

# **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 18 MAY 2011**

## **Report on Oxfordshire Outdoor Learning Service (OOLS)**

### **Background**

- 1 OOLS is a direct provider of:
  - Residential programmes for a variety of groups
  - Adventurous outdoor activities
  - Training for teachers and those who work with young people
  - Fulfilling the Authority's duty to monitor and authorise educational visits.
  - Advice for adults and teachers who plan and lead groups on off-site visits
  - Facilities (supported or unsupported) for internal (OCC) and external groups to use.

### **Centres**

- 2 Historically the 3 out-county Centres (Kilvrough, Woodlands and Yenworthy) provided a 5 day model of residential visit with a programme of adventurous outdoor activities or specialist field study work for exam courses.
- 3 The core clients for these Centres remain schools and pupils in Oxfordshire during and around term time for 41 weeks of the year (school term-time is 38 weeks). Over the last 5 years the Centres have responded to demand and provided courses for more specialist groups such as young carers, young people at risk of offending and young people with autism.
- 4 The in-county Centre, Hill End, provides residential opportunities on a self-facilitated basis for school and community groups. The Centre is fully occupied during the summer months but use drops from October through to the spring. In addition it runs day visits, currently mainly for Early Years and Primary phases which focus on environmental and field studies. Over the last 3 years new courses based on team building and social skills activities have been successfully introduced.

### **Training and Authorisation**

- 5 Specialist Advisory staff from OOLS provide support for all OCC staff planning visits with children & young people and fulfil the Authority's duty to authorise and monitor such visits.
- 6 The service provides an electronic system through which schools can plan all off-site visits and seek authorisation when necessary.

- 7 OOLS provides high quality training courses for teachers and leaders who are engaged in off-site learning programmes. Staff based at the Centres have been trained to deliver these courses so they can be provided at a cost effective rate for organisations which need access to them. There are no other providers of these training opportunities within the county.

### **Progress towards self-financing**

- 8 The Service began implementation of its 5 year plan in 2010-11. The key element of working towards becoming self-financing is to increase income by both maximising the use of the Centres and trading services which are not provided elsewhere locally.

### **Maximising use of Centres**

- 9 Access to the Centres will be offered in the following order of priority:
- i. Children & young people from Oxfordshire
  - ii. Non- Oxfordshire schools or groups where there are vacancies not taken by Oxfordshire groups
- 10 However in future, consideration may be given to giving first choice of places at times of high demand for non-Oxfordshire groups. The higher rates charged to them would enable charges to be kept lower for Oxfordshire users at other times.
- 11 The core business of the Centres will be to continue to provide for Oxfordshire users, who will make up a minimum of 85 % of total users. Hill End will be the centre for information and training in relation to outdoor learning and occupancy will be increased to year round provision.
- 12 OOLS will continue to explore opportunities to use the skills and expertise within the service to provide courses for new users. This would include those with specific or complex needs where we can provide high quality at a cost effective price.
- 13 In future it is anticipated that core income will still come from schools but the service expects to be in a position to meet a wider range of demand from other parts of the county council.
- 14 A number of pilot projects have been undertaken over the last year to meet the needs of non-school groups. For example there were family groups from Bicester and Didcot in August 2010. Kilvrough and Hill End are part of the National Citizens project for summer 2011.

### **Other services provided by OOLS**

- 15 Priorities:

- Fulfilling the Local Authority's duty to monitor and authorise safe undertaking of visits by children and young people.

## CH8

- Provision of high quality training for adults organising and leading groups of children and young people.
- Co-ordination of information and services related to Outdoor Learning and provision of specialist information as a traded service.

### **Actions already taken**

16 The following actions have already been done:

- i. Charges have been increased at all 4 Centres at above inflation rates
- ii. OOLS staff have been trained to deliver training for group leaders and Educational Visit co-ordinators (EVCs) so that the Service can generate income from these courses. In this academic year this has generated £10,000. It is expected that this will double in the next year.
- iii. A consultation was undertaken and 3 posts of Deputy Head of Centre were removed from the out-county Centres. This created a saving of approximately £100,000 although the full value will not take effect until this financial year.
- iv. Working patterns at the out-county Centres were adjusted to give greater flexibility. For example if the group in residence is not maximum size staff are programmed to take leave or work at one of the other Centres during that week.
- v. Facilities at Hill End have been improved to provide better accommodation for training and activities.

### **Current position**

17 At the end of the 2010-11 financial year the Outdoor Learning Service budget was predicted to have an under-spend of approximately £60,000. This represents savings of £160,000 within the year. The target saving for this year was £108,000. The target at the end of the 5 year period is £500,000.

18 These savings were mainly generated from efficiencies, one-off savings and reductions in staff. During this financial year the focus will be on increasing occupancy through a greater variety of courses and looking at alternative methods of generating income.

19 Two possibilities are:

- Using the separate lodge buildings on each of the out-county sites as self-contained holiday accommodation, perhaps for OCC staff
- Entering into agreements with other authorities to provide places for their students

20 In the longer term it is proposed that the service will explore other organisational models such as Trust status to reduce the financial risk to OCC while retaining provision that can meet Oxfordshire's needs.

## Occupancy of Centres academic years 2009/10 and 2010/11 (projected)

21 The following charts show the comparison of usage for each of the 4 Centres for last academic year and projected figures to the end of this academic year all of which show an increase.

Name of Centre: Kilvrough Manor OEC Capacity: 60

Course duration	Number of groups		Total participants	
	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011
6 day	1	1	44	45
5 day	49	44	1438	1545
4 day	2	4	29	108
3 day	1	4	22	160
2 day	8	12	157	238
Other	0	2	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>2206</b>

Group Split	2009/10	Projected 2010/11
Primary	0	38
Secondary	0	13
Special	0	0
Other	0	4

Name of Centre: Yenworthy Lodge OEC Capacity: 36

Course duration	Number of groups		Total participants	
	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011
5 day	45	45	1488	1124
4 day	0	8	0	206
3 day	2	0	12	0
2 day	5	9	184	214
Other	0	7	0	264
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1684</b>	<b>1808</b>

Group Split	2009/10	Projected 2010/11
Primary	39	39
Secondary	7	5
Special	7	6
Other	0	10

## CH8

Name of Centre: Woodlands OEC Capacity: 48

Course duration	Number of groups		Total participants	
	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011
7 day	2	5	41	85
6 day	2	3	68	98
5 day	51	54	1462	1486
4 day	10	5	200	130
3 day	1	5	3	84
2 day	1	0	2	0
Weekends	13	9	206	141
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>2024</b>

Group Split	2009/10	Projected 2010/11
Primary	35	40
Secondary	19	23
Special	8	5
Other	5	4

Name of Centre: Hill End Capacity: residential: 140 Day: variable

Course duration	Number of groups		Total participants	
	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011	2009/10	Projected 2010/2011
5 day	10	11	1876	683
4 day	5	5	230	601
3 day	29	25	1269	991
2 day	30	38	1458	1402
Day non res.	65	145	3072	4316
Workshops	11	38	90	672
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>7995</b>	<b>8665</b>

Group Split	2009/10	Projected 2010/11
Primary	47	38
Secondary	10	6
Special	3	4
Other (incl children's centres)	37	44