

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 11 January 2012

Subject: Outdoor Education Service

1. Purpose

1.1 This report informs members of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee of plans to support the Outdoor Education Service going forward.

2. Background

2.1 In November 2009, Members agreed to a Report that would secure the lease of private property to offer residential outdoor provision to pupils. This lease would be for a period of some 25 years. The Outdoor Education Centre at Ardlui opened its doors in April 2010.

3. Main Issues

3.1 The volume of pupils and the business predicted in the first year of the centre's opening has not materialised. Adverse variances have been reported to Education and Lifelong Learning Committee over the past year.

3.2 Following the restructuring of Educational Services in Spring 2011, the Executive Director asked the incoming Head of Service to undertake a thorough review of the Outdoor Education Service one year on. This was undertaken in conjunction with expertise within our Policy and Performance Section.

3.3 It is clear from the review that the present arrangements for the operation of the Service are not sustainable in the medium to longer term. They do not enable the potential of having such an asset within the Council to be realised. The review covered key elements of basic business planning:

- Stakeholder Marketing and Promotion
- Business Volume and Consultation
- Access and Availability
- Costs and Charges
- Personnel Capacity and Business Planning

3.4 A draft plan for improvement has been formulated as a result of the review. (Appendix 1) This will cover key aspects of the business of the Outdoor Education Service to ensure that Council Policies are adhered to in all aspects of delivery. This plan is focussed on setting a clear direction to stabilise the Outdoor Education Service for the future.

3.5 In order to support this essential work going forward, the business functions of the Outdoor Education service will be moved from the remit of the current Senior Outdoor Education Officer to be undertaken by personnel within the Policy and Performance Section. This assistance programme will be a short term arrangement. It will enable the current Senior Outdoor Education Officer to focus on programme delivery whilst the Policy and Performance Section oversees the plan for improvement.

4. People Implications

4.1 The changes detailed in this report will require to be monitored in relation to workload and capacity within the Policy and Performance Section.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The costs of the Assistance Programme can be met within existing budgets.

5.2 The Outdoor Education Service is anticipated to outturn at approximately £167,000 over the original budget.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There is a significant financial and reputational risk to the Council if action is not taken to address the overspend and associated issues within the Outdoor Education Service.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

7.1 There is no equalities impact associated with this report.

8. Strategic Assessment

8.1 The Council has identified four main strategic priorities for 2011/2012, namely Social and Economic Regeneration, Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Fit for Purpose services.

8.2 This report is particularly concerned with the Financial Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Fit for Purpose Services.

8.3 Both the improvement plan and the Assistance Programme reflect the strategic priorities of the Council.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 The Education and Lifelong Learning Committee is recommended to

- a) agree the plan to support the Outdoor Education Service going forward, and

- b) receive further reports should Trust status or partnership delivery become an option.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Draft Plan for Improvement

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All wards