

COMMUNITY ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

Report by Interim Service Director, Children & Young People

AUDIT & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 October 2019

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides details for a proposed review of community access to schools.**
- 1.2 At its meeting on 19 April 2018, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee requested a scoping paper on community access to schools. There is no specific policy relating to which schools are available for community use. This report covers the work planned to produce a new policy for community access to schools.
- 1.3 Given the many differences across the Borders with regard to community access to schools and the amount of information that will need to be gathered, it is proposed that a steering group of officers be convened to take this forward. Initially, the group would carry out a full analysis of all community use of schools recorded over a twelve-month period. This work would be reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee by June 2020. The next stage would be for the group to formulate policy and undertake consultation, prior to any new policy being presented for Elected Member approval.
- 1.4 The final stage for the group would be to monitor the implementation of the new policy and processes. This would include evaluation of user groups at key points in the first year of implementation. The outcome of this evaluation and the impact of the policy would then be reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee by August 2021.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee approves the process as detailed in section 5 of this report for reviewing community access to schools.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 19 April 2018, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee requested a scoping paper on community access to schools. The paper, covering the work planned, would include details of which schools were categorised as community schools, accessibility, letting, service arrangements and charging policy.
- 3.2 Across the school estate, there is a variety of arrangements for community access to schools. These differ between the PPP schools and other High Schools, as well as those for Primary Schools. Some sports facilities in schools are managed by Live Borders and some facilities by Management Committees.

4 SCHOOL ESTATE – CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 There is no specific policy relating to which schools are available for community use although three schools: Philiphaugh Primary in Selkirk, St Ronan's Primary in Innerleithen, and Burnfoot Primary in Hawick, are classified as "Community Schools".
- 4.2 Three High Schools (Earlston, Eyemouth and Berwickshire) are operated by AMEY Facilities Management on behalf of the PPP funding contract with set hours being available for community use.
- 4.3 In Peebles and Kelso High Schools, the sports facilities are run and managed by Live Borders, with the School being granted full use during school hours.
- 4.4 The new campus in Jedburgh will be different in the opportunity for concurrent use of the building by both school and community at any time. As SBC's strategic partner, Live Borders will manage this.
- 4.5 In the other four High Schools, community access and use of the premises is arranged directly with the School, with costs for caretaking and cleaning met from the charges applied.
- 4.6 Across the primary estate, there is significant variation in community use. While any School can accept a request for community use, the availability of a janitor or caretaker to enable such a request to be met can on occasion be a barrier. Many facilities are offered for use during school term only, with groups and organisations being forced to limit their activity accordingly.
- 4.7 Pricing is based on SBC policy which should ensure consistency, however, there are historic and local arrangements which sit out-with this structure. Within the policy itself there are anomalies in charges applied to different groups and for uses of spaces.
- 4.8 A brief analysis of community use of schools highlights that there are times when several buildings in the same community are being utilised at the same times, each with separate caretaking cover, leading to inefficiency in the operating model.

5 WORK PLAN

- 5.1 Given the many differences across the Borders with regard to community access to schools and the amount of information that will need to be gathered, it is proposed that a steering group of officers be convened to take this forward. This group would comprise officers from Education, the Corporate Landlord, Facilities Management, Finance, Community Learning and Development and Live Borders, and would agree the principles of a review of community use of schools.
- 5.2 The group would carry out a full analysis of all community use of schools over the twelve-month period to June 2019. This would be reported on a school by school basis – number of bookings, number of groups, charges applied, total income and costs. The number of booking requests declined (with reasons) would also be included where available.
- 5.3 The next stage would be for the group to formulate policy by considering rationalising processes, including booking systems, charging and the number of sites available at specific times. Any implications for staffing and finance would also be taken into account. Consultation would then be undertaken with user groups, schools, community groups (including Community Councils) and Area Partnerships. The proposed new policy would then require approval by Elected Members at full Council. It is anticipated this work could take up to a year to conclude however it is proposed that as much as possible be reported back by June 2020.
- 5.4 The final stage for the group would be to monitor the implementation of the new policy and processes. This would include evaluation of user groups at key points in the first year of implementation. The outcome of this evaluation and the impact of the policy would then be reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee by August 2021.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report however there is potential for efficiencies to be made in utilities, janitorial overtime and cleaning through alignment of bookings to fewer buildings across the same community and these would be captured in the Fit for 2024 agenda.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

At the moment, there are inconsistencies across the Scottish Borders relating to community access to schools. There is a variety of reasons for this, some to do with historic practices, others to do with suitability of each school and availability of staff and/or budget. It is important that a review is carried out to establish a policy on community access to schools to ensure maximum use of facilities where practicable and within budget. It may not be possible to provide equity across the Borders due to the nature of school buildings and the cost of opening facilities out-with school hours, but reasons for this would be explained within the policy.

6.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the development of any new policy on community access to schools.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no economic, social or environmental effects of carrying out the review of community access to school and any future impacts will be accounted for within any new policy.

6.5 Carbon Management

There is no impact on the Council's carbon emissions from the recommendations within this report.

6.6 Rural Proofing

Rural proofing will be part of the consideration for any new policy on community access to schools.

6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

7.2 Consultation is also taking place with officers from Live Borders.

Approved by

Stuart Easingwood
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Signature

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Background Papers: Nil

Previous Minute Reference: Audit & Scrutiny Committee, 19 April 2018

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Lesley Munro can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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