

# **THE SITE OF THE FORMER VILLAGE COMMUNITY SCHOOL: KEY STAGE 3 OFFSITE PROVISION**

Report of the Director of Education

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Work to develop plans for a Neighbourhood Learning Centre on the site of the former Village Community School is continuing, with some positive opportunities identified. As part of this, it is now proposed to identify part of one of the three main buildings for use by 11-14 year-old pupils registered with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), in order to meet new Government requirements. (Paragraphs 5.1 - 5.4)
- 1.2 There have been investigations into other potential accommodation for this provision, but no alternative is available. At the same time, the feasibility of including this in the Village site development has been considered. (Paragraphs 5.5 - 5.6)
- 1.3 Such a development would be consistent with the overall vision for the centre of a range of lifelong learning activities. In addition, it would represent a cost-effective solution to the government requirement on all authorities, that, with effect from September 2002, PRU provision should be available on the basis of a full timetable, with access to the range of facilities required at particular Key Stages. (Paragraphs 5.7 - 5.10)

## **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 That extensions and remodelling could be undertaken at the Council accommodation currently used by the PRU.
- 2.2 That the availability of alternative Council-owned premises be investigated.
- 2.3 That the use of premises owned by Derby College and the university be considered.
- 2.4 That the availability and feasibility of privately-owned premises be investigated.

- 2.5 That use be made of parts of the Peartree building of the former Village Community School.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

3. That subject to the necessary budgetary provision being identified for 2002-2003, provision for Key Stage 3 pupils registered with the PRU should be made within parts of the ground and first floors of the Peartree building, with effect from September 2002.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

4. The use of parts of the Peartree building represents the most cost-effective and timely solution to the actions required of the authority to provide appropriate facilities for Key Stage 3 pupils and can be incorporated within the wider plans for the site.

### **MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 5.1 The transformation of the buildings and grounds of the site of the former Village Community School into a Neighbourhood Learning Centre has been the subject of previous reports to Members
- 5.2 As those developments have been progressing, work has been taking place regarding the need for appropriate accommodation for pupils registered with the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), particularly those at Key Stage 3 (11-14).
- 5.3 There is now a government requirement that all provision for excluded pupils should be on the basis of a full (100%) timetable with effect from September 2002 in order to ensure that they have access to a better education and improved life chances. This can be accommodated in existing provisions for Key Stages 1, 2 and (largely) 4, but existing facilities are not adequate for Key Stage 3. Access to a range of facilities including science, design/technology, information & communication technology, cookery and sports are all essential elements of Key Stage 3 programmes. As such, they will be assessed by Ofsted as part of the re-inspection of the Education Service in September, and will also be inspected as part of any Ofsted inspection of the PRU which could well take place during the school year 2002-2003.
- 5.4 The DfES is closely monitoring progress towards the aim of full-time provision, which is one of the government's highest priorities, and we have recently been asked for an action plan to show how this will be achieved.
- 5.5 Investigations have been undertaken into whether or not the Council has any suitable vacant premises that could be used for this purpose, but no such premises have been identified. In addition, discussions

with Derby College and with the University have also failed to identify any suitable accommodation which the Council might access on behalf of the PRU.

- 5.6 However, in parallel discussions concerning the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, it is clear that part of the Peartree building could provide sufficient and appropriate accommodation for the Key Stage 3 pupils. This accommodation is currently being used by the year 11 pupils, formerly from Village School. There may be occasions when a small number of Key Stage 4 pupils would also be based there, or use the facilities on a visiting basis. The provision would, however, be very much targeted at Key Stage 3.
- 5.7 In the context of the development of a Neighbourhood Learning Centre, the aim is for the broad focus of the activities to be developed at Peartree to be 14-19 vocational education, serving the needs of pupils locally and across the city, and in that respect the provision for Key Stage 3 PRU pupils would be consistent with and should not prejudice the overall activities within the building and across the site as a whole.
- 5.8 Every effort continues to be made to develop a broad range of services which respond to the community's needs positively in discussion with partner agencies, including Derby College and the Learning and Skills Council. Premises work in relation to the Sure Start and Neighbourhood Nursery developments should begin in the autumn. This particular proposal meets a specific requirement on the authority, but is only a part of those wider developments.
- 5.9 It is envisaged that somewhere between 20-50 young people would be accommodated in the facility at any one time, on parts of the ground and first floors of the building. These areas were subject to significant refurbishment last summer in advance of occupation by the Village Year 11 pupils. They have been very well cared for during this school year, and could therefore be occupied with little or no premises-related expenditure. This proposal would represent very good value for money. Even if other premises could be identified, they would require significant expenditure to ensure the provision of specialist facilities.
- 5.10 In addition to the building and facilities themselves, the location provides the potential to develop a truly inclusive approach to PRU provision, with young people being able to access and contribute to the wide range of activities envisaged across the centre. Such an arrangement would also provide a number of other users of the site with opportunities to contribute to PRU programmes, and further develop the range of multi-agency partnerships which have always been envisaged as a key feature of the centre.
- 5.11 Examples of such links might include:
- links with adult and community learning and youth service provision;

- adult and community learning and voluntary agencies accessing the facilities;
- enhanced opportunities for art and drama work with voluntary organisations and the University;
- Sure Start/Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative literacy projects;
- access to anticipated health service provision on site (GP's surgery and clinic).

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Increased staffing provision to deliver the 100% timetable referred to in paragraph 4.3 has been built into the education budget for 2002/2003. No provision has, however, been made for additional premises costs such as fuel, rates, cleaning and caretaking. These costs are estimated at £75,000 in a full year.
- 6.2 Income is received by the service from school budgets when pupils are excluded. £150,000 assumed increase was built into the 2002/03 budget. In 2001/02, a total of £272,000 was actually received. If the current rate of exclusions continues, there would therefore be an additional £122,000 available in 2002/03, which could be used to fund the premises costs. The additional costs would then need to be taken into account in the preparation of the 2003/04 budget.
- 6.3 The Pupil Referral Unit receives a formula capital allocation from the DfES and this could be used if any capital alterations are needed. Maintenance expenditure, as for other buildings occupied by non-delegates services, would be the responsibility of Commercial Services, which has to prioritise its expenditure across all Council buildings.
- 6.4 As indicated earlier in this report, significant capital investment was made to the ground and first floors of the Peartree building last summer. Premises other than Peartree would almost certainly require a further round of capital expenditure to make them fit for purpose, although it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify a source for such funding.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7. All Pupil Referral Units will be required to provide a full timetable over each of five days per week over the full school year, with effect from September 2002.

## **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

8. None directly arising from this report.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. The immediate environment of the Peartree building, having been recently refurbished, is suitable for secondary age pupils, whilst the wider environment of the site as a whole will provide a wide range of opportunities to develop learning programmes.

### **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10 The facility would provide the opportunity to develop a truly inclusive approach to the learning and support needed by individuals and groups of young people, experiencing significant levels of disadvantage.

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Background Papers:

Ref: I: Educat / Committee / Committee / Council Cabinet / 11 June 2002 / Village Site - Key Stage 3 offsite provision