

Forward Plan reference number: FP/271/01/22

Report title: Essex ActivAte Holiday Activity and Food Programme	
Report to: Cllr Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnership and Performance	
Report author: Jason Fergus	
Date: 24/01/2022	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex, our new organisation strategy, sets out four strategic aims and 20 commitments. The strategy focuses on levelling up the County and supporting communities and families across Essex. A key focus is on supporting healthy and active lifestyles and strong and resilient families and communities
- 1.2 Consistent with achieving this commitment, this paper sets out a proposal to accept £4,163,590 of funding from The Department of Education in order to deliver the Holiday Activity and Food programme (Essex ActivAte) across the County during 2022. This programme will engage and support young people and families who are eligible for benefits based free school meals and families most in need. The programme will provide free and inclusive holiday clubs across the county that will include a range of fun physical and enrichment activities, a free nutritious meal, nutritional education and mentoring and support for the young person and whole family. The clubs aim to improve health generally, including, crucially, mental health and aim to provide the families with the knowledge and support to live healthier, happier lives.
- 1.3 The Essex ActivAte programme will play a key role in supporting the key aims of Everyone's Essex, our plan for levelling up Essex. In particular it supports the family, health and economy commitments made in the plan including family resilience and stability, outcomes for vulnerable families, levelling up outcomes for families, healthy lifestyles, levelling up health and promoting independence.
- 1.4 By encouraging greater physical activity, it is anticipated that this decision will have a neutral, and potentially beneficial, impact on ECC's net zero ambitions.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree that Essex County Council accept funding of £4,163,590 from the Department for Education to fund the delivery of a holiday activity and food programme in the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays during 2022. The Essex ActivAte programme will include Holiday Clubs, Food Support and to

provide outreach and a virtual service offer for all school aged children who are eligible for benefits based free school meals.

- 2.2 Agree to deliver a holiday activity and food programme in Essex in the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays during 2022 and to provide grant funding to delivery partners to provide the delivery of the holiday Activity and Food programme.
- 2.3 Agree to delegate to the Head of Active Essex, following a grant funding application process:
 - 2.3.1 to approve the chosen delivery partners,
 - 2.3.2 agree the final terms of the funding agreements
 - 2.3.3 and enter into funding agreements with delivery partners.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes, particularly the long summer holidays. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families:
 - 3.1.1 less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
 - 3.1.2 more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
 - 3.1.3 more likely to experience social isolation
- 3.2 Free summer holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they:
 - 3.2.1 provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
 - 3.2.2 cover more than just breakfast or lunch
 - 3.2.3 involve children (and parents) in food preparation
- 3.3 In the Autumn 2021 budget, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme ("Programme") will be extended across the country for the next 3 years. In December Essex County Council received an offer letter which included a funding allocation of £4,163,590 in order to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities during 2022. It is proposed that ECC accept the funding and provide holiday programme in Essex.
- 3.4 ECC must use the funding to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays 2022, to children across Essex who receive benefits-related free school meals. There are further conditions to confirm the availability of the clubs in the holidays, including hours open and that

the clubs meet national published standards, core aims and objectives. ECC will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the DFE in relation to the delivery of these. ECC's offer will meet the DFE's requirements

3.5 Essex County Council's Active Essex team (Active Essex) will coordinate the Essex ActivAte programme. Active Essex have been delivering holiday hunger programmes since 2019 and over the past few years have developed a network of over 100 locally trusted organisations who delivery this work locally.

3.6 Active Essex will:

- 3.6.1 map the holiday provision across Essex in order to ensure that holiday provision exists and is supporting the areas of greatest need. establishing a steering group to support implementation and delivery
- 3.6.2 develop a local plan for provision across Essex, based on what we know about local supply and demand.
- 3.6.3 ensure that sufficient, adequate provision is available across Essex for children with SEND/additional needs and support for young people suffering poor mental wellbeing.
- 3.6.4 run a process to identify and awarding funding to holiday club providers in order to ensure there is enough provision to meet demand.
- 3.6.5 ensure that all delivery partners are providing a value for money service, that all funding is being used to provide the provision of a holiday activity and food club and that a breakdown of expenditure is submitted as part of the evaluation process
- 3.6.6 support all providers to meet the Department for Education framework of minimum standards
- 3.6.7 work with families to reduce dependency by providing nutritional education for children and educating families around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis.
- 3.6.8 work with families to ensure we can support them with the knowledge, understanding and resources to be able to continue to provide healthy, cost-effective meals for the whole family
- 3.6.9 work in partnership across Essex County Council departments to ensure that families are aware of the support available to them and to provide a range of support and information around wider Council services and priorities eg: climate control, Library services, Education support, skills development
- 3.6.10 work in partnership with Essex Library Service and other Essex County Council departments to incorporate their services as part of the delivery of the programme
- 3.6.11 evaluate the programme so that we can understand the wider impact the Essex ActivAte programme is having on the whole family outside of attending the holiday programme

3.7 An open, transparent process will be run to identify providers to deliver the Essex ActivAte programme during 2022. The Active Essex team will work with ECC

procurement in order to manage an application process on the ECC portal. Successful providers will be responsible for planning and delivering local Essex ActivAte clubs during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. It will be necessary for Essex County Council to enter into an agreement with these providers to set out the terms of the funding and ensure delivery of the programme. This will be done via a grant agreement, that will reflect the Department for Education's terms, and all partners will complete an application to become a partner on the programme. It is proposed that the Head of Active Essex will approve the successful grant applicants following the successful completion of the application process

- 3.8 Resources to deliver the summer holiday activity and food programme will be pooled from across Essex County Council including Active Essex. This will require creating and recruiting to new project posts including four quadrant locality leads, a communications lead and a Business Support Officer.
- 3.9 The Essex ActivAte Holiday Activity and Food programme supports the Everyone's Essex policy objectives in the following ways:
 - 3.9.1 Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential
 - 3.9.2 Improve the health of people in Essex
 - 3.9.3 Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
 - 4.1.1 Provide an equal foundation for every child
 - 4.2.2 Strengthen communities through participation
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
 - 4.2.1 Encouraging young people and families to be more active and less reliant on cars and transport
 - 4.2.2 Improving the physical wellbeing of young people so that they are more likely to choose active travel
 - 4.2.3 Providing local employment and volunteering opportunities so that some residents do not have to travel for work
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
 - 4.3.1 Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
 - 4.3.2 A good place for children and families to grow

5 Options

Option 1 – Agree that Essex County Council accept the funding from the Department for Education and deliver an inclusive holiday activity and food programme throughout the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays during 2022 for young people who are eligible for benefits based free school meals and families most in need.

5.1 It is recommended the approval of the use of the Department for Education funding in order to deliver the Essex ActivAte holiday activity and food programme and provide a support offer for young people who are eligible for benefits based free school meals, and approval to delegate to Head of Active Essex in consultation with the Executive Director for Children and Families and the S151 Officer to agree the proposed holiday club fund activities for the Easter, summer and Winter 2022 school holidays and to agree the spending plan for the funding.

5.2 This is the recommended option

Option 2 – Do Nothing

5.3 This option would not enable us to distribute the funding from Department of Education and would mean that our residents would not benefit from central government funding.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The Department for Education has announced that a further £200m has been made available to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities throughout 2022. The programme will be available to children in every local authority in England. Essex County Council has an indicative maximum allocation of £4,163,590.

6.1.2 As per section 31 of the Local Government act, the grant will be paid subject to specific conditions being met and will be available in the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays in 2022. The purpose of the grant is for local authorities to make free places at holiday clubs available in the school holidays to 31st December 2022 to children in their local authority who receive benefits-related free school meals

6.1.3 The funding will be used for holiday club places that will be available for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year. This covers four weeks in the summer, plus a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays. Local authorities have flexibility about how they spend this grant and deliver this provision to best serve the needs of the children and families in their areas

6.1.4 The Authority must provide an annual report on their HAF programme to the Department by 30 June 2023. The report will cover a number of different areas, as set out in the Annual Report section of the programme guidance and an annual Certificate of Expenditure must be submitted at the end of the financial year that the funding has been properly expended

6.1.5 The proposed spending plan is as follows:

	£
Easter club delivery 2022	600,000
Summer club delivery 2022	2,000,000
Christmas club delivery 2022	800,000
Communications and Marketing	100,000
Staffing costs	327,532
Booking system, evaluation, training and other support costs	336,058
Total	4,163,590

The Authority can spend up to a maximum of 10% of its allocation on its administration costs for the local coordination of the Programme. The remainder must be spent on the provision of free holiday club places for eligible children

6.1.7 The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance in consultation with the S151 Officer will keep the allocation and spend plan under review and a further formal decision may be needed to adjust allocations

6.2 Legal implications

6.1 ECC are required to comply with the terms of the DfE funding. If ECC do not comply with the terms, the DfE can request return of the money.

6.2 When considering grant funding delivery partners, ECC will need to ensure that it undertakes a selection process for partners and that it enters into agreements with all delivery partners which pass through the terms of the DfE grant funding terms and conditions. ECC should monitor delivery of the programme by delivery partners to ensure compliance with funding terms.

7 Equality and Diversity Considerations

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.
- 7.4 The funding is specifically for young people who are school age, but there is also support put in place for the whole family.

8 List of Appendices

8.1 The Department for Education Offer Letter

8.2 The Essex ActivAte Holiday Activity and Food programme Equality Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

9.1 Department for Education Holiday Activity and Food programme Guidance

The 'sign off' boxes below are deleted for cabinet reports but not for CMAs.

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Cllr Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnership and Performance	01/06/22

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Cllr Christopher Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	01/06/22
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer).	02.02.2022
Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	24.01.2022
Laura Edwards (on behalf of Paul Turner)	
Executive Director Children, Families and Education	16.02.2022
Helen Lincoln	