

COMMITTEE: ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
DATE: 5 MARCH 2008
SUBJECT: FREE ENTITLEMENT PROJECT MANAGER POST
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND LEARNING
CONTACT OFFICER: DAVID BRUCE

IMPLICATIONS:

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| LEGAL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | COMMUNITY SAFETY | |
| EQUALITIES | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | ENVIRONMENT | |
| FINANCIAL | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | CONSULTATIONS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| STAFFING | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | OTHER | |

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

PURPOSE

1. To seek approval for the appointment of a one year fixed term post to project manage the Wave 2 Pathfinder Project for the introduction of the Flexible Free Extended Educational Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year Olds in Luton.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. Administration Committee is recommended to approve the appointment of a Free Entitlement Project Manager post for a fixed term until April 2009 in order to drive forward the Wave 2 Pathfinder Project in Luton.

BACKGROUND

3. During the financial year 2008/09 Luton Borough Council has been asked by DCSF to become a Wave 2 Pathfinder Authority to trial the

implementation of the Extended Free Flexible Offer for Three and Four Year Olds.

4. Although the Wave 2 pathfinder is specific to the earlier implementation within Luton of the extended flexible free entitlement, it also provides a focus and significant capital funds for the LA to utilise in shaping the local market and influencing future delivery. There are linkages to all aspects of early years services and the pilot has the potential to support the local authority's strategic forward planning across the early years sector. It is therefore important that the planning and project management of this area of work are appropriately resourced, with attention to ensuring strategic alignment is built in with the following activities:
 - Funding reforms
 - Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
 - Early years foundation stage curriculum
 - Universal children's centre coverage
 - Development of extended services in and around schools
 - Implementation of Luton's Play Strategy
 - School place planning
 - Workforce development
 - Support to providers re Ofsted registration and inspection
 - etc

It also provides an opportunity for Luton to identify key barriers to engagement, to bring these to the attention of DCSF and to explore ways of removing these barriers in collaboration with the DCSF Free Entitlement team.

REPORT

5. The DCSF has provided the following definition of the Flexible Free Entitlement, which Wave 2 Pathfinders are being asked to test out:

Local authorities should ensure that parents are able to access, if they wish, free provision

- over **a minimum of 3 days per week**
- between **8.00am and 6.00pm**
- for **at least 6 hours a day**
- In **sessions of 2 hours or more**
- From **a maximum of 2 collaborating providers**
- over **15 hours per week** for a minimum of **38 weeks** per year.

6. The Wave 2 pathfinders will be testing the DCSF's current definition of flexibility from 2008, to inform the implementation of a national entitlement from September 2009 onwards (implementation of the entitlement in more disadvantaged communities from September 2009, and nationally from September 2010). Although the expectation is that Wave 2 pathfinders will

implement the extended entitlement from September 2008, earlier implementation from April 2008 is allowable.

7. In addition to revenue funding for the existing free education entitlement of 12 hours per week for 38 weeks, Luton will receive the following funding:

| | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Revenue | - | 1,020,542 | 1,850,696 | 1,776,997 |
| Capital | - | 1,090,752 | 1,090,752 | 1,090,752 |
| Project management | 15,000 | 20,000 | - | - |

Revenue:

- Budget allocations are calculated with approximately 40% intended to fund increased flexibility
- Allocations for the additional 2.5 hours are dependant on actual pupil numbers
- Q&A from DFSC states that revenue funding can be used for marketing and communications if LAs consider that this will incentivise flexibility

Capital:

- to enable PVI providers to deliver extended entitlement and to do so flexibly
- to support delivery of EYFS, with particular focus on improving play and physical activities
- ICT resources to ensure access by all children, including those with disabilities

Can also be used to address the following issues:

- Facilities to provide lunch or breakfast
- Availability and appropriateness of outside play space and equipment
- Availability of inside space for rest

Project Management:

- Total amount for project management will be confirmed once the delivery profile is established with each LA
- DCSF contacts are currently exploring scope for the whole allocation to be received by Luton in 2008/09 budget year
- Proposals to top up project management funding from revenue will be considered on a case by case basis.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no legal implications as agreed with J. Newman in Legal Services on 15 February 2008.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9. The Flexible Free Entitlement is a universal entitlement within the terms of the Wave 2 Pathfinder project, and the Project Manager will need to ensure that it is accessible to all 3 & 4 year olds attending provision in Luton, determining suitable adjustments to premises, transport, free meal entitlements etc to remove any potential barriers to children from vulnerable backgrounds.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are the following financial implications as agreed with the Head of Corporate Finance on 15 February 2008:

Funding is included within the revenue grant for project management of the pathfinder, although the total amount for project management will be confirmed once the delivery profile is established with each LA. Proposals to top up project management funding from revenue will be considered on a case-by-case basis. DCSF will also consider requests to carry forward 2007-08 Project Management grant if it is not fully utilised in that financial year. The post is being proposed on a fixed term basis, so full costs should be available through Wave 2 Pathfinder Revenue Grant during 2008-09 and there will be no further call on Local Authority funds.

HR IMPLICATIONS

11. There are the following HR implications as agreed with Chris Goulding Head of HR on 15 February 2008.

The introduction of the Flexible Free Education Entitlement could have implications for staff working in schools and other settings, as they are required to work more flexibly. This will be subject to further work by the Project Manager as the implications are identified, and Unions will be consulted and involved in any proposed changes. The appointment of the Project Manager post in itself, however, has no significant HR implications.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

12. It is proposed that Administration Committee approves the creation of and recruitment to this post.

APPENDIX

Job Description – Free Entitlement Project Manager.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D

There are no relevant background papers.