

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

SPECIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT ON SEVERN.

WEDNESDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY 2012 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, G W Ballinger, N Gale, I Hardiman, P B Harrison, J A Hart, V Higgs, J Holden, H J Martin, D J McCann, D R Sheppard, S J Williams, and G C Yarranton.

Observers

Councillors: M Ahmed, N Desmond, M J Hart, M B Kelly, F M Oborski, and J A Shaw.

OS.93 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A J Buckley, J Greener, and A M Sewell.

OS.94 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor P B Harrison was a substitute for Councillor A Buckley, Councillor H J Martin was a substitute for Councillor A Sewell and Councillor G C Yarranton was an substitute for Councillor J Greener.

OS.95 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.96 Future Arrangements for the Management of Sports and Leisure Centres

The Committee received a copy of the report entitled "Future Arrangements for the Management of Sports and Leisure Centres" and documentation that was presented to the Sports & Leisure Centre Review Panel.

The meeting was opened by a presentation from the Cultural Services Manager. The purpose of the presentation was to summarise the steps that the Council had taken to date on the future arrangements for the management of sports and leisure centres.

To facilitate the meeting the Chairman agreed to take questions from Members so that a distinction could be made between open and exempt issues. Members outlined the questions they wished to ask in advance of the debate, which were as follows;

- How had the decisions been made on the mix of facilities at the new facility, in particular pools, and climbing walls?
- The assumptions that had been made about possible community asset transfers.
- The future use of the sites at Stourport on Severn and Bewdley.
- The reduction in the number of badminton courts to six from current availability of eight courts at the Glades.
- Who took part in the consultation and outcomes.
- The cost effectiveness of the refurbishment of the Glades and the installation of a new tank.

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- The tendering process and the effect on funding on disposing of the Glades.

18:15 Councillor M Hart joined the meeting.

Members were reminded by the Director of Community and Partnership Services that the debate and decision not to refurbish the Glades had been recommended by the Scrutiny committee as part of the review.

Members were advised that the mix of facilities had been indicated in the Cabinet report and were based upon the facilities needed in the district, balanced with affordability and the budgets available. However there was scope to look at a different facility mix if required. Moreover, the income generated from the outside five a side pitches and their location outside enabled greater flexibility of indoor space. Further, that any reduction in fitness stations would reduce revenue and the proposed mix of facilities was revenue neutral.

Members were advised that a climbing wall could be a feature but where other centres had them they ran them on a franchise basis that was managed separately from the centre.

In response to the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Members were advised that a CAT could still be possible and that meetings with Wychavon Leisure were being undertaken.

18:25 Councillor N Desmond joined the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the current facilities at Stourport as part of Stourport Sports Association, Members were advised that the Rugby and Cricket clubs wish to relocate due to planning designation for the relief road.

Members were informed that the state of the buildings rather than the cost effectiveness of the activities predicated the decision, as the centre needed so much work done to it to make it a sustainable facility. Generally, dry-side activities are more profitable than wet. Further work would be needed to calculate any costings if a CAT were to take place and how this would effect the overall viability of a new build.

In response to a question regarding the number of courts, Members were advised that although eight courts were more preferable and offered a better space for events, this had to be weighed up against finance, with a larger facility being more costly, this was mitigated by the outside five a side pitches which provide more flexibility with programme.

In response to a question regarding the swimming pool at Stourport, Members were informed that there had been extensive discussions with Wyre Forest Swimming Club, and the Club had decided that they would prefer that money be invested in a new facility rather than the pool at Stourport; they would like an eight lane pool rather than six. Moreover, that the pool in Stourport was not the only facility that they used and they did use other facilities in the District.

Further debate ensued, and a Member recalled the history that was attached to the Glades, in particular how it had once attracted larger sporting and entertainment events. Moreover that the Glades should be retained and refurbished, as it was central in the District and offered ample parking for visitors. In particular a new tank

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and pool should be installed at the Glades, together with the roof being repaired and the current proposals were ultimately a down grading of leisure facilities.

Members were advised that the key driver was the need to consider the future sustainable leisure provision in the District and that it was not just about the Glades needing refurbishment. Evidence had shown that the usage increased in a new facility as it would be modern and fit for purpose. Moreover the DC Leisure contract was drawing to a close and that the Council had started to look at the future arrangements for sports and leisure centres over two years ago.

Further, that a study by DC Leisure had shown that it would cost £9m to put in a new pool and reconfigure the Glades leisure centre. If the refurbishment option was progressed this would cost the Council £211k per annum in additional revenue costs. The public were expecting better quality leisure facilities and it had been demonstrated elsewhere that visitor numbers would increase with new facilities.

A discussion then ensued on the procurement processes, and in particular restrictive tendering and competitive dialogue. In response, Members were advised that both options had been explored and there was less risk associated with restrictive tendering, and it was less protracted. Moreover it would be the same companies that would be involved regardless of the tendering process that was used.

