

Wiltshire Council

**Cabinet
14 December 2010**

Subject: Review of Indoor Leisure Facilities – overview of public consultation and the refined proposal

**Cabinet Members: Councillor Stuart Wheeler – Leisure, Sport and Culture
Councillor John Noeken – Resources (WTP Cabinet Member)**

Key Decision: Yes

Executive summary

This report gives an overview of the views collected through the Leisure Review consultation process and identifies a refined proposal that take those views into account.

In addition the report explains how the refined proposal will be delivered as part of the Workplace Transformation Programme. This includes the specification of leisure facilities within campuses, the planned improvements to facilities considered part of the Council's overall operational estate and the determination of the future management arrangements of all operational estate.

Proposals

That Cabinet:

- (i) Approves the refined proposal set out in **Appendix A** of this report.
- (ii) Approves that the delivery and implementation of the building and future management elements of the refined proposal be included in and taken forward by the Workplace Transformation Programme.

Reason for Proposals:

As reported to Cabinet in July 2010 the current indoor leisure facility stock that the Council inherited as a result of local government re-organisation is outdated, inefficient and unsustainable.

Throughout August, September and October 2010 the Council undertook a comprehensive public consultation exercise regarding an indicative replacement, refurbishment and devolvement programme which aimed at gathering the views of local people and local and national stakeholders.

This paper sets out the results of the consultation and recommends a refined proposal that reflects the views gathered and the rapidly changing environment the Council is facing.

The proposal enables the Council to:

- (i) Deliver a refined proposal that has been directly shaped by local people.
- (ii) Ensure that indoor leisure facilities are a key component of the emerging community campus programme.
- (iii) Retain a strategic view and deliver certain parts of the leisure service in the context of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme.
- (iv) Undertake improvements to the leisure service within the wider strategic context, which in turn will have wider ranging benefits than if the Council were to approve the original proposals.
- (v) Send a clear message to local people that the Council supports and values the provision of opportunities for people to take part in healthy activities.

MARK BODEN

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Wiltshire Council

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Key Decision: Yes

Purpose of report

1. To give an overview of the responses to the Leisure Review consultation exercise and seek the Cabinet's approval to allocate the financial resources, subject to Full Council approval and within the context of the Workplace Transformation programme, required to carry out a refined programme of improvements.
2. The improvements refer to the service and buildings and are based upon the views collected through the consultation and the emerging service delivery review project being carried out by the Workplace Transformation Programme.

Background

3. Wiltshire Council currently financially contributes towards 23 leisure facilities offering varying levels of service due to various factors, such as age, condition, design and range of facilities.
4. In November 2009 the Council resolved to carry out a review of these facilities and in July 2010 Cabinet agreed to carry out a comprehensive consultation exercise focused on an indicative replacement, refurbishment and devolvement programme.
5. The indicative replacement, refurbishment and devolvement programme as consulted on focused on a 25 year plan for future development, including the proposals for new facilities within campuses, improvements to some existing facilities and the potential transfer of some facilities to local community management.
6. A broad range of views was collected through a comprehensive programme of information gathering. The views collected have been invaluable in developing and directly influencing the refined proposal detailed in this paper.

7. Since the Cabinet paper in July there has been a change of circumstances within local government and we are even more aware of financial pressures and what actions need to be taken. This has created the need to develop innovative ways of working allowing the Council to continue to improve services when faced with a different landscape of public service delivery and with significantly fewer resources.
8. This paper details a refined proposal that takes into account the views expressed from the community and a variety of partners and other relevant organisations. The refined proposal is broadly based upon those put forward in the replacement, refurbishment and devolvement programme.

Main Considerations for the Council

9. The main considerations for the Council are to:
 - (i) Approve the refined proposal set out in **Appendix A** of this report.
 - (ii) Approve that the delivery and implementation of the building and future management elements of the refined proposal be included in and taken forward by the Workplace Transformation Programme.

