

Report of the Cabinet Member for Education

Cabinet – 21 April 2016

REVIEW OF SCHOOL MUSIC SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

Purpose:	The report seeks a decision following the joint consultation on a proposal with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to disaggregate the shared music service and to establish a new music service in Swansea to support Swansea schools from 1 September 2016
Policy framework:	Sustainable Swansea
Reason for decision:	To confirm the disaggregation of the shared music service and to establish a new music service in Swansea to support Swansea schools from 1 September 2016
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, HR, Commercial Services, Sustainable Swansea (Education Strategy)
Recommendation(s):	To agree to disaggregation the shared music service and to establish a new music service in Swansea to support Swansea schools from 1 September 2016
Report author:	Kelly Small
Finance officer:	Ben Smith
Legal officer:	Stephen Holland
Access to Services officer:	Phil Couch

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The West Glamorgan Music Service (WGMS) is a joint-working service between the City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC). Staff are employed by each of the local authorities but can work across schools in both councils. Staff are on teachers' pay and conditions and the majority are employed to provide peripatetic instrumental music tuition at schools.

- 1.2 It is important to note the proposal is not to end the provision of a music service to schools. The proposal is related to bringing clarity and financial transparency to the business model. Staff need to be clear over who is their employer and which schools they work with. The City and County of Swansea recognises the rich history of WGMS and the excellence of the youth ensembles. These will continue to operate jointly with NPTCBC as they are self-funding but with clear accounting
- 1.3 The WGMS music offer to schools is mainly funded by schools via a service level agreement (SLA) buy-back but there is also a central subsidy provided by each of the local authorities. In Swansea, this subsidy was set at £232k for 2015-2016. Buy-back from schools was budgeted at £720k. However, a number of schools did not buy-back and income is now calculated at £681k. This will place additional pressure on the service and place at risk the opportunity for children and young people to learn a wide range of instruments, and to develop singing so that they can go on to perform in ensembles and choirs
- 1.4 Council had originally proposed to remove the central subsidy on 1 April 2016 but have agreed to continue funding the subsidy for this service into the financial year 2016-2017 (albeit within a still reduced overall level of budgeted core subsidy) while a service review is undertaken. However, in the longer term, the subsidies available from Swansea and NPTCBC are likely to differ, and neither local authority is able to financially subsidise schools in the other local authority. Therefore, NPTCBC officers are also proposing to end the joint-working arrangement. We will though continue to collaborate closely with NPTCBC to ensure the range of staff skills and resources meet need.
- 1.5 Regardless of the level of financial subsidy, there needs to be clarity over the cost of the service to each local authority; particularly in these times of austerity and potentially reducing SLA buy-back from schools. The needs of schools need to be met in the most cost-effective, efficient way to ensure schools can afford music tuition for their pupils without increasing charges to families. The future sustainability of the services in both local authorities requires affordable tuition costs to schools to produce young musicians to join the ensembles

2. Consultation on the proposal to disaggregate the Music Service

- 2.1 Consultation took place with staff, trade unions, schools and other interested parties during the period 9 February 2016 until 10 March 2016. The attached joint local authority consultation paper (Appendix A) was circulated widely and made available on the council's website. Joint meetings were also held with staff employed by both local authorities and also with trade union representatives.
- 2.2 956 response letters were received during the consultation period, as well as two petitions (one with 6090 electronic signatures).

- 2.3 The main points raised by those responding to the consultation related to the financial subsidy for the service or a misconception that the proposal was to end the service completely; however, this was not a part of the consultation. The proposal is to create a music service in each of the local authorities, funded by each respective local authority, with staff employed by that local authority to serve the schools maintained by that council.
- 2.4 A summary of the consultation responses is attached at Appendix B.

3. Equality and engagement implications

- 3.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been drafted with no major issues identified.
- 3.2 The EIA will be updated to reflect ongoing developments as the proposal progresses.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 There should be minimal direct financial implications from this proposal to disaggregate the service alone.
- 4.2 However it should be noted that if schools do not buy back the SLA (regardless of the outcome of the proposal to disaggregate the service) then there could be redundancies in either of the local authorities, as currently, schools in Swansea are serviced by staff employed by NPTCBC and vice-versa. This potential has always been present given that the bulk of the funding has always been generated by schools purchasing the service via SLA, and so a disaggregation of the service does not impact on this.
- 4.3 Furthermore, notwithstanding the council's decision to continue funding whilst the review of the service is undertaken the core annual subsidy provided by the council, as reflected in the budget set, has been reduced from £232k 2015-2016 to £124k in 2016-2017. The service will ultimately have to be structured to live within the overall budget available to it through a combination of the new, lower central subsidy and the total income received from the SLA with schools.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal support will be provided in relation to any employment issues arising from any transfer of employment contract or if any subsequent restructure involves the potential for redundancies.

Background Paper: None

Appendices: Appendix A – Consultation paper
Appendix B – Summary of consultation responses