

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES		
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL ATTENDANCE POLICY		
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	16 JULY 2013		
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE		
<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
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<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>			
None			

### **BRIEF SUMMARY**

Members are asked to reinforce the importance of school attendance through the adoption of a revised Attendance Policy. There is considerable evidence demonstrating the link between attainment and attendance. Even a seemingly small drop in attendance can have a real effect on outcomes.

The policy sets out the principles, roles and responsibilities as everyone strives to maximise school attendance. There has been an improvement of over 2% in attendance since 2007 as a result of the hard work of all involved. However, the picture nationally has also improved and the City is still 0.8% above the National average. This equates to about 38,000 school days of missed education across the City.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (i) To approve the revised School Attendance Policy, attached at Appendix 1.

### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. School attendance is a high priority for both the Council and schools. Whilst attendance has improved, our absence rates are consistently above the national rates and those of our statistical neighbours; although a considerable amount of excellent work has been done. Our aspiration for 2014 is to achieve an attendance rate of 94.9%.
2. Attendance is a critical factor in ensuring improved attainment and future life outcomes. It is central to social inclusion and has a major impact on a child's future life opportunities; equipping them to make good choices as young adults and citizens for themselves and for their communities. It is recognised that attending school regularly can be a protective factor for children; contributing to keeping them safe from harm and reducing their engagement in risky behaviours, anti-social behaviour and juvenile crime.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

3. School attendance in Southampton, although improving, remains consistently behind the national rates and those of our statistical neighbours. The alternative to adopting this new City-wide attendance policy would be to continue with current approaches which are likely to result in a failure to achieve our target of 94.9% attendance for 2014.

### **DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)**

4. Whilst further improvement in line with the policy will be the result of a relentless focus on attendance by everyone, there will be activities and changes to support the policy going forward. These are to:
  - Engage with key professional groups right across the Local Authority, the Health Sector, the Police and others to ensure that school attendance is a priority and that families are challenged with consistent messages from all.
  - Deliver an effective communication programme to all residents that promote the benefits of school attendance with parents and community groups.
  - Recommend to schools that they adopt a zero tolerance to absence for term time leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances.
  - Working with the Families Matter project where school attendance is one of the issues that affect the particular families.
5. The policy will be supported by guidance documents developed in partnership with schools that support them in their work with families in line with this policy and legal requirements.
6. Reducing absence rates will require the continued good work of parents, schools and local authority officers to address issues affecting attendance; strengthened by the rigorous implementation of new national guidance.
7. It will also require a broader ownership of issues relating to children's attendance; so that whilst the Local Authority will continue in its statutory duty to enforce regular school attendance; the role of families, communities and partner agencies in understanding and giving a consistent message to promote attendance, contributes to cultural change across the City.
8. Consultation has taken place with schools through an Attendance Conference on 6<sup>th</sup> March and a consultation event on 9<sup>th</sup> May. Consultation has taken place with partner agencies through the consultation event on 9<sup>th</sup> May and discussion at the Children and Young People's Trust Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. The events have generated broad support for the principles in this policy.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Capital/Revenue**

9. There is a small resource available for communication of the strategy within the Children's Services portfolio budget. There may be an impact on the capacity of the Education Welfare Service and Legal Services if the policy results in an increase in prosecutions for non-attendance, but it is anticipated that this can be managed within existing resources.
10. There are no capital implications as a result of implementation.

**Property/Other**

- 11. There are no property implications.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:**

- 12. Parents have a duty to secure the education of their children who are over compulsory school age by regular attendance at school by virtue of section 7 of the Education Act 1996. The Council has a duty to ensure sufficient school places are available to meet the needs of its area in accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 1996. The Council’s duties in relation to the enforcement of school attendance are set out in chapter II of the 1996 Act and the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, those Regulations will be amended by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 which will limit the power of Headteachers to grant leave of absences during term time to cases of “exceptional circumstances”. The number of days such an exception may be granted for is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Amendments to penalty notice provisions will also be introduced by the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 to make the issue of penalty notices and prosecutions quicker.

**Other Legal Implications:**

- 13. The impact of the policy is not expected to negatively affect any group having protected characteristics under the Act.

**POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

- 14. This proposal is in accordance with the Children and Young People’s Plan. The proposals in this report and the content of the Policy have been determined having regard to the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010.

**KEY DECISION** Yes

<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All
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## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

### Appendices

1.	Southampton City Council Attendance Policy
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### Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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### Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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### Other Background Documents

#### Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)

Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

1.	None	
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