

**21 September 2015****Agenda Item: 07****REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES  
AND CULTURE****THE FAMILY SERVICE – CHANGES TO STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT AND  
THE INTRODUCTION OF ADMINISTRATION FEES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for changes to the staffing structure of The Family Service and the introduction of a single fee of £50 for chaperone licensing.

**Information and Advice**

2. At the July 2015 meeting of the Children and Young People's Committee, it was agreed to amend the threshold in the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct at which fines for unauthorised absence from school could be issued.
3. The July Committee report outlined the anticipated impact of a change in the threshold. In summary as a result of implementing the agreed change in threshold it is expected that there will be a significant increase in demand from schools for fines to be issued by the Local Authority to parents in response to unauthorised absence. The estimated increase in demand was calculated using some Department for Education projections of the number of students who are likely to fall within the new definition of Persistent Absence in Nottinghamshire from September 2015. Although the Code of Conduct already recognises a head teacher's right in law to issue fines themselves, to date no school has chosen to issue fines directly to parents. Therefore the County Council must expect to pick up the majority if not all of the additional demand to issue fines generated by the agreed change in threshold.
4. Due to the high rate at which fines for unauthorised absences are unpaid (almost 50% nationally) it is also anticipated that there will be a significant increase in court work to prosecute through the Courts parents where the fine is not paid. As a consequence of the introduction of an opportunity within the Code of Conduct for schools to request from the Local Authority a warning letter to be sent to parents or carers once the unauthorised absence has reached 10% (3 days within a 6 week period), an increase in work load to deliver this requirement is also anticipated. The changes once taken together will increase workload beyond the current capacity of the staff presently undertaking enforcement work on behalf of the County Council.

5. It is therefore proposed that in order to meet the additional work generated due to the change of the threshold, the following changes are made to the staffing structure of The Family Service:
- to establish 3 FTE posts of Education Enforcement Officer (Hay Band A) from 1 November 2015
  - to establish a 0.5 FTE post of Senior Professional Practitioner (Hay Band C) from 1 November 2015.

### **Introduction of Administration Fees for Chaperone Licences**

6. In addition to prosecutions for non-school attendance the other functions related to educational welfare exercised by The Family Service will include the issuing of licences for children's employment, children involved in the performing arts and the issuing of licences to chaperones who support children involved in licensed performances. In order to offset some of the additional cost incurred by the establishment of the above posts, it is also proposed that the charge for administration and child safety and protection training for Chaperone Licencing is revised. Currently a charge of £25 is made where an applicant declares that they do not intend to work professionally as a chaperone and £50 when they intend to do so for financial gain. The licences issued do not vary and as such volunteers may then become fee charging chaperones. The proposal is to align the fees with a single charge of £50 which will generate a conservative estimate of £2,875 in income each year.

### **Other Options Considered**

7. Consideration was given to the redeployment of staff from within The Family Service. However this is likely to have an adverse impact on capacity elsewhere within the service. It is also unlikely to provide the necessary enforcement expertise. Consideration was also given to managing the increased workload within the existing dedicated enforcement resource. However this is not feasible given the current Enforcement Leads are already at capacity applying the existing 25% threshold.
8. The potential to charge an administration fee for the issuing of child performance licences, often made by large production companies, has been examined but would not be lawful.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

9. The recommendation is made following the decision at the July 2015 meeting of the Children and Young People's Committee to alter the threshold in the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct so that it is more closely in line with the new national definition of persistent absence. The additional staffing will enable the County Council to meet the anticipated increase in demand for fines and subsequent court work flowing from the threshold change.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health

only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

11. The net financial impact of the establishment of these posts is estimated at £182,000 per year including on-costs. It is projected that up to £80,000 of income can be generated per annum that would contribute to the cost of these posts. Introducing a new standard charge for Chaperone Licensing will generate around £2,875 annually.
12. The remaining additional cost can be met by the reprioritisation of services within The Family Service's budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17. A potential budget pressure would be present from 2017/18 when the current Option for Change saving of £1m is actioned for this service which would require further reprioritisation of the service's budget.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That:

- 1) the proposed changes to the staffing structure of The Family Service be approved.
- 2) the proposed introduction of a single fee of £50 for chaperone licensing be approved.

**Laurence Jones**

**Temporary Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture**

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### **Constitutional Comments (SLB 28/08/15)**

13. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report, subject to the Employment Procedure Rules which require all reports to include HR advice and for the recognised trade unions to be consulted.

### **Financial Comments (SS 03/09/15)**

14. The financial implications of this report are contained within paragraphs 11 and 12 above.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

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.

Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct for Issuing Fines for Pupil Absences – Amendment to Threshold - report to the Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 July 2015

Full Report – Review of Penalty Notice Code of Conduct Threshold

Job Description for new post of Education Enforcement Officer

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

All

C0688