

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2018 AT 10.00 AM IN CURRIE PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELFAST

1. PRESENT Mrs M Culbert (Chair)

Dr M Dynan	Mr N McCausland
Mr E Jardine	Mr O McMullan
Sir Gerry Loughran	Ms S O'Connor

The Chair thanked the Board of Governors of Currie Primary School and the Principal, Mrs A Currie, for facilitating the meeting at the school.

2. IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs K Scott, Mr D Anderson, Mr P Crooks, Mr J Dunbar and Mr C McNickle.

3. APOLOGY

Mrs P Carville.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 MAY 2018

The minutes* (CUOS/10/18/3) of the meeting held on 10 May 2018 were agreed on the proposal of Dr Dynan and seconded by Mr McMullan.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

The Chair advised that Members would be given a tour of the school after the meeting. The Chair welcomed Mr Crooks and Mr Dunbar to the meeting and she invited Mr Dunbar to provide a short update on the Department for Communities' (DfC) feasibility study on a funding bid to develop store rooms in the school into a community resource. Members expressed concern that the process for securing £150,000 of funding was unnecessarily extensive and it was agreed that officers would ask DfC for a timeline for the expected completion of the feasibility study.

***Action:** Officers to ask DfC for a timeline for the expected completion of the feasibility study.*

7. COMMENCEMENT OF REVIEW OF COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

WIDENING THE AGENDA

Mr Dunbar presented a paper* (CUOS/10/18/6) and outlined current work relating to the community use of schools service. This work fell into two broad categories:

1. The day to day use of existing school facilities across the school estate, in accordance with DE's toolkit; and
2. The development and addition to the school estate (building and facilities) to increase community use of schools.

Mr Dunbar highlighted that this work was expected to increase and improve community use of schools. However he stressed that the work was largely based on responding and reacting to external factors such as requests from schools for additional facilities or new funding opportunities. He informed Members that a review of this work would enable EA to set out a more strategic approach. He suggested that the review should make recommendations on how EA should:

- Establish a cross directorate approach to promoting community use of schools;
- Align strategically with Councils through Community Planning to promote and maximise community use of schools; and
- Work more collaboratively with other statutory partners and funders such as the Department of Education, the Department for Communities and Sport NI.

The Chair welcomed the proposals and highlighted the importance of a cross directorate approach to promoting community use of schools. A Member referred to the need to work collaboratively with other statutory partners; however, in light of the Currie Primary School case study, he expressed concern that such collaboration might lead to delays in finalising projects.

A Member referred to the relationship between schools and local councils and expressed the view that an overarching strategy was required to govern community use of school premises. This was required to provide assurance to schools that councils would contribute towards the maintenance of school facilities. The Member highlighted that it was the practical governance arrangements that often stymied efforts to promote community use of schools. Mr Crooks highlighted that EA had a positive working relationship with local councils.

A Member expressed the view that the Department of Health was a key statutory partner when considering how school premises could be made available for public use. He was mindful of the need to provide for the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Mrs Scott highlighted that the cross directorate approach to promoting community use of schools would include officers from the Children and Young People's Services directorate.

(Mr McCausland entered the meeting at 10.31 am)

On the proposal of Ms O'Connor and seconded by Mr Jardine, the Committee agreed to proceed with the review of Community Use of Schools.

8. PROJECTS FOR NOTING

8.1 GREATER SHANKILL AND BELFAST CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Mrs Scott presented a paper* (CUOS/10/18/7.1) and informed the Committee that the Area Plan Annual Action Plan 2018/19 included a carry-over 'action' for the Greater Shankill Road area of Belfast to address school provision where sustainability was an issue and to ensure that school places were located as required.

Members noted that EA had been working in partnership with the Greater Shankill Partnership and Belfast City Council to explore a joint Area Planning/Community Planning pilot to explore the possibility of working in conjunction with a range of relevant service providers to develop the concept of full-service schooling for the primary age children. Mrs Scott informed Members that a full-service school focused on partnerships between a school and its community. It integrated education provision, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development.

Members considered the benefits of a full-service schooling model for parents and children in the area and Mrs Scott reported on plans to convene a meeting with Belfast City Council and relevant statutory and community partners. This meeting would explore the potential for the provision of future joined up services to this community through the full-service schooling concept. Mrs Scott undertook to report back to the Committee following preliminary meetings to consider the proposals.

A Member queried whether this was the first example of the full-service school model. Mrs Scott confirmed that it was the first time EA had considered the model and it was hoped that it would provide the basis for future service provision. She paid tribute to the support provided by the Greater Shankill Partnership to this work. The Committee noted the paper.

Action: Mrs Scott to report back to the Committee following preliminary meetings to consider the proposals.

