

**REPORT OF THE LEADER****REVIEW OF THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION  
SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for a change to how the County Council's translation and interpretation services are provided.

**Information and Advice**

2. The Translation and Interpretation (T&I) service was reviewed in July and August 2012 to establish how this service could be provided more efficiently in future.
3. The review included some face to face meetings with the Group Manager Marketing and Engagement and a Survey Monkey questionnaire. Consultation took place with the following groups:
  - Two council employees who run the service
  - Council employees who use the service
  - Translators and interpreters employed by the County Council
  - External organisations currently using the service
  - The Council's BME staff group (which gave feedback on an Equality Impact Assessment)
4. The review report ([background paper A](#)) concluded that whilst service users are satisfied with the quality of service they receive, it is not good value for money for the service to continue to be provided directly by the Council. This is because of the investment needed to make the back office running of the service more efficient. The only viable alternatives are to enter into a shared services arrangement with a public sector provider or to outsource all translation and interpretation services to a private provider.
5. The different options for outsourcing translation and interpretation services have been considered. Whilst there are some potential benefits of private sector provision (e.g. online ordering portal with real time management information), there are also real risks. These include the potential for increasing costs and a drop in quality (e.g. of translation/interpretation or not being able to the same interpreter if they are based out of the county). A

robust procurement exercise with intensive and ongoing contract management would also be needed.

6. Setting up a shared service with another public sector provider has also been considered. Shared services are about removing inefficiency by encouraging public bodies to identify common functions within their own organisation (or with other public bodies) and having those functions delivered as a single shared service platform across organisational boundaries. A number of councils (including Nottingham City and Leicester City) offer translation and interpretation services and the County Council already accesses some such services through partners (e.g. the police). Local authorities are allowed under the Local Government Act 1972, The Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 and the Local Government Act 2000 to make joint arrangements and to supply services to other local authorities.
7. Outsourcing T&I services will impact on the following stakeholders:
  - Two Council employees – the staff currently running the service would potentially be put at risk; they will be supported through existing HR processes.
  - 150 translators and interpreters – they are employed on a zero hours relief contract; some are used more regularly than others; many work for several organisations
  - County Council staff who use the service – staff working in social care request the majority of translation and interpretation (some by using T&I services accessed through partners such as the police)
  - External organisations – there are a number of partner organisations which pay to use the service
  - People of Nottinghamshire – these are the end users of the service and are often vulnerable people. An Equality Impact Assessment ([background paper B](#)) has been undertaken as part of the review.
8. The recommended option is to set up a shared services arrangement for all translation and interpretation with Nottingham City Council (Language Solutions service). This is considered the best option for the following reasons:
  - The City Council is already providing the same service a mile down the road (at its Loxley House building) and has invested £16k into an electronic system.
  - It supports the ongoing employment of local translators and interpreters (the majority of translators and interpreters being used by the Council are already working for the City Council's service).
  - Continuing to use local translators and interpreters makes it more likely the same person can be used throughout the life of a case or court hearing – something that social care staff have highlighted as important for a good quality service.
  - The City Council has comparable charges so would not cost more money.
  - Using the City Council's service provides ongoing quality assurance for the Council.

- Establishing a formal agreement with the City Council will take less time than a procurement exercise with a private provider and is unlikely to require intensive contract management.

## **Recommendation**

- That the County Council changes from direct provision to using Nottingham City Council's translation and interpretation service (called Language Solutions), as soon as possible.

## **Councillor Kay Cutts Leader of the Council**

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Clare Yau, Marketing and Engagement Group Manager, telephone: 0115 9773851. E: [clare.yau@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:clare.yau@nottscc.gov.uk)

## **Constitutional Comments [NAB 23/08/12]**

1. Policy Committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report, subject to careful consideration being given to the commercial arrangement between the County and the City Councils to be in a form agreed by the Group Manager, Legal Services.

## **Financial Comments [MB 23/08/12]**

2. The cost of the service in 2011/12 was £87,000. This cost was fully met by recharges to departments and outside bodies.

## **HR Comments [AB 28/08/12]**

3. Two Council employees will potentially be put at risk. There are very few translators/interpreters who receive work on a monthly basis – most work is more ad hoc. The translators/interpreters are employed on a zero hours relief contract basis. A number of them already undertake assignments for the City Council, and those registered with the County Council will transfer to the City Council's register.

## **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

A) Review of the Translation and Interpretation Service (August 2012 report)

B) Equality Impact Assessment (July 2012)

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All