

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**PEOPLE  
CABINET MEMBER**

**REVIEW OF JOINT ARRANGEMENTS FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES TO  
CHILDREN WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENT AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) note the agreement between North Lincolnshire, East Riding, Hull and North East Lincolnshire to withdraw by mutual consent from the Joint Arrangement for delivery of education support services for hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability
- b) initiate a consultation on the future organisation of education support services for hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability; seizing the opportunity to design a more flexible, and effective service and improving value for money
- c) note the requirement for a further report following consultation to approve the withdrawal from the Joint Arrangement and simultaneously implement an improved service model, maintaining continuity of service to users

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 North Lincolnshire Council, East Riding Council, Hull City Council and North East Lincolnshire Council are partners in a Joint Arrangement to deliver education support services to children and young people with hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability.
- 2.2 North Lincolnshire is in this Joint Arrangement for visual impairment and physical disability services. North East Lincolnshire is in the arrangement for hearing impairment and visual impairment services. East Riding and Hull are in the arrangement for hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability services.
- 2.3 The arrangements have been under review since March 2011. During that period, there have been regular meetings of officers from each local authority including lead officers for the joint arrangements, Legal Services and Human Resources. An outcome of these meetings is that all four local authorities are

in agreement that the current arrangements are no longer fit for purpose and should be disbanded in favour of a less restrictive model of service delivery.

- 2.4 Each local authority has agreed to seek the approval of their Cabinet Member in respect of withdrawing from the current arrangement.
- 2.5 The current arrangement is based on a 'lead authority' model in which all staff work to the policies and procedures of the lead authority irrespective of their employing authority. There are material differences between the policy and procedure of the lead authority and one or more of the other partner authorities which can cause service delivery problems.
- 2.6 Each local authority has been working to develop ideas for new, possible service models, structures and partnership arrangements. Key guiding principles include:
  - **providing the best possible educational outcomes for children and young people who need this specialist support**
  - **ensuring that service capacity is responsive to locally identified need and that service delivery is responsive to the specific needs of users**
  - **improving systems of governance and accountability**
  - **delivering improved value for money**
- 2.7 Officers from each local authority are in the process of finalising proposals for service provision and for possible staffing structures, based on the points described in 2.6 above. These proposals will be used as part of the consultation process if the recommendations in the current report are approved. The proposed consultation period would be to commence in July 2012. All four local authorities are working carefully together to ensure that consistent messages go out to all stakeholders at the same time.
- 2.8 A further report is required following consultation to approve the withdrawal from the Joint Arrangement and simultaneously implement a new service model, maintaining continuity of service to users. This will need to be approved by each local authority.

### 3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1: To note the agreement of North Lincolnshire, East Riding, Hull and North East Lincolnshire officers that all four local authorities should withdraw from the current joint arrangements for providing education support services and open consultation processes on new service models. For North Lincolnshire this presents an opportunity to redesign and improve services for children with visual impairment and physical disability.
- 3.2 Option 2: Not to agree with the other three local authorities and thus not plan to withdraw from the current arrangements or to open consultation processes on proposed new service models. North Lincolnshire would then be

committed to a Joint Arrangement that the other local authorities have agreed to withdraw from.

#### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1 would ensure that North Lincolnshire can prepare to withdraw from an arrangement to deliver key services to disabled children that is no longer fit for purpose. The consistent legal advice from all four local authority legal services officers is that taking the steps to withdraw from the current arrangements, as set out in the legal document underwriting the arrangements, is necessary before being able to consult on anything that might take its place. Withdrawal from the Joint Arrangement would enable this consultation process to take place and do so in a co-ordinated way and over a co-ordinated timescale with the other three local authorities involved. The current arrangements will continue on a 'business as usual' basis during the period of notice and until any new arrangements were in place. A further report to Cabinet Member will be required before implementing an alternative to the current Joint Arrangement.
- 4.2 Option 2 would mean that a set of arrangements that are no longer fit for purpose will continue for a significant group of disabled children in North Lincolnshire. However, they may also become even less fit for purpose if not unworkable, if one or more of the other three local authorities decide to withdraw.

#### **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

##### **5.1 Financial**

The joint arrangement will not deliver value for money into the future. The accountability arrangements within the current arrangement do not enable each local authority to exercise control over its annual spend and they do not enable each authority to implement its own necessary performance management, including around the accountability of staff for the educational achievement and progress of children and young people supported by the service.

Option 1: The plans being worked on for a proposed new service model are being drawn up within the financial envelope of the current annual budget for this service area which is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Option 2: Management costs of the current arrangement have risen year on year and if no changes are made to the joint arrangements it will not be possible to take the necessary action to remedy this effectively.

- 5.2 Staffing: The current arrangement involves 122 staff working across the four local authorities. Each local authority employs a proportion of the staff and each on their authority's terms and conditions, which are not consistent across the four authorities. There are no specific staffing implications to report at present. They will be described in a subsequent report should option 1 be approved.

5.3 Property: There are no specific property implications to report at present. Any such implications will be described in a subsequent report should option 1 be approved.

5.4 IT: There are no specific IT implications. to report at present. Any such implications will be described in a subsequent report should option 1 be approved.

**6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 There are no environmental or other implications arising from this report.

**7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 There are no outcomes of consultation to report at present. If the recommendations of this report are approved, there will be a large-scale consultation process on possible new arrangements which will be presented in a further report.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves option 1.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

The Civic Centre  
Ashby Road  
Scunthorpe  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB

Author: Alan Reynolds

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

“An Agreement relating to the provision of Educational Special Needs Services: Kingston upon Hull City Council and The East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council.”