

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITION FUND APPLICATION

Aspire Oxford is requesting £30,000 from the Transition Fund over a 3-year period, to establish Florence Park's community-owned centre for children and families. We are requesting this fund to realise a community-owned proposal which has appointed its own local Stakeholder Steering Group (please see attachment).

#### INTRODUCTION

##### **A New Bid: How this bid differs from previous applications and business models put forward by The Nature Effect, and then Aspire.**

1. *We have built on the community engagement and the overall vision of earlier bids.*

We have attracted an unprecedented amount of further support and development capacity, and volunteers, and worked on the detail of the proposal to respond to the requirements set out by the County Council in August 2017, from Councillor Mark Gray. We have developed the proposals with a local Stakeholder Steering Group who will, with Aspire, oversee the incubation phase of the project and transform into a Community Benefit Governing Body within 6 months.

2. *We have developed the childcare model ...*

... to be a 24 full time place equivalent year round nursery open 8-6pm based on the Council's understanding of the requirements for the area. We are in conversation with other providers – Larkrise School, Donnington Doorstep Preschool, Comper School, Little Troupers nursery, to ensure we are not duplicating vacancies or undermining the sustainability of these important, other providers in the area. We believe there is a real risk of this if a huge private day nursery were to be located or to suddenly increase its capacity within this community without reference to the impact on others. We have talked to local parents about the kind of childcare they need, and about what is currently not available in the area. We want to steadily increase childcare capacity and the number of places available locally to meet their needs – including much needed wrap around and holiday provision for the youngest children attending other term time provision in the area.

We have decided that it would not be appropriate to stretch beyond 24 FTE places on the site; this would not be possible given the space, including for Ofsted registration, without taking over the community room area. To lose the community room area would make the wider business proposal unviable. We have already stretched the childcare

provision to accommodate 24 places, which would need one of the office spaces converted as a sleep room. We can, and have, committed to working with other providers and the sufficiency team to increase capacity to meet genuine local need.

3. *We have expanded on our model of family support and open access drop in sessions.*

The Café is at the heart of these proposals with part of the community room space being a parent drop-in area which is open every day with peer-to-peer advice and signposting for services. We have been publicly assured that the City Council will not allow the contract with San Remo to be a block to the Café development. It would be overseen by volunteers with agencies and the providers at the Centre offering sessions. For example:

- supporting parenting (eg 10 things to do with your toddler outdoors)
- crafting sessions (eg make your own playdough, waste things into playthings)
- health (breastfeeding drop-in, healthy eating for families)

4. *We have included more detail on the financial business model ...*

... including the spreadsheet supporting the profit and loss summary in the business plan. We have undertaken more market research on local needs and competition, including other providers of similar services and pricing and occupation assumptions. We believe we have a robust business model with a sophisticated level of local consultation and business planning behind it. We have already secured the agreement 'in principle' from Oxford City Council to a one-off, £15k pump prime fund in year 1, if our bid is successful in being awarded transition funding.

### **Three Good Reasons for County Councillors to support this proposal**

1. *It is a community led initiative with an unprecedented level of community support and engagement.*

It will provide a community benefit model of governance for management of the community asset that is sustainable in the long term. The community benefit governance model will provide the County Council with one accountable body for the lease of the building. This organisation will be responsible for the repairs and maintenance, vision, ethos, relationships with the community and with users of the centre. The governance model will ensure that income generated is used for the local community benefit, and any surpluses invested back into the Centre. There is a very skilled and experienced group of local people – the Stakeholder Steering Group – to ensure the success of the project, and to draw in start-up funding and social investment, alongside a large pool of signed up local volunteers to tap into, from the get-go.

2. *The vision for the multi-use centre is innovative and supports the objectives of Oxfordshire Together.*

It supports the objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership as well as supporting local health, wellbeing and employment outcomes for families. The social enterprise units – namely the Café, the Nursery, the Retail outlet, meeting room and flexible work stations – will generate income to ensure the future sustainability of the Centre. The Florence Park Centre for Children and Families has ambitions to be a flagship example of what is possible in combining social enterprise with family and community support needs. Once established it will have the capacity to support other centres across the City.

3. *The Centre will respond to the childcare sufficiency needs of the area in a flexible way.*

It will work to address and respond to on the ground demand and to work closely with other providers in the area and the childcare sufficiency team at OCC to ensure that we continue to expand the availability of high quality childcare across the locality. The childcare will be built on parent-led, cooperative models which have become increasingly popular nationally, to ensure affordability. It will have a fully inclusive curriculum, pedagogy and ethos with a focus on outdoor learning which is accessible to all and inclusive of children with disabilities and from a wide range of faiths and socio-economic backgrounds. We will begin by immediately establishing the 24 new full time place nursery, including 8 places for 2 year olds. We are talking to two other new groups wanting to expand the number of available childcare places further on nearby sites over the next two years. This includes the Children's Allotment, which has already raised funds to establish a nursery on the nearby Whitehouse site and gained approval to take on the site from the City Council, and are very keen to work with us under one multi-site umbrella.