
Meeting of Shadow Executive

4 April 2007

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

Community Use of School Premises

Summary

1. This report provides background information about the community use of school buildings.

Background

2. The use of schools buildings by the community is not new. Indeed, some local authorities, most notably Cambridge and Leicestershire, made it a point of principle when establishing comprehensive schools in the 60's and 70's that schools should become colleges serving the wider community. For the most part, this meant locating Adult Education in schools and encouraging, by this means, the development of closer links with the local community.
3. The wider aspiration for schools to provide a focus for community activity is now almost routine in thinking about the future of the education system. Here, for example, is Ruth Kelly, then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, in 2005 'I want to see every school reaching out to their community'. Indeed, it is almost impossible to find anybody speaking against the idea of putting schools at the heart of their communities.
4. The reality, however, is rather more complex than the rhetoric. The concept of community education, or community schools, actually combines a number of different ideas. These can be broadly summarised as follows:
 - Children should have access to educational opportunities outside the regular school day, and this should be provided on a voluntary basis at the schools they attend,
 - Adult Education should be provided using the same network of buildings that are used to provide education for children,
 - School buildings represent a valuable asset which, in the interests of efficiency, should be used by the community when they are not being used by children,
 - The curriculum should be shaped and influenced by the needs of local communities.

Educational opportunities outside the regular school day.

5. The government has invested heavily in the concept of what it calls 'Extended Schools'. Additional funding has been provided in order to achieve the national target that by 2010, all schools should provide access to a core of extended services, with half of all primary schools and a third of all secondary schools doing so by 2008.
6. Extended services and activities can be organised and delivered directly by school staff, and/or by schools working in partnership with existing local private or voluntary sector providers, via school clusters and/or by third parties. While many schools may choose to develop an even richer mix of services and activities, the core offer for mainstream and special schools is:
 - high-quality childcare provided on the school site or through clusters or other local providers, with supervised transfer arrangements where appropriate, available 8am – 6pm all year round,
 - a varied programme of activities to be on offer, such as homework clubs and study support, sport (at least two hours a week beyond the school day for those who want it), music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs such as chess and first aid courses, visits to museums and galleries, learning a foreign language, volunteering, business and enterprise activities,
 - parenting support including information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes run with the support of other children's services and family learning sessions to allow children to learn with their parents,
 - swift and easy referral to a wide range of specialist support services such as speech therapy, child and adolescent mental health services, family support services, intensive behaviour support, and (for young people) sexual health services. Some may be delivered on school sites, and
 - providing wider community access to ICT, sports and arts facilities, including adult learning.
7. To monitor the provision of extended services, Ofsted and other involved inspection organisations have developed a new system of school inspection that covers both education, wider childcare provision and extended activities.
8. In York, just under £1M has been provided over the two financial years 2006 – 08 to support these developments. The city has set itself the challenge of all schools becoming extended school by 2008. These figures were agreed in advance of the publication of the core offer and may not be achieved. However, significant progress has been made and all schools have attended the training provided by the Training and Development Agency (TDA) which is a requirement for any school seeking to become registered as an Extended School. A summary of the position of schools in the authority is attached at Annex A.
9. Concerns have been expressed about the sustainability of these developments. In the recent budget announcement, some reassurance has

been provided that the funding already provided will continue during the three year period covered by the comprehensive spending review:

'As you will be aware, the chancellor published his 2007 budget on Wednesday 21 March. The budget brought positive news for children, young people and families, with £10.7 billion more capital and revenue funding being invested in schools, colleges, universities and children's services by 2011. The budget showed particularly strong support for extended schools which we wanted to ensure you were aware of. As well as updating on the excellent progress made so far, with over 4000 schools already delivering the full core offer of extended services, it committed additional funding for extended schools in 2008 - 2011 over and above existing levels. This was particularly in recognition of the Training and Development Agency's concerns about the workload involved in developing and maintaining extended activities - in particular building the effective links with local agencies, businesses and other educational institutions on which a full menu of activities and services depends. Further information about local authority allocations will follow later in the year.'

