

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	20 January 2011
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT:	Bookings and Lettings Review: Progress Report
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/11/004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides an update on the progress on the implementation of the bookings and lettings review.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the committee notes the progress being made in implementing the bookings and lettings review.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The review seeks to improve the quality of the service provided from a customer perspective, while ensuring improvements in efficiency of delivery, therefore achieving revenue budgetary efficiencies.

The total Janitorial budget for 2010/11 is £1.74 million, of which £116K is budgeted specifically for overtime to support lettings in educational establishments. At the end of December 2010, expenditure on janitorial costs for the year to date was of £1.36 million.

The budget for income from lettings within educational establishments for 2010/11 is £373K, which includes approximately £83K, which is funded from the corporate lettings budget, managed by Corporate Governance.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Background

At their meeting of 18 February 2010, the Education, Culture and Sport Committee agreed to the implementation of new Policy and Procedures for Bookings and Lettings across City Council Sports and Educational establishments.

The Committee requested Officers to provide updates to subsequent Committee meetings on the progress with the implementation of the bookings and lettings policy.

Whilst the Education, Culture and Sport Committee made several amendments to the recommendations, 16 key elements were approved with regards to the revision of the bookings and lettings policy and procedures for sports facilities and educational establishments. The Committee resolved to approve the following recommendations, including a number which required further detailed work, and which would require to be reported back to future meetings:

- 1) That both the Sports Bookings and Educational Lettings system be brought together into a single more customer focused, integrated system.
- 2) That Officers continue to explore options to progress the procurement of an electronic Leisure Management System, and report back on this matter.
- 3) That Officers progress discussions with staff and Trade Unions about options for the deployment of janitorial cover, and bring a further report to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 4) That Officers develop alternative options for staffing facilities, in the event that full janitorial cover is not possible, and bring these options in a further report to a future meeting of the Committee.
- 5) That, wherever possible, lets are allocated into a reduced number of buildings.
- 6) That Charging Categories based on the size and type of the facility being used, are introduced for use of all sports and educational establishments, as set out in section 6 of the report.
- 7) That charges are applied in line with the Charging Rates relative to the majority nature of the Group using the facility as set out in section 7 of the report.
- 8) That applications for Lets be considered in line with the Access Priorities set out in section 7 of the report.
- 9) That all external groups hiring facilities for coaching and tuition purposes be required to provide evidence of insurance and coaching qualifications, within a 2 year period.

- 10) That the City Council and Sport Aberdeen consider signing up to the 2006 Accord, as a means of demonstrating best practice in relation to the protection of children within facilities operated through the revised Bookings and Lettings System.
- 11) That Officers report to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on the outcome of a review of the Access to Leisure Scheme.
- 12) That 10% of the income for use of Schools and Community Centres is paid to the establishments, in recognition of the additional costs resulting from external lets.
- 13) That Officers report to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on the outcome of a review of the Corporate Budget.
- 14) That the revised Bookings and Lettings policy and procedures be progressed in time for implementation in August 2010.
- 15) That varying charges be applied to those living outwith the City boundary by using an Accord Card or Visiting Accord Card.
- 16) That the Committee receive oral updates at each meeting on the Bookings and Lettings review and the progress of its implementation.

Update on Implementation

- The timescale for implementation of the bookings and lettings review was August 2010, in order to coincide with the start of the new academic year for educational establishments.
- This timescale also enabled the new sports trust, Sport Aberdeen, which now manages bookings and lettings for both sports and educational establishments, to be established immediately prior to implementation.
- Applications for community lets were invited during May 2010 for return by the deadline of 31 May 2010.
- Applications for after-school programmes, school activities and community education programmes were also sought, and for the first time these included school lets within the time 4pm to 6pm.
- Some delays resulted from the lettings team not receiving applications for after-school programmes, school activities and/or community education programmes before the end of the school term. As educational facility lets take priority and must be processed first this meant that external let applications could not be processed for these facilities until the educational programme was provided. (The solution to this is setting an earlier deadline for school lets in future years). A move from paper to electronic application forms has been introduced by the lettings staff in Sept 2010 which has ensured earlier and secure delivery of let applications which will impact favourably on next years bulk educational facilities applications.

- Rationalisation of available facilities resulted in some delays in confirming lets, due to applicants having to consider, (and possibly visit), alternative venues. (In future years this should be easier, as people become more familiar with the available facilities).
- There have also been some delays in being able to confirm janitorial cover, in line with agreed savings for 2010-11. (Discussions are ongoing with Facilities Management on how these arrangements can be streamlined).
- Over 2,500 applications have been received and processed in the period between May and Sept 2010, with over 25% more applications having been dealt with than in previous years.
- Further work is required with staff to increase the level of information on which rooms within establishments are most suitable for community lets, and ensure that all staff are fully aware of detail of the new bookings and lettings policy and procedures.
- However, the majority of lets were confirmed by the end of August 2010, and those outstanding were mainly ones where applicant's first choice of venues were not available, or the lets are not scheduled to start until later in the year.

