

ITEM No ...9.....

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2019

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: 399-2019

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 On the 31 October 2016, the Policy and Resources Committee approved the testing of opening 15 school playgrounds for community use (Article IV of the minute of meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 31 October 2016, report 351-2016 refers). This report now outlines the progress made to date on the opening of the school playgrounds and seeks approval to further extend the approach to include more schools in the city, as part of a strategic review of community and school play spaces.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that committee members:

- i note and approve the contents of the report;
- ii instruct the Executive Directors to provide a progress report within the next reporting cycle of the Dundee Play Framework in May 2020.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 A financial analysis/comparison of vandalism costs to the buildings has also been carried out over a 7 year period. The findings are positive, demonstrating that the vandalism costs to the school buildings have not increased even though the school playgrounds are open to the community. There are no financial implications attached to this report.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Scottish Government's report 'Building Better Schools, Investing in Scotland's Future' (2009) outlines how schools need to be seen as integral parts of the communities they serve, with both children and their families making best use of school facilities, including playgrounds.

4.2 Dundee's Play Framework, "Discover Play In Dundee" (2016) developed by multiagency partners, promotes a holistic approach towards play and the central role it can play in promoting better outcomes for children, families and communities. The framework focuses on the following priority areas:

- Play at home
- Play at school
- Play in the community
- Leadership and Governance – positive support for play in Dundee

4.3 The opening of school playgrounds corresponds with both the national policy on 'Building Better Schools' and the local Play Framework. The opening extends community access to schools in a way which has been shown to help children, young people and families.

4.4 Council services are working closely together as part of the Changing for the Future 2022 to move all schools to become community hubs, reviewing how a variety of community services and supports can be provided for local families across the whole year. The opening of school playgrounds plays an important part in this direction of travel.

5.0 PROGRESS

5.1 To date the following 17 schools are officially open for community use:

- Ballumbie Primary School
- Coldside Campus (Our Lady's RC Primary School)
- Coldside Campus (Rosebank Primary School)
- Craigie High School
- Craigiebarns Primary School
- Blackness Primary School
- Balgarthno Campus (Camperdown Primary School)
- Balgarthno Campus (St Clement's RC Primary School)
- Dens Road Primary
- North East Campus (Longhaugh Primary School)
- North East Campus (St Francis RC Primary School)
- Tayview Primary School
- St Ninian's RC Primary School
- St John's RC High School
- Kingspark School
- St Mary's RC Primary School
- SS Peter and Paul RC Primary School

5.2 The school playgrounds have been open for community use 7 days a week, including the Summer, Easter and October school holidays since August 2017. During November to February, they close in the weekday evenings due to the dark winter evening period; however, are opened up at the weekends.

5.3 In the report to Policy and Resources Committee on 23 April 2018 (Article VIII, Report 146-2018 refers), information was provided on the positive impact on children and young people by opening the school playgrounds. <https://www.dundee.gov.uk/reports/reports/146-2018.pdf>

In addition although, there has been a small number of nurseries and schools experiencing vandalism to picnic benches and play equipment, these have been isolated incidents and may have happened regardless of the school gates being opened. In these cases, Community Safety Wardens have increased their presence in these hot spot areas.

5.4 Dens Road is open to the community again following playground resurfacing and redevelopment during 2018/19 funded from the Victorian/Edwardian Capital budget in the City Plan.

Evidence is suggesting that in the existing primary schools who have security lighting and CCTV, there are less incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Therefore, part of the Dens Road project has included planning for CCTV installation and in light of recent vandalism events in the nursery, the design team have been asked to expand the coverage of CCTV to include the Nursery Area. If available budget allows, this additional scope will be incorporated in the design.

5.5 The development of a new dual use play facility in the former St Vincent Primary site for Rowantree Primary School children and the wider community is in its early planning stages. An extensive engagement process with children, families and staff from Rowantree Primary as well as the children and families living in the community will take place over November and December 2019 to ensure children are involved in shaping the design of their new playground

and community play space. Officers in the Children and Families Service are working closely with Neighbourhood Services and City Development on this innovative project.

- 5.6 The Opening of the School Playgrounds is a key part of the Dundee Play Framework, which was presented at the 22 April 2019 Policy and Resources Committee (Article XII, Report 175-2019 refers). Within the report it was reported that officers in Children and Families Services and Neighbourhood Services would work with other key agencies to create a strategic overview and mapping of play spaces in the city to improve the quality and maximise resources, including maintenance and replacement costs. The opening of school playgrounds will be part of this work moving forward.

6.0 PROPOSAL

- 6.1 In agreement with the Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and City Development, it is proposed that the 17 school grounds mentioned above should remain open for public use.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the installation of security lighting and CCTV is included in the planning of future playground redevelopments to help reduce the vandalism costs, particularly in schools where vandalism is identified as being higher. CCTV images should be capable of being directed to the Council's Safety and Alarm Response Centre, in order that the areas can be monitored effectively out of normal school hours.
- 6.4 Due to the success of the approach to date, all new build schools that are currently in the planning stages will have community access to the grounds and green space built into the design concept so that these grounds will be made available immediately on opening for community use.
- 6.5 It is proposed that Neighbourhood Services, Children and Families Service and City Development continue to work together with partners to look for additional opportunities to open school grounds and create Dual Use School/Community Play Spaces. In addition, since the reporting of progress on the opening of the school playground is already included in the reporting of the Play Framework to Policy and Resources Committee, it is proposed that future reporting of the Opening of the School Playgrounds be reported with the other play developments in this city as part of the Dundee Play Framework.

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 Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

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