

**Schools Forum – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Astley Burf Outdoor Education Centre**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Schools Forum of the current operational situation at Astley Burf Outdoor Education Centre, which is a registered charity. Schools Forum have endorsed the Educational value of the Centre and sought further information on addressing the operating shortfall.

**Background**

2. Astley Burf Outdoor Education Centre was transferred to the Local Education Authority in 1938 via a Deed of Gift, for the purpose of a School Camp. The deed requests that the said premises are maintained as a School Camp known as the Astley Burf Camp for the benefit of the children and young persons of the Borough of Dudley.
3. The centre has a maximum capacity of 60, 48 accommodated within the Cabins, and 12 under canvass, although the tents are rarely used.
4. If the current pricing policy for Astley Burf was applied to all pupils, not just fee paying, it would result in the centre being self financing. However, this may not leave funds available for further investment in the centre if take up numbers fall, due to fees being levied from all pupils.
5. The current deficit position of the centre has been mainly brought about by the centre (Local Authority) giving free places to pupils in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). However, DCSF guidance states that it is the responsibility of the school and not the Authority or the provider to cover these costs. Schools that use alternative providers to Astley Burf are already charged for FSM children. Schools cannot charge parents of FSM children for board and lodgings and for any part of the residential that falls within the school day but can request voluntary donations or raise funds for the visit.

6. The table below is an analysis of the previous 3 years occupancy and an example of additional charges, which would have been borne by the visiting school.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-8
Average	£588	£588	£647	£548
Minimum	77	77	77	77
Maximum	1,232	1,771	1,540	1,309

7. Schools receive funding via the LMS formula to address social deprivation issues. In 07-08 this amounted to £3.7m. The Local Authority is working towards increasing the amount of funding received by schools for social deprivation over the next 3 years in line with Government targets.
8. Options:
- a) To charge the visiting school for **all** children attending Astley Burf.
  - b) Top slice the DSG for the annual shortfall.

### **Finance**

9. The funding of schools is prescribed by the DCSF through the School Finance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2007.
10. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006, the Schools Budget is funded by a direct DCSF grant: Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

### **Law**

11. Schools Forums are regulated by the School Forums Regulations 2002 as already amended by the Schools Forums (Amendment) Regulations 2004 and the Schools Forums (Amendment) 2005 Regulations.

### **Equality Impact**

12. Astley Burf Outdoor Education Centre aims to ensure the children enjoy and achieve, as a result of staying on site, and living in an outdoor environment and offers equality of access to all.

## **Recommendation**

13. Astley Burf charges schools on a per pupil basis irrespective on whether pupils are FSM. It will then be the responsibility of the school to fund the visit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

**John Freeman**

**Director of Children's Service**

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