Consultation Methodology

10. The methodology employed ensured extensive coverage across the county. The aim was to provide a variety of opportunities for all those interested to have their say along with a method to enable us to collect specific data around generic operational issues.
11. A questionnaire was produced containing questions collecting thoughts on facility programming, usage, pricing, parking, travel and the generic value of indoor facilities. In addition, open ended questions were included inviting comment on what measures would encourage more people to take part in leisure activities and also encouraging general views about the proposals.
12. The autumn 2010 edition of Your Wiltshire Magazine, which is sent to each household in Wiltshire, featured a full page spread detailing the original indicative proposals, area board dates and signposting readers to where they can get further information to enable them to have their say.
13. The postal address for the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood and Planning was supplied along with a dedicated email address through which people could make their views known.
14. The questionnaire was accompanied by a leaflet detailing the background of the review and the specification of the proposals. The questionnaire and leaflet were made available at every indoor leisure centre, all libraries, hub receptions and online. In addition, copies were sent to all town and parish councils, all schools, local interest groups and local and national partners, doctors surgeries and hospitals, national sporting governing bodies and clubs using the facilities.

15. The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture presented the proposals at each area board (except one) and in some areas these meetings were preceded by a public roadshow where officers were available to answer specific questions.
16. The approach to the consultation process resulted in a number of requests for both public and specific group meetings, all of which were accommodated.

Overview of Response to Consultation

The Wiltshire-wide View

17. A total of 3,189 responses were received, of which 3,134 were found to be valid (98%). Of the total responses received 35% were male and 62% were female and 5% considered themselves to have a disability. A total of 3% of respondents were under the age of 18, 13% were aged 18 to 34, 39% were aged 35 to 54 and 41% were aged 55 and over.
18. The response to the consultation encourages us to believe that the provision of multi-functional high quality facilities will encourage more people to take part in healthy activities, with 85% agreeing with this principle and 51% of respondents strongly agreeing.
19. Over 88% of respondents felt that price can be a barrier to taking part. Approximately 66% of respondents felt that pricing should be reflective of the type of facility and that a generic pricing policy is not right for Wiltshire. These views will be considered when a future pricing policy is developed.
20. Broadly speaking the response shows that the provision of indoor leisure facilities within a 20 minute travel time is supported by local people. To clarify both the original indicative proposals and the new refined proposal share this principle which ensures over 95% of the county's residents can access an indoor leisure facility within 20 minutes. It should be noted this is an impressive statistic in a large rural county such as Wiltshire.
21. There was strong opposition to the concept of charging for parking for those people taking part in activities at indoor leisure facilities as it is perceived this would be a barrier to participation.
22. In terms of specific activities the most popular are swimming, using the gym and fitness classes. This corresponds with locally collected usage figures but in addition the provision of catering facilities and badminton also scored highly which will need to be reflected in future facility design and programming.
23. As anticipated the two open ended questions prompted a myriad of comments. The primary response to what would make users use the facilities more than they currently do were that local people would like more affordable pricing, improved facilities, improved equipment and a greater variety of activities and classes. The questions asking for additional comments and whether people would like to get involved in the running of their local leisure facility were primarily directed at specific facilities therefore the overview of the responses per community area is given below and in **Appendix B**.

24. The Council is aware of two public petitions, one from the Westbury area with 2,512 signatures which was submitted for consideration to the Council and another in the Bradford-on-Avon area. The Bradford petition was not submitted. Both petitions relate specifically to the facilities in the respective towns remaining open.
25. Sport England submitted a response which outlined their support of the proposal and confirms their view that the baseline work that underpins the leisure facilities review is robust and sound.
26. **Appendix B** gives a more detailed overview of the responses received.

The Community Area View

27. The following section gives headline figures from the consultation, with particular reference to the open ended questions and the wider correspondence received, however a more detailed overview is provided in **Appendix B** of this paper.
28. Broadly speaking the things that matter most to people across the county are they would like affordable and improved facilities and greater variety of activities.
29. Value for money and more competitive pricing was the most highly stated comment received in response to the open ended questions. This was noted primarily in Salisbury, Marlborough, and Chippenham and from a total of 12% of respondents who declined to note their address or local facility.
30. Improved facilities and better quality equipment was noted as important to local people. It should be noted that this was the second most important item to those people who did not give their location, therefore on balance this is what matters to people in Wiltshire most. This is particularly important in Amesbury, Durrington, Melksham, Tidworth and Trowbridge. Residents in the Warminster area commented on the recently improved changing facilities.
31. As anticipated in terms of individual facilities those sites identified for transfer to local communities were the subject of a respectively large amount of correspondence and comment and in the majority of areas public meetings were held.
32. The desire to see the local leisure facility remain open and for the Council to retain some financial responsibility for it was commonly reported in Bradford-on-Avon, Corsham, Tisbury and Wootton Bassett. Local people in Downton (southern Wiltshire), Malmesbury, Pewsey and Westbury also expressed their desire to see their local facilities remain open. Cabinet should note that a desire for the Council to consider the transfer of all facilities rather than some was mooted at a number of area boards and specific public meetings relating to those facilities indicatively identified for devolvement.
33. A range of correspondence was received from users of the indoor bowling facility at Christie Miller Sports Centre which centered on concerns about potential loss of membership and the strong desire to see indoor bowling remain in Melksham.

