

CABINET MEMBER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, CULTURE AND LEISURE

Venue: Town Hall,
Moorgate Street,
Rotherham.

Date: Tuesday, 24th January 2006

Time: 9.00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
3. Accreditation for Museums - the new National Standards Scheme (Guy Kilminster, Libraries, Museums and Arts Manager) (report herewith). (Pages 1 - 4)
- to consider the financial implications of meeting the Museum Accreditation Standards alongside the budget-setting process for 2006-07.
4. Changes to Higher Education Student Finance 2006 (Angela Milton/Alison Leone, Student Support) (report herewith). (Pages 5 - 9)
- to consider how changes to tuition fees is debated and developed
5. Review of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery (Alison Leone/Angela Milton, Student Support) (report herewith) (Pages 10 - 14)
- to consider the way forward

The following item is likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

6. Herringthorpe Leisure Complex and former Horticultural Nursery Consultancy Exercise (Phil Rogers, Head of Service Culture and Leisure) (report herewith). (Pages 15 - 19)
- to approve a request to waive Standing Orders to allow the employment of a Contractor to undertake a feasibility study
7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure
2.	Date:	24th January 2006
3.	Title:	Accreditation for Museums – the new National Standards Scheme
4.	Programme Area:	Children & Young People’s Services

5. Summary

The Museum Accreditation Scheme is the national minimum set of standards for UK museums. It replaces the existing Registration Scheme, under which Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham Art Gallery and the York and Lancaster Regimental Museum have been Registered as fit for purpose. All three museums will be invited to apply for Accredited Status in January 2006.

The Accreditation Standards are both more challenging and wider ranging than those covered by the existing Registration Scheme. Failure to achieve Accreditation will have serious implications and the work required must be planned for and delivered before the July 2006 submission deadline.

6. Recommendations

Members receive the report and that the financial implications of meeting the Museum Accreditation Standards are considered as part of the budget setting process for 2006-07.

7. Proposals and Details

The Museum Accreditation Scheme is a set of nationally-agreed, and published, minimum standards for UK museums. Museums qualify for the Scheme by meeting clear basic requirements on how they care for and document their collections, how they are governed and managed, and on levels of information and services they offer to their users. The Scheme is a re-branded and much expanded replacement for the Museum Registration Scheme. Clifton Park Museum, Rotherham Art Gallery and York and Lancaster Regimental Museum are currently Registered museums. This Registered status will remain in place until the three museums are invited to apply for Accredited Status in January 2006.

The Accreditation Standards are divided into 4 sections: Governance and Museum Management; User Services; Visitor Facilities; and Collections Management.

The single greatest strength of the Service in relation to meeting the Standards is the recent improvements to user services and visitor facilities at Clifton Park Museum. However, the limited capacity of the Service has meant that this has only been achieved by scaling back on delivery and the of planning improvements at both the other museums. Similarly, the long-term focus on creating the new displays at Clifton Park Museum has, through lack of staff time and resources, witnessed a general slipping of standards for Collections Management.

In addition a report by Internal Audit in July 2005 on the Control and Security of Collections, highlighted areas of improvement with recommendations to improve aspects of the collections management to reduce the risk of loss. These would be issues that would need to be addressed to meet the Accreditation Standard.

8. Finance

Officers have now considered the implications of meeting the Accreditation Standards and the investment required. In summary these are:

Issue	Cost	Comment
Maintaining permanent exhibitions	£7,000	The Service has more 1250 m ² of permanent exhibitions but no budget to maintain and develop them. Accreditation requires Services to have in place 'planned programmes to institute improvements in collection care'
Temporary exhibitions and events	£6,000	There is no budget for temporary exhibitions or events. The Art Gallery in particular is at risk of failing Accreditation because of this.
Insurance revaluation	£20,000	The Internal Audit report has highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive revaluation of the Service's collections to ensure adequate insurance cover.