Revised Charging Categories

- There has been some reaction from groups about the impact of increased charges, though many have also accepted that previous charges had been too low for many years.
- The groups, which have been affected most by increased charges, are those who use a large number of rooms within schools. Many of these are reviewing their usage to identify if they could operate more efficiently within fewer rooms. Where this is not possible, groups have been advised that they could apply for grants to support their activities.

Outstanding elements of the Review

- Electronic Leisure Management System – Whilst the Committee was unable to support the purchase of a comprehensive leisure management and electronic bookings system, due to the considerable cost, Officers were asked to explore alternative options. The lack of a suitable electronic system is still causing considerable difficulties and delays for staff in both processing and monitoring bookings and lettings, though officers are currently discussing a number of approaches to try to resolve this issue, in partnership with both Sport Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council.
- Charges for Non-City Residents – Education, Culture and Sport Committee agreed that 'varying charges should be applied to those living outwith the City boundary by using an Accord Card or visiting Accord Card'. At the Finance and Resources Committee on 2 December 2010, it was agreed that the Director of Corporate Governance should bring forward a report to their next meeting setting out options for using the Accord Card as proof of eligibility for a

preferential charge for a range of services, including lettings. It is anticipated that the costs associated with implementing this policy will be met by the Accord office.

- Review of management of lets on site - Facilities Management have been developing a number of options for providing cover for evening and weekend lets, and these will be presented to Education, Culture and Sport and the Trade Unions early in the New Year. Some of these include using the newly created post of Facility Support Assistants. However, should the option chosen by Education, Culture and Sport involve new job descriptions being developed, then the implementation timescales would be longer, as they would need to comply with current policy and procedures regarding recruitment and advertising.
- Review of the Corporate Budget for Lets - Considerable work has been carried out on reviewing the rationale for groups receiving free lets via the Corporate Budget held by Corporate Governance, though this was not sufficiently progressed in time for the current year's lets. A further report will come to Committee once this review has been concluded.
- Review of the Access to Leisure Scheme – The Access to Leisure scheme is considered to be working well, and provides important discounted use of services for the most vulnerable within our communities, and those least able to pay. There is still a requirement to review particular aspects of the scheme, to ensure that it is achieving its objectives, and it is proposed that this is done in conjunction with Sport Aberdeen, and that officers report back to a future Committee with any such proposals.
- External Audit - Officers have fed back to the City Council's external auditors, Henderson Loggie, to confirm that new Policy and Procedures addresses their audit recommendations. The external audit report on this was approved by Audit and Risk Committee on 21 September 2010.

6. IMPACT

The report relates to the arts, heritage and sport strand of the community plan, specifically in relation to the sports, leisure and recreation vision of developing Aberdeen as an "Active City" and in relation to ensuring that our community has 'access to services of a high quality that meet their needs.' under the 'We value our people' strand and Single Outcome Agreement Outcomes 6, 'We live longer, healthier lives' and 13, 'We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.'

The report also links to Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking through culture, arts and sport:

- Increase participation in sport, provide support for athletes and reward excellence
- Ensure high quality, well managed sports facilities in Aberdeen

- Recognise the contribution of sport, culture and arts to promoting the area as a tourist destination
- Recognise the role of sport and arts in tackling anti-social behaviour

The report relates to *Fit for the Future: a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Aberdeen City 2009-2015*, which has 5 key objectives:

- Promote and increase opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for everyone in Aberdeen
- Provide a comprehensive and high quality range of sports facilities in Aberdeen City Council
- Maximise the social, educational, health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity in Aberdeen city
- Develop and sustain pathways which nurture local, regional and national sporting people to reach their potential
- Raise the profile of sport in Aberdeen

The report also links to the *Vibrant Aberdeen: the Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen*, the draft *Learning Strategy* and the *Aberdeen City Council Out of School Care Policy 2008*.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Sports Transformation Programme – approved at Council 13 Feb 2008
- Digest of Charges for Sports Facilities; Scotland 2008/2009- A research study by SportScotland
- 'The Challenge of Charging' – Accounts Commission 1999
- 'Fit for the Future': A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Aberdeen City
- 'Vibrant Aberdeen': A Cultural Strategy for Aberdeen
- Aberdeen City Council Learning Strategy
- Out of School Care Policy 2008 Aberdeen Early Years and Childcare Partnership
- '2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Scottish Sport' – Children 1st & SportScotland
- Henderson Loggie External Audit Report on School Lets (2006/07)
- Report & minutes of Education, Culture & Sport Committee of 18 February 2010

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

David Wright
 Service Manager (Assets & Finance)
dwright@aberdeencity.gov.uk
 01224 523042