

Financial Monitoring Report

Cabinet: 24 July 2019

Appendix A: Financial support for subsidised admission and travel for school children to attend SkillZone from September 2019 (for information)

Cabinet Member: Cllr Dave Norman

Portfolio: Public Protection, Parking and Libraries

Background

The County Council considered a Motion (842) on 26 June 2019 relating to the financial support it provides to school children attending the SkillZONE.

The Council made a unanimous decision at the meeting to ask Cabinet to explore opportunities to reintroduce the scheme to cover the admission and transportation costs for all identified schools wishing to send key stage 2 and 3 children to the SkillZONE for road safety education from September 2019.

This Appendix sets out the Cabinet's proposed financial support to such children in response to the Council's decision.

1. In the two financial years up to 2016, SkillZONE received a total of £85,000 to offer free admission for all year 5 pupils and to subsidise the transport costs for identified schools. The funding also created 'New Journey' which is a project to train students to become safe travel ambassadors in Year 9.
2. An impact of the funding was that 16,400 primary school children attended SkillZONE during the period when Gloucestershire County Council subsidised admission and transport; and 500 year 9 students went on to support up to 3000 new year 7 children as they made the transition to secondary school.
3. Following the withdrawal of the funding there has been a year on year reduction in visitor numbers. During the period 2017-2019, 10,230 primary school children attended a SkillZONE life skills session from a high of approximately 9000 in 2015 to a low of 4500 last year.
4. It is important to note that a free session for every key stage 2 and 3 child in Gloucestershire cannot be delivered in one year as there are too many schools and too many children for the SkillZONE capacity.

Options

1. Continue to offer places to schools who must arrange their own travel:

This has been identified as a key barrier to attendance as school budgets have reduced.

2. Seek alternative funding routes to subsidise travel:

This will be an ongoing option which SkillZONE will pursue. However, to take this option will not allocate funding to the base budget which results in a year by year approach to offering this training and creates a further barrier to schools accessing the facility as they cannot plan far enough in advance.

3. Reintroduce subsidised travel, on a targeted basis:

a) This will support transportation of 5000 primary school and 600 year 8 children per year to the centre to directly receive training and to become New Journey travel ambassadors to educate a further 3500 year 7 children across Gloucestershire. The cost of this is £40,000 to subsidise travel for 5000 children and £8000 to train 600 ambassadors to educate a further 3500 children.

b) As this is an in year request the pro-rata amount required to fund the remainder of the financial year will be £28,000.

Officer Advice

1. It is proposed that subsidised travel be reintroduced, on a targeted basis, to transport primary and secondary school children to the centre to directly receive training across Gloucestershire.
2. The cost of this is £28,000 (pro-rata) to subsidise travel.

Summary

1. At the full council meeting on 26 June 2019, members unanimously supported Motion 842 – SkillZONE, relating to admission and transportation costs for key stage 2 and 3 children to attend the centre.
2. SkillZONE and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) officers will continue to work through the Safer Gloucestershire Partnership and other relevant routes to secure funding which supports the attendance of children to the SkillZONE centre to receive training in the valuable life skills, including road safety that the centre offers.
3. The recommendation in the overarching Financial Monitoring Report makes provision for this additional funding to enable the release of £28,000, in year, from the transformation reserve to fund key stage 2 and 3 attendance at SkillZONE.