8.2 DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND SPORT NI PROJECT UPDATE – ‘YOUR SCHOOL YOUR CLUB’

Mr Crooks presented a paper* (CUOS/10/18/7.2) and informed Members of the ‘Your School Your Club’ initiative which had been established in 2014 between the Department of Education (DE), Sport NI and the former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure with the aim of promoting community use of school facilities. He highlighted that in 2017 the Department for Communities (DfC) had secured £391,000 funding and had established a Pilot Scheme to enhance existing school facilities for community use in accordance with ‘Your School Your Club’. Members noted that DfC worked in partnership with Sport NI and EA to identify projects which would provide community use through enhancing existing school facilities. The following projects had been completed in 2018:

1. Parkhall Integrated College – Provision of floodlights to existing 2G synthetic pitch;
2. Waringstown P.S. – Provision of floodlights to existing 2G synthetic sports facility;
3. St Mary’s P.S. Pomeroy – Replacement of existing grass pitch with 3G synthetic sports facility and floodlights; and
4. Hillcroft School – Enhancement and provision of play equipment to existing play area.

Mr Crooks informed Members that, for the current financial year, £750,000 had been secured by DfC for the enhancement of existing school facilities. Members noted that, in accordance with the objectives of ‘Your School Your Club’, DfC had issued correspondence to Councils, requesting that suitable projects should be identified through community planning, whilst giving due regard to their strategic need for sports facilities within each Council area.

Mr Crooks informed Members that a working group comprising officials from DE, DfC, a nominated representative from the Councils, Sport NI, EA and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) had been established to assess the information. Members noted that a list of suitable projects would be agreed for progression in this financial year by DfC. These projects would be delivered by either EA or a Council. A Member expressed concern at the timescales associated with single year funding cycles and Mr Crooks highlighted the benefits of moving to a five year funding model.

A discussion ensued on the process involved to identify suitable projects. Mr Crooks highlighted that requests for synthetic pitches were very popular amongst schools; however this demand had to be balanced against the strategic need of the Council. A Member queried whether EA took cognisance of facilities in other school sectors and EA’s working relationship with CCMS was noted. A Member expressed the view that suitable projects should be

identified in rural areas and it was noted that DAERA sat on the working group and that all of the decisions of the working group were subject to rural proofing.

A Member expressed concern that problems might arise between various sporting organisations in terms of fair usage of school facilities. Members noted that following the school day the local Council was responsible for administering community use of school facilities.

The Committee noted the paper.

9. MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDS

(Mr McCausland declared an interest in this item and explained the reason for his interest)

Mr Anderson presented a paper* (CUOS/10/18/8) and updated Members on the draft guidance on the management and control of Private School Funds. Members noted that a working group had been established in response to an initial review of issues regarding community use of schools and Private School Funds. Mr Anderson highlighted that the initial report identified the need for clear and consistent guidance to schools and that the guidance would be considered in addition to DE's Guidance Toolkit for community use of school premises and existing guidance on the Local Management of Schools. The drafting of the guidance had progressed significantly, however some issues remained to be discussed and resolved.

A Member commended the document as a comprehensive guide; however he expressed concern that some school leaders might be overwhelmed by the guidance. Mr Anderson reiterated the need for comprehensive guidance and highlighted that the guidance would be accompanied by a frequently asked questions document to provide further clarity.

Members noted from the draft guidance that the responsibility to audit Private School Funds was a matter for Boards of Governors. A discussion ensued on how leadership teams, in smaller schools especially, might find it difficult to manage accounting expectations. A Member queried whether EA training on the management of Private School Funds was provided to Boards of Governors. Mr Anderson suggested that it would be important for a training programme to be developed for Principals and Governors to explain the revised guidance. The delivery of this training would be timed for delivery around the same time as the revised guidance was issued to schools.

A discussion ensued on how the issue of school governance was being addressed as part of DE's Transformation Programme. It was agreed that this matter should be raised at the EA Transformation Programme sub group and at the forthcoming meeting with the Permanent Secretary on 24th October.

A Member referred to considerable challenges for some Boards of Governors to manage accounting expectations.

The Committee noted the draft guidance.

Action: *Officers to refer the matter of school governance to the EA Transformation Programme sub group for consideration. This matter would also be included for discussion at the forthcoming meeting with the Permanent Secretary on 24th October. Training programme to be developed alongside the revised guidance. Officers to finalise revised guidance for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee for approval.*

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Community Use of Schools Committee would take place on Tuesday 5th February at 10.30 am in Antrim Board Centre.

The meeting ended at 11.08 am.

Chair

Date

*Paper circulated with the agenda