34. Throughout the consultation process a number of interest groups emerged in relation to those facilities identified for transfer to local communities. These have either evolved into groups putting themselves forward as potential future operators or they are acting as groups that simply have an interest in the facility.
35. Residents in the community areas of Calne and Cricklade commented mostly on their satisfaction with their local facilities and the staff operating the facilities. This is particularly interesting as these two facilities are independently managed so in the case of local management there appears to be strong support for operators.
36. Cabinet should note that across the county there is a shared consensus from local people and organisations that leisure operational staff perform well and are a credit to the Council.

Workplace Transformation Programme

37. This paper sets out the outcome of the leisure review which was based upon specialist comprehensive audit work undertaken by the Council's leisure service.
38. The Workplace Transformation Programme is responsible for all operational estate and from this point on the implementation of the building and future management aspects of the service will be taken forward by the Workplace Transformation Programme.
39. In order to deliver the proposals set out in this paper any finances attributable to the leisure review will need to be considered as part of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme and will form part of a paper to Cabinet in the new year.
40. The strategic management of leisure, sports development and open space in terms of the service principles will be taken forward by Leisure Services. The indoor leisure facilities strategy, along with other key strategic documents will be developed over the forthcoming months.

The Refined Proposal

41. This paper suggests an alternative proposal to that originally consulted on which reflects the responses received and it is intended to ensure the flexibility to deliver improvements which will be taken forward as part of the wider development of community campus facilities. This alternative proposal is set out in **Appendix A**. Essentially, the Council will undertake improvements to the leisure service within the wider strategic context which in turn will have wider ranging benefits than if the Council were to approve the original proposals.
42. The Council has been clear about its proposal to invest in the building aspects of the service, to transfer management of some facilities to community management and to identify new management arrangements for the facilities it would theoretically retain. These principles remain but the delivery and timescales will now be taken forward under the wider Workplace Transformation Programme and will be reflective of the public consultation.

43. This paper recommends that the following principle be approved in respect of the Workplace Transformation Programme. It may be necessary for the Council to initiate alternative interim management arrangements for any one of the facilities it currently owns but does not manage in the event that major building works are required or those that form part of pilot projects. The latter will be dependent on the timeframe of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme which is yet to be established.
44. A number of the facilities in Wiltshire were originally identified for transfer to local management. In light of the response of the consultation and the impact of the WTP campus and operational estate management work stream it is suggested the most suitable approach would be as set out in **Appendix A**.

Management Arrangements

45. Presently eight facilities are managed in-house and twelve are managed under two separate contracts with DC Leisure, which are in the process of being extended to 2013.
46. Cabinet has previously agreed an appraisal of future management arrangements would be undertaken and new arrangements implemented following the expiry of the DC Leisure contract.
47. This paper recommends that the future management be determined through the WTP campus and operational estate management workstream. This approach will be taken with all operational estate to ensure consistency and economies of scale in terms of service delivery, finance, efficiencies and local community engagement. This will be considered as part of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme and will form part of a future paper to Cabinet and Full Council in 2011 when consideration is given to the Council's capital programme.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

48. The refined proposal will provide the means for the Council to significantly reduce the carbon emissions attributed to the indoor leisure facilities.
49. This reduction will occur due to the high construction and quality standards that will be applied to the new build and refurbished facilities and measures will be taken to mitigate against wider environmental risks through an extensive climate change adaptation project. This will include the installation of relevant plant and equipment through the planned maintenance programme and standardising the approach across the sites to issues which have a potential impact on the environment.
50. The Workplace Transformation Programme aims to achieve at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions across the operational building stock.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

51. An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been completed which demonstrates that the refined proposal promotes equality of opportunity as improvements will mean improved, fully accessible leisure facilities for all sections of the community.

Risk assessment

52. **Table 1** highlights the headline risks and proposed management of those risks associated with the proposals in this report.

