



Subject:	Imagination Library NoM – proposed pilot
Date:	7 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales. Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart. Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To report back to Members on the motion in relation to a proposed pilot of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which was proposed by Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor Howard. The Standards and Business committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting of the People and Communities committee.
1.2	To further report on the council agreement that the Book Trust be included as one of the interested partners the Council would work with to secure the success and sustainable funding of any scheme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none">To consider the proposed one year pilot of the Imagination Library and to note the facilitation model, resourcing and management of any Pilot.

2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given there is no budget and no staff resource for this work and there are other providers who operate in this area, committee are asked to consider and agree that the proposal could be looked at again by committee once external funding to cover project and staff costs are secured.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor Howard, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:</p> <p>“Belfast City Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges that the majority of physical brain development occurs in the first three years of life, when children form over 1 million new neural connections per second; Recognises the benefits of reading, and reading aloud, to young children which can promote the development of basic literacy and vocabulary skills, establish strong interpersonal relationships between children and parents/guardians, as well as improving longer term educational, health, social and economic outcomes; Is concerned about the rising cost of living which will limit the ability of families to pay for essential educational resources like books for young children; Agrees to investigate and establish a pilot of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in the City to provide a new book each month for children aged 0-5, working with any interested partners to secure the success and sustainable funding of the scheme.” <p>3.2 The proposer of the motion, Councillor de Faoite, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion. The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting of the People and Communities committee.</p> <p>3.3 Furthermore, at the request of Councillor Murray, the January meeting of Council agreed that the Book Trust be included as one of the interested partners the Council would work with to secure the success and sustainable funding of any scheme.</p>

How It Works

3.4 Following officer investigation, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a book gifting programme devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere. Each month, enrolled children from birth to age five, receive a high quality, age-appropriate book in the post, free of charge. The Dolly Parton foundation will then work with the affiliate organisation to register children and contribute to the costs. The foundation indicates that books are carefully selected and full of variety. They include traditional stories and rhymes, books by beloved authors and illustrators, non-fiction content and newly published titles. Each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails a high quality, age-appropriate book to all registered children, addressed to them and at no cost to the child's family.

3.5 The Imagination Library provides the infrastructure of the core programme including managing the secure central database for the Book Order System and coordinating book selections and wholesale purchasing. It also incurs the cost of the programme's administrative expenses and coordinates the monthly mailings.

3.6 Acting as a Local Affiliate, Belfast City Council would be responsible for enrolling children to the programme within the geographical area.

3.7 The Imagination Library negotiates wholesale pricing for the books. Local Affiliates (in this case the Notice of Motion suggests that this could be Belfast City Council) and Partners are responsible for securing funds to cover that cost. Books are 100% free to enrolled children because their Local Affiliate has secured funds to cover the cost of the books and the postage and packing fees.

Pilot Design

3.8 Officers met with the Councillors de Faoite and Howard to discuss the NoM and to outline their research in relation to the Dolly Parton Foundation and the Imagination Library scheme. As a result, the elected members are proposing that council operate an initial one year pilot project which will be offered to 200 participants across the city. It is suggested that 100 participants will be identified through Councils Registrar's office and a further 100 participants will be identified through linked community organisations within each of the 4 quadrants of the city.

3.9 The estimated cost of delivery of any approved pilot will be £5,200 which is based on a fee of £26 per child per year for 200 participants payable to Dolly Parton Foundation. Committee are asked to note that no provision has been made for the pilot in the 2023/24 budget

estimates, however, elected members anticipate that local benefactors will provide this funding in order to make the proposed pilot viable.

3.10 If funds are secured, officers will be required to act as a link to the Dolly Parton Foundation, promote the project, work with the funding partners, identifying beneficiaries and administer the scheme.

3.11 Evaluation indicators will be designed to evaluate the Pilot. This will provide relevant information related to:

- i. Satisfaction with the project: How well perceived is the initiative by service users.
- ii. Outcomes achieved: How much the pilot has improved parental confidence and competence, parental attachment, and literacy.
- iii. Effectiveness measures: How do the outcomes relate to the effectiveness of the pilot

A final evaluation report will be presented to include any recommendation on the Pilot.

3.12 To support any agreed pilot, it is further proposed that council officers will work with existing providers of similar schemes in order to add local value to the planned pilot scheme. There are two main initiatives currently being delivered in the Belfast area.

- The Book Trust delivers the Book Start Early Years Pilot, where materials, parent support and practitioners support is given through partners such as Sure Start to almost a thousand children in the city.
- Department of Education also deliver a similar scheme across all the nurseries in the Belfast area.

3.13 In the interim, and given there is no budget and no staff resource for this work and there are other providers who operate in this area, committee are asked to consider and agree that the proposal could be looked at again by committee once external funding to cover project and staff costs are secured.

Financial and Human Resource Implications

3.14 The estimated total cost for a pilot scheme for 200 children is £5,200 based on a cost per child of £26 which is payable to the Dolly Parton Foundation. These costs have not been included in 2023/24 budget estimates, however, elected members anticipate that local benefactors will provide this funding in order to make the proposed pilot viable.

3.15	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> If delivered in the manner described, the pilot will not have equality, good relations or rural needs implications.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None