Replacement of Collection management software and data transfer	£67,000	The Internal Audit report has identified the existing MODES software as being inadequate as a tool for managing the collection. Accreditation requires a Service to use the primary documentation procedures of the SPECTRUM standard.
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A BIP has been completed as part of the 2006-07 budget planning process highlighting the investment required and the financial resources being bid for.

In addition to the above there is currently no revenue funding for storage of the collections or for the additional customer service staff required to run the 'new' Clifton Park Museum. These issues have been identified as part of the ongoing base budget review.

With severely limited revenue funding for exhibitions, events and marketing, the Service is also unable to deliver a sustained and quality programme of delivery, which also makes its income targets unachievable. Again the base budget review has drawn Members attention to this shortfall and its impact upon our capacity to fully exploit the Service.

9. Risks & Uncertainties

Whilst the Museums, Galleries and Heritage Service already meets some of the Accreditation Standards, and is working to tackle the areas where it is weakest, it is necessary to meet all of the Accreditation Standards for each museum in order to receive Accredited Status. Investment is required to ensure that this can be achieved. The Internal Audit report has emphasised areas of weakness that place the collections at risk and made recommendations for improvement. Resources are not available within the Service to implement those recommendations.

Failure to receive Accredited Status effectively means that the museums will no longer be recognised as meeting national standards. This will damage the reputation of the Service and Council and will impact upon the CPA score of the Culture and Leisure Service. It could also open up the possibility that donors/lenders will request that the collections are returned to them. The financial implications can be particularly severe – organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund will have a legitimate reason to demand the return of any grants awarded. The Service will also be debarred from bidding for further grants from a number of funding bodies.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Satisfying – and aiming to exceed – Accreditation Standards is fundamental to the work of the Museums, Galleries and Heritage Service in terms of its performance and its role in delivering the aims and objectives of Council policies. As both our short-listed projects for the Gulbenkian Prize and recently completed redevelopment of Clifton Park Museum have demonstrated, the three museums play an important role under the themes of Learning, Achieving, Alive, Safe and Proud.

The central issue in meeting Accreditation Standards is that of sustainability of the Service.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The Accreditation Scheme guidance is attached.

On 27/04/05, Robin McDermott, the Yorkshire Museums Libraries and Archives Council Regional Museums Advisor, visited Clifton Park Museum to explain how the Accreditation Scheme impacts on the three Rotherham museums.

The Head of Culture & Leisure and Senior Executive Director Children and Young Peoples Services have commented on the report.

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member Lifelong learning, Culture and Leisure
2.	Date:	24th January 2006
3.	Title:	Changes to Higher Education Student Finance 2006
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

From 1st September 2006, English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can charge a variable tuition fee of up to £3,000 for each year of an undergraduate course.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the report is noted and consideration is given as to how this debate is developed.

7. Proposals and Details

In accordance with the HE Act 2004, students starting courses at English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on or after 1st September 2006 can be charged a variable tuition fee of up to £3,000 for each year of the course. Along with the higher tuition fee, a new package of living cost support will also be introduced. The £3,000 cap on fees cannot be raised by more than inflation before 2010 at the earliest. Payment of the new tuition fee can be deferred until the end of a student's course by the student taking out a loan to cover the cost during the course. Those students who started courses before 1st September 2006, 'existing students', will remain on the current package of financial support and be charged an annual tuition fee of around £1,200 for each year of the course.

New Students

For new students starting undergraduate courses from September 2006, the financial support package will consist of the following elements:

