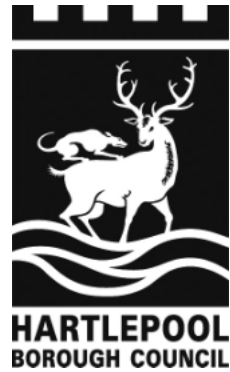


CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO

DECISION SCHEDULE



Monday 19 December 2011

at 2.00 pm

in Committee Room "C"

Councillor C Simmons, Cabinet Member responsible for Children's Services will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

None.

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 2.1 Carlton Outdoor Education Centre – Update On Service Review Action Plan – *Director of Child and Adult Services*

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

None.

4. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS

None.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

19 December 2011



Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: CARLTON OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE –
UPDATE ON SERVICE REVIEW ACTION PLAN

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is advise and update the Portfolio Holder of the progress made with the revision of the operation at Carlton Outdoor Education Centre since the service review was completed as part of the Council's Business Transformation Programme.

It is also necessary to seek Portfolio Holder approval for the revision of the hire fees and charges in relation to the use of the Centre as follows:

- (i) For allocated use by Hartlepool Primary Schools effective for the academic year September 2012 to July 2013 and;
- (ii) For use by all other groups and organisations effective 1st April 2012.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Details of the changes made to operation at the Centre are given as well as details of bookings, programme update, accreditation success and building improvements.

Information is also provided on the current financial position of the Centre which continues to be a challenge for officers since the withdrawal of the financial partnership arrangement with the Tees Valley Local Authorities.

Current charges are given as well as proposals for the next financial and academic year as well as the justification for needing to increase these. It is envisaged that this should assist with income generation at the site and help to address the current funding gap.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

Children's Services Portfolio includes responsibility for Carlton Outdoor Education Centre.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-Key.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Children's Services Portfolio, 19 December 2011.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

The Portfolio Holder is recommended to:

- (i) Note the contents of the report and;
- (ii) Approve the revised fees and charges as detailed at **Appendix 2** to be introduced for the new financial year from April 1st 2012 and the new academic year from 1st September 2012.

Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: CARLTON OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE –
UPDATE ON SERVICE REVIEW ACTION PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As the Portfolio Holder will be aware, Hartlepool Borough Council is responsible for the management and operation of Carlton Outdoor Education Centre as a result of a lease arrangement with the Carlton Trustees. Hartlepool became the lead authority for the site following the demise of Cleveland County Council as a result of local government reorganisation, on behalf of the four Tees local authorities of Stockton, Redcar, Middlesbrough as well as Hartlepool.
- 2.2 The management of the site moved to Community Services, specifically Sport & Recreation, from Children's Services in February 2010 as part of the Business Transformation departmental reorganisation and as part of that programme of work, went through a service review which was completed and presented to Cabinet in December 2010. Planned changes to the operation have therefore been implemented since April 2011 to make the future operation of the Centre more sustainable going forward.
- 2.3 The operation is still overseen by a Steering Group comprising Local Authority representatives, the Trustees, Headteacher representation and Officers from Child and Adult Services who remain involved in the decision making process relating to the management of the site.
- 2.4 This report therefore serves to update the Portfolio Holder on progress made to date.

- 2.5 A full-scale revision of all hire fees and charges has also been completed across all Sport and Recreation services and thus it is necessary to seek approval for those relating to Carlton specifically.

3. LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTNERS AND FUNDING REVIEW

- 3.1 At the time that the management of the Centre was transferred to Community Services in February 2010, Stockton Borough Council had already withdrawn from the partnership arrangement, withdrawing their financial contribution for subsidised Primary School use at the same time.
- 3.2 Almost at the same point, Redcar also decided that they would be withdrawing from April 2010 which left only Middlesbrough and Hartlepool remaining as financial partners. The service review therefore was extremely timely as action would have to be taken if the Centre was to remain viable.
- 3.3 As a consequence, the focus for programme development moved to the need to explore different markets in order to attract new users to the Centre. However, at its heart was to remain its core function of providing outdoor education for primary school children from Middlesbrough and Hartlepool although this could no longer be relied on as the sole method of funding provision.
- 3.4 As part of their budget settlement for 2011/12, Middlesbrough then formally decided to withdraw funding from Carlton as well. This led to the prospect of significant financial problems which if not addressed, would pose a real question mark over the future of Carlton. It has also had the effect of leaving the Steering Group consisting of the trustees, officers from Child and Adult Services and a Hartlepool headteacher representative.
- 3.5 Over the past few months, we have therefore undergone significant change at the site with difficult decisions to be made and this has brought a much improved financial performance upon which further information will be provided in Section 7.

4. UPDATE ON SERVICE REVIEW AND PROGRESS MADE

Staffing Restructure

- 4.1 Major changes to the staffing for the Centre have been implemented and a structure chart is attached at **APPENDIX 1** showing the current position.
- 4.2 The managerial/supervisory positions have been reduced and the roles and responsibilities of other posts have been revised. The two Senior Instructors now also carry out additional duties to assist with the overall operation of the Centre and the Site Operative contributes significantly more to the upkeep and maintenance of the site. This has enabled us to cancel existing maintenance contracts in place to further reduce expenditure.

- 4.3 The major changes where some very difficult decisions had to be made were with the Cooks and the Housekeeping team. Unfortunately, Carlton was previously staffed as though 100% occupancy was being achieved for 52 weeks of the year. This was totally unrealistic and placed a huge financial burden on the Centre as well as having the impact of finding it difficult to fully occupy the staff.
- 4.4 As a result, this area has been reduced to a core of staff for a weekday operation based on one group in residence only and if additional bookings are taken and for the weekends as well, relief staff are brought in to staff up as and when required. This has reduced our staffed hours for this area from 233.625 hours to 119.75 hours a week. Regrettably, these necessary changes did bring staff redundancies and a reduction in hours for others but it has removed an unnecessary financial burden from the Centre.
- 4.5 The final part of the staffing review was implemented at the beginning of November 2011. Instead of employing additional Instructors to support the Centre's programme, this resource is now procured from freelance staff on a self-employed basis. This has had the effect of further reducing our payroll costs.
- 4.6 A large part of the staffing review was not simply about cutting costs, but about introducing new working practices into the Centre operation, doing things differently and more efficiently. The staff still remain involved in this work, constantly challenging themselves to find efficiencies in order to reduce costs.

Administration

- 4.7 All the administration for bookings at the Centre and all the billing is now carried out by the Administrative Officer at Carlton. Previously, this was undertaken by the department's support staff at the Civic Centre which was a lengthy and inefficient practise.
- 4.8 The new system has had the effect of providing greater ownership and control at Carlton and has helped to reduce the Centre's support costs.

Procurement of Goods and Services

- 4.9 Considerable analysis of expenditure at the site has been undertaken and some significant changes have been made to reduce expenditure. Our Procurement Unit have greatly assisted with this work and where we have been able to source locally, contracts have been established to ensure cost savings. The Council's Maintenance Division has also revised its charging policy where Carlton had previously suffered financially owing to its geographical remoteness from Hartlepool.

5. CENTRE USAGE AND NEW MARKETS

- 5.1 We have continued to attract a number of new schools to the Centre, many from outside of Hartlepool, some private schools and birthday parties continue to remain very popular. This area of work seems to grow and grow as does that around offering training and development courses. For example, the Centre in partnership with the Institute for Outdoor Learning hosted an Introduction to Bush Craft course in October. We are also hosting this month in partnership with the same organisation, the first North East based Enabling Outdoor Learning, A Conference and Festival for Teachers.
- 5.2 The Centre also hosted a Community Sports Leader Archery Award and a MIDAS training day recently and are working with a company called Medi-pro providing technical support for their training courses in rescue situations.
- 5.3 Unfortunately, we have not been able to fully exploit the use of the school holiday weeks yet as this year has brought significant change to the site and our full energies and focus needed to be on seeing through this implementation. However, this will be a main area for development over the forthcoming months with the Summer of 2012 very much in mind.
- 5.4 Despite this, the Centre was busy during this year's summer holiday period with a number of family activity days, a regional Young Carers event, a number of private residential bookings and self-catering groups utilising the site. It also brought us some important maintenance time.
- 5.5 There is still much to do but hopefully the Portfolio Holder will be encouraged that we are going in the right direction and have demonstrated that we can cater for different markets and users without departing from offering a valuable educational experience for schools.
- 5.6 With regards to school use, at the moment, there is still availability for the academic year 2011 – 2012 although all the subsidised allocations for Hartlepool schools have been fully taken up. Whilst we have lost some school bookings due to the removal of financial support from Local Authorities in particular the Free School Meal subsidies, we have also gained some new ones and we are currently at the same level that we were this time last year.

6. BUILDING IMPROVEMENT WORKS

- 6.1 Earlier this year, owing to concerns of the Health Safety Executive, the Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) tanks had to be relocated to another area of the site. In addition to this, much of the gas pipework also had to be replaced.
- 6.2 As a further consequence of this work, boilers were replaced in the laundry store, laundry corridor and camp-store and the kitchen was upgraded to comply with new regulations which necessitated the replacement of all the equipment. We therefore took the opportunity to remove the need for LPG in this area with all replacement appliances being electrical.

- 6.3 Some remedial works were undertaken in the residential block shower areas and the re-sealing of floors and shower cubicles has been undertaken to prevent water seepage. Drainage work has also been undertaken. We have also replaced the canopy at the front of the main building as the original was rotten and the classroom roof has been resealed. We have also undertaken significant tree works at the site following a site survey.
- 6.4 Collectively this amounts to over £100k of expenditure funded from the remaining £90k capital budget for Carlton and the securing of £15k from the Council's Capital Fund Group. At the moment we have a balance of £6.5k capital remaining.
- 6.5 The bulk of the capital funding has been spent on essential health and safety works to allow the Centre to remain operative, several projects remain that we would like to undertake to allow the maximum use of the site possible. At the moment, the design of the residential block does not lend itself easily to being able to cater for a mix of users and this type of improvement will be reliant on our ability to be able to secure external funding.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Prior to implementing any of the aforementioned changes in order to put the Centre on a better financial footing, when Middlesbrough announced the withdrawal of their financial contribution, overall it meant that the funding gap we were facing for the Centre for 2011/12 was £194.5k.
- 7.2 The subsequent action that has been taken by officers to reduce expenditure, some of which has only been implemented mid-way through this year and the effort to increase income generation has had a dramatic effect so far. As budgets stand, officers are forecasting a reduction in the funding gap this year of £114k to £80k which it is hoped the Portfolio Holder will acknowledge is an excellent performance.
- 7.3 The remaining gap will be covered by a revenue reserve created for Carlton within which remains £66,914. Whilst on present forecasts, a gap of £13k would still remain, officers hope this would reduce further as the remainder of this year progresses.
- 7.4 However, the task facing us for the next financial year should not be underestimated as the reserve created will have been fully used. Therefore, the need to increase income and keep expenditure to a minimum will be imperative.

8. FEES AND CHARGES – 2012/2013

- 8.1 Attached at **APPENDIX 2** are the proposed fees and charges for Carlton for the 2012/2013 financial and academic year. We are proposing to increase

these broadly in line with inflation and it is necessary to do so if we are to ensure that Carlton remains sustainable for the future.

