

Report reveals drop in income from school lets

Funds raised from leasing out classrooms and school spaces across Edinburgh have dropped to a third of the amount raised before Covid.

A report has revealed the council's 23 schools brought in more than £280,000 by letting non sport space to local groups and businesses before the pandemic.

However last year nine schools handed over the Edinburgh Leisure to oversee the letting raised just £56,000 for Edinburgh City Council while 14 remaining in the local authority's management brought in just £37,000.

The report, which looked at how Edinburgh Leisure's takeover of the schools spaces had gone in its first year, said it had been 'challenging' to bring customers back to the classrooms.

And it said many who used the schools before the pandemic had either found new premises or gone out of business.

The report said: "Income has predominantly come from bookings/organisations using classrooms to teach English for speakers of other languages.

"This was a strong business area for non-sport lets pre-Covid, and Edinburgh Leisure is supporting the growth across the schools they manage.

",Attracting pre-Covid non-sport business back to schools is a challenge.

“During the period when school lets were unavailable, many customers (those still in business) are likely to have found alternative premises where they are choosing to remain rather than move back to using schools.”

Some schools which are now being managed by Edinburgh Leisure did better than others with James Gillespie's High School bringing in £29,631 from leasing non sports space last year.

Leith Academy was the second highest earner at £17,360 however some schools failed to attract users with Craigroyston High School bringing in just £93 over the year and Portobello High School at the bottom of the list with an income of £83.

The council agreed to bring Edinburgh Leisure in to manage the leasing of nine schools for an initial six month pilot starting last January with plans to handover more schools in the second phase of the transfer.

However a meeting of its education, children and families committee today heard that there had been a slower than expected return to pre Covid use and the pilot had been extended to allow more data to be gathered.

Councillors agreed to delay phase two of the transfer and give the first phase more time to complete market research and look into further opportunities for using the space available.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter