

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MARCH 2016 AT 10.30 AM IN FORESTVIEW

1. PRESENT Mrs M Culbert (Chair)

Dr M Dynan Ms S O'Connor
Mrs N Lappin

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mr G Boyd, Mr G Butler, Mr J Collings and Ms L McCall.

3. APOLOGY

An apology had been received from Miss N Gowan.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded of the requirement to declare interests where appropriate during the course of the meeting.

5. DRAFT SCHEME – COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

The Scheme reflected the duties of the Authority as set out in the Education (Northern Ireland) Act 2014.

Discussion ensued in relation to the role of Local Authorities in community planning and their obligations to engage with the Authority as a statutory partner. Mr Butler said that strategic meetings took place once every three months and, on an operational level, EA officers were engaging with District Councils, particularly within the Youth Service. Members were of the view that the EA should be approaching District Councils to emphasise the importance of promoting community planning. The Chair of the Board indicated that she had made such a representation at the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

It was noted that while the Authority would work with 11 individual Local Authorities, it would have to design and adopt a regional perspective.

The importance of aligning community planning and Area Planning was highlighted. It was noted that DE's Policy for Sustainable Schools cited six criteria to assess a school's educational viability, one criterion being 'strong links with the community'. Area Planning considerations would therefore take account of schools which met a range of other community needs.

It was pointed out that initial planning required for new builds should take account of possible community usage.

A Member queried how work in this area was currently being resourced. Mr Butler advised that Community Use of Schools impacted on officers within Development and Planning, Claims and Legal, Extended Schools and Social Inclusion. Where licence arrangements were required for community use of premises, this was facilitated through the Legal Service.

The Chair pointed out that the Committee would be required to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies and provisions made to promote the uptake of engagement between schools and communities.

A Member suggested that the Scheme should reflect partnership arrangements with Local Authorities. It was considered that this partnership arrangement would be reflected within the Authority's Corporate and Business Plans and that the draft Scheme could be reviewed by the Committee at a later stage.

On the proposal of Dr Dynan, seconded by Mrs Lappin, the Committee agreed to recommend the adoption of the Scheme.

6. COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL PREMISES : A GUIDANCE TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS

(Mrs Lappin declared an interest as she served on the Board of Governors of two controlled schools and her husband served on the Board of Governors of a controlled school.)

The Committee noted the DE booklet entitled 'Community Use of School Premises : A Guidance Toolkit for Schools'.

Mr Butler advised that community use of premises normally fell within three categories: a one off use of a school's premises; regular bookings; and arrangements requiring licencing agreements. He pointed out that the Committee would be required to consider a model scheme in due course which would set out guidance for grant-aided schools on the rate of charges to be applied for the use of premises.

Discussion ensued in relation to the responsibilities of a Board of Governors in opening its premises to community use. Members noted that the Authority self-insured for employer and public liability costs. Self-insurance also extended to Catholic Maintained Schools.

A Member requested information on claims and legal issues and their associated costs which had arisen as a result of community use of schools. It was agreed that information on Losses would be provided to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and that relevant information would be presented to the Community Use of Schools Committee.

The Committee agreed that the guidance toolkit for schools should be restructured to become more user friendly and that the document should reflect the benefits to a school in facilitating and promoting community use of premises. It was agreed that officers would re-draft the document for the Committee's consideration which would take account of how schools could access advice and support. A Member stated that engagement with school principals in the document's re-drafting would be beneficial.

Actions: *Information on Losses to be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee; information on claims and legal costs to be presented to the Community Use of Schools Committee; guidance toolkit for schools to be redrafted for the Committee's consideration.*

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that meetings would be convened once per school term. The next meeting would be held on 24 May 2016.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm.

Chair

Date