- 8.2 Of note is the proposal to increase the price to Hartlepool primary schools to £30.00 from £29.00 per person per day. This is a substantial reduction on the charge that should be made in order to cover costs and should be at the same level as per the remaining fees and charges. For example, for a non Hartlepool based school child, it is proposed to increase these from £45.00 to £46.50 a day.
- 8.3 This year, the Council contributed £74,727 to the Centre in return for which, a proportion of allocated weeks (19 weeks) were provided to Hartlepool Primary Schools for use at the subsidised price. We propose to maintain the allocations for 2012–2013 at 19 weeks; that is 106 days but to do so, the subsidised price will have to increase to £30.00 as previously indicated.
- 8.4 Despite this proposed increase, the level of subsidy received on the true cost of provision will actually increase, from £540.75 per day for a school group to £558.00. However if the price remained the same, whilst the subsidy would also increase, it would do so to an unsustainable level (£540.75 to £591.00 per day) which officers would not advise given the financial circumstances of the Centre.
- 8.5 Officers recognise that there is a risk associated with increasing charges, particularly for the subsidised school use with the loss of the Pupil Support Grant. However, it is felt to be a necessary risk as we have to address the financial situation at the Centre.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

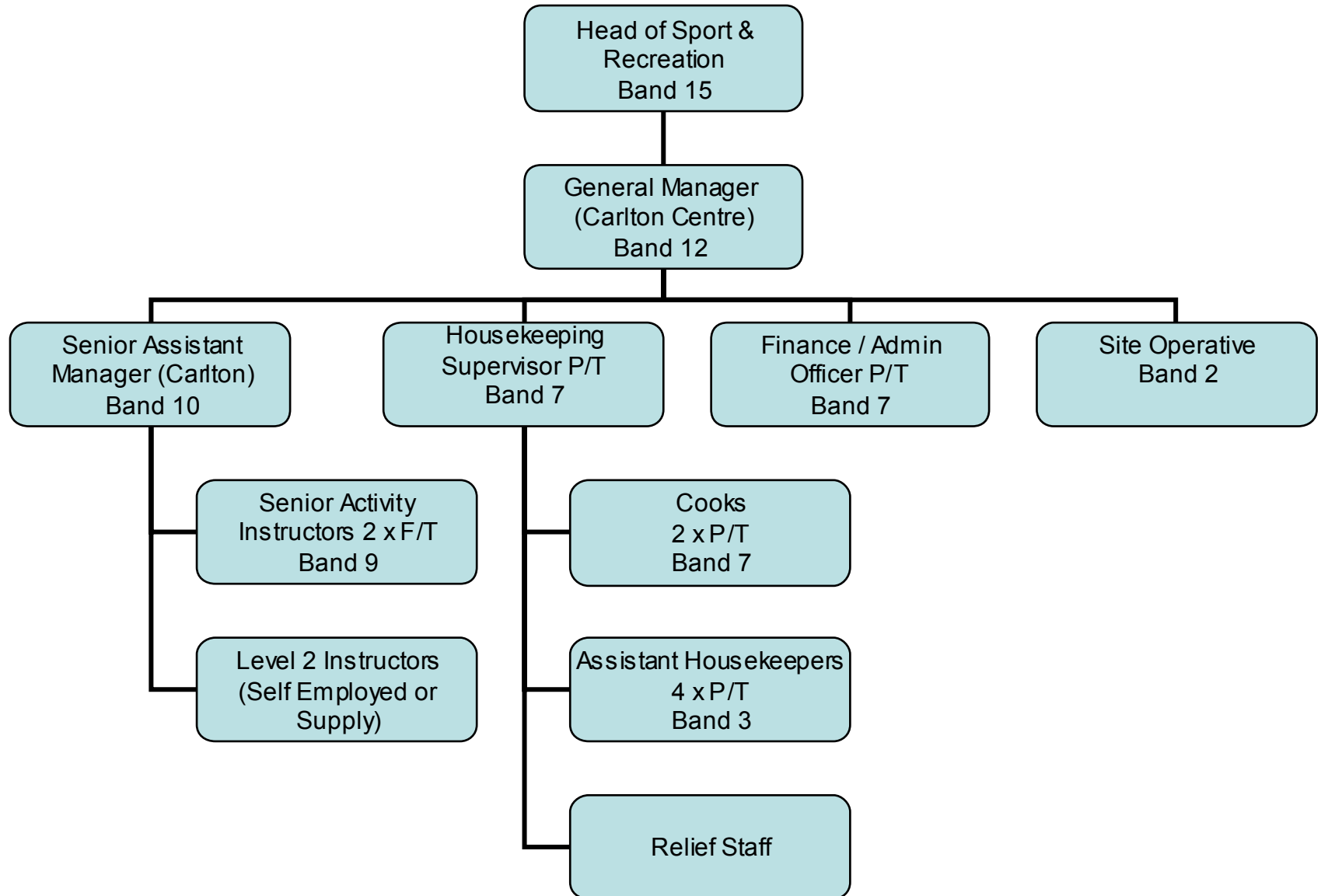
- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder is recommended to:
- (i) Note the contents of the report and;
 - (ii) Approve the revised fees and charges as detailed at **Appendix 2** to be introduced for the new financial year from April 1st 2012 and the new academic year from 1st September 2012.

