Suffolk Babies' to deliver reading etc. advice to new parents.	1,500
Involve local businesses	Nov17 – Aug18	Print window stickers etc.	200

Project Administration	Sep17 - Aug18	Part-time, 15 hours per week (over all areas)	5,000
Total			24,400

9.3 The Let's Talk Reading project is seeking £20,000 across the four Area Committees in which it is active. This request is split proportionally to the wards and annual budget of each committee.

- North West, 3 wards, 23% £4,615.00
- Central, 3 wards, 23% £4,615.00
- South East, 3 wards, 23% £4,615.00
- South West, 4 wards, 31% £6,155.00

9.4 **The amount requested of the South West Area Committee is £6,155.00**

10. Legal Considerations

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.

10.3 Each school is formally constituted either under Suffolk County Council, as the Local Authority, or as an Academy within a Multi-Academy Trust. The Project is hosted by Suffolk Libraries, which is formally constituted as an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable status.

11. Performance Monitoring

11.1 The Let's Talk Reading Project Board is required to complete the monitoring report of engagements and impact and provide a short report to the committee.

12. Conclusions

12.1 There is a high level of need within Ipswich and the South West area related to literacy levels and educational achievement in general. The poor outcomes in these areas affect life chances and social mobility for residents and the local economy.

12.2 The Let's Talk Reading project seeks to address this need through interventions and additional support to children and families. It is for the South West Area Committee to form a view on the efficacy of these interventions.

13. Recommendations

13.1 That the South West Area Committee considers the merit of the options for funding set out in section four and decides an option.

Reason: To determine the merit of allocating funds to the Let's Talk Reading project in order that it may work to improve child and adult literacy in South West Ipswich