- **Tuition Fee Loan** of up to £3,000, depending upon rate charged by chosen university. Loan is not subject to an assessment of household income.
- **Maintenance Grant** of up to £2,700 subject to assessment of household income.
 - At £17,500 gross income, the maximum is received,
 - minimum grant of £50 at income of £37,425.
 - No grant for income above £37,425.
- **Living Cost Loan** - rate dependant upon whether student living at home, in London, or away from home and not in London.
 - 75% of the loan is available to all students regardless of household income.
 - Maximum loan (100%) for a student living elsewhere (not at home or in London) will be £4,405.
 - Household income of around £49,000 and above will receive 75% of the living cost loan only.
 - For lower income households, a portion of the maintenance grant will substitute for part of the maintenance loan.
- **HEI Bursary** - universities wishing to charge more than the current standard fee rate will first have to enter into an Access Agreement with the Office for Fair trading (OFFA) showing how they would take action to make sure that students are not deterred from their chosen university because of higher fees. This involves the introduction of bursaries. As a minimum, any student receiving the full maintenance grant of £2,700 and on a course charging the maximum £3,000 fee, will receive a bursary from their institution of at least £300 per year.
- **Other grants** - income-assessed grants available for students who study abroad, those with children and those with a spouse or adult dependant.

There is also a non-income assessed grant for students with disabilities. New Special Support Grant instead of Maintenance Grant for students eligible for certain benefits or single parent students.

Existing Students

Those who started courses before 1st September 2006 will remain on the following support package:

- **Tuition Fee Grant/Loan** - Income-assessed grant towards the £1,200 fee. Students can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover any portion they are assessed as needing to pay themselves.
- **Higher Education Grant** – income-assessed grant towards living costs of up to £1,000. No grant for income above £21,955.
- **Living Cost Loan** paid the same rate as new starters, but different income level criteria. Household income above approx £43,000 will receive 75% of loan only.
- **Other Grants** - Same package as new starters except no Special Support Grant.
- **Access to Learning Fund** – Government funds given to universities to run their own schemes of targeted financial support. Priority normally given to student parents and mature students

Repayment of Student Loan

Student loans begin to accrue interest from the moment they are paid out. Interest rates are low and linked to inflation meaning that a student repays broadly the same, in real terms, as the value of what is borrowed.

Loan repayments commence the April after a student leaves or finishes a course and is earning over £15,000 a year. The repayment rate is set at 9% of earnings above £15,000. See table below for illustrative examples:

Gross annual income	Monthly repayment
£17,000	£15
£20,000	£37
£23,000	£60

Repayments are collected through PAYE by HMRC. A student can make early loan repayments and all loan balances (excluding arrears) which remain unpaid after 25 years will be written off.

8. Finance

All financial details are described in section 7.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It is unclear to what extent the public perception of student debt will deter students from starting university, or cause parents to not encourage their children to continue on into higher education.

The introduction of the loan to match the higher tuition does mean that no student should struggle financially to pay fees whilst at university. There will also be more financial support for living costs for students from low income backgrounds than is available at present.

The level of loan debt incurred by students will however increase from 2006: a student from a lower income background who has needed to take out a full tuition fee loan for 3 years and also living-cost loans is likely to owe at least £18,500 on graduation compared to around £13,000 at present.

Additionally, the new support package can appear complex and confusing. Indications are that the majority of HEIs will be charging the maximum fee of £3,000, with a smaller number charging reduced fees of £1,500 or £2,000. Many also seem to be offering bursaries and scholarships which are more generous than the minimum £300, and not necessarily restricted to those students in receipt of the full £2,700 maintenance grant.

When considering options for higher education therefore, prospective students must not only consider as previously the academic, social and cost of living implications of different institutions and courses, but will also have to take into account the level of tuition fee, financial bursaries and scholarships.

The level of applications will be assessed for the 2006/7 cycle in order to gain an indication of whether the increased fees have had an impact upon take-up rates for higher education amongst Rotherham students. Currently approximately 33% of school leavers progress to higher education courses, leading to 3,000 applications for financial support.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Nationally, the performance of local authorities is measured against targets set by a national Service Level Agreement implemented in August 2005 (see Report to Members 'Review of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery'). For the 2006 processing cycle, there are a number of factors which will have implications for LA performance against these targets:

- Time implications for the parallel processing for two types of support: new and existing package.
- Reliability of national on-line system during peak-processing period.
- Increased number of financial assessments due to raised income levels for new starters.
- Increased customer enquires during processing period due to new support package: university bursaries are dependant upon level of support assessed by LA.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

