

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 31 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT ON: OPENING OF SCHOOL GROUNDS FOR COMMUNITY USE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 351-2016

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval for the opening of 15 school grounds for community use.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that committee members:

- i note and approve the contents of the report;
- ii note the implications for educational establishments; and
- iii instruct the Executive Director to report back on progress in 6 months.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of signage and waste bins including installation will be £21,000. The costs will be met from Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development. In addition Play Scotland have agreed to fund £5000 of the overall cost.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

4.1 Schools need to be seen as integral parts of the communities they serve, with children and their families making best use of community facilities, and communities accessing school facilities as described in the Scottish Government's report of 2009 - 'Building Better Schools, Investing in Scotland's future'. This would include school grounds.

4.2 As part of Dundee's Physical Activity Strategy, a Dundee Play Framework (Discover Play in Dundee) has been developed by multiagency partners with a vision to "*Discover where we can all experience, explore, enjoy and learn through PLAY, every day*". The framework focuses on the following priority areas:

- Play at home
- Play in childcare settings, nursery and school
- Play in the community
- Leadership and Governance- Positive support for play in Dundee

One of the key outcomes of this framework is to maximise the use of the school playgrounds. The recommendations of this report will make significant progress towards achieving this aim.

- 4.3 Improved access to the quality sporting and other facilities in most secondary schools across the city has the potential to make a significantly enhanced contribution to the health and wellbeing of the city, including club engagement and the development of sporting excellence. The Scottish Government, national agencies such as **sportscotland**, as well as the Council all have strategy documents that influence policy and practice around improving community access to schools.
- 4.4 Dundee Schools are widely used in the evenings and weekends for a variety of activities and Dundee City Council through letting procedures (along with similar procedures in Leisure and Culture Dundee who now increasingly manage schools sports and swimming facilities) allow a wide range of evening, weekend and holiday access to schools. However, some school “playgrounds” are not currently open to the community and children and families are needing access to places to play in their local community.

5.0 CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS IN ALLOWING PUBLIC ACCESS TO SCHOOL GROUNDS

- 5.1 Many Dundee schools benefit from significant playground area and green space, however a number of schools, particularly those in the more central areas of Dundee have very limited outdoor facilities. There is often a correlation between the schools with a lack of green space and the availability of green space in the neighbouring community area where the school is located. However in many areas of the city there is significant public green space.
- 5.2 Vandalism remains an issue in some schools in the city and in an attempt to provide better outdoor play facilities schools, most often through their own or parental funding, have purchased outdoor play equipment that has been vandalised in the past. It should be noted however that this vandalism has occurred in spite of perimeter fencing and locked gates. Dog fouling, broken glass and needles can also be an issue in open school playgrounds and green space.

6.0 PROPOSAL

- 6.1 Following several discussion across Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development including discussions with all Community Officers it was agreed that 15 school grounds/adjacent grounds should be opened for public use from January 1st 2017. Some of the schools selected (marked *) are scheduled for replacement as part of the Council’s capital programme. These school grounds will remain open for community use until the schools are closed. The schools are listed below:

- Ballumbie Primary School
- The maintained green space adjacent to Fintry Primary School
- Craigie High School
- Craigiebarns Primary School
- Blackness Primary School
- Balgarthno Campus
- Gowriehill Primary School*
- Hillside Primary School*
- St Ninian’s Primary School
- Our Lady’s Primary School*

- Dens Road Primary School
- St John's High School
- Kingspark School
- St Marys Primary School
- SS Peter and Paul Primary School

6.2 The rationale for the selection of locations was based on two factors:

- where communities had little existing access to play facilities or green space and;
- specific issues in relation to school sites (eg access, levels of vandalism)

6.3 The Community Safety Warden Service already provides assistance with patrols around schools (particularly during school holiday periods). The Service has been consulted and will ensure passing patrols are maintained and any issues of anti-social behaviour will be addressed and if necessary reported to Police Scotland.

6.4 Neighbourhood Services will assess each of the sites for additional litter and dog bins and arrange for the management of these bins. In addition and as part of the "Pride in Your City" campaign, appropriate user friendly signage will be sited to both welcome users and encourage positive engagement with the school grounds. Due to the strong partnership working developed with Play Scotland to create Dundee's Play Framework, there is commitment from them to support Dundee with small funding sources to assist with signage. Play Scotland have also agreed to work with children from local schools to design the signage along with a national creative partner.

6.5 Communities Officers will liaise with Community Learning and Development Youth Work staff, Community Safety Wardens, Community Organisations, Schools and members of the public to monitor the impact of opening Schools for public use.

6.6 Children and Families Service along with Neighbourhood and Community Services and City Development will continue to work together to look for additional opportunities to open additional school grounds. All new build schools that are currently in the planning stages have community access to the school grounds and green space built into the design concept so that these grounds will be made available immediately on opening for community use, if the present plans prove to be successful.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environment assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chief Executive, Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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Mike Galloway, Executive Director, City Development

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