

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
8 October 2015

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	ECAS 88/15

School Lets

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report sets out a proposed scope of a review of school lets charging policy, to support delivery of an agreed £150,000 saving target on school lets income.

1. Background

- 1.1 In agreeing the budget in December 2014, the Council agreed saving proposal reference 28: 'Increased income from school lets, arising from school lets review and potential changes to that policy in relation to free lets' with a saving value of £150,000 to be implemented in financial year 2016/17.
- 1.2 That saving proposal had arisen following a review of school lets, which identified improvements in relation to consistent application of the existing 2009 policy, as well as opportunities to be explored in relation to additional income from review of the charging policy and free lets arrangements.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to set out the process to progress the review of the charging policy, and free lets arrangements. The report also refers to further stages of a review, to look at financial arrangements, as well as staffing arrangements and roles/responsibilities, of both the administration and servicing of lets.

2. Charging Policy - Context

- 2.1 Members involved in previous reviews of school lets, will recall that at that time record keeping was devolved to school level, and as such there were significant limitations in the Council's ability to centrally report on letting activity.
- 2.2 The position has improved significantly over the past 1–2 years, with a centralised database now maintained into which all school let activity should be recorded. Given the relatively recent implementation of this new database, it is acknowledged there may be some gaps or inaccuracies in the data it records, but nonetheless, it now provides a more complete picture on which to base any future decisions around letting policy and charges.
- 2.3 Key information, sourced from the database and the financial information system, is as follows:

	Financial Year 2014/15	
Number of school let 'events' (i.e. individual timeslots booked)		25,335
By Area:		
- North Area	4,171	
- South Area	14,519	
- Mid Area	1,661	
- West Area	4,984	
By charging type:		
- Charged let events	10,157	
- No charge let events	15,178	
Number of 'registrations' (i.e. applications received from organisations)		2,680
Total income from school lets		£214,000
Budgeted income from school lets		£261,000
Shortfall		£47,000
Income Target 2016/17 (including saving)		£411,000

2.4 A copy of the current charging policy is enclosed as **Appendix 1**.

3. Review Scope

3.1 The proposed scope of the review of charging policy is to:

- Achieve the financial target set by the Council
- Review and clarify the free lets policy
- Ensure charges are simple and transparent
- Ensure charges are consistent and equitable
- Ensure policy makes clear the position in relation to organisations in receipt of direct financial support from the Council
- Maintain access to school facilities in line with the Council programme commitment *"The Council will ensure that all new school buildings will act as a community-hub. We will investigate new and innovative ways to deliver more community access to existing buildings as part of a review of the schools estate"*.

3.2 The review will be led by officers, engaging and consulting with elected members and other representative stakeholders, as the review progresses. A small group of members will be directly consulted in the development of proposals, to act as a

'focus group'.

- 3.3 The intention is for the review to conclude in a relatively short timescale, in order that recommendations can be considered by the January or February 2016 Committee, and change then implemented for the 2016/17 financial year.
- 3.4 Future review phases – it is recognised that there is also a need to review the process around school lets, in particular the administration arrangements in relation to let bookings and charging arrangements, and also roles/responsibilities in relation to the facilitation of lets. With the intention to streamline and improve efficiency of the process, and also improve the service experienced by customers. This will be progressed once the immediate priority of review of charging policy is concluded.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Resource implications – none within this report, however subsequent reports will propose changes to charging policy which will have implications for end users, and achieving the Council's financial targets.
- 4.2 **Legal** implications – nothing to highlight.
- 4.3 **Equalities** implications – the stated scope of the policy review is to ensure an equitable charging policy. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken on any revised charging policy proposals.
- 4.4 **Climate change/carbon clever** implications – nothing to highlight.
- 4.5 **Risk** implications – risks associated with the policy review and proposals will be considered as the review progresses.
- 4.6 **Gaelic** implications – no implications to highlight.
- 4.7 **Rural** implications – nothing to highlight, any revised charging policy proposals would be expected to be equitable and apply pan-Highland.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider this report and agree the scope of the school lets review.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 24 September 2015

Author: Brian Porter, Head of Resources

Current Charging Policy

SCHOOL LET CHARGES 1st APRIL 2015 - 31st MARCH 2016

ACCOMMODATION/FACILITIES	DURATION	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C
Classroom/small meeting room/staff room or space of equivalent size	Up to 3 hrs	£9.40	NA	NA
Classroom/small meeting room/staff room or space of equivalent size	Per hour	NA	£19.00	£69.05
Badminton Court within large hall in Secondary School (Net and stands) (max 4 people)	Per hour	£8.30	£19.00	£32.25
Small Hall/dance studio/gym/large meeting room/community room or space equivalent to 1-2 badminton court size	Per hour	£16.10	£24.00	£83.20
Games Hall/social space or space equivalent to 3-4 badminton court size	Per hour	£35.65	£46.70	£147.80
Theatre	Per hour	£39.80	£50.65	£174.85
Grass Playing Field/Track	Per hour	£20.80	£26.85	£71.40
All Weather Pitch	Per hour	£26.65	£32.70	£98.10
MUGA (Multi Use Games Area)	Per hour	£15.05	£21.10	£57.95
Changing (for outdoor sports facilities)	Per hour	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00
Lighting (for outdoor sports facilities)	Per hour	£6.00	£6.00	£6.00

- Notes:** (a) The above facilities may not be available to hire in every school
(b) Lets of a non-standard length are charged on a minimum of half hourly basis and rounded up eg 1 hour and 15 minutes is charged 1½ hours.
(c) Charges change from 1st April each year and lets after that date will be subject to the new charges

CHARGING BANDS	Band C: Commercial Commercial organisations for profit making activities including instruction, dance, events, sales and spectator events
	Band B: Semi-Commercial Instructed activities of educational or sporting content where the instructor retains the income, elections, unlicensed ceilidhs and dances where an individual retains the income, weddings
	Band A: Community Sporting, social, political and religious activities, not for profit instruction, musical competitions, Blood Transfusion Service
DISCOUNTS	50% reduction where 100% of participants are under 18, full time students or over 60. Discounts only apply to Bands A and B
SURCHARGES	An additional 25% per Let booking will be applied for additional staffing outside standard opening hours – after 10pm, weekends and school holidays.
VAT ON SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL LETS	VAT is chargeable at the current rate on sporting Lets as per the conditions set out in section 5 of HMRC Notice 742 Land and Property, http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageAboutUs_ShowContent&id=HMCE_CL_000154&propertyType=document#P210_24269 for more information.