Operational Decision Record

Publication Date	Decision Reference Number
29/06/2023	4977

Decision Title

Arts Council England (ACE), Library Improvement Fund (Round 2): Counter Culture - Transforming the way we engage with our customers

Decision Value

Total project value: £142,455

This is broken down by:

£124,355	ACE funding from their Library Improvement Fund (round 2)
£7,500	In-kind value for library staff resource time spent on this project
£5,600	As part of a matched funding contribution, the Council has committed to make IT purchases to the value of £5,600 to support this project over the project term. This has been secured within the Libraries IT budget.
£5,000	As part of a matched funding contribution, the Council has committed to invest in frontline staff training to the value of £5,000 over the project term (3 years). This has been secured within the Libraries Staff Training budget.

Revenue or Capital Spend?

Revenue

Department

Libraries (Sports, Culture & Tourism)

Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details)

Nigel Hawkins, Head of Culture & Libraries

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Decision Taken

To accept funding from the Arts Council England to the value of £124,355 to make library improvements that will enable the library service to better support customer (local resident) needs and to increase the efficiency of library operations.

Reasons for Decision and Background Information

Nottingham City Council has 15 libraries spread across the city, money received through the ACE LIF (Round 2) grant will help us to modernise six of these libraries, helping us to make valuable library environment and technology improvements.

ACE LIF (Round 2) funded improvements under this project include:

- To replace the large library staff desks at Clifton, Bilborough, St Ann's Valley, Bulwell Riverside & Southglade Park libraries with smaller staff pods, including make-good fixes as part of this.

- Extend our tablet loaning scheme to include Strelley Road, Southglade Park & Clifton libraries.
- To replace the library flooring at Bilborough and Southglade Park libraries, *and*
- Purchase a range of soft furnishings for public usage at Clifton, Southglade Park and Bilborough libraries

The above internal environment improvements will help our libraries look more welcoming and inviting for our customers which will have a positive impact towards our focus on driving up library visitor numbers.

The mobile and modern furniture will allow us to make more flexible use of library space, both to improve library usage and improve the space available to support increased library activities & events. The more compact and more modern staff desks will enable staff to work in a more agile way within the public library area to better support customer needs and enquiries.

Expanding customer digital access opportunities, through the expansion of our tablet loaning scheme to a further three libraries, will help us extend the reach of digital access opportunities across our city communities, helping to reduce digital poverty in our more deprived community areas. As a note, our current pilot tablet loaning scheme in place at The Dales and Meadows libraries, have both proved very successful and have high engagement levels. The pilot has been extremely popular across all library user groups, but shown to be particularly popular with our recognised 'hard to reach' 'young adult / teenage' audience.

The Council financial commitment put forward as matched funding, the £10,600 investment on IT purchases and staff training, has been independently identified as a requirement to ensure on-going library operational and service delivery efficiencies and improvements. The budgets committed have been secured under each current relevant budget, and is a recognised required service improvement need to be carried out regardless of whether this funding application was successful.

Project timelines - Start: April 2023 / End: March 2026

Other Options Considered and why these were rejected

To decline the ACE LIF (Round 2) funding.

This was rejected as it would prevent libraries from investing in much needed library service improvements and to invest in these through the use of external funding valued at £124,355.

Reasons why this decision is classified as operational

- This is a decision valued under £250,000
- All decisions relating to the library service area budget commitment, carried out under this project, fall within the budget levels controlled by the officer taking the decision
- We are seeking approval to accept grant funding to implement agreed policies, up to the value of £250,000.

Additional Information

The procurement elements of this project will follow and adhere to the Council's agreed procurement procedures. ACE has funding T&Cs that we will ensure compliance with,

when falling within the Council's agreement procurement procedures. ACE T&Cs are familiar to the Council's procurement team as we have successfully implemented a number of ACE funded projects over recent years.

Project Risk Management: A summary of anticipated risks is set out below:

Risk	Mitigation / controls
Staff resource pressures and vacancy gaps which may delay delivery or completion timelines	There is an amount of leeway built into the project timelines to allow for delivery delays. Regular contact with libraries ACE assigned contact for this project means that timelines can be reviewed and assessed at each project milestone, and mitigating action taken under the guidance of ACE.
Costs exceed budget available	Robust cost estimates will be identified and contingency of up to 10% included on each project.
Withdrawal of grant funding	Very low risk as it is an already established and Government backed funding programme.
Build works risks	Project costing provided following external supplier pricing assessment.
Unexpected delays to project delivery (risk of falling behind schedule)	Time contingencies for delivery have been built into the project planning.

EDI considerations: internal library environment and digital access improvements across the six libraries included as part of this project – Bilborough Library, St. Ann's Library, Clifton Library, Southglade Park Library, Bulwell Riverside Library and Strelley Road Library - will result in a positive impact on local citizens from ethnic minority groups, disabled people, older people due to the increased flexibility of staff engagement as a result of these project changes. Other positive impact for all local residents are the wider spread of increased digital engagement opportunities (and flexibility of digital access) across our libraries. Staff training to be implemented as part of this project will result in improved staff support and engagement across all library user groups. An EIA will be completed as part of the implementation process.

Information about this project will be provided to the relevant ward councillors and libraries portfolio holder.

Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)

Frank Jordan, Corporate Director of Communities, Environment & Resident Services

Scheme of Delegation Reference Number

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Date Decision Taken

10/03/2023