

Feasibility Report on the Delivery of the Extended School Agenda

Summary

1. This feasibility report presents information on the Extended Schools Agenda and asks Members to consider whether they wish to carry out a scrutiny review of this topic looking specifically at Quality and Take-up of Provision, and Community Use.

Background to the Review

2. In May 2008 the Education Scrutiny Committee received a scoping report for Part B of their ongoing review of School Governors. Part B was scheduled to investigate the role of Governors and current clerking arrangements in extended schools. At that time, Members recognised that there was no issue around those arrangements and therefore agreed not to proceed with Part B of the review. Instead they agreed that the broader issue of governance of extended school provision should be considered as a possible separate topic in the future. As a result, this topic was submitted by Cllr Merrett in August 2008 – see topic registration form at Annex A.

Criteria

3. In regard to the eligibility criteria, Cllr Merrett believes this topic relates to the eligibility criteria as follows:

Public Interest – there is a public perception of inequality in life chances because of background and differential service provision. There is also a perception that teenage kids are not properly provided for and that there is not enough affordable things for them to do

Under Performance / Service Dissatisfaction – whilst all York schools are nominally extended schools, there appears to be little evidence both locally and nationally of the comprehensiveness, quality, effectiveness or value for money in terms of what is being provided. It is also acknowledged that the 4th aspect of the core offer 'Community Use of Schools' is largely undeveloped (reference Head of Service comments at Education Scrutiny meeting in June 2008).

In keeping with Corporate Priorities – Extended school provision is a key component of the Government and Council’s agenda for giving every child the optimum start in life and for tackling deprivation and improving community engagement and cohesion.

Level of Risk – At this stage, it is unclear whether any/all schools in York will meet the full extended school agenda (especially community use) by 2010, and whether the key target groups are being effectively covered.

4. The Head of Early Years & Extended Schools has provided the following feedback on the eligibility criteria identified above:

“In regard to under performance / service dissatisfaction, the DCSF monitors the progress of each authority in this agenda. York is currently the 4th best performing authority in the region and 10th best performing authority in the country. Between 2008-2010 we will be developing this result by monitoring and making improvements to the quality, effectiveness and value for money, particularly with regard to community use of schools for all.

In regard to Level of Risk, York is already delivering the agenda. Therefore Cllr Merrett’s suggestion that the review should look at the quality and inclusiveness of what is on offer, is the best approach.”

5. The Executive Member for Children’s Services agrees that the topic does fit with the eligibility criteria identified above. In regard to the feasibility of carrying out a review of this topic at this time, Cllr Runciman has suggested that it may be slightly premature at this stage bearing in mind the fast pace of the developments in this service area. Therefore, in the event that the Committee decide to proceed with the review, careful consideration should be given to the remit to ensure the review can remain focussed and be completed in no more than six months to prevent the ongoing work from superseding the findings of the review.

Background to the Extended Schools Agenda

6. Information on the Extended Schools Agenda is shown in Annex B.

Current Extended Provision in York Schools

7. In York, just under £1M was provided over the two financial years 2006–08 to support the development of extended school provision. The Local Authority set itself the challenge of all schools becoming extended schools by 2008. This challenge, set in advance of the publication of the core offer, has been met and the Local Authority now has two years to improve the quality of the activities on offer. A summary of the position of schools in the authority is attached at Annex C. The dates shown within the annex demonstrate the date each school met the target and the data would only be changed if the schools were no longer delivering the full extended schools offer.

8. **Adult Education**

The city's Adult and Community Education (ACE) service makes extensive provision at over 80 sites in the city, including schools. Access to school premises is paid for by the service according to an agreed set of charges. 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.

9. A major priority of the service is to ensure that the accommodation used for adult learning is of high quality and that facilities are available to support learning through ICT and appropriate use of audio visual equipment. For this reason they have developed provision through a city-wide network of library learning centres. These venues provide additional community provision that is more appropriate for use by adults. It is also recognised that for many adults, particularly for those from more disadvantaged communities, a school can have negative associations and therefore a library is a more attractive venue.

10. **Use of School Buildings**

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.

