

# **Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Audit and Governance to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017.**

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**Subject:**

**Outdoor Education Centres**

**Summary statement:**

**This report provides the Committee with an update on the progress to make the District's three Outdoor Education Centres independent of the Local Authority and sustainable into the future.**

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**Portfolio:**

**Education, Employment and Skills**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children's Services**



## **1. SUMMARY**

This report is intended to bring together work on the outsourcing of Outdoor Education Centres to provide information on the progress and forward plan to make them independent of the Local Authority.

It will provide the progress that has been made, give an overview of the current issues, and presents the milestone plan over the next 21 months to make the Outdoor Education Centres independent of the Local Authority.

This report will be used as the basis of an Executive report to facilitate the transfer process.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

On 11 July 2012 the Schools Forum recommended the allocation of £1m of Direct School Grant (DSG) one-off monies to support the re-development of 3 outdoor education centres (Buckden House, Ingleborough Hall and Nell Bank). This capital redevelopment alongside a subsequent increase in usage and revenue from the centres was seen as essential in meeting the long term goal for the financial sustainability of the centres. This was to be achieved within the rigour of a new business plan and ownership (Trust) model for the governance of Ingleborough Hall and Buckden House. This sum of money was further supplemented with £273,000 of resource from the Aiming High Short Breaks Fund, to ensure that all three Outdoor Education Centres were fully compliant with accessibility requirements for pupils and adults with mobility difficulties.

The recommendations for the 2014/15 DSG, made in January 2014, included a further commitment from the Schools Forum when it transferred the financing of the DSG's existing annual £228,000 revenue contribution to the outdoor centres to one off monies. This commitment was for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17. The funding ceases in April 2017, by which time it is expected that the outdoor centres will be financially self-sustaining. At the request of the Local Authority, within the recommendations of the 2014/15 DSG, the Schools Forum earmarked £500,000 that had not been allocated to the 2 year old capital projects as a further contribution to the capital redevelopment costs of the outdoor education centres, which was supported by the Secretary of State.

A target date for the completion of the investment and transfer was April 2017. The majority of the work has been completed, though delays were experienced in the capital programme, negotiations with potential trustees and due diligence. This has resulted in a programme delay and the target for the establishment of the trusts is now September 2017 and being made independent of the Council by December 2018. A high level plan is presented in Appendix A. The headline plan presents more detail on the activity that will lead up to the decision by the Executive in June 2017. It should be noted that revenue support for the centres from the Schools Forum ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Improvements to the centres' trading position suggest that overall the three centres should reach breakeven at this point.



It is not proposed that this report should review historical issues regarding the operation of Outdoor Education Centres. These have been extensively reported and are listed in this report under other relevant documents.

Two of the three Outdoor Education Centres are managed by the Council but do not have a co-ordinated approach including governance arrangements. The third is operated by an independent trust and the property leased from the council at a peppercorn rent.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

A number of options are being considered for the future viability of the three Outdoor Education Centres from retaining the current three Centres or 2 Centres with a complementary offer, or a single Centre with a wider offer. Also there are a number of options being considered for the future governance and management arrangements from 3 separate organisations, 2 separate organisations, or a single organisation. In the event that a trust model is selected as the future option by Executive a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) will need to be established.

A review has taken place regarding the sustainable futures and commercial possibilities of three outdoor education centres; Buckden House, Ingleborough Hall and Nell Bank, in the context of changing Local Authorities responsibilities and budgets as well as the greater autonomy and diversity in the education sector.

Most schools fund their visits through a combination of parental contributions, pupil premium funding, the school budget and fundraising activities. The day rate, room hire rates and residential rates for each centre offer very good value for money. Schools generally recognise this and state it as a reason for choosing one of the Bradford centres.

Council officers, working with partners and trustees have developed a new business sustainability plan which includes:

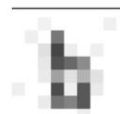
- a. Extending the use and offer of the centres;
- b. Keeping charges to users under review;
- c. Managing costs more effectively; and
- d. Attracting grant or other sources of funding.

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

As part of the review and appraisal of options for the Executive report for June 2017 the resource and financial opportunities and costs will be thoroughly considered and appraised.

### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

There are a number of considerations to be taken into account regarding the move to CIO status which are the subject of on-going discussion and consultation, these include building liabilities and ownership, staffing arrangements, establishing and electing Trustees and clarifying roles in full.



## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

The outdoor learning service promotes the values in the Council's key strategies and objectives for the education of children and young people.

As a CIO is to be a separate legal entity, independent from the Council, then external legal advice will be required to advise that entity. Legal Services have and will continue to assist the service to ensure any Council interests are included.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

The refurbishment of the centres included the provision of barrier free access to allow pupils with mobility difficulties to participate in Outdoor Learning. The updating of residential facilities provided additional privacy, making centres accessible by all members of the community.

### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

There are no greenhouse gas emission impacts arising from this report.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Outdoor Learning can be used by schools to better engage pupils and enrich their learning and broaden their horizons beyond what is possible in the classroom. Activities can assist in providing stretching activities and developing positive behaviours.

### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

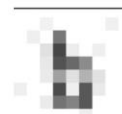
No issues

### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

Consultation with Trade Unions will need to be undertaken when the decision is made by the Executive.

### **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Ward or area implications as all children and young people in Bradford and the District have access to the Centres.



## **7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)**

No implications.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None

## **9. OPTIONS**

None

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Strategic Director of Children's Services continue the work to make the three Outdoor Education Centres sustainable and independent of the Local Authority whilst ensuring a high quality outdoor education offer for children and young people.
2. That the Committee notes the progress that has been made towards making the Centres independent and the timetable to complete the work by December 2018.
3. That the Committee notes the decision will be made by the Executive in June 2017 on the option to make the Outdoor Education Centres independent.
4. That the Committee notes that following the Executive decision progression towards implementation of governance arrangements will be overseen by the "Great Start, Good Schools" Priority Outcome Board.

## **11. APPENDICES**

Action Plan



## Appendix 1: OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRES REVIEW - High Level Action Plan

ACTIVITY	2015				2016				2017												2018											
	Quarter				Quarter																											
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	D						
OEC Capital Refurbishments																																
Consideration of OEC Options for Independence																																
Mandate for OEC Option for Independence																																
Status update report to G&A Committee																																
Staff liabilities																																
Consultation - Centre staff/management																																
SD/AD Briefings																																
Chairs briefing/Pre-Exec																																
Executive decision and sign off of option																																
Progress detailed implementation plan - pending chosen option.																																
Legal structure(s) formed ready for transition																																
Mobilisation of transfer of OEC to independence. Including: Asset Transfer; Business Support (payroll, HR, Legal etc.); Financial Systems; TUPE/Staffing; Logistics; Consultation; and Communications and Marketing.																																
Evaluation and review																																
OEC made independent																																



## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Report of the Assistant Director, Access and Inclusion to the meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee. 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Subject: Outdoor Education Centres – Future Governance arrangements.

