

20 March 2017

Agenda Item: 6

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

THE OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICE'S INCREASED OFFER IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Committee on the Outdoor & Environmental Education Service's (OEE) increased offer in conjunction with the Commercial Development Unit (CDU), from 1 April 2017, to create long term increased income to deliver a cost neutral budget by 2020/21.

Information and Advice

2. On 16th November 2016, Policy Committee approval was given to invest £130,000 over two years to enable the OEE Service to become cost neutral to the Council, whilst continuing to deliver an extensive offer of challenging educational activities for the children and young people of Nottinghamshire. This forms part of the Commercial Development Unit's remit to explore potential income generation opportunities of the Council's services.
3. The £69,000 investment in 2017/18 and a further £61,000 in 2018/19 will enable the Service to market services to nearby areas, where there is little outdoor education provision. Particular focus will be on The Mill Adventure Base, where there is currently under occupancy in the cooler seasons, as follows:
 - increasing the occupancy of the 'Pods' residential experience
 - increasing day visits by primary schools
 - increasing the offer of out of school 'Holiday clubs'
 - growing the market for the 'Forest Schools' environmental programme
 - growing the market for 'Wildthings' first camp experience
 - growing the commercial market for the indoor climbing facility
 - utilising opportunities created by Ashfield District Council's successful Heritage Lottery Fund bid which will improve the infrastructure at King's Mill Reservoir.
4. Additional income will also be generated through the following;
 - increasing the outside of term-time occupancy rate at both Hagg Farm and St Michael's residential centres

- market research, through the CDU process, also demonstrated that the service was of a high quality but was charging a lower price than competitors, therefore pricing will be adjusted to reflect the market
 - increasing the Service's market share of contracts outside of the County's schools at charges above 'full cost recovery', which will generate a surplus to reinvest in Nottinghamshire
 - developing a solid offer to schools based on the changes to the Duke of Edinburgh Award licensing arrangements
 - negotiating improved leasing arrangements for Hagg Farm and St Michael's residential centres.
5. Following consultation with the staff team, the investment will be used to increase income by more than £200,000 p.a. by 2020/21. This will be achieved through improving the commercial offer and marketing the Service's offer to a wider audience through:
- creating appropriate marketing materials, both hard copy and online including the use of social media
 - providing public Wi-Fi facilities at The Mill Adventure Base
 - implement an online booking /payments facility for the Service
 - for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2019, releasing the Team Manager from their current direct delivery responsibilities at Hagg Farm Residential Centre, to concentrate on directly marketing the Service to a wider number of schools and developing other sustainable commercial market opportunities.

Other Options Considered

6. Consideration was given to several options though the Commercial Development Unit's Pilot Project arrangements but this proposed option was selected as the most viable to deliver a cost neutral OEE Service by 2020/21. The Service has also examined the possibility of a differing delivery model for The Mill Adventure Base, with possibly a third party managing the facility at either zero cost to, or a small income to, the Council; due to uncertainties about access to the reservoir for water activities during the next few years, this is not considered a feasible option at this time.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

7. The increased commercial offer, outlined in **paragraph 5**, will create a long term increase in income, to deliver a cost neutral OEE Service by 2020/21.

Statutory and Policy Implications

8. 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 services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, 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

9. The initial investment required to implement commercial plans was approved by Policy Committee on 16th November 2016 and will be met from the Strategic Development Fund.

Human Resources Implications

10. None, other than honorarium arrangements for two current members of staff and an increase from 0.6 FTE to 1 FTE for one of them, so that the Service can concentrate this two year period to directly market the Service to schools and develop other sustainable markets.

Implications for Service Users

11. Secure a long term future for the offer of outdoor and environmental activities to children and young people of Nottinghamshire.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee notes the Outdoor & Environmental Education Service increased offer in conjunction with the Commercial Development Unit (CDU), from 1 April 2017, to create long term increased income to deliver a cost neutral budget by 2020/21.

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Constitutional Comments

12. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 01/03/17)

13. The financial implications of the report are contained within paragraph 3 and paragraph 9 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.

Commercial Development Unit - report to Policy Committee on 16 November 2016

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0950