

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE		Subject; TRADING STANDARDS – EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY DEBT COUNSELLOR POSTS
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 28 TH March 2007	Ref: TS/DR	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek authority for the extension for one year of two temporary Debt Counsellors within the Planning & Environment Department in order to continue development of the activities of the Working for Families Fund service.

2. Background

2.1 On 4th January 2006 Planning and Environment Committee approved the creation of two temporary Debt Counsellor posts until 31st March 2007.

2.2 The Working for Families Fund (WFFF) was established in December 2003 by the Scottish Executive to take forward the development of services to support parents in disadvantaged areas to enable them to participate in training or employment. It is administered through the Policy & Economic Development Service of the Planning & Environment Department.

2.3 Despite falling rates of unemployment there are still significant levels of worklessness in some areas of North Lanarkshire. Debt and fear of changes in financial circumstances have been found to be a further barrier in moving people from unemployment.

2.4 The trading standards service has been awarded a further £57,500 funding through the Working for Families Fund to continue providing money advice to support parents in disadvantaged areas to facilitate their participation in training or employment.

3. Considerations

3.1 The Trading Standards Money Advice service has expanded its capacity in the Data Zone areas of Coatbridge, Airdrie, Bellshill, Wishaw and Motherwell. Clients who have benefited from the extension of provision include lone parent and parents with other stresses in the family referred via Key Workers and other participating agencies in the WFFF Service.

3.2 Service delivery to the WFFF client group has included free, impartial and confidential debt counselling and money advice, representation in dealing with creditors, solicitors and debt recovery agents. It is also proposed to carry out "better off" in work calculations to clients where appropriate.

3.3 It is proposed to continue delivery of this service through the extension of two temporary debt counsellor posts, grade NLC7, for twelve months commencing 1st April 2007.

4. Corporate Considerations

- 4.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this project. The Working for Families Fund will meet all salary and other costs through funding provided by the Scottish Executive.
- 4.2 The Money Advice service contributes to the corporate priorities of promoting social inclusion and health, wellbeing and care.
- 4.3 The Head of Personnel Services and Finance Department staff have been consulted on this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee.
 - (a) Approve the extension of two temporary Debt Counsellor posts (NLC7) for a period of one year until 31st March 2008
 - (b) Note that the cost of the posts will be met by funding provided by the Scottish Executive.
 - (c) Remit this report to the Policy & Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for approval.



David M Porch
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT
19 Feb 2007

Local Government Access to Information Act: for further information about this report, please contact David Roderick Trading Standards Manager on 01236 616415