11. 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. Advice from Property Services in the past has tended to recommend that schools set commercial rates and this has sometimes been a disincentive for community groups.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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. This access to school premises is necessary in order to use the city's sporting assets to their fullest. However, the logistical and financial barriers are many and schools require significant support to find the appropriate solutions to their individual circumstance. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.

The Future of Extended Provision in York

17. From May to September 2007 the Children's Information Service within the Early Years and Extended School team carried out York's first Childcare Sufficiency Assessment¹. The government defined 'childcare' as including play, care and education (apart from full time education within a school) in the maintained and community sector. For example holiday playschemes, private day nurseries, maintained education nurseries, pre-school playgroups, childminders or before and after school clubs. The information gathered as part of this assessment provides evidence of the provision of the first core offer

¹ A sufficiency assessment was made a statutory duty in the Childcare Act (2006) and involves consulting with parents, carers, childcare providers, local business, key partner agencies as well as children and young people. Sufficient childcare, in section 6 of the 2006 Act, is defined as 'sufficient to meet the requirements of parents who require childcare in order to enable them to take up, or remain in, work or to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

i.e. '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'.

18. From the consultation 693 responses from parent and carers were received along with 26 responses from local businesses. Although some gaps were identified, the findings showed that the vast majority of respondents felt that childcare in York matched families needs (a summary of those findings are shown at Annex D).
19. There are various pieces of work already underway to address some of the barriers identified and the Children's Information Service are about to begin the process of doing a 'light' refresh of the Sufficiency Assessment as required by the Childcare Act (2006). At the same time, work to bridge the gaps will be reviewed and drawn together into a single document (this will be around October/November 2008). The findings from the 'light' refresh will be pulled into a report that will include updated information about the levels of provision, report against progress made in tackling the childcare barriers and highlight changes in the childcare market over the last year. This will be published and go to EMAP in March 2008.
20. Work is also being done with the DDA, Special Services and transport leads to look at improved access to provision for those with special educational needs or those living in rural communities – this is in terms of both transport and support for children and young people attending activities. Plus, additional Dept for Schools Children & Families (DSCF) funding has been provided to enable improvements to be made to staff training and better buildings. To ensure that funding is made available where it is needed most and to as many providers as possible, a tendering process has been put in place and the Extended Schools Services continues to seek out other available funding streams.
21. Having achieved the aim of all schools becoming extended schools by 2008, the new challenge for York is to build on that achievement to ensure that activities are inclusive, of high quality, developed in partnership with others, based on consultation and widely marketed, are flexible and sustainable and are coordinated to ensure that new activities do not jeopardise existing business.
22. In order to achieve these goals, a new multi-agency Steering Group for Extended Schools is planned to begin work in October 2008. To ensure a higher level of commitment, this forum chaired by the new Assistant Director for Partnerships and Early Intervention, will include schools and partners and will give a strategic steer to the next developments of the work of the Extended Schools Service. Information on the membership and remit of the Steering Group is shown at Annex E.
23. In addition, in 2008 Action Plans for each York school, were created identifying the current provision of the 5 core offers available, and detailing how the activities offered by other organisations and LA departments are co-ordinated

(work is still ongoing on the Action Plans for three secondary schools) – see example Action Plan shown at Annex F. Each school has an Extended Schools Consultant (ESRC) from the Early Years and Extended Schools Service. These members of staff monitor the provision of the core offers and support each school and their Shared Community Partnerships in producing a yearly action plan which schools are then able to copy into their School Improvement Plans for Ofsted examination. The action plans are also collected by the Early Years and Extended Schools Service in order to co-ordinate city wide planning and support of this agenda and act as evidence for the TDA and DCSF.

