

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board**

**14<sup>th</sup> June, 2018**

**Report of the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning**

**Matter for Information**

**WELSH GOVERNMENT FEMININE HYGIENE GRANT**

**Wards Affected:**

All Wards

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with information in relation to the use of Feminine Hygiene capital funding allocation for 2017/18 and revenue grant allocation for 2018/19 issued by Welsh Government.

**Background**

2. Members will be aware of recent media reports relating to 'period poverty' throughout the UK. Following a report, in March 2017, about girls in Leeds who had been missing school because they were unable to afford feminine hygiene products, a survey was carried out by Plan International UK that found that 1 in 10 girls were unable to afford sanitary products.
3. On 27<sup>th</sup> March, this year, Kirsty Williams, Education Secretary for Welsh Government, stated that she was determined that Wales take action on this.
4. Welsh Government wrote to the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> March this year informing that a Capital Funding allocation of £30,827 for the financial year 2017/18 was being provided specifically to be spent on 'equipment and facilities in

relation to addressing period poverty faced by girls with specific reference to improving 'toilet and feminine hygiene hardware in schools'.

5. The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 specify the number of toilets that must be provided according to the size of the school population and the age of the children, and the separation of the toilets depending on age and gender. The regulations do not include any reference to the disposal or provision of sanitary products. However, the Welsh Government published 'School Toilets: Good Practice for Schools in Wales in 2012'. Within this guidance there is a section on female sanitary products and disposal.
6. The Welsh Government will require a high level report from the Council as to how it has utilised the funding, and, therefore, there will be an expectation that schools who accept the funding will comply with the grant conditions.
7. Welsh Government also informed the Council that £10,476 per annum Revenue funding had been allocated for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to be spent on feminine hygiene products for those women and girls most in need in the Authority.
8. Whilst there is no evidence of research in Wales related to Feminine Hygiene Products, in August 2017, a proposed bill for the Scottish Parliament entitled 'Ending Period Poverty' noted that an average person would require 4 – 5 products per day when menstruating, and calculated that there are 68 menstruating days, on average, per year. Total usage will, therefore, be 272 – 340 products per annum or 13 – 17 packs per year costing £13-£16 per pupil/per annum (it should be noted that these costs are related to the cheapest product on the market as of July 2017).
9. As of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2018, the population of female pupils between years 4 – 6 in Neath Port Talbot schools was 2208. An average of 4 girls per primary school, total around 230 pupils, require feminine hygiene products within the primary sector. In the secondary sector there are 3874 female pupils and 775 of these are entitled to free school meals. However, it is not proposed that there should be any restrictions on girls wishing to access this free provision.
10. The estimated total costs for hygiene products for all female pupils in secondary schools would be between £50- £63k per annum but this would

reduce to between £38 and £47k per annum when school holidays are taken into account. Based on estimates provided by primary headteachers, costs within this sector would be around £3k per annum. Total costs across both sectors would be a maximum of £50k.

11. It should be noted that the potential demand on this provision significantly exceeds the funding made available by Welsh Government. Officers will be making appropriate representations to secure increased funding.
12. Officers are currently engaging with all schools to canvass views on how sanitary products can be distributed in the most sensitive, dignified way respecting girls' privacy. Pastoral leads in schools are requested to engage with girl pupils to seek their advice in this matter. Based on the responses from schools, we will ensure that products are dispensed in a way that respond to girls' needs.
13. Free provision of these feminine hygiene products has the potential to improve both health and wellbeing and attendance at school of some of the most vulnerable pupils by the reduction in anxiety and affording of these sanitary products.

### **Financial Impact**

14. The grant funding provided by Welsh Government will be distributed to schools on applicable girl numbers. However, as noted above, the real costs are likely to exceed the funding made available placing increased demands on school budgets. Welsh Government have confirmed that the Capital Funding allocation of £30,827 provided at the end of the 2017/18 financial year can be rolled-over into the 2018/19 financial year.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

15. Not required.

### **Workforce Impacts**

16. There are no workforce or staffing issues directly associated with this proposal.

## **Legal Impacts**

17. There are no legal implications.

## **Risk Management**

18. There is no risk associated with this report.

## **Consultation**

19. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on the recommendations within this report.

## **Recommendations**

20. None.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

21. Not applicable.

## **Implementation of Decision**

22. Not applicable.

## **Appendices**

23. Welsh Government letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2018

## **List of Background Papers**

24. No background papers

## **Officer Contact**

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