

Report to Schools Forum – Tuesday 6th December 2016

Re: Membership of CLEAPSS

Purpose

This report explains the background to CLEAPSS (the schools' science and technology advisory service), and the implication of schools choosing not to de-delegate the DSG Licence Budget that funded annual membership of CLEAPSS on behalf of Walsall schools.

Background

Walsall Council is a member¹ of CLEAPSS and subscribe to its service each year on behalf of the schools in the Borough.

CLEAPSS advice and documentation is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive and the Department for Education as the definitive basis for safe practice in practical work in schools and colleges. Membership of CLEAPSS is also a very cost effective way of getting expert advice on all aspects of science and technology – it's not just about health & safety.

Whilst the majority of CLEAPSS guidance is aimed at secondary schools, they also produce a wealth of information for primaries.

With regard to secondary schools, whilst membership of CLEAPSS is not compulsory, in the opinion of Walsall's health & safety team, schools would struggle to find the same level of advice and guidance on safe practice in science and technology either internally or from any other external organisation; therefore the team would strongly recommend that secondary schools remain members of CLEAPSS.

Historically, membership of CLEAPSS has been paid for through the DSG Licence budget; however you will be aware that this year schools have chosen not to de-delegate this budget and hence there is no longer a central budget from which to pay the CLEAPSS invoice.

Financial considerations

Membership of CLEAPSS costs 11.5p for each pupil age 5 – 19 when the subscription is via the local authority, but rises to 25p per pupil when schools subscribe directly². We believe that this cost is modest.

As a one-off, this year's membership of CLEAPSS was paid for from the health & safety team's training budget (at a cost of £3865); however, the team is not responsible for membership of CLEAPSS and has no budget to pay for it in subsequent years.

¹ All local authorities responsible for education in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, are members

² There is also an additional charge for secondary schools that use CLEAPSS Radiation Protection Advisor service.

The cost of schools subscribing independently is approximately double that of the council subscribing on their behalf; however, the overall cost to the council of paying the invoice and then recharging each school (£20 – £60 per primary school) makes this uneconomic due to the on-costs associated with administration and raising invoices. There is also the issue that some schools may choose not to be members of CLEAPSS, which would further complicate the process.

With regard to secondary schools, the health & safety team believes that membership of CLEAPSS is essential to ensure safety in practical work and there is a risk in them not being members; therefore we will look to explore options to include membership as part of our traded services offer to those schools buying back the service, or seek reassurance that the school has joined CLEAPSS independently (all Walsall secondary schools are academies, voluntary aided or foundation schools, hence the council is not the employer and health & safety is provided on a traded basis).

Possible recommendations:

1. **Either** – Walsall Council administers CLEAPSS membership for all Walsall schools and academies, but absorbs the administration cost of raising invoices and re-charging schools by charging a rate mid way between the lower and higher rates. This is estimated at 18p per pupil.
2. **Or** - Each school subscribes to CLEAPSS independently, paying more than twice the current per pupil rate. We believe that this option could lead to significant risk if some schools choose not to subscribe.

Recommendation 1 is the preferred choice, as this ensures that all schools and academies have the security of membership.

(Taken from a briefing to Walsall's health & safety committee on 3rd October 2016 by Chris Close, Health & Safety Manager)