

**Report to the Deputy Leader of the County Council**  
**Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools**  
**Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment**  
**Date: 9 March 2015**

**Part I**

Electoral Division affected:  
All

**Schools Playing Field Improvement Programme 2015/17**  
(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:  
Stephen Riley, (01772) 531546, Environment Directorate,  
[Stephen.riley@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.riley@lancashire.gov.uk)

**Executive Summary**

This report sets out proposals for investment of the capital receipt from the former Tulketh High School playing fields on playing field improvements at schools across Lancashire.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No 25 have been complied with.

**Recommendation**

The Deputy Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools are recommended to approve the proposal to utilise the capital receipt to improve school playing field drainage at those schools set out at Appendix 'A' to the report.

**Background and Advice**

From 1 September 2008, Tulketh Community Sports College closed and the site and buildings were used by Fulwood High School and Sports College as part of the school's temporary expansion. From 1 September 2009, Fulwood High School and Arts College became Fulwood Academy and all staff and pupils transferred to the academy building. Since then the Tulketh building has remained unoccupied. This does not impact on the occupation of part of the site by "Play Football" (national organisation which offers FA accredited small sided football venues for local competitive leagues and pitch hire).

The Former Tulketh High School site was declared surplus by the Directorate for Children and Young People in May 2011. Since then, Corporate Property Group has been formulating proposals for the disposal of the site which is anticipated towards the end of 2015. The site includes some buildings and also some areas designated

as school playing fields. This report is concerned solely with the playing field element of the site.

Section 77(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 applies when a Local Authority wishes to dispose of school playing fields and consent must be obtained from the Secretary of State for Education. There is a general presumption by the Secretary of State against the need to change the current pattern of school playing field provision by disposal or change of use.

In order to obtain consent in the case of a school closure, the Secretary of State will expect that the first priority for re-investment should be sports facilities or specific capital projects to improve, or enhance, facilities at, or for, schools. There is an expectation that the Local Authority will have formally made such a plan prior to submission to the Secretary of State as evidence in support of a s77 application in order to demonstrate Lancashire County Council's commitment to reinvest proceeds from the sale of the playing fields into sports facilities across Lancashire.

The requirement to reinvest the proceeds of the disposal of the site into improving sports facilities only applies to the playing field area and not the buildings. Approval to proposals for the disposal of the complete site will be sought at a later date.

It is proposed that proceeds from the disposal of the playing field element of the site be utilised to fund improvements to playing field facilities for a number of schools across Lancashire as listed in Appendix 'A'.

Playing field improvement programmes previously ran from 2004/06, 2006/08 and 2008/11 however funding limitations have precluded this type of work in recent years.

Officers have utilised information from playing field condition surveys that were carried out some time ago together with their local knowledge of school facilities. A list of projects is set out at 'Appendix 'A'. The intention is to prioritise those schools that have difficulty accessing their facilities all year round in phase 1. In phase 2 schools that have some access will be targeted; improvements to these establishments will be carried out subject to the availability of funding. Works will consist mainly of installing or improving playing field drainage systems in order to increase year round accessibility for pupils. The size of the capital receipt for the Tulketh playing field site will determine how many of the projects listed can be included within the programme; this is currently estimated at £0.877million. Should the capital receipt be substantially higher than anticipated a further report will be submitted. Schools will be informed that inclusion on the programme is entirely dependent on the size of capital receipt.

To guarantee that this investment has maximum benefit to pupils in future years a condition of the funding will be that schools commit to maintaining the improved playing fields through the use of the Delegated Budgets.

Schools devolved formula capital (DFC) allocations have been reduced substantially in recent years and Voluntary Aided schools are unable to commit their DFC to playing field improvements because this type of work cannot be grant aided. It is therefore recommended that financial contributions from schools are not requested.

## **Consultations**

Officers within Corporate Property Group who are dealing with disposal of the Tulketh High School site and grounds support officers who offer advice to schools on playing field maintenance have been consulted.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

### **Financial**

Failure to provide evidence to the Secretary of State regarding Lancashire County Council's commitment to reinvesting proceeds from the disposal of the playing fields will delay the potential capital receipts from the sale of the whole site.

The works will be wholly funded via the capital receipt and will not be carried out until sale of the site is agreed. Therefore no further capital funding will be required.

### **Property Asset Management**

Failure to undertake improvement works to school playing fields would result in continuing reduced teaching and learning opportunities for school staff, pupils and the wider school community.

### **Procurement**

Due to the nature of the works required to improve school playing fields, a limited number of specialist contractors are available to undertake this work and a narrow window of opportunity exists during the summer months when sports field improvement works can be undertaken. For this reason the programme must be spread over a number of years.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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Nil

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.