

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	JOINT WORK WITH THE ISLE OF WIGHT TO PROVIDE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND EDUCATION RELATED SERVICES
DATE OF DECISION:	24 OCTOBER 2011
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	

BRIEF SUMMARY

This report provides information on the developing partnership with the Isle of Wight Council, and gives detail on the specific support to be provided in the area of school improvement support and challenge, the provision of statutory responsibilities in relation to those pupils with special educational needs and potentially other areas of children's services related activity including co-ordination of the early years support function and advice and support to school leavers with few or no qualifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Having complied with paragraph 15 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules:

- (i) To agree to the development of a working relationship with the Isle of Wight Council to provide school improvement and related education functions for an initial period covering the academic year 2011/12
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services and Learning following consultation with the Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services to do anything necessary to support, plan and implement the collaborative working arrangements.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report is submitted for consideration as a General Exception under paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the City Council's Constitution, notice having been given to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Public. In order to progress the joint working arrangements, a decision is required as soon as possible and before the publication of the next forward plan.
2. Both the Isle of Wight and Southampton City councils are seeking greater efficiencies in their delivery. Through this joint working relationship, both authorities will be able to rationalise delivery whilst maintaining a focus on statutory duties and outcomes for children, young people and families. .
3. The Isle of Wight Council has a number of statutory responsibilities which it is currently relying upon contractors to fulfil. This limits continuity or confidence amongst the school community. A traded services arrangement with Southampton City Council would provide immediate access to a broader range of expertise than the council currently is able to secure. It would give some Southampton City Council staff the opportunity to work on a broader scale and will ease the sharing of expertise across the head teacher groups in both local authorities.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

4. Not to work in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council to deliver school improvement and related services. This would reduce the ability of both authorities to gain efficiencies in the management and delivery of services.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

5. By the two authorities working together, sharing expertise and combining resources and purchasing power; the level and quality of services being delivered to residents and visitors will be sustained more efficiently and at less cost to the council taxpayer. The only changes our customers should see are improved services.
6. The Isle of Wight's schools and learning function has recently been reviewed as part of a council restructure and, following internal recruitment, only one post has been filled on a permanent basis. The result is that the council does not have ongoing access to the range and breadth of skills and experience required to meet its statutory responsibilities.
7. Southampton City Council has retained an experienced school improvement service and has been seeking ways to sustain the delivery through trading services. The role and responsibilities of local authorities with regard to school improvement is changing and the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, gives greater autonomy to schools. Further changes are planned, including consideration of a national formula for school funding. This is likely to further reduce the budgets that the councils will have for this area of activity. Standards on the Isle of Wight, particularly at primary school age 11, are low and the council is committed to working with schools, especially in the first few years of the new two tier school organisational structure, to address the standards issue.
8. With regard to the provision of the statutory educational psychology service on the Isle of Wight, there have been several attempts to recruit qualified staff in recent years and this process has been unsuccessful and there are, currently, no qualified staff in post.
9. The Isle of Wight Council has rejected the option to seek a range of short term contracts with specialists from within the private sector. The council has already used this approach to provide the educational psychology service and the feedback is that while some contractors are valued the lack of continuity is an issue.
10. Therefore, The Isle of Wight Council is recommending entering into an initial explorative arrangement with Southampton City Council to provide a range of staff with the relevant qualifications and expertise, while at the same time providing Southampton access to staff from the Isle of Wight who have expertise and experience that they are able to utilise and would value.
11. This agreement has the potential to provide longer term sustainability as this enables Southampton to retain some key staff. Initially, proposals are being developed for initial spot purchased services for school standards, educational psychology, specialist teachers, National Leader in Education support for failing a school on the Island, and strategic and operational management.
12. The work, detailed in this paper, dovetails with wider authority collaboration across other Directorates e.g. Environment, Economic Development

13. The recent programme of changes to terms and conditions will be maintained, unions will be consulted about any differences in working practices, and that any additional staff employed to deliver contracted work will be employed on fixed term contracts.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

14. There are no capital implications.
15. A consistent schedule of charges will be agreed with Finance to ensure that the full cost of services provided is charged. Any efficiencies made will contribute to the Council's savings proposals.

Property/Other

16. There are no property/other implications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

17. Each upper tier local authority must have a mechanism to monitor the performance of its schools (in particular, standards and finance) and the ability to provide advice to schools that are identified as failing or at risk of failing. Each Authority will maintain this duty through their statutory Directors of Children's Services. Those responsibilities cannot be delegated and will continue to be provided as per current arrangements.
18. Local authorities also have responsibilities with regard to distribution of the dedicated schools grant, school admissions, home to education transport and safeguarding, sufficiency of school places and health and safety. These areas are not affected by this proposal and will remain the responsibility of designated chief and senior officers within the Council.

Other Legal Implications:

19. The exact mechanism for the delivery of services together with Human Resources, contractual, insurance and indemnity and other operational requirements will be determined and subject to appropriate partnership / memorandum of understanding / contractual agreements as the proposals are developed and implemented with the benefit of ongoing legal and other professional advice.
20. All services delivered under the joint working arrangements will be subject to compliance with all relevant pervasive legislation including the Equalities Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

21. The proposals have implications for the Children and Young People's Plan, the City Council Plan and the 14-19 Strategy.

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KEY DECISION? Yes

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1	None
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Documents In Members' Rooms

1	None
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Integrated Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to be carried out.	N/A
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Other Background Documents

Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at: N/A

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None	
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