

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services**

**Response to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service Consultation**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To provide a report on the responses received to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) Consultation.

**Background**

2. A Consultation on the Future of the EMAS Service was undertaken from 8 September 2008 to 8 December 2008.
3. All responses to this consultation have now been read and analysed by the Directorate of Dudley Children's Services. A summary of the consultation is attached to this report. A copy of all consultation responses are available in the Member's Library and in the Cabinet meeting room.
4. Key Outcomes

The following Key Outcomes were noted.

Decisions regarding the answering of two questions were heavily influenced by:

- the Council's decision to close all the supplementary schools.  
Many respondents believe they were a significant factor in raising pupil attainment, promoting social cohesion, and were centres well run by experienced EMAS staff who acted as positive role models for young people;
- the Council's decision to withdraw the community funding aid.  
Many individuals and voluntary organisations emphasised the benefits derived from this funding, and how EMAS have effectively supported out of hours activities for young people in many ethnic minority communities;
- the proposals to continue the community language programmes have been interpreted as a further diminishing of community support. Once again, the

overriding comments of respondents stress the effectiveness and quality of the experienced and qualified EMAS staff;

- a further factor that influenced the responses was the belief that the consultation was driven by a political decision to reduce budgets and that a thorough, rigorous, and objective review of EMAS was needed and that the needs of young people in Dudley's communities, and the outcomes achieved to date were of secondary importance. Some respondents further commented that the lack of performance data for all groups and communities was a significant weakness in the consultation. In essence there was a feeling that as a respondent they could not effectively engage with the consultation due to the exclusion of the data.
- a solicitor's letter was received raising issues with the consultation process and stating the view that there were flaws in the consultation process and in the Equality Impact Assessment rendering them invalid. Further detail as to those allegations is contained in the solicitor's letter of 11 November 2008, attached to this report. The legal department has considered those issues and its response of 11 December 2008 is also attached to this report.

5. **Question One - Level of Council's Budget for EMAS**

***Option A - Reducing the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 to £320,700.***

Comments provided in support of this option tended to agree with the consultation document, or agree that if central government allocations are reducing then the Council should follow the pattern set.

***Option B - Setting the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 - at its previous level (£611,800) or some higher level.***

The overwhelming number of responses supported option B as their preferred choice.

Responses from community groups and individuals not included above cited a range of factors that influenced their selection. In summary they included:

- the success of existing arrangements due to the positive links with EMAS and their well qualified staff;
- that more funding be dedicated to supporting existing groups and other groups not in receipt of such support e.g. Chinese, Bangladeshi communities;
- that the growing numbers of new arrivals and refugees coming to Dudley need support and that this is best achieved through a centralised service.

***Option C - Setting the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 at a lower level.***

Comments in support of this option cited the reduction in national funding as one reason why the budget should be reduced. Another respondent cited the present economic climate as a further justification for reduction.

***No preferred Option stated***

Comments within this group indicated preferences for either raising or lowering the budget. Reasons to increase the budget reflect comments in option B, whilst those for cutting the budget reflect Option C. Some respondents felt further information was needed before they could state a preference. For example, information about salary costs and the number of young people being supported over the past 5 years.

6. ***Question Two - Consultees are invited to comment on any aspect of this proposed restructuring, and also to put forward their own suggestions as to how the structure of EMAS may be improved, including changing the EMAS budget.***

7 responses and 1 phone call were received in support of the modernisation and restructure of the service. Of these, 3 supported the structure in line with the Council's budget decision of March 2008. Other reasons cited for restructure included:

- to make the service more efficient and effective;
- to support the needs of all new arrivals from all parts of the world;
- to provide more support from advisors and classroom assistants in primary schools.

30 responses were received that stated no preference relating to the restructure of the EMAS service. The nature of the comments in each response does however provide evidence in support or not of a restructure.

***Comments favouring a restructure include:***

- a reduction in the central budget, and that schools should fund more of the work;
- EMAS should work more closely with other LA services and systems to ensure there is no overlap of roles;
- EMAS should appoint less classroom assistants and appoint more teachers into primary, secondary and special schools.

***Comments suggesting no restructure or an increase in EMAS service include:***

- more dedicated workers for each community;

- provide more staff to meet the needs of all new arrivals and to provide the support to teachers and pupils in school where new arrivals or ethnic children are isolated.

The majority of responses received support an increase into EMAS.

The responses received on a standard format response sheet which cited the following as the reason for their preferred choice.

*Quote - "EMAS is a very diverse team; there is a need to expand the structure to include more staff and resources to deal with the under achievement, integration and community cohesion issues. I feel the community needs have increased during the last few years and there is a need for a more focused work. Community Language classes must remain in the current format and not be changed."*

Other responses received expressed a need to modernise and restructure EMAS but in doing so, expand the services provided. Reasons given in support of these responses are reflected in section 4 - key outcomes paragraph.

## **Finance**

7. The EMAS budget for 2008/09 has been retained at the 2007/08 level. The proposed budget reduction of £306,000 has been found from existing resources during 2008/09 which has impacted on other service delivery in the Directorate.
8. The future structure and operation of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service will be dependant upon the outcome of the consultation and be determined by the Council.

## **Law**

9. The work of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service is governed by the Education and Inspection Act 2006.
10. The Race Relations (Amendments) Act 2000 places a general duty on a wide range of public authorities, including local authorities, to promote race equality.

## **Equality Impact**

11. The Council has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (attached) in relation to the proposal to reduce the level of funding to EMAS and the structural changes proposed.

## **Recommendation**

12. In view of the consultation responses the Council is asked to determine the central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10. The possible options include:

- Option A - Reducing the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 to £320,700;
- Option B - Setting the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 - at its previous level (£611,800) or some higher level;
- Option C - Setting the Council's central budget for EMAS for the financial year 2009/10 at a lower level.



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## **List of Background Papers**