It was confirmed that the existing contract with DC Leisure comes to an end in March 2013 and would be extended with a six month withdrawal period from when the extended contract had been agreed. Members debated the recommendations and felt that it should be explicit that the contract be extended. Further, that DC Leisure were kept informed of the possible closure date due to them taking bookings etc.

Following further debate, Members were advised that DC Leisure would be afforded no advantage as the current contract holders in the future tendering process. It was beneficial to the Council to extend the current contract rather than to begin a tendering process for what could be a relatively short period of time, from April 2013. Further that DC Leisure were content to sign the extension to the current contract.

Members were advised that re-configuring the Glades had been considered and that it was an expensive and complicated process. Further debate on this topic continued and it was concluded that this was not an option that could be progressed.

A Member voiced their concern on the possibility of losing facilities in Stourport should there be no CAT, moreover how much time would be allocated to the swimming club in a new build. In response Members were advised that there would be less time for the Club than was currently available, however there would be a teaching pool and programmes would be in place to maximise the pool use. Additionally Wyre Forest Swimming Club already used other swimming pools. A Member asked whether even if there was no CAT, whether the site could be reserved for other community sports use, even if it was just the site following demolition.

In response to a question Members were advised on the progress of the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan and the weight it would be given in future planning matters.

In response to a question regarding how long the centres had been closed due to repair or maintenance issues over the last 12 months, the Cultural Services Manager

agreed that she would write to the Member with the information.

Decision:

Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. In order to meet the future needs of the District as this is the most affordable and sustainable option a new leisure centre based on Option 3, including a swimming pool, should be progressed,**
- 2. That to enable the provision of at least one swimming pool in the District by the Council until such time as a new leisure centre is built, that the current contract with DC Leisure be extended for 3 years, with an option to terminate at 6 months notice.**
- 3. Wyre Forest Glades Leisure Centre closure will be the earliest of:**
 - (a) when a new leisure centre is complete; or**
 - (b) if the site needs to be vacated in order to allow its development by any purchaser of the site; or**
 - (c) the end of the 3 year extension to the current contract in March 2016;****but not before 30th September 2013 in any case.**
- 4. Stourport Sports Centre will cease to be operated by Wyre Forest District Council when the new leisure centre is complete or at the end of the 3 year extension to the current contract in March 2016 if an asset transfer has not been possible and that further consideration should be given for the continued use of the site for community sport (not to exclude use by any commercial sports providers);**
- 5. The transfer of Bewdley Leisure Centre and playing fields should be secured and a negotiated withdrawal from the dual use agreement;**
- 6. The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services and the Director of Legal and Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Well-being be authorised to enter into negotiations for the acquisition of the preferred site for the new leisure centre identified in Exempt Appendix 1.**
- 7. Following acquisition of the site the appropriate Directors in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Well Being, commence the procurement exercise using the restricted procedure for a Design Build Operate Maintain (DBOM) contract for the build and operation of the new leisure centre.**
- 8. That the Capital and Revenue Budgets associated with Option 3 as set out in Section 5.3 of this report and Exempt Appendix 2 be approved and included in Cabinet's final budget strategy proposals in February (exact phasing to be confirmed together with final costs following site acquisition and competitive procurement).**

Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “Exempt Information” as defined in paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

OS.98

The following proceedings were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting due to the commercial sensitivity of the matters being discussed.

Members discussed alternative sites for the new Leisure Centre and concerns were raised about the location and access, in particular the congestion that may be caused on a major arterial route and the provision of public transport. Further that floodlighting and late night activities could have detrimental effect on local residents.

The benefits of another option were debated and some Members felt that another site would meet the needs of residents who lived in another area who could benefit substantially from having a new leisure centre situated in their community.

In response to the points raised Members were advised that bus routes and other methods of transport could be catered for. Moreover, that there were air quality issues and traffic impacts on the proposed second alternative. In addition the location of the new Leisure Centre would have an impact on the revenue stream. However there were three sites to be considered, albeit that one was more preferable to the others.

19:32 Councillor Harrison left the meeting

Further debate ensued on the merits and drawbacks of potential locations for the Leisure Centre in particular any timing and linkage to other regeneration projects within Kidderminster.

19:36 Councillor Harrison returned.

Members were advised that traffic studies would be undertaken together with other expert advice, however there were other considerations that had to be balanced.

Further debate ensued on additional suggested alternatives; however Members were advised that these options had been considered and that they were not viable for the reasons explained. Moreover, bus routes could be diverted if necessary. Members were again reminded that the proposals were about delivering a sustainable future for leisure provision, that the Council could not afford to maintain the current centres, and that refurbishment would have greater cost implications.

In response to questions regarding the consultation that had been undertaken, Members were advised that this was a snapshot, and that the return rate was similar to other consultations carried out by the Council.

Debate ensued and the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services responded to some of the points raised reassuring Members that each option would be given full consideration.

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During the following discourse Councillor J Hart left the meeting at 20:15 and returned at 20:18.

A Member raised their concerns regarding the decision making process and options that contained within the report.

Members then discussed each of the proposals in turn.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 20:50.