

**Schools Forum 11 December 2007**

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

**Astley Burf Outdoor Centre**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform and raise awareness of the current operational situation at Astley Burf Outdoor Education Centre, which is a registered charity and to request a management steer as to the way forward for the future.

**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 to maintain the said premises 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. In 2003 Astley Burf secured a NOF (New Opportunities Fund) 3 PE and Sport lottery bid of £324,000. A percentage yet to be agreed would be required to be repaid if the centre were to close.
5. Astley Burf is managed operationally by Brenda Proctor, who is the Centre Manager at Saltwells EDC, both services are managed by Catering and Client Services, who ensure the day to day running of the centre. A Partnership Group meet on a termly basis and discuss strategic issues. The Partnership Group consists of various interested groups, including Headteachers, Accountancy, Voluntary Sector and the Primary Care Trust. A full list of group members is included within Appendix 1.
6. Astley Burf has become high profile recently, with increased media attention following the announcement that we would be passing on the cost of coach transport to schools, to generate additional income. It is normal practice to increase fees annually in line with inflation.

7. Free School meals children currently attend the Centre at no charge to the visiting school, a re-imbusement of £6.00 per week (free school meal allocation per pupil) is transferred from the catering account to Astley Burf.
8. The responsibility for covering the cost of a FSM child rests with the school and not the Authority or the provider. 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 fund raising for the trip.
9. Options
  - a. To charge the visiting school for all children attending Astley Burf including FSM children. This may result in many children not given the opportunity of having the benefits of a residential experience as the School may not be able to pay on their budget.
  - b. Top slice the DSG for the shortfall 06/07 – 30k inflated annually. FSM children could then attend Astley Burf without charge and this would be funded from a deprivation element of the DSG.
  - c. An alternative solution to funding the shortfall is to charge a notional element of £20.00 for FSM pupils thus reducing the burden on schools. However, if a large number of FSM children use the facility it will leave Astley Burf inappropriately funded.

## **Finance**

10. Astley Burf requires an additional £30k per annum, to become self-financing and improve facilities.

## **Equality Impact**


11. 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.

## **Conclusion**

12. The current Astley Burf budget is proving inadequate to cover the service provision and we ask that consideration be given to select an option to sustain the viability in line with the purpose of the bequest.

## **Recommendation**

13. Schools Forum approve a change in the funding of pupils entitled to FSM by adopting option 9b.



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**John Freeman**  
**Director of Children's Services**

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## Appendix 1

### Astley Burf Partnership Group

#### MEMBERS

Penny Rushen	Resources and Planning (Chair)
Rachel McKiernan-Doyle	Principal Sports and Recreation
Phil Hadley	H2O Water Sports
Maureen Hooper	Development Office
Martin James	Howley Grange Primary School
Margaret Jones	Catering and Client Services
John Kulyk	Halesbury School
Ann Partridge	Hurst Green Primary School
Brenda Proctor	Saltwells EDC
Shelley Reynolds	Education Accountancy
Veronica Ross	Representing the Voluntary Sector
Sally Cornfield	Physical Activity Advisor, PCT
Dean Hill	Dudley NHS
Dewi Williams	Community Capacity Manager
Dominic Tipping	Youth and Community Representative
Richard Lisseter	Activity L