Adult Education

10. The city's Adult and Community Education (ACE) service currently makes extensive provision on over 80 sites in the city, including schools. Access to school premises is paid for by the service which spends roughly £50K per annum according to an agreed set of charges based on a standard calculation which includes the following:
 - floor area (£2.50 per hour per 50m²),
 - a fixed fee (£4.77 per evening), and
 - the cost of caretaking (about £35 per evening secondary school and £16 per evening primary school).
11. The service has recently been inspected and achieved a grade 2 (good) for the quality of provision that it makes. The summary report comments that:

'Programmes are delivered through adult education centres based at seven secondary schools. The adult education centres also use about 80 smaller venues such as village halls and community centres. The service works closely with schools and other partners to target parents and carers who do not have a level 2 qualification. Partnership working is effective in widening participation and engaging learners. CYC works particularly effectively with schools and voluntary organisations to provide a wide range of accessible venues at times that meet learners' personal needs.'
12. The current policy is based on the need to ensure access to adult learning within local communities and this is recognised as a strength throughout the report, which identifies as a particular strength the quality of Family Learning (Grade 1 – outstanding).
13. However, the service has identified as a major priority the need to ensure that the accommodation used for adult learning is also of high quality and that facilities are available to support learning through ICT and appropriate use of

audio visual equipment. For this reason the service is also developing provision through the network of library learning centres that are being developed in the city. Funding has been secured for New Earswick (Targeted Capital), Acomb (LSC) and a bid to the big lottery is being prepared for Tang Hall. These refurbished venues will provide additional community provision in venues that are more appropriate for use by adults. It should be noted that for many people, particularly in more disadvantaged communities, the library is a more attractive venue than the school which can have negative associations.

Use of school buildings.

14. Decisions about the use of school buildings rest with the school governing body, though a statutory power exists for the authority to direct the school to make premises available at a price which at least covers the costs incurred by the school. These are known as 'directed lettings'. It is rare for schools to refuse lettings, and some schools rely on the additional income to support future development of the school and its buildings.
15. It should be noted that schools are not allowed to subsidise community use from their main school budget, which can only be used for the education of the children attending the school.
16. The advice provided to schools in the past from property services has tended to recommend that schools should set commercial rates and this has sometimes been a disincentive for community groups. The authority is currently working on the development of a lettings policy which includes provision for schools to charge at actual cost. An example of such a policy is attached at Annex 2.
17. Even when schools only charge at cost to cover caretaking, energy, wear & tear and administration, they are not always competitive with existing community premises. This can be for a number of reasons:
 - Many schools do not have zoned heating and the cost of opening a large building in order to allow the use of one room can, as a consequence, be higher than it would be for a smaller and less well maintained community venue,
 - The cost of caretaking and cleaning for council owned property can be higher than for other landlords who make use of casual or private sector labour or do not undertake the work to the kind of standard that is required if children are using the school the following day.
18. It should not be assumed that all communities are seeking access to school premises. Two case studies make the point. In Case Study one, the building of a new school hall and community venue actually put at risk existing community provision which was highly valued by local people and was the focus for local voluntary activity. In Case Study two, a school seeking funds for flood lighting for its all weather pitch has put at risk the viability of a similar pitch provided by a local sports club that does not have floodlighting. The authority recommends that any school seeking to market its facilities should work very closely with

existing community groups in order to establish need and understand the position of existing providers.

19. In a number of schools with exceptional facilities, extensive provision is made for the community on a largely commercial basis. Only a small number of schools in the city, mainly secondary schools such as Oaklands, actually have facilities that lend themselves to this kind of provision.
20. For a number of reasons such provision rarely covers its costs. At Oaklands, for example, no specific payment is made for the actual use of the premises as it is run as an extended school not a Local Authority Service. However, the Leisure budget provides grant support (a subsidy) through an SLA for the wider community provision of £71k 2006/07 which equates to £122k in a full year. Where such provision is subsidised by the council it is usually in response to a policy priority to ensure that services are available in areas where they would not be considered commercially viable by the private sector.
21. Continued and enhanced community access to school sports facilities remains an important aspect of each of the zonal sports plans and projects aiming to create this feature in Active York's investment planning portfolio.
22. Predominantly the requirements come from sports clubs and groups looking for consistent times and venues for their activities. In particular, the competition for available indoor and sports hall space is evident, with most secondary schools in the city being booked to capacity during peak times. For these groups, provision of good quality facilities at sustainable rates, security of lease, and simple administrative systems are all important. Ways of combating inconsistencies in these areas across the city continues to be an area to address.
23. There is also some identified need for accessibility to school facilities for activities loosely termed "casual" or "pay and play". It is important however to note that the concept of this casual use is more often than not still pre organised activity which is open to any member of the public eg an aerobics class for a per session fee, or a prebooked slot on a badminton court, rather than a completely open, turn up and play session.
24. As such, it is recognised that both types of activity require access to school premises in order to use the city's sporting assets to their fullest. However, the logistical and financial barriers are many and schools will require significant support to find the appropriate solutions to their individual circumstance.
25. Active York will continue to work with schools to broaden the core lease times available to clubs (eg open later, during holiday periods and at weekends) as well as encourage an ethos of integrated rather than dual use provision where possible. This may build capacity at the times when clubs need access to the facilities most. It will also be the only way to release facility time for the more casual approach to recreation provision.
26. Schools will also require significant financial support if they are to take on this extended role. Many school facilities are not currently of a high enough quality,