DfES: Higher Education Information team circular July 2005

SSIN 01/06 July 2005

SSIN 02/06 July 2005

SSIN 06/06 August 2005

SSIN 08/06 October 2005

SSIN 09/06 December 2005

DfES Service Level Agreement for the Higher Education Student Finance Service
between the DfES and the Local Authorities June 2005

DfES A Guide to Financial Support for Students in 2005/6 January 2005

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ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure
2.	Date:	24th January, 2006
3.	Title:	Review of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The DfES is currently conducting an end-to-end review of student finance delivery in England to consider centralisation of the service presently operated by Local Authorities in partnership with the Student Loans Company (SLC)

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the report is noted and consideration is given to the way forward.

7. Proposals and Details

Current Service Provision

Rotherham MBC receives and processes over 3000 applications for Higher Education Student Finance each year, in accordance with the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998, the Education (Student Support) Regulations and the functions transferred by the Secretary of State to Local Authorities in England.

Application statistics suggest that on average 33% of school leavers progress on to Higher Education each year in Rotherham (1998 to 2005).

The Student Support Service has a team of 5 FTE permanent staff. It offers an advice and guidance service and performs assessments of eligibility and entitlement to student loans and grants. Payments and collections of student loan repayments are made by the Student Loans Company.

The service utilises a national online database to record student data and perform assessments of support entitlement. The System Administrator is the Student Loans Company in Scotland.

Service Level Agreements

The Authority has been required in 2005 for the first time to give its formal commitment to a Service Level Agreement for the Higher Education Student Finance Service. Local Authorities are now individually accountable and responsible for a number of functions, of which the main elements are listed below:

- Provision of an information service (telephone helpline and 'drop-in' centre) to provide applicants and their sponsors with advice and guidance,
- the implementation of local management and administrative procedures for the processing of applications for higher education financial support,
- the accurate entry of data to the system, assessment and approval of eligibility and entitlement to such support,
- and the provision of adequate resources to allow applications to be processed in line with agreed SLA targets.

The main agreed processing targets are as follows:

- recording receipt of applications on to system within 3 working days,
- processing applications within 30 working days and 20 working days for paper and online applications respectively,
- providing access to a public information service between core hours of 0900 and 1630 and taking action on 'call-back' tasks (raised by the customer contact centre at the SLC) within 2 working days of receipt.

Local Authority performance against Service Level Agreements in 2005/2006 has been monitored by the SLC and DfES from August 2005. It should be noted that by 1st September 2005 Rotherham had processed 85% of all applications received exceeding the national average at that time of 78%. **All** applications received by Rotherham by the recommended date for submission (1st July 2005) had been fully processed at the beginning of the academic year.

Review of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery

The Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell announced on 7 June 2005 the terms of reference for a review of the delivery of higher education student finance in England. This end-to-end review is considering how the present student finance can be made more customer-focused, efficient and sufficiently flexible to respond to possible future changes in higher education. It will also consider the service in terms of the demands of the e-Government agenda and the findings of the Efficiency Review. The review will recommend options for change to the service to Ministers in January 2006.

The review is considering:

- the needs of customers, including the provision of advice and the needs of under-represented student groups;
- the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery processes and use of technology;
- clear objectives and challenging performance measures, benchmarked against comparable services;
- the relationship between the DfES and current/future delivery partner(s), allocation of responsibility and management of risks;
- Value-for-money and sufficient flexibility to deal with possible future changes in the higher education system

Pilot Scheme

The Department will conduct a Student Finance Delivery pilot scheme in the academic year 2006/2007 to assess the impact of different delivery models on services.

