

9 January 2020

Agenda Item:10

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE AND COMMUNITIES

SCHOOLS WASTE ACTION CLUB PROGRAMME

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from Committee for the cessation of the Schools Waste Action Club (SWAC) programme, and an associated reduction in the staffing establishment in the Place Commissioning Group.

Information

Background

2. The County Council has provided a free SWAC programme for schools since the early 2000's, initially through one post employed on a consultancy basis by "Waste Watch", and most recently through two Waste Education Officer Posts employed directly by the Council and located in the Waste Strategy and Development Team in the Place Commissioning Group.
3. It is important to note that the Council has no statutory responsibility for providing waste education in schools and is therefore unable to influence which schools take up the offer of the SWAC programme. As such, it has proved difficult to engage with hard to reach groups and geographic areas with high levels of contamination in the kerbside recycling
4. The feedback from individual schools which receive the SWAC programme is excellent due to the high quality of the teaching delivered. Recently, however, a much greater understanding of, and changing attitudes towards, waste and recycling together with an increased awareness of sustainability issues amongst the wider population have resulted in waste education forming a more integrated part of the national curriculum.
5. In addition, through the current Waste PFI Contract Veolia employ a Recycling and Education Officer and provide a range of recycling and waste advice to schools, community and voluntary groups including guided tours of, and educational visits to, the Mansfield Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).
6. The MRF has a dedicated education room, and Veolia provide free transport for schools to the site and have also produced educational videos and other resources which are available to schools and others to support recycling knowledge and help increase awareness.
7. Unfortunately, it is not possible to effectively measure any impacts of SWAC activity on overall recycling and landfill diversion performance. This has led the Council to consider that the continued provision of this free service to schools is no longer desirable, either in terms of impact or return on investment..

8. It is proposed therefore that the SWAC programme is no longer provided to schools, and the two posts allocated to the programme are removed from the establishment in the Place Commissioning Group, and the funding associated with the employment of the current officer is released as a budget saving with effect from 1 April 2020.
9. Presently, only one of the posts has an incumbent, and although two posts are still within the establishment only one of those posts is currently funded.

Other Options Considered

10. To continue to provide the service free of charge to schools or seek to offer the service to schools on a chargeable basis was deemed unaffordable, as no guarantee could be made as to the likelihood of recovering any or all of the costs incurred by retaining the posts.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. As noted in the Background of this report the national position on recycling within the wider environmental agenda and the context of the national curriculum has changed significantly over the course of the last 20 years and the current SWAC model is considered no longer appropriate.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

13. As noted above although two SWAC related posts are identified within the approved establishment only one post is currently funded.
14. Cessation of the SWAC programme will save around £42,000 per annum in direct and indirect employee costs, however should it not prove possible to redeploy the current incumbent redundancy costs will be incurred.

Human Resources Implications

15. Standard County Council processes will apply to the structural changes, and any staffing implications.
16. A draft of this report has been shared with the trade unions and no comments have been received.
17. As described the identified employee has been consulted formally of the proposed changes to the effected post. The changes will mean an overall loss of 1fte, as one post is currently vacant.

Support will be offered to the employee at risk and every effort will be made to redeploy using the Councils agreed Redeployment Policy.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) Approve the cessation of the Schools Waste Action Club (SWAC) programme with effect from 1 April 2020, and the associated reduction in the staffing establishment in the Place Commissioning Group;
- 2) Approve any statutory processes necessary to reduce the staffing establishment including redundancy of the current incumbent if required.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Place and Communities

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mick Allen, Group Manager, Place Commissioning, Tel: 0115 9774684

Constitutional Comments [KK - 23/9/2019]

18. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Communities and Place Committee

Financial Comments [RWK 23/09/2019]

19. The proposal in the report to cease the Schools Waste Action Club with effect from 1 April 2020 will result in an annual saving estimated at £42,000.
20. Any redundancy costs incurred would be funded from the contingency budget for which a sum of £4.6 million is included in the 209/20 revenue budget.

HR Comments [EC 24/10/2019]

21. Any proposals will be subject to a formal consultation period with staff and the recognised trade unions, and standard County Council processes will apply to the structural changes, and any staffing implications.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All