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## Report of the Chief Executive of Education Leeds

### Report to Executive Board

Date: 14 January 2009

**Subject: Deputation to Council 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2008– The need of Local Schools and Communities for sports facilities in the Hyde Park Area**

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Hyde Park & Woodhouse

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 Representatives of Local Hyde Park Residents were granted a deputation to the Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2008. The deputation was in relation to the need of Local schools and communities for extra sports facilities in the Hyde Park Area.

### 2 Background

- 2.1 The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (SPR's) sets out guidelines for playing fields at maintained schools. When these SPR's were introduced in 1999 it was considered impractical to require local authorities to provide additional playing fields for those schools that fell below the minimum requirement.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Executive Board is asked to note: The concerns expressed in the deputation and Education Leeds' response.

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- 1.1 Representatives of Local Hyde Park Residents were granted a deputation to the Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2008. The deputation was in relation to the need of Local schools and communities for extra sports facilities in the Hyde Park Area.

## **2 Background**

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## **3 The Issue**

- 3.1 The deputation raised concerns about obesity and lack of exercise in the local population, especially among children and young people, with serious implications for their future health, and the lack of sports facilities.

## **4 Education Leeds Response**

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that the schools detailed in the deputation do not meet the minimum guidance, although there are discrepancies in the areas stated in the petition and also in the background information. For example, two of the schools, at Springbank and Rosebank have new artificial playing spaces and these count as double spaces when accounting against the guidelines.
- 4.2 It is also important to acknowledge that many of these local schools make use of off site provision to assist them in their PE curriculum and for team game usage. Quarry Mount school has an agreement with the City of Leeds High school which allows use of their sports pitches when requested although there are some restrictions because of the use made of the fields by the school itself. Rosebank school has used fields off site and in fact all these local schools are able, by agreement, to make use of off site facilities in the ownership of the City Council. Some schools choose to make use of these facilities and some schools do not. In terms of team games many schools which do not have playing pitches on their own site manage to deliver matches by playing them away.
- 4.3 Education Leeds seeks also to support local schools in making the best use of their school sites, including all play areas. There is a great emphasis, through the Healthy Play agenda, on laying out new Zone Parks in primary schools which provide new opportunities of learning through play. When it has been possible to supplement schools play spaces, as in the case of Rosebank school where Education Leeds managed to close off a local thoroughfare and turn it into top quality additional play space, Education Leeds has been proactive. To further support our schools there is a nationally funded staff infrastructure and support mechanism for PE and school sport – the “Schools Sports Partnership” – and we will encourage all schools to get involved in this scheme.
- 4.4 With regard to the Olympic aspirations of our young people Education Leeds piloted a project last summer involving 30 primary schools, all of whom received fixed funding allocations. This was deemed as a great success and it is hoped to offer this to all schools next summer. The Council is committed to support the Olympic aspirations of the City and Education Leeds is fully signed up to this work which is being directed by the Council strategically.
- 4.5 However, the reality of many of these schools sites is that they cannot be expanded and that there is very limited opportunity to rebuild schools on local sites that do offer the

chance to meet SPR's.

## **5. Planning & Economic Policy Response**

- 5.1** In considering the possible acquisition of the protected playing pitches for use by local Primary Schools, the view of Education Leeds is essentially sympathetic, in that the points made by the schools are valid in themselves as they have little greenspace of their own. However, the absence of playing fields does not of itself constitute a breach of any regulation or legislation. Whilst Education Leeds would welcome the provision of greenspaces for both school and community use, it is acknowledged that finding the funds to buy the land from their resources is likely to be a problem. There is no identified funding vested with Education Leeds to support the costs of purchasing the protected playing pitches. An additional concern of Education Leeds is that, as the fields are not linked to any of the local Primary Schools, there are likely to be implications in both the management and maintenance of the fields to make them suitable for school use, including health and safety matters.
- 5.2** We are clearly still negotiating with Leeds Girls High School (LGHS) with the intention of retaining at least Ford House Gardens to form a new public park and, if successful, this would be available for the wider community. It wouldn't however, resolve concerns about distance from the schools and health & safety matters for children's play.
- 5.3** Following the report "Response to Deputation regarding a request for the Council to buy the recreational and sports facilities on the Leeds Girls High School site" to Executive Board on 11 June the Chief Asset Management Officer has met with school representatives to explore the possibility of acquiring the land concerned, namely land at Victoria Road (behind the former school gym & pool), for either community use or for use by local Primary Schools or both. There is ward member support for the council to purchase the sports pitch at Victoria Road.
- 5.4** However, the Leeds Girl's High School have aspirations to develop the land concerned and their valuations are based on securing planning permission for a residential use. There is a huge difference between a residential valuation and a greenspace one. This is the sticking point. Given that, at present at least, the land concerned is a protected playing pitch, it has a greenspace valuation until such time as the planning process determines whether an alternative use is acceptable. Planning applications have been submitted for the site and these are currently being analysed and processed.
- 5.5** Sport England have objected to the current planning application but the school's advisors are responding to this and it is possible that Sport England could withdraw their objection if the school can provide adequate mitigation for the loss of the pitch. However, at this stage it is important to understand that the outcome of the planning applications cannot be predicted with any certainty and the process needs to run its course. Asset Management Officers will monitor the situation.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1** Executive Board is asked to note: The concerns expressed in the deputation and the response.

### **Background Papers:**

The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999

11 June 2008 Executive Board: Response to Deputation regarding a request for the council to buy the recreational & sports facilities on the Leeds Girls High School site