Consultation

24. The Training and Development Association (TDA) are leading on supporting the Extended Schools Agenda work, supported by two national charitable organisations. These are:
 - ‘ContinYou’² - provides technical support through the extended school service agenda including advice on health improvement, community regeneration and study support.
 - ‘4Children’³ - provides expert advice on all aspects of childcare linked to extended schools, including delivery models and quality assurance programmes.
25. Both organisations bring expertise and skills, and complement each other to support schools through the process of developing extended services.
26. The topic registration includes suggestions for who should be consulted and how that consultation could be carried out i.e a number of surveys:
 - Survey of schools and extended provision providers
 - Survey of existing service users
 - Survey of wider community (perhaps limited to two geographical areas)

Options

27. In considering the information provided within this report Members may choose to:
 - i. Not proceed with a review of this topic in light of the ongoing work of the Extended Schools Service to create an Action Plan for each school and the creation of the Multi-Agency Steering Group set up specifically to deal with the issues raised in the topic registration form. Instead the Committee could request regular update reports on the ongoing work.
 - ii. Defer the decision on whether to carry out the review until work has

² ‘ContinYou’ – www.continyou.org.uk

³ ‘4Children’ - www.4children.org.uk

been completed on the Action Plans and a report has been provided by the Extended Schools Service on the findings. If a decision is then taken to proceed with the review, the findings will help to focus the remit for the review.

- iii. Agree a remit and commence the review now. The Committee will need to consider the work of the Steering Group and the work being carried out to create the Actions Plans to ensure that there is no duplication of effort (see paragraphs 22-23 above).

Conduct of Review

31. If a decision is taken to proceed with this review at this time, in order to assist the future work planned by the Early Years & Extended Schools team and the new Multi-Agency Steering Group, it would be beneficial if the review focused on:
 - how the activities are decided on e.g. consultation with families
 - whether the activities on offer are fully inclusive to all children and families
 - what are some of the blocks to quality e.g. inclusion of disabled children and young people, full year activities etc
 - whether the right partnerships are in place to help to deliver the agenda
 - whether all the relevant local authority departments are involved in the agenda e.g. leisure
 - what effect does targeting versus universal activity have
 - how activities are marketed to communities
 - sustainability of offer after 2010
28. The Head of Early Years & Extended Schools has confirmed that her team could support this review in a number of ways. For example:
 - Send out questionnaires to a selection of users and analyse results (in line with the suggestions made by Cllr Merrett in his topic registration form).
 - Analyse each school's Action Plan which details what is being done under each of the core offers and who is leading on its delivery e.g. pvi, family learning etc, and provide a report on this to the scrutiny committee.
 - Set up visits and meetings for the scrutiny committee should they be required
29. The attached registration form details the methods suggested by Cllr Merrett, for carrying out a review of this topic including who should be consulted, where supporting information could be drawn from and the timescale required for carrying out the review.
30. It should be recognised that the cost of this approach would be more than the budget available for the scrutiny review therefore an alternative approach may

need to be sought. One suggestion would be for the Committee to hold a number of informal meetings with the above groups in order to gather their views. This would require some advertising of the sessions to encourage attendance but would be less costly than carrying out a number of surveys. The committee could also consider data from the TDA and Ofsted.

Implications

34. **Financial** - It should be recognised that the cost of carrying out the number of surveys suggested within the topic registration form (as detailed in paragraph 27 above), would be more than the budget available for the whole scrutiny review. Therefore an alternative approach may need to be sought or the number of surveys limited. A detailed cost analysis would need to be carried out before proceeding with any survey.
35. There are no HR, Equalities, Legal or other implications associated with the recommendation made within this report.

Risk Management

36. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation within this report.

Recommendations

37. Having considered all of the information provided within this report and its associated annexes, it is recommended that the Education Scrutiny Committee proceed with this review.
38. If a decision is taken to proceed, the Committee will need to:
 - decide when to commence the review based on their current workload and other possible topics being considered.
 - agree an overall aim for the review together with a number of key objectives – a suggested remit is attached at Annex F.

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Approved



Date 13 August 2008

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Full Service aspects of extended school services from:
2003 Green Paper – Every Child Matters
2004 Children’s Act & 2004 Next Steps
DfES booklet Next Steps Extended Schools: Providing Opportunities & Services For All
Ofsted Report – How well are they doing?
Education Scrutiny Report on the Extended Schools Services 2006

Annexes:

- Annex A** – Topic Registration Form
- Annex B** – Summary Explanation of the Extended Schools Agenda
- Annex C** – Summary of Current Extended School Provision in York
- Annex D** – Summary of Findings from 2007 Sufficiency Assessment
- Annex E** – Terms of Reference for Multi-Agency Forum
- Annex F** – Example Action Plan
- Annex G** – Proposed Remit for Review