

OPTION: REMOVING SUBSIDIES SCHOOLS MUSIC SERVICE

BUDGET SAVING: £21,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council currently provides a Schools Music Service. The service has for many years received a small subsidy from the Council.

The option in this area is to remove the subsidy and ensure that it brings in enough income to break even. This will be done through increased marketing and seeking sponsorship.

The Music Service has a budget of £825,000 which is mostly funded by school contributions and grants. Currently in the Music Service there is a full time Business Manager, a part time secretary (2 days per week), a head of Music Service and 14.2 FTE music teachers. Music Educators are employed on a contractual basis to provide instrumental tuition.

The Music Service receives a grant from the Arts Council to support the delivery of the Wider Opportunities programme – a national programme whereby all Year 4 pupils have access to a year of music tuition. Currently Wirral has more schools (94% of primary schools) participating in the Wider Opportunities programme than almost all local authorities. In order to receive the grant the Music Service had to consult with other music providers to form a Music Hub. Currently Wirral Council and Cheshire West & Chester (CWaC) Council are the main leads in the Hub. This grant will reduce over a 3 year period. In 2012/13 the grant is £571,900, in 2013/14 the grant will be £120,000 less.

The Music Service was completely restructured in 2010 / 2011. The service had been previously identified for reconfiguration as there was a year-on-year overspend of approximately £100,000.

The Arts Council grant can not be guaranteed in the future so plans need to be in place so that income generation exceeds expenditure so making the service financially stable.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

There is a small net subsidy for the Schools Music Service from the Council of £20,600. This savings proposal would cease any net subsidy from the Children and Young People's Budget in light of agreements in place with schools to pay for the third term of the Wider Opportunities programme. This, together with other income generating initiatives should offset the grant reduction and provide the budget saving required.

Options for income generation could include:

- Increasing the hourly music tuition rate from £36 / hour per class for 10 weeks to £40.
- Generating income by charging for children attending Music Centres.

- Actively marketing the services to secondary schools to increase the take up to more than four schools.
- Increasing the availability of small group instrument tuition available for parents to purchase out of school hours (evenings and weekends).

Other alternatives would be to look at reducing leadership and staffing costs by combining the service with Cheshire West and Cheshire. As a minimum 2 leadership posts plus a small amount of administrative salary costs could be saved. The Council could also reduce costs by employing Music Educators to deliver aspects of the Wider Opportunities programme.

IMPACT

This savings proposal would cease any net subsidy from the Children and Young People's Budget. The Music Service already has agreements in place with schools to pay for the third term of the Wider Opportunities programme. This, together with other income generating initiatives should offset the grant reduction and provide the budget saving required. The Wider Opportunities programme is optional for schools. Schools who do not take up this offer are preventing Year 4 pupils having access to a universal service.

In respect of the Schools Music Service, schools are currently responsible for passing on charges for instrumental tuition to parents or using their remissions policies to provide tuition to pupils free of charge. If the Music Service is to provide instrumental tuition at Music Centres and after school the current local authority policy will need to be reviewed as the service will have an increase in costs if tuition is given free to some pupils.

MITIGATION

Where schools do not implement a remissions policy there could be fewer pupils in poorer wards accessing music tuition. However, Pupil Premium received by schools may be used