Risks of not carrying out proposals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • various components of the current stock are low quality, inefficient and not fit for purpose • facilities will be at capacity in the medium term future • unsustainable buildings in environmental terms and continued high carbon emissions figures • inability to maintain business continuity without service improvements • negative impact on participation rates • planned maintenance non-visible to users at significant cost and disruption to service • drop in levels of customer satisfaction 	
Risks of proposals	Mitigation of risks
Financial investment with long term commitments	<p>All financial and delivery aspects form part of the wider workplace transformation programme which reduces the risk as any expenditure will be considered against priorities within a single programme</p> <p>Prudent budgetary management will be applied and savings captured centrally</p>
Increase in capital costs due to un-costed items such as land acquisition, unforeseen abnormals, demolition, removal costs	Verification of capital costs including contingency considerations will be addressed by the WTP paper in 2011
Potential loss of capital receipts	Council to consider council owned land for new developments which can mitigate against loss of potential capital receipts
Costs relating to potential campus sites relate to the leisure aspect only	All financial and delivery aspects form part of the wider workplace transformation programme where wider campus costs are accounted for

Financial implications

53. The financial implications associated with the refined proposal set out in this paper broadly remain as previously reported. This will be considered as part of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme and will form part of a future paper to Cabinet and Full Council in 2011 when consideration is given to the Council's capital programme.

54. The original proposals suggested the Council grant fund the Melksham Gymnastics Centre £400,000 to enable an extension to the facility. The continuation of this proposal forms part of the recommendations in this report as set out in detail in **Appendix A**.
55. Detailed financial modelling, which forms part of the wider Workplace Transformation Programme modelling will be completed in the event that Cabinet support the refined proposal.
56. All future proposals brought forward via the Workplace Transformation Programme that have capital investment proposals and/or revenue implications will be assessed on an individual basis and will be subject to the councils budget setting process and approval.

Legal implications

57. The refined proposals will be subject to various legislative provision and the legal risks to the Council will be minimised as the project develops under the wider Workplace Transformation Programme.

Human Resources implications

58. Cabinet should note that in generic terms the approval of the principle of initiating alternative interim management arrangements, if necessary, for any of the 23 facilities could potentially incur additional costs emanating from equal pay requirements and the possible harmonisation of employment terms and conditions if they were less favourable. A detailed assessment, formal consultation process and due diligence exercise will be carried out at an appropriate time if any TUPE transfers of staff were deemed necessary.

Options considered

59. Three distinct options have been assessed in the development of this report:
 - (i) The Council retains responsibility for all existing leisure facilities, undertakes planned maintenance only and omits leisure facilities from the Workplace Transformation Programme.
 - (ii) The Council delivered the proposals that were consulted on.
 - (iii) The Council delivers the refined proposal as set out in this report.
60. Option (i) was immediately discounted as all operational estate falls within the remit of the Workplace Transformation Programme and as such will be subject to consideration as part of the wider proposals to develop community campuses. In addition from a service perspective this offers no opportunity to enhance the facilities and therefore improve services.

61. Option (ii) has been discounted as the response to the public consultation must be considered and as such the views of local people and organisations have influenced thinking which has resulted in refined proposal. In addition it became apparent that the previously stated timeframe was not conducive to the campus project timeline nor did the previous proposals allow for a strategic approach to management arrangements for operational estate.
62. Option (iii) has been identified as the most appropriate way forward as the refined proposal complement both broad public opinion and provide the flexibility for the leisure facility service to be enhanced through the Workplace Transformation Programme, which fits with the wider strategic context.

Conclusions

63. The refined proposal ensures that the indoor leisure facility service in Wiltshire will be enhanced which creates more opportunities for local people to take part in physical activities ensuring the benefits that a healthy lifestyle offers. In addition the Council can demonstrate to local people that their views have been considered and subsequently directly shaped the way in which the Council will deliver improvements to the service.
64. The refined proposal will be considered as operational estate under the Workplace Transformation Programme. This will enable the Council to take a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of integrated services across the county, which include the provision of high quality indoor leisure facilities.
65. The proposals give a clear message about the Council's commitment to providing high quality and efficient local services.
66. The strategic management of leisure, sports development and open space in terms of the service principles will be taken forward by Leisure Services. The indoor leisure facilities strategy, along with other key strategic documents will be developed over the forthcoming months.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A: The Refined Proposal

Appendix B: Overview of the Consultation Response

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