

The Highland Council
EDUCATION, CHILDREN & ADULT SERVICES
21 May 2014

Agenda Item	17.
Report No	ECA/14/14

COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN SCHOOLS

Report by Director of Care & Learning

Summary

This report sets out the current position in relation to community facilities in schools and recommends that further work is due to ensure consistency in their availability to communities.

1. Background

- 1.1 The internal and external facilities of all Highland school are available for community use.
- 1.2 The Scottish Government's School Estates Strategy emphasises the importance of schools being utilised as community hubs. This includes the aspiration that "schools are integral parts of the communities they serve, with pupils making use of community facilities and communities accessing school facilities".
- 1.3 In addition, parent councils have a statutory duty to ensure that community use of schools is maximised.
- 1.4 Given the size and nature of the Highland School Estate there is a wide range of facilities available from basic rooms which can be used, for example for community meetings, to high quality modern indoor sports facilities.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 The Council has invested very significantly in new or refurbished primary and secondary school provision.

New and refurbished school facilities are designed following full local consultation in order to reflect as far as possible the views of local service users on the range of facilities to be included within the provision.

As a result there is a template for new primary schools encompassing flexible use internal facilities with external sports provision being made through flood-lit all weather pitches.

In larger projects such as new or significantly refurbished secondary schools community facilities will include internal and external sports and fitness provision and will often include a swimming pool, library, community use rooms and community learning facilities.

A current example is the 3-18 campus being designed in Wick which will include a swimming pool and community library in addition to standard leisure facilities which will be available to community users.

2.2 The above approach in effect provides a community hub at each new or significantly refurbished school location.

2.3 Depending on the nature of the facilities available in schools and other local premises there are widely varying levels of community use of school facilities.

There are generally very high levels of use of modern external and internal sports facilities and community library use has typically increased when incorporated in a new school building.

2.4 A survey of sports facilities has been carried out and was discussed with Local Members in order to agree a strategic plan for sports provision across the Council area.

All recent developments have fitted in with this plan. There is now a need for the survey to be refreshed and discussed at Ward meetings in order that members can be fully sighted on the range of external facilities available locally.

3. The Way Forward

3.1 An updated survey, as mentioned in paragraph 2.4 above, will provide an up-to-date picture for Members of the facilities available locally and will also allow for a strategic approach to the planning of the use of facilities, particularly external pitches in areas where there is multiple provision. This will have the beneficial effect of ensuring that, grass pitches in particular, are not over played.

3.2 Currently there is no consistent mechanism for ensuring the planned use of facilities, particularly pitches as mentioned in paragraph 3.2 above.

3.3 In general local arrangements and local knowledge will ensure that local groups and individuals can access facilities when they want. However, it is important to ensure that there is consistency in the availability of school based facilities for community use.

It is therefore proposed that in addition to the updating of the survey of sports facilities work is taken forward to identify a consistent approach to the accessing of community facilities, in particular sports facilities and that a detailed report be taken to Members at a future meeting of the Committee.

4. Implications

4.1 There are no legal, equality, climate change or Gaelic Medium implications at this stage.

4.2 Recommendation

Members are asked to agree:

- That the sports facilities survey is updated and submitted to Members at Ward Meetings
- That officers develop proposals for the management of access to community facilities as set out in paragraph 3.3 above.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 13 May 2014

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Background Papers: