

## **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD: 14 January 2009**

**SUBJECT: Woodkirk Valley F.C. –response to deputation to Council**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **1 Introduction**

1.1 Representatives from Woodkirk Valley Football Club were granted a deputation to the Council on 19 November 2008. The deputation was in relation to the procedures for the Community use of School sports pitches and sports halls

2. The deputation raised a number of queries and concerns regarding the current lettings procedures.

#### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Executive Board is asked to note the concerns expressed in the deputation which is attached.

2.2 Education Leeds will meet with representatives of the club and that wider policy considerations will be raised with Children's Services Department and Learning and Leisure.

Agenda Item:

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

### Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in  
(Details contained in the Report)

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Representatives from Woodkirk Valley Football Club were granted a deputation to the Council on 19 November 2008. The deputation was in relation to the procedures for the Community use of School sports pitches and sports halls. A copy of the deputation is attached.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The LA's current scheme for community use of school premises was introduced in 1991 and covers the following activities that the Authority wishes to accommodate and for which it will pay compensation to schools to cover wear and tear, cleaning, caretaking and energy usage. Directed lettings comprise:-
- Holiday playschemes as part of the education playscheme programme
  - Voluntary youth groups
  - Groups of people with disabilities
  - The Authority's youth programme and under 18 sport
  - MP and Councillor surgeries
  - Adult education and leisure classes administered by the Authority (including Leisure Services instructional classes)
  - Music Centres and Music Centre performances
  - Supplementary Schools.
  - Governor Training

- After school provision when part of a local Authority programme

The current policy provides for 'free' use of school premises for groups listed above. All other groups are fully chargeable and schools must set their own charges. Where groups qualify under the policy the agreed fee to be paid to a school is met by Leeds City Council. 'Free' lettings to users currently costs the Council £819,000 (in 2007/08) in reimbursements to schools. The reimbursement rates have not kept pace with inflation and do not cover the full cost including wear and tear. However, the Leeds City Council policy is significantly in excess of the financial support provided to users in neighbouring authorities. In most authorities users must pay a proportion of the letting fee.

### **3.0 THE ISSUE**

**3.1** The deputation raised queries over the allocation process for lettings, suggesting that they should be age and geographically prioritised. Queries were also raised over lettings in PFI schools. Concerns were raised over the late cancellation of some lettings and the maintenance and suitability of some pitches.

### **3.2 Current policy and Procedures**

All groups wishing to apply for the Letting of School premises or Grounds are sent a copy of the document 'Community Use of Education Premises Conditions and Guidelines' that details the application process and requirements on users. Currently the policy gives no preference based on either geographical location, age of participants or chartered status, or the financial standing of potential users. There is also no upper limit to the value of free lettings granted to individual clubs. The process for the allocation of usage each season begins in April, with applications typically required by a date in May. Where more than one user group requests use of the same facilities at the same time it is currently the school that makes the decision as to which letting to accept. Where this occurs the Letting Unit attempts to find an alternative time and or venue for the group that has not obtained the letting requested.

### **3.3 Points Raised**

#### **3.3.1 Cancellations**

The lettings conditions cover the notice to be given by users and schools whenever a school requires use of its building for its own use. When lettings guidance is issued to potential users each April guidance covering their responsibilities is re-issued to schools. The Lettings unit will contact schools reminding them of the importance of informing users and the Lettings Unit of any unavailability as early as possible. Schools should give users as much notice as possible, but it is not possible to give a letting precedence regardless of the notice period if a school requires use of its premises.

#### **3.3.2 Geographic allocation.**

There are differences in the premises and grounds available for hire at each school. Groups can apply for use of the premises that most meet their needs throughout Leeds. A geographic allocation giving priority to a group nearest to a facility may deny groups use of the facilities that best meet their needs. This would also require a significant investment in administration or computer systems as the letting system is not capable of calculating such information. However, this should not prevent two groups from brokering a swap or exchange of letting through the

Lettings Unit and Schools if they both agree that it is beneficial.

### **3.3.3 Time Allocations**

There are only a limited number of Schools Sports Halls within the City and all groups apply for the timeslots that most meet their needs. The policy does not give preference by age and all applications received by the initial deadline are submitted to the school at which a letting is to take place for the school to determine the user.

The lettings application form does request that organisations provide the age range of users. The guidance to schools can be amended to request that schools take into account the age of users when determining the allocation of time slots. For example, if three user groups request an hour between 6pm and 9pm the school should take into account the age of participants in determining which hour to allocate to which group.

Such a procedure could only apply where it is a matter of allocating time slots across the same overall user requests. It would not be equitable to allocate simply based on the age of potential users as it could deny use to older age groups. For example, where two or more users apply for exactly the same time and there are no alternative times or facilities available.

However, it must be noted that Schools will all have their extended services needs and may prioritise users with close links to the school or local population. Groups using school premises are mostly staffed by unpaid volunteers and times applied for can be based on the times that volunteers are available.

### **3.3.4**

#### **PFI Contracts**

The lettings procedures for using PFI schools are the same as for non PFI schools in that users must apply to the lettings unit. However, it is the PFI contractor and not the school that decides whether a letting can go ahead. Schools built under PFI contracts have arrangements whereby payment deductions are made where premises or grounds are not available for school use. The overall lettings availability is set out within each PFI contract, and the cost of usage can be higher than the reimbursement rates paid to non-PFI schools. This is because the letting rate must cover the full costs including lifecycle renewal, and possibly an element of risk to the contractor that additional lettings use could lead to a payment deduction if the premises or grounds were not available for school use.

### **3.3.5**

#### **Maintenance of Pitches**

Schools have responsibility for maintenance of their grounds and must limit letting use in order to protect them for school use.

Pitches could be better maintained but only through much greater levels of expenditure. This could involve significant capital expenditure to provide drainage systems. The current funding available to schools does not allow for this level of expenditure. Schools should refuse lettings where this would lead to overuse and interfere with the delivery of education to pupils.

### **3.3.6 Current Lettings**

The Woodkirk Valley F.C. supporting information details five of seven applications made for the 2008/09 year. As noted three lettings were successful as applied for and four were not. In two instances this was due to a clash with a time used by another user that the school wished to continue, the third application was unsuccessful due to the temporary relocation of much of the use of Morley Leisure Centre whilst it is rebuilt, and the fourth was given to a club requesting only one

hour per week. Whilst not being able to meet the first preferences of the Woodkirk Valley club the club is currently accessing four indoor lettings, one Astroturf letting and a grass pitch letting. The letting fee reimbursed to the schools concerned by the City Council will exceed £5,000 in 2008/09.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications directly related to the content of this report. However, any change in policy could have financial implications.

#### **5.0 STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The City Council Subsidy of community use is non statutory. However, where the City Council directs a school to take lettings the school must be reimbursed by either the City Council or through a charge to users.

#### **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Executive Board is asked to note:

- the concerns expressed in the deputation.

6.2

- that Education Leeds will consider the points raised through the meeting with the Woodkirk Valley representatives. Wider policy issues will be raised with the Children's Services Department and Learning and Leisure.

### **Background Papers**

Deputation to Council 19 November 2008

Community Use of Education Premises Conditions and Guidelines