

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

6 MARCH 2001

**CHARGES FOR THE LETTING OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PREMISES:
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEME FOR OUT OF SCHOOL CARE CLUBS**

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report details proposals to amend the present letting scheme which governs the use of education department premises by out of school care clubs.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a) approves the revised charging arrangements outlined in Section 4.3 below;
- b) authorises formal discussions with Angus Childcare Partnership to seek to secure direct financial assistance for individual out of school care clubs.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Education Department currently operates a letting scheme in respect of the use of schools by outside organisations. The scheme (last reviewed by Committee at its meeting on 7 March 2000 – Article 2 of the minute of the meeting refers) relates mainly to use of premises outwith the normal school day but some access is also available for user groups during the course of the school day. This latter arrangement allows playgroups and mother and toddler groups to meet in a large number of schools and also includes the provision of facilities for many other organisations which use community lounges or community wings which form part of some schools.
- 2.2 User groups essentially fall into one of three general categories and the current scheme makes provision for a series of charges. Essentially, there are three categories of users:
- Those who have access to premises free of charge;
 - Those who pay a reduced or nominal fee;
 - Those who pay an economic, commercial rate.
- 2.3 To date, all 15 Out of School Care Clubs in Angus have enjoyed the free use of school premises during term time and, as a consequence, benefit from a significant financial subsidy from the Council in respect of staff, energy and cleaning costs incurred by the Council as a result of the OoSC Clubs' use of these premises. Those OoSC Clubs which choose to make use of school premises outwith term time currently pay a reduced fee for this facility. (See paragraph 3.4 below).
- 2.4 Recently, all Council departments have been required to review their charging policies in order to determine the appropriate economic rates and costs for services which they provide. As part of that process the issue of charging for school premises has been one of the subjects for discussion. In particular, it has been considered necessary to establish the level of charges which would provide an accurate reflection of the cost of making premises available to Out of School Care Clubs although this report recommends that the Education Committee should continue to give preferential status to these clubs.

- 2.5 It is recommended that the Council should maintain its support for Out of School Care Clubs, but should do so in a more transparent fashion, and also in ways which allow a sharper focus in terms of how individual clubs might be supported.

3. COMMENT

- 3.1 Out of school care for children has featured prominently on the agenda of successive governments throughout most of the last decade. The aim is to provide a safe, caring, creative environment outwith normal short hours in which children are looked after while their parents are working or in full-time education or training. Ideally, on school days an out of school club would open after school until approximately 6.00pm and between approximately 9.00am and approximately 6.00pm on in-service days and some school holidays.
- 3.2 The clubs are run by parent volunteers (although staff are also employed to provide care and supervision) and funding support is received directly, or in kind, from the Council's Education Department, from Scottish Enterprise Tayside, from The Childcare Partnership and more recently by way of application to the New Opportunities Fund.
- 3.3 Parents are charged for the service provided and each scheme needs to meet the cost of employing staff to look after the children as well as paying other overheads. In some parts of Scotland, OoSC Clubs operate outwith school premises, and the cost of accommodation then becomes a major overhead for these clubs.
- 3.4 Since out of school care clubs were first established in schools in the Tayside area in 1994 free lets of education department premises during school term times have been granted. For those clubs seeking to make use of school premises outwith term time a charge of £44.00 per day is levied for each day which involves a janitor in working additional hours, or having to be redeployed from another school.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The current letting scheme is designed principally for school use in the evenings or possibly at weekends). Any attempt to apply it directly to the activities of OoSC Clubs would result in a massive increase in the accommodation costs of these clubs – an increase which very few, if any, can afford. For that reason, it is not recommended that the current letting scheme be applied directly to OoSC Clubs.
- 4.2 Nonetheless, there is a need for the Council to be transparent in the way in which it subsidises Out of School Care. Given the unique nature of this particular activity it would also be appropriate to devise a charging structure which relates specifically to Out of School Care.
- 4.3 The following proposals have been developed based on current and expected patterns of Out of School Care.

(Note: All undernoted arrangements assume that an appropriate area within the specified school can be identified for the duration of each let).

- A.** Let of school on normal school days (190 days per annum) from 8.00am until 9.00am and from 3.45pm until 6.00pm **and**

Let of school on In-service Closure Days (5 days per annum) (and any occasional day on which the school is closed to pupils due to elections) from 8.00am until 6.00pm.

Annual charge £1300

- (NB** Any Out of School Care Clubs applying for the let of a school on this basis will also have the opportunity to apply for full remission of the annual charge. These applications will be processed by the local Community Education Worker; criteria for full remission will be reviewed from time to time but initially it is anticipated that all OoSC Clubs will qualify for full remission of this annual fee).

- B.** Let of school on any of 35 specified weekdays per year outwith the normal pupil year from 8.00am until 6.00pm.

Daily charge £25

- (NB)** (i) the 35 days available for this facility will be specified in advance each year by the Council, and will generally be those days on which janitorial cover can be made available;
- (ii) OoSC Clubs may also request remission in full or in part of this daily fee. In considering these requests priority will be given to OoSC Clubs serving areas of deprivation and able to demonstrate a Club policy which targets parents in particular need of Out of School Care for their children; thereafter some priority will be given to new or recently established OoSC Clubs which are in need of short-term assistance. Some OoSC Clubs may not therefore be successful in requests for remission of this daily fee; it is anticipated that these Clubs will be well established with adequate resources to meet the fee).

- C.** Let of school on any one of 20 specified weekdays per year outwith the pupil year, from 8.00am until 6.00pm.

Daily Charge £50

- (NB)** (i) the 20 weekdays available for this facility will be specified in advance by the Council, and will generally be days on which janitorial cover is likely to be difficult and costly to arrange;
- (ii) no remission of this charge will be available to any Club).

- D.** Let of school on any weekday outwith the pupil year and not specified under B or C above, or on certain Saturdays, or on any Sunday.

Daily Charge £75

- (NB)** (i) the weekdays available for this facility will be specified in advance by the Council and will include public holidays;
- (ii) no remission of this charge will be available to any Club;
- (iii) no let will be granted on a Sunday, unless exceptional circumstances apply).

5. OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

5.1 It seems likely that attention will continue to be given to Out of School Care by a number of agencies.

5.2 In these circumstances it will be important for the Council to continue to work in partnership with individual clubs and with the OoSC network in order to identify alternative funding sources whenever possible, and to keep the Council's subsidies of letting charges under review.

5.3 Specifically, the Council should work with the OoSC network with a view to seeking some financial support from the Angus Childcare Partnership.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 By endorsing this report it is anticipated that the Education Committee will be supporting a model of good practice in relation to the provision of safe care arrangements for children.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No financial implications for the Council are anticipated from approval of this report but further reports will be submitted to Committee if discussions with the Childcare Partnership can be successfully concluded, or if any specific financial issues should arise after the above charges have become operative.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Council remains committed to supporting OoSC Clubs across Angus and to ensuring that their operation does not conflict with the Council's duty to provide efficient education. Clubs will be supported wherever possible although it should be noted that it is not possible to guarantee the availability of buildings or staff for all periods requested.
- 8.2 In terms of the "Charging for Services VFM Study Phase II" document (Policy and Resources Committee 20 June 2000 – Article 10 of the minute of the meeting refers) it is essential that the Council can demonstrate the level of subsidy being offered to individual organisations and the table of charges provides a means of doing so.

9. CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Law & Administration, the Director of Finance and the Director of Social Work.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.