It is expected that the pilot scheme will help the DfES to quantify the impact of greater centralisation on:

- the quality of help and advice provided to applicants and their sponsors during the application process,
- the ease of access to this help and advice
- overall satisfaction with the level of service provided
- the unit costs of delivery,
- the accuracy and consistency of assessments,
- and the timeliness of processing

Volunteer Local Authorities have been selected to participate in one of two pilot schemes on the basis of size and customer base (that is, they cover the full range of

complex cases, social classes, income and residency issues). The two business models chosen for the pilot scheme are:

1. Fully centralised delivery

All student finance responsibilities currently discharged by the participating Local Authorities will be transferred to the Student Loans Company for the 2006/7 cycle, except for the provision of local pre-application information and advice. The pilot will therefore handle data entry, assessment and approval of payments.

Centralised Pilot Authorities: North Yorkshire, York City, Brent, Southwark, Hackney, Stockton-on-Tees, Southend, South Tyneside, Redcar & Cleveland, Darlington and Hartlepool.

Total number of students in pilot: 40,400

2. Hybrid delivery model (partial centralisation)

Basic administrative tasks and data entry will be handled centrally while the assessment of students' entitlement and other more complex tasks would still be performed by LA staff.

Hybrid Pilot Authorities: Lancashire, Cheshire, Leeds, Manchester City and Sutton.

Total number of students in pilot: 53,500

The Pilots will be based in Mowden Hall in Darlington (former DfES offices) and team members have been sought on secondment from Local Authorities, particularly those participating in the pilot schemes.

It is estimated that the assessment staff to caseload ratio within the fully centralised pilot will be 1 assessor per 1000 cases. This ratio will offer an advantage to the pilot scheme over many Local Authorities whose ratios may be as high as 1 assessor per 1500 cases. Rotherham has two permanent assessment staff and 3173 cases in 2005/2006, a ratio of 1 assessor per 1581 cases. Pilot schemes will also not be required to handle personal callers as Local Authorities are at present.

The infrastructure of the pilot scheme will also see a dedicated data pipe connection installed between Darlington and Glasgow. This will offer a distinct advantage to the pilot scheme in terms of system speed and stability of connection, factors which have had a significant impact on Local Authority performance rates since the implementation of the single system.

There is a perception among many Local Authority Student Finance officers in England that full centralisation of student finance is the preferred government option and inevitable outcome of the review. There is also widespread concern that continuing uncertainty is not helpful for staff morale and retention within Local Authorities.

Project Evaluation

An independent third party will be recruited to conduct the evaluation of the Pilots and it will monitor the Pilots' operational performance during the 2006/07 application cycle.

Whilst the evaluation will be on-going the final report is expected to be available in November 2006. Any changes recommended/adopted as a result of the review are not expected to be implemented before the 2008/2009 application cycle.

8. Finance

If it is concluded that Student Finance functions should be fully or partially centralised it is likely that an adjustment would be made to the Local Authority's Formula Spending Share to reflect the transfer of student finance function to another body. Line 2.7.4 of Section 52 Budget Statement for 2005/06 shows a budget allocation of £137,432.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- Loss of local customer service to residents of Rotherham Borough through full centralisation of student finance.
- Redeployment/redundancy of student support service team.
- Local skill shortages in Student Finance as current team members seek alternative employment in light of uncertain service future.
- LA performance against national SLAs in 2006/07 application cycle will form part of the evaluation of pilot scheme performance. Poor LA performance may therefore increase likelihood of centralisation of Student Finance service delivery.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Local Student Support teams contribute to the aims of lifelong learning within the Rotherham Learning and Achieving priorities. Any centralised system could lead to less participation in higher education. Allied to some of the changes in the other paper on Student Support on this agenda, both local and national participation could be threatened.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Improving Student Finance Delivery (letter from M.F.Hipkins, Director, Student Finance, DfES, February 2005)
- Review of Student Finance Delivery (Written Ministerial Statement, Bill Rammell , 7 June 2005)
- Student Finance Delivery Pilots 2006/2007 (letter from M.F. Hipkins, Director, Student Finance, DfES , July 2005)
- Review of Higher Education Student Finance Delivery: Consultation (DfES, July 2005)
- Section 52 Budget Statement (2005/2006)
- Service Level Agreement for the Higher Education Student Finance Service between the DfES and the Local Authorities (DfES , June 2005)

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