

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20TH SEPTEMBER, 2010**

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline progress to date regarding Community Use of school facilities, including Multi Use Games areas.

Summary

2. In December 2009, the Sport and Physical Activity Facility Strategy and the Playing Pitch Strategy were formally approved by Darlington Borough Council cabinet. A fundamental element of the action plans of both of these documents is to improve the availability of sport and physical activity facilities by ensuring that school buildings are open for use by the local community beyond the core school day. Community use of school facilities is also one of the strands of the Extended Services core offer, which requires school to facilitate community access where facilities are available and appropriate for community use. As part of the recognised need for the approach to community use to be town-wide, work has been undertaken to ensure that the relevant support is in place for schools to be able to make facilities available.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee provide comments on progress to date.

Cliff Brown
Director of Community Services

Gill Walker
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Sport and Physical Activity Facility Strategy.

Playing Pitch Strategy.

Community Use Guidance Document

Gill Walker: Extension 2878

S17 Crime and Disorder	Part of the aim of community use is to provide
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	cultural and learning opportunities in local areas – it is hoped that provision of more activities to divert residents would have a favourable outcome in terms of crime and disorder. It is expected that this would particularly be the case for antisocial behaviour caused by children and young people.
Health and Well Being	In particular, the provision of accessible sport and physical activity opportunities close to people's homes will help to improve health and well-being, and transport is one of the biggest barriers to participation. In addition, other health promotion work could be based in schools, such as smoking cessation, weight management and healthy cooking courses.
Sustainability	This area of work forms part of the day-to-work of staff within Cultural Services and Children's Services, and is also an area of work that is increasingly being expected of schools. For this reason, the work is sustainable.
Diversity	Services and community activities based in schools would be available in local areas, and would be much more likely to attach those groups who tend to feel isolated. Schools are also in an excellent position at the heart of their local community, and are therefore able to pick up on any local demand for sessions or activities that are required by specific groups.
Wards Affected	All projects are Darlington wide.
Groups Affected	All sections of the community are addressed..
Budget and Policy Framework	This area of work will be delivered within available funding
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The majority of this area of work relates to the delivery of the Healthy Darlington and Safer Darlington themes, however sport and physical activity and culture are able to contribute to the delivery of all of the themes.
Efficiency	

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. The approach to increasing community use of school facilities is cross departmental, with both Children's Services and Community Services (Cultural Services) working together to ensure that schools are supported as much as possible. A supplementary planning document was adopted in July 2009 By Darlington Borough Council. This document embedded two core strategies, the Sport and Physical Activity Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy. This will now allow leverage of community use not only on school facilities but community use for any future building plans throughout the borough, which is increasingly being stipulated in planning agreements by Sport England as mitigation for the loss of playing fields. This is to be evidenced through a Community Access Agreement between the school and the authority.
5. Whilst opening school facilities to the public for community use seems like a straightforward concept, it is recognised that there is a huge amount of work that needs to take place before this can be allowed. School must consider: the mechanics of the access (i.e. who will open/close the facility and what will it, will the use disrupt classed the next day – for e.g. if classroom furniture has been moved), implications for insurance and liability, wear and tear of facilities and the cost of additional maintenance, implications for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and also schools must develop a pricing policy and booking procedures etc.
6. In order to support schools through this process, the Community Use Guidance document was produced. This document takes school step-by-step through the procedures and principles that must be considered, and most importantly, gives the contact details for those who are the experts in each areas (for example there is a direct contact for any questions regarding insurance, and the same for safeguarding and licensing etc.) This document will also assists in a more consistent approach to community access, pricing etc to school facilities.
7. A small working group with children's services, cultural services and school representation determined that it was important that the commitment to work towards increased community use was accepted on a town-wide level, and as a result, the Community Use Guidance Document was taken to the Headteachers Joint Consultative Group (JCG) in May 2010. JCG agreed that school facilities should be made available beyond the school day (where appropriate), and the guidance document was welcomed. It was agreed that a small working group would take forward the project, and start to put into place a procedure for supporting schools to, and to initiate meetings with individual schools to support existing community use procedures, or to begin the process where facilities are not currently available for community use. Several meetings are planned for the summer, and for the new term in September.
8. A key element of the process of opening for community use, as is detailed in paragraph 4, is the development of Community Access Agreement (CAA). This is a document which details which facilities will be available, and also commits to the type of activity that will be supported (for example, the lettings procedure might provide lower rates to community and voluntary organisations). There are a number of schools who at present are required to have a CAA as a result of capital works that have been carried out, and these schools will be targeted as a priority in order to satisfy the planners and also Sport England. Arrangements have been made to meet with these schools Cultural Services Officers who will lead on this.

9. As part of this work the working group agreed to consider access to MUGAs (Multi use games areas) if these are on a school site. This will mean that the Community Access Agreements will also reflect access arrangements to these facilities on school sites.
10. A paper is also going to the Headteachers and Governing body briefing in January to update all schools on progress in this area.

Outcome of Consultation

11. Consultation took place with schools through the Joint Consultative Group in May 2010. JCG agreed that school facilities should be made available beyond the school day (where appropriate).