

Appendix 4

Consultation on surplus school property

Newcastle

With regard to the ultimate disposal of a redundant school site and buildings, the Corporate Surplus Properties Protocol applies.

This essentially evaluates the potential for the asset to be used for some other municipal purpose as opposed to disposing of it and generating a capital receipt. The final decision is taken by BMG Capital Sub Group. Ward members are consulted whilst the case is under review. Individual directorates cannot make decisions regarding the future use of an asset which they have declared surplus.

Bristol

When land or buildings are going to be declared surplus, they are usually identifiable at least a year in advance through the Asset Management Plan.

Annually, each department has to prepare an Asset management Plan. This identifies future capital aspirations and opportunities for land disposal.

A Capital Receipts Board has been established. Membership includes the Executive for Central Support Services, the Chief Finance Officer, the Chief Property Officer, and Chief Valuer. The Board monitor potential land disposals and are made aware of these through the asset management plan.

When finally a department has made a decision to release an asset, details of that asset are circulated corporately to see if any other department has a need for it. If a claim is not made for it (there would have to be a case already identified in the Departments Asset Management Plan) it is advertised on the open market.

During the period that the identity of the surplus land is circulated for consultation partner housing associations are also given the opportunity to make a bid for the land. This can slow the process down a bit.

Where we are disposing of school playing field we work with Leisure colleagues to identify the impact of releasing the playing field for housing development on the overall Public Open Space and Playing Pitch strategy. We obviously consult with the DCSF on how Section 77 funds will be spent.

There is no public consultation on how surplus school buildings will be used.

The consultation will have already been undertaken as part of the statutory process for closure. In terms of school closure we use prescribed processes which include public notices in the media, public meetings, letters to parents in the school, letters to local residents around the school and finally, web site, and statutory notices fixed to the school premises.

Liverpool

When disposing of surplus school buildings and/or land there is no additional consultation and the process is much the same as that for the disposal of any other asset. However, ward Councillors are consulted as a matter of course, and where there is any dispute over the future use of the building they may ask for a wider

community consultation to be carried out. In such cases the relevant Executive Member also usually becomes involved.

There have been several recent cases where a community group has expressed an interest in taking over former school buildings. Liverpool City Council now carry out an options appraisal of any development proposals, including those from community groups, so as to properly evaluate their robustness. A system is also being developed whereby any organisation submitting development plans for a former council asset (including a school building) will have a single point of contact within the development department. This is designed to counter the difficulties which have ensued when community groups have received assurances from ward Councillors that they will be able to make use of a building, when in reality the Council is still bound to seek 'Best Consideration' for the asset, and will ensure that all organisations putting forward proposals have realistic expectations.

Nottingham

Once a school building has been declared surplus it goes through the usual asset management mechanisms. A report is taken to Senior Management to establish whether the Children's Services Department can make use of the building at all. Once it has been established that they cannot, the request is broadened to the rest of the Council Departments, and if this approach is still unsuccessful then the building is advertised for sale on the open market.

The final decision in terms of who to dispose of the building to would need to be approved by the Portfolio Holder and the relevant ward Councillors. Area Committees are usually used to give Councillor the opportunity to evaluate all potential buyers and their proposals before a decision is made.

Wakefield

Before an asset can be declared surplus, the Head of Property Management must be given six months notice. During this period, he or she will assess whether the asset is of significance to the local community, and if so, ward Members will be consulted about its future use. If no other Services require the building, it will be declared surplus. If a ward Member objects to this decision, and feels that the building should not be declared surplus, then at this stage a request can be made to refer the matter to Cabinet for a decision.

Once the building is officially declared surplus it will be offered for sale on the open market, unless the Secretary of State has given approval for it to be disposed of at less than best consideration.

Sheffield

There is no set procedure as such, but invariably what we try to do is establish at the outset when schools are being closed what the future of the former building will be. In many cases the closure of the site is linked to trying to provide better accommodation or facilities on a replacement school site and therefore any receipt is linked to this "new" replacement provision. The community consultation in these cases normally takes place during the school closure process and more often than not the community have their say at this point on what they would like to see happen. However, it is as always a very difficult balance between the need to maximise a receipt and what the local community sees as a need to keep a community resource. There are also difficulties around consulting on the disposal of sites/buildings during the consultation period as this can give the impression that a decision has already been made which could lead to a delay in discussions about the future of buildings.