

Subject:	The Impact of School Costs on Families		
Date of Meeting:	20 April 2009		
Report of:	Director of Children's Services		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Gil Sweetenham	Tel: 293433
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 A Notice of Motion regarding the impact of school costs on families was considered at Council in October 2008 and included a request for a report on this issue to the Children & Young People's Trust Board. This report outlines the background to the issue and outlines proposed action to be taken to support schools and families.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the CYPT Board notes the following actions that are being taken in response to the Notice of Motion considered at Council in October 2008:
- 2.1.1 Guidance from the 'Adding Up' campaign will be circulated to all schools within the City, including their 'Top Ten Tips' for schools to adopt to help parents
- 2.1.2 Schools will be provided with a list of charities that can support families with costs associated with children attending school.
- 2.1.3 Schools will be reminded of their statutory duty to ensure their policies do not disadvantage any children.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 A Notice of Motion regarding the impact of school costs on families went to Council in October 2008 (Appendix I) and a report was requested for the CYPT Board. The Motion was accepted by Council which resolved to give its support to the 'Adding Up' campaign led by the Citizen's Advice Bureau that highlights the range and impact of school costs on families and gives guidance to schools on how those costs can be mitigated.
- 3.2 The Motion also instructed the Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove City Council to write to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families urging him to:

- Accept the requests in Early Day Motion 1234 from John Battle MP that a statutory duty is placed on local authorities to provide uniform grants for families in receipt of maximum child tax credit
 - For the Government to identify a budget for the provision of standardised school uniform and school trips grant to Local Authorities
 - Consider making the school costs requirement of the new Admissions Code enforceable via the Schools Adjudicator who should have the power to investigate on behalf of parents.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive received a reply from the Department of Children, Schools and Families on 12 November 2008 (Appendix II). In summary the response highlighted the statutory duty on all governing bodies to ensure that their policies do not disadvantage any children. The response also identified that LA's have discretionary power to provide grants and that all maintained schools must comply with the law on charging for school activities.
- 3.4 The Council works actively with all schools to ensure they comply with the new Admissions Code.
- 3.5 The Council is aware of the Citizen's Advice Bureau campaign which aims to get schools to adopt best practice with regard to supporting needy families with the cost of school trips, uniform, specialist equipment etc. All schools will be issued with copies of guidance from the 'Adding Up' campaign including 'Top Ten Tips'.
- 3.6 The Council has not provided funding to support parents with school uniforms in the last ten years. Some funding is, however, available from local charities and the list of these charities will be reissued to schools.
- 3.7 There are no plans to agree a local discretionary school uniform grant. The establishment of a discretionary school uniform grant would require a redirection of CYPT resources which are already fully committed for 2009/10.
- 3.8 All schools in Brighton & Hove are encouraged to make uniforms as accessible as possible to all families by identifying uniform items that can be purchased cheaply through supermarkets and their own school shops. Many schools provide second-hand uniform shops. Schools also fulfil the strict criteria related to school trips ensuring that compulsory and essential educational visits are made available to all students regardless of their ability to pay.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The cost of the two recommendations in this report will be met from within existing Local Authority budgets. Under the Schools Finance Regulations discretionary uniform grants are chargeable to the Local Authority budget and not the Dedicated Schools Grant. This means that if the Council decided to introduce

such grants then funding would need to be identified from within the CYPT Local Authority budget.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates

Date: 26/03/2009

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 At present LEA's have a discretionary power under sections 510 and 511 Education Act 1996 to provide school clothing grants or to help with the cost of school clothing in cases of financial hardship. As set out in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 above the Council does not currently exercise this discretion. Schools should however ensure that their school uniform policy is fair and reasonable. Furthermore the School Admissions Code of Practice 2009 advises that schools should have arrangements in place to ensure that families do not feel unable to apply for admission to particular schools because of the high uniform costs.

Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston

Date: 8/4/2009

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The actions outlined in this report will support equality of opportunity for all pupils.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 None

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 None.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendation in this report is that the CYPT Board notes the actions that are being taken in response to the Notice of Motion considered by Council in October 2008. These actions are intended to express the Council's support to the 'Adding Up' campaign led by the Citizen's Advice Bureau that highlights the range and impact of school costs on families and gives guidance to schools on how those costs can be mitigated.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Notice of Motion.
2. Response from DCSF to CEO.

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None