



Title: **Future Use of the Chestnut School Site**

Public Agenda Item: **Yes**

Wards Affected: **All Wards in Torbay**

To: **Council**

Key Decision: **Yes – Ref. I004127** On: **1 February 2011**

Change to Budget: **No**

Contact Officer: **Matthew Redwood** Change to Policy Framework: **No**

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1. What we are trying to achieve and the impact on our customers

1.1.1 The proposal is to utilise the Chestnut primary site for a Primary Support Centre, a base for the Torbay Music service delivered via the Torbay Academy of Performing Arts (TAPA) and a possible site for the South Devon Gym Club.

1.1.2 This proposal will provide a co-ordinated base for a range of services to support primary age children with behaviour difficulties, a permanent base for the music service which serves the whole of Torbay and a potential site for South Devon Gym Club.

2. Recommendation(s) for decision

That the Mayor be recommended:

2.1 That the use of the Chestnut school site for a Primary Support Centre and the base for the Torbay Music service (Torbay Academy of Performing Arts - TAPA) be approved.

2.2 That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to enter into discussions with The South Devon Gym club to discuss the Chestnut school site being the long term venue for the club.

3. Key points and reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 Currently there is a range of support provision for primary aged pupils with behaviour issues across Torbay. These include the Pegasus centre, currently based in a mobile classroom on Paignton Community and Sports College (PC&SC) site, a primary aged Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) group based at Lupton House and some tailored individual provision based at a primary school. This provision is effective but would benefit from a permanent, shared base. Further support for primary aged pupils with behaviour difficulties could be developed to support schools and parents from a permanent base.
- 3.2 The Torbay music service currently stores many thousands of pounds of instruments in a temporary classroom on the Old Mill Road site (Old Cockington Primary school site). This storage is not secure and is damaging the instruments due to damp. TAPA also has great difficulty in finding appropriate rehearsal and performance space for its various music groups.
- 3.3 The South Devon Gym Club (SDGC) is a community based club providing gymnastics tuition and gymnastics facilities to people with a broad range of needs and abilities. The Club is in need of a suitable site for a long term base. The club is currently proposing to rent commercial premises at Yalberton having had to move from their existing premises. The aim would be to offer part of the Chestnut site as a site for a purpose built gymnastics hall which would give the club a permanent base.

For more detailed information on this proposal please refer to the supporting information attached.

**Richard Williams
Director of Children's Services.**

Supporting information

A1. Introduction and history

A1.1 Chestnut primary school closed in July 2011. The premises are a 1970's building which comprises a six classroom building, with a large hall and ancillary accommodation. The building is in generally good repair and upkeep. It is attached to the Chestnut Children's centre build within the last 5 years. The school site has good provision of parking and access. There is a large hard play area and significant grassed grounds. The site is used on a contractual agreement with Indigos - an outdoor based activity group. Elements of the site are difficult to use due to steep slopes and changes in gradient.

At the Council meeting on 13th July 2011 the closure of Chestnut school was agreed with the amendment that the site be 'retained for educational and community uses where possible'

A2. Risk assessment of preferred option

A2.1 Outline of significant key risks

A2.1.1 An area of concern is the increasing number of primary aged pupils showing very significant levels of behaviour difficulties at an early age across the primary school age group. To address this the Pegasus provision was set up as a jointly funded and managed provision between the Local Authority and primary schools.

Pegasus works in partnership with primary schools to provide short term interventions for children who are experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties through delivering a curriculum based on activities to develop emotional health and well-being in small groups. The children attend for two half day sessions a week for approximately 12 weeks. Weekly reports on each child's progress and shared with their schools along with some suggested follow up work to be completed in school. A number of other activities operate from Pegasus – an Outreach Team and Rapid Response; advice sessions for schools; parenting sessions; and training for school based staff. There are two teachers and three support workers attached to Pegasus. Currently Pegasus is based on the Borough Road site of PC&SC in a mobile classroom. Transport costs to the Pegasus provision remains the responsibility of the 'home school' although the Home to School Transport section often coordinate the provision of the transport.

The EOTAS primary group at Lupton is designed for children who for emotional, social or behavioural reasons are not managing school life. It provides a primary academic curriculum but also tries to assess and address the behaviours which made it difficult for the child to maintain school based learning. The children at Lupton are taught in a group of 6. Whilst in the group each child will have a learning programme tailored to their individual needs. It provides full time education for its pupils and a child may be at Lupton for up to one year depending upon his/her progress and the availability of a suitable school place. The group takes permanently excluded children; children with statements of Special Educational Need; and those unable to maintain a place in either a special or mainstream school. It currently operates from premises at Lupton

House in Brixham. There is one teacher and two Teaching Assistants attached to the Lupton group

The purpose behind a coordinated primary support centre is to improve the effectiveness of the work with a small but challenging group of primary pupils by ensuring that they can access support early, that it is targeted at the needs of each individual and that it supports children in returning to full time academic education in mainstream settings. The centre will provide a seamless continuum of support. It will reduce instances where professionals are needlessly duplicating activity while some children and young people are unable to receive support and remain on waiting lists for services.

The Primary Support Centre would need to be registered with the Department for Education and will be subject to the same regulations as a school for example inspection by Ofsted. The Primary Support Centre will have a teacher in charge, management committee and a delegated budget funded from the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) in a similar way to a school. Provision for Pegasus and EOTAS is already funded from the DSG as were the premises costs for Chestnut primary school so this would not be placing any additional budget pressures on the DSG.

Torbay Council (through the music service known as Torbay Academy of Performing Arts) is in possession of a large quantity of musical instruments, including strings, woodwind, brass and percussion. The value of these instruments is many thousands of pounds.

Some of the larger and newer instruments, which are used on a more regular basis, are kept in Oldway Mansion and remain in a good condition. Many instruments are stored in a temporary classroom on the old Cockington School site on Old Mill Road. These instruments include many woodwind instruments. Woodwind instruments have a lot of moving parts including silver plate and corking on the keys.

Unfortunately, the temporary classroom has shown itself to be unsuitable for instrument storage for a variety of reasons:

1. It is likely that Oldway Mansion will be transferred to a new owner and therefore the very large, bulky instruments (timpani, bass drum, glockenspiels) will have to be moved elsewhere. The Old Mill Road site does not allow easy access for large instruments, it would require professional 'movers' every time they needed to be used.
2. The Old Mill Road site is insecure. Since the Old Mill Road site has been used by TAPA, there have been a number of break-ins.
3. The Old Mill Road site is damp and cold. This damp and cold atmosphere is having a negative impact on the condition of the instruments. Most of the woodwind instruments' corking has been ruined, rendering the instruments unplayable. The cost of replacing this corking can run into hundreds of pounds per instrument. Brass instruments are becoming rusty, stringed instruments are warping and percussion instruments are losing elasticity.

TAPA faces significant problems finding space to run workshops and rehearsals, particularly during the day at weekends and during the working week. Oldway Mansion is used for evening rehearsals, but not available during office hours or

at weekends due to the noise factor when people are working or ceremonies are taking place. There is massive potential for the music service to offer activities at weekends and during school holidays which could, in time, be revenue-raising.

If Chestnut were to become the permanent site for TAPA it would resolve the instrument storage issues and give them a base for performance and rehearsal after school, at weekends and holiday periods. It would also give access to an ICT suite which will allow for further development of the service.

TAPA is funded via a direct ring fenced grant from the DfE and money that is currently being used to hire premises would be available for the maintenance and development of the Chestnut site.

The South Devon Gym Club gets significant numbers of children involved in a sport that schools generally cannot cater for given the level of investment needed in the specialist facilities needed. The club does outstanding work with children and adults with learning difficulties and it also supports many gymnasts who aspire to compete at elite levels. The proposal is to talk to the club with the aim of offering them the facility for building a purpose built facility on the Chestnut site. Any capital funding would have to be accessed independently by the club and there can be no contribution from Children's Services capital funding and/or the Council's capital pot.

The club requires a dedicated building due to both the heavy usage pattern and also the nature of the equipment used. These factors prohibit SDGC from considering flexible use of shared facilities. The club is very well supported and it is understood that it operates profitably. The club and the Sports Council advise that SDGC would be able to sustain a level of loan repayment necessary to fund all (or a significant proportion) of the build cost. It is the presumption of this report that any building would be provided by self generated funding via the South Devon Gym Club/Sports Council and would have no contribution from Children's Services capital funding and/or the Council's capital pot.

The gymnastics use could complement the proposed use for the site outlined in this paper or as a school site in the future. The club has yet to give formal consideration to the proposed relocation or to prepare a business case or other due diligence. The key trustees of the club have in principle an interest in the site.

If the club is interested in the site then another report will come back to Members to seek approval for the granting of a lease for the site.

A2.2 Remaining risks

Whilst Chestnut school has closed and the school site is not needed for the provision of primary school places at this time it would be sensible to retain the integrity of the site so that if in future the birth rate rises in Brixham then the provision of a larger school on the Chestnut site is a possibility.

It is likely that the gym club would require a building of about 600m² with an eaves height of about 6 metres. This is not an insignificant sized building and care would need to be taken that its footprint does not impede the possible re-use of the school site for educational purposes.

A3. Other Options

A3.1 The option of moving another school to the Chestnut site was explored but was not pursued as it was not considered appropriate to do so.

A3.2 Another option would be to explore the possibility of providing an Innovation Centre at the school site. Torquay and Paignton have such centres to help businesses grow but this facility is lacking in Brixham.

A4. Summary of resource implications

A4.1 There are resource implications of this proposal for the running and maintenance of the building but these will be covered from the DSG as was the building when it was a primary school.

There may be potential additional home to school transport costs for transporting children to the Primary Support Centre. It is not possible to say how much these will be as the children attending Lupton will be from different addresses in the future. However, as an indication in January 2012, 2 pupils live in Paignton and 7 live in Torquay. These pupils are transported in one large taxi with one pupil currently being a lone rider on a taxi. The cost of extending one of these routes is likely to be between £950 - £1,900 per school year. Transport to the Pegasus provision will remain as part of the schools responsibility.

Early intervention to enable primary aged children to continue and thrive in their school settings may have significant but an unquantifiable reduction on potential independent school fees, alternative special provision or expensive bespoke educational packages in the secondary phase.

A5. What impact will there be on equalities, environmental sustainability and crime and disorder?

A5.1 None

A6. Consultation and Customer Focus

A6.1 None

A7. Are there any implications for other Business Units?

A7.1 None

A8 Appendices

A8.1 None

A9 Documents available in members' rooms

A9.1 None

A10 Background Papers:

The following documents/files were used to compile this report:

None