

19 May 2014

Agenda Item: 10

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND INCLUSION

SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS SERVICE – PROPOSED RESTRUCTURE OF THE PLACE PLANNING AND ADMISSIONS TEAM

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the Committee's approval of the revised structure (**Appendix A**) of the Place Planning and Admissions (PPA) team from September 2014, within the Support to Schools Service. This includes the proposal to relocate the responsibility for home to school transport, the analysis of school capacity and support for aspects of school organisation to the PPA team from the Business Development and Support team.
2. Members are asked to approve the creation of four new posts:
 - 1fte x place planning officer
 - 2fte x senior professional practitioners for place planning and admissions
 - 1fte x senior professional practitioner for vulnerable groups.
3. Members are also asked to approve a proposal that two team manager posts for Place Planning and Admissions, and one Area Officer post, are disestablished.
4. Members are also asked to note the transferral of responsibility for Elective Home Education from the Education Improvement Team into the structure for Place Planning and Admissions.

Information and Advice

5. The County Council continues to retain statutory responsibility for strategic early years and school place planning and admissions. These are high profile responsibilities as the Council must ensure that there are sufficient school places, appropriately located across Nottinghamshire.
6. The proposed restructure aims to create a stronger staffing structure that reflects the increasing challenge in relation to the admissions of vulnerable pupils and the implementation of the fair access policy. A principle has been to address issues around single responsibility posts which pose a threat to

business continuity in the event of unplanned absences. A further principle has been to address issues around succession planning in relation to complex technical posts.

7. The proposed restructure specifically includes:
 - a. the transferral of responsibility for Elective Home Education from the Education Improvement team to PPA
 - b. the transferral of responsibility and established posts for home to school transport from Business Development and Support to PPA (2fte)
 - c. the transferral of responsibility and established posts for aspects of school capacity and school organisation from Business Development and Support to PPA (2fte)
 - d. the creation of 2fte senior professional practitioners for PPA to ensure capacity to fulfil statutory responsibilities for admissions, admission appeals and place
 - e. the creation of 1fte senior professional practitioner post for vulnerable pupils to increase capacity in relation to fair access and to support the coordination of the County Council's children missing education strategy;
8. Feedback from the consultation which ran between 14 February 2014 and 14 March 2014 is attached as **Appendix B** and the proposed structure is outlined in **Appendix A**.

Other Options Considered

9. Other proposals were considered which included maintaining the existing staffing structure. However, whilst this restructure has not been driven directly by the need to secure financial savings, the proposed structure offers greater coherence and refocussing of the team on current national and local agendas, particularly around fair access. It was considered that the risk of failing to deliver statutory responsibilities for strategic school planning and admissions be too great to significantly reduce the actual size of the team. In an ever changing and complex local education environment comprising Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings, child minders, community and academies as well as alternative educational providers, that there was a continued need to secure a specialist team of strategic place planners and admissions officers to ensure that the Local Authority continues to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.

Reasons for Recommendations

10. Members will wish to note the proposed structure strengthens the capacity to deliver statutory responsibilities, and includes the transferral of responsibilities for school transport, school capacities and school organisation from the Business Development and Support service which is also undergoing a significant review and reduction in services. The proposal is cost neutral and complements the savings already identified across the Support to Schools Service.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service 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

12. The Support to Schools Service has already identified £1.3m of savings, mainly as a result of reduced staffing costs within the Education Improvement Team and reductions within identified support budgets for school improvement. The proposed restructure of the PPA team does not aim to secure further savings but rather to strengthen capacity to ensure that statutory responsibilities are met. It should also be noted that the key staffing costs for elements of the PPA team were agreed by the Schools Forum which allocates £422,000 from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to this team, with £392,000 additional funding from County Council budgets. The proposed restructure of the PPA team will be cost neutral.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That the proposed staffing structure for the Place Planning and Admissions team is approved with effect from 1 September 2014 including:
 - the relocation of responsibilities for school transport, school capacity and school organisation from the Business Development and Support Service to the Place Planning and Admissions team (4fte posts);
 - the disestablishment of 2fte Place Planning and Admissions team managers, and 1fte Area Officer;
 - the creation of 4fte new specialist posts within the Place Planning and Admissions team;
 - the relocation of the responsibility for elective home education from Education Improvement to the Place Planning and Admissions team.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 29/04/14)

13. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (KLA 25/04/14)

14. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 12 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

All.

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