or have the appropriate equipment to support community use. For example most school markings will be for junior regulations and the kit used will need to be purchased and stored separately from the PE department assets. Ancillary facilities such as changing areas and receptions/ office space will also require investment to cope with increased usage. Additionally, administrative arrangements and business planning functions will need boosting to deal with staffing contracts, cash handling, increased caretaking duties, energy provision, insurances etc.

27. For many schools, whilst the desire to open their doors to the wider public is indeed there, the risk in taking on a loss leader is too great without an underwritten subsidy and the guarantee that community use will not undermine the school improvement agenda.
28. Active York's role is to support schools to find their own solutions to these problems. Through a SLA with CYC, over the last 3 years, All Saints school has been gradually building up its community use agreement, and developing its business to require less and less subsidy. Whilst not quite there yet it is still an aspiration that within the next year it will provide both group bookings and pay and play programmes and make it the centre for local community recreation.

Section 106 funding

29. It is not always appreciated that the provision of community facilities is heavily dependent on capital funding to ensure that facilities are maintained to an appropriate standard. Public expectations have risen significantly in recent years and many adults are no longer prepared to tolerate the kind of facilities that are available in schools. It is worth noting that the cost of the recent investment in the Oaklands Sports centre, provided through lottery funding, was over £1M. The main source of such funding is through Section 106 funding for Leisure facilities as a condition of planning permission for the development of sites in the city.
30. Section 106 money for leisure facilities is received from developers when there is no play, amenity open space or space pitch provision with the development. Not all sites make payments, for example medium size sites may include play and amenity provision but not sports pitches and therefore only a sport payment would be made. Where payments are made it has to be used reasonably close to the development so that the occupants benefit from the investment.
31. Payments come in two types - revenue when the developer has built new facilities - usually a playground or amenity open space which is then transferred over to CYC, or capital - to provide new facilities or increase capacity or standards of existing facilities. Capital payments constitute nearly all of the money received.
32. Use of 106 Payments are administered by members of the Parks and Open and Space and Sport and Active Leisure teams. Parks and open space money has to date tended to go to city centre sites reflecting where the development

has taken place. With the change in the housing threshold at which 106 criteria apply in April 2005 (down from 10 dwellings to 1 dwelling) more money is now being received in Parish area and payments are now starting to be made to Parish Councils where they are the providers of facilities close to the development. Use of the sports pitch payments are informed by the Sport and Active Leisure Zone Plans.

33. Over the last 5 years £450,000 has been spent, and £350,000 is allocated and /or awaiting to be spent. A further £1,000,020 has been agreed as part of planning applications which are likely to be implemented over the next 5 years. Key projects which have been supported are Rowntree Park (lottery restoration, skateboard and tennis courts), Glen Gardens (tennis and basketball courts) Oakland's Sports centre, play areas, smaller parks and gardens, grants to voluntary sports clubs for equipment and buildings, grants to Parish Councils for improvement to facilities and land they manage. There has been no or very little additional revenue to support these investments so the existing R&M budgets have to cope.

Consultation

34. This report was requested by the Shadow Executive.

Options

35. This report does not include recommendations for action.

Analysis

36. The analysis of the current provision of community access to schools is included in the body of the report

Corporate Priorities

37. This report does not directly address any of the corporate priorities of the City of York Council.

Implications

Financial (Contact – Head of Finance for LCCS).

38. The financial implications of the community use of school premises are included in the body of the report

Human Resources (HR) (Contact – Head of HR for LCCS)

39. There are no implications

Equalities

40. There are no implications

Legal

41. There are no implications

Crime and Disorder

42. There are no implications

Information Technology (IT)

43. There are no implications

Property

44. There are no implications

Other

45. There are no implications

Risk Management

46. The risks associated with the community use of school buildings have not been analysed in detail but would include the following:
- Liability for any costs associated with the commercial failure of community use of school buildings,
 - Liability for insurance and other costs associated with the public use of school buildings,
 - The impact on existing community groups and premises of any extension of the use of school buildings by existing community groups.

Recommendations

47. The Shadow Executive is recommended to note and comment on the report.

Reason: In order to make recommendations to the council on the community use of school premises.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All Yes

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Audit of Extended School Provision
Annex 2: Model Lettings Policy