10. CONTACT OFFICER

Pat Usher, Sport and Recreation Manager
 Tel: (01429) 523416
 Email: pat.usher@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None



FEES & CHARGES 2012 - 2013**HARTLEPOOL PRIMARY SCHOOL GROUPS (Sept 2012 – July 2013)**

	CURRENT 2011 - 2012	PROPOSED 2012 - 2013	% INCREASE
ALLOCATED DAY RATE			
Residential Charges for pupils & Teachers/other adults supervising pupils (one instructor to 10/12 pupils activities per 24hrs)	£29.00	£30.00	3.45%

ALL OTHER USERS (01.04.12 – 31.03.13)

	CURRENT 2011 - 2012	PROPOSED 2012 - 2013	% INCREASE
RESIDENTIAL CHARGES			
Fully catered accommodation with one instructor in standard activity programme per 24hrs (minimum group size 12)			
Adult	£49.25	£51.00	3.55%
Child (up to 12 yrs)	£45.00	£46.50	3.33%
Bed Only	£20.00	£20.50	2.5%
Camping per person	£5.00	£5.25	5%
Additional Instructor for 2 Instructor activities e.g. canoeing			
Per day	£105.00	£107.75	2.62%
Per half day	£60.00	£61.50	2.5%
Day Visitors 9.00- 4.30pm (minimum group size 10)			
One Instructor activities per person			
Full day	£16.50	£17.00	3.03%
Half Day	£9.75	£10.00	2.56%
Two Instructor activities per person			
Full day	£27.00	£27.95	3.52%
Half Day	£14.50	£15.50	6.9%
Additional Meals and refreshments per person if required			
Breakfast			
Light	£3.25	£3.35	3.08%
Cooked	£4.75	£4.90	3.16%
Lunch/packed lunch	£3.75	£3.85	2.67%
Evening Meal/Dinner			
Adult	£9.50	£9.85	3.68%
Child (up to 12 yrs)	£8.25	£8.30	0.61%
Supper	£1.80	£1.85	2.78%
Tea/coffee and tray bakes per head	£1.60	£1.65	3.13%

Tea/coffee per head	£1.00	£1.00	0%
Conference Room Hire per day	£50.00	£50.00	0%
Conference Room Hire per hour	£8.00	£8.00	0%
Additional minibus per day	at cost	at cost	at cost
Team Building / Corporate Events / Parties			
Tailor-made to suit your requirements	Prices on request	Prices on request	Prices on request
Self-Catering	Prices on request	Prices on request	Prices on request
Exclusive use of Centre			
Available for a maximum of 68 people – Fully catered accommodation with instruction	Prices on request	Prices on request	Prices on request

NB – All Hartlepool based groups e.g. Youth Groups, schools etc. subject to a 5% discount on the above rates (with the exception of meals and refreshment charges).