



Committee and Date

People Overview Committee

15 January 2020

Item

Public

Shropshire Music Service

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1 Summary

Shropshire Music Service is a valuable cultural and educational asset to the Council. It would benefit from your awareness and support.

2 Recommendations

Committee members to:

- Increase their awareness of the work of the Shropshire Music Service and to act as advocates for the service in schools, other settings and the wider Shropshire community.
- Support the Shropshire Music Service by publicising and even attending service events and opportunities.

REPORT

3 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

Opportunities:

- To increase the number of children taught/amount of time given/additional support offered.
- To work with schools to increase the amount and standard of general music tuition.
- To expand provision outside the education age range – there is already a substantial early years programme, but as yet the service does not offer adult tuition. A pilot programme of singing events for older people in the care system has proved very successful.

Risks

The service is at risk if the grant from Arts Council England is cut. It is at risk if there is a fall in families' disposable income, or in school budgets.

4 Financial Implications

- The service turns over around £1.2 million per year.
- Around £350,000 comes from the Arts Council England grant.
- The remaining income comes from charges to schools and parents.

5 Background

Countless studies have shown that music education is beneficial to young people. Not only does it promote wellbeing and self-esteem and nurture life skills such as concentration and teamwork, but it is now universally accepted that music education *improves* academic performance.

To ensure the quality of delivery of such a crucial part of children's education, it is important to have a team of highly skilled, experienced and dedicated professionals. Shropshire Music Service is that team.

Formed in the 1960's, the music service is part of the Learning & Skills Directorate in Children's Services. In its early days, the service taught classical instruments to school children individually and provided a youth orchestra for them to attend. It was fully funded by the Council and lessons were free.

Nowadays, the service is fully traded. The service teaches 21 instruments to over 5,000 children each week, in a range of formats including whole class tuition. Pupils are able to attend 18 different bands and ensembles, playing music from all genres.

The service is peripatetic. The service's 60 teachers travel to schools to provide instrumental lessons on brass, strings, woodwind, keyboard, voice, guitar and drums. They also provide classroom music lessons and run groups and clubs.

Whole class instrumental teaching is offered to all schools in the county at a heavily subsidised rate. This means that all children can begin playing an instrument in school at no cost to the family and with an instrument provided for the duration of the tuition. In this way, they ensure that parents' financial circumstances are not a barrier to learning an instrument.

Financial constraints are also addressed by the service's remissions policy, under which disadvantaged pupils can receive up to 50% reduction in fees and instrument hire.

Inclusion has long been one of the top priorities. Shropshire Music Service staff are adept at differentiating music lessons in order to ensure those children with special educational needs and disabilities are not prevented from accessing and excelling in music lessons. In addition, the service is delivering bespoke music provision in SEND settings such as Severndale Specialist Academy and the tuition service.

The service works with schools to ensure the best possible music provision across the board. Continuing professional development is offered to school teachers, both as a staff in their own schools, and centrally with other schools. Visits to schools to deliver free audits of music provision are well received and

often result in an increase in engagement with service. There is an 'open door' policy for support for any aspect of a school's musical life.

Musical instruments can be expensive to buy. The service offers its pupils instrument hire at very low cost, further ensuring that financial background is no barrier to musical progression.

Events are a large part of what makes the service different from individual music teachers. As well as a regular schedule of concerts from their ensembles, they run a very successful calendar of annual events. For example, 'Shropshire Sings' features hundreds of children singing in a massed choir to an audience of thousands.

The service is the lead partner of the Shropshire Music Education Hub, through which funding is received from DFE to deliver the aims set out in the National Plan for Music. This role allows the service to work with a large number of other arts and cultural organisations within the county, helping to ensure our young people have access to a rich cultural experience.

The service is also part of West Midlands Music, a group of 12 music services from around the region, as well as being loosely federated with neighbouring services on Staffordshire, Stoke and Telford. Being a member of these groups allows them to look outside the county to identify best practice and ensure the quality of their provision.

The service's strap-line 'Teaching Music, Changing Lives' reflects the passion they have as an organisation have for music tuition and their belief in its power to transform. Members are most welcome to come and see for themselves: visit their teachers in schools, join their rehearsals with ensembles, events around the county or their regular concerts. Members will be proud of the county's young musicians, and of the organisation that exists to support them.

Music services are under threat across the country. Powys and Wrexham have no provision at all. Once a service folds, the evidence suggests that it is extremely difficult to reform. The service needs your support and advocacy to raise and maintain the profile of the service, thereby helping it to continue and expand.

6 Conclusion

Members are invited to do whatever they can to raise and maintain the profile of Shropshire Music Service.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Edward Potter

Local Member

All councillors across all Shropshire wards.

Appendices

- Overview of services offered
- Arts Council roles
- 'Why Buy SMS?'
- Calendar of events
- List of available ensembles