

**JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD
27 JUNE 2008**

**Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Leisure Centres
Interim Report – 27 JUNE 2008**

Purpose of report

1. To update the JOSTB on the approach of the Front Line Workstream to manage the transition programme for the five authorities leisure centres up to 1 April 2009.

Work to Date

2. The Front Line Workstream Board (FLS) has developed a Programme Initiation Document that sets the scene for the work that must go on up to 1 April 2009 and beyond to achieve the objectives set out in “We’re ready..” and “Next steps..”.
3. The Cultural Services Working group, a sub group of the FLS, has been established to provide leadership and accountability to ensure a smooth transition of a number of the Cultural Services within the five authorities, including all of the local authority provided leisure centres.
4. The group is prioritising its efforts on the essential transitional tasks that need to be undertaken prior to 1 April 2009, namely:
 - To maintain effective and seamless service delivery in all prescribed service areas to at least the equivalent of current performance levels and share best practice where appropriate to enhance service delivery
 - To establish a base line position that includes timelines, financial implications, risks and issues arising
 - To initiate a Sports Facilities Assessment to assist with the collation of data and inform any Sports Facility Strategy for the new authority’s Leisure Services Section
 - To collate customer/stakeholder feedback and satisfaction levels and recommend new service standards
 - To map existing methods and standards of delivery including concessionary schemes, fees and charges, memberships packages, admissions policies and operational practices
 - To ensure that service provider contracts, as appropriate, continue the necessary operational management arrangements during the transition period
 - To ensure that Service Agreements and funding arrangements, as appropriate are in place in advance of April 2009 and in accordance with the Wiltshire COMPACT to ensure external partners or partnerships are able to provide a seamless service delivery during transition
 - To put forward proposals regarding structures, roles and responsibilities.
5. It is important to stress that the objective is to ensure that the current levels and mix of provision is maintained through this period of transition as the five authorities merge into one new Wiltshire Council.

6. The working group is mindful of the fact that any recommendations put forward now to sustain the current level of service must not restrict or inhibit the new authority's ability to transform the service in future years. So any recommendations regarding contract extensions and Service Agreements are only likely to be for an interim period that falls in line with other contract periods for similar services currently in place across the five authorities.
7. Taking these issues on board the Cultural Services working group and FLS has advised that the delivery of the £270k efficiency saving identified for Leisure Services is not likely to be realised until 2011/12. By this time the leisure service will be fully integrated and will be able to deliver a more consistent and co-ordinated strategic approach, providing efficiencies through economies of scale.

Transformation

8. Members will be aware of the ambition of the new authority as stated in "We're ready..": *"to seek to use the opportunities offered by a single authority to develop cultural services that foster vibrant communities, improve health and well being, and promote Wiltshire's unique cultural heritage"*.
9. The development of a new and innovative approach to area governance from May 2009, a corner stone of the One Council for Wiltshire submission, will play an integral role in defining the future leisure service provision, providing a voice for local communities to help tailor services to reflect community need at a local level.
10. Added to this, the actual move from transition to the transformation of Leisure Services is complex. With this in mind, it is considered that it will be the responsibility of the new authority and its members once elected in May/June 2009 to manage the formation of a sustainable, effective and financially efficient service and that it would not be appropriate to review options before this time. As such, any detailed options reviews that need to be undertaken will be done so between June 2009 and March 2011 to enable them to be as inclusive as possible.
11. It is felt that the panel can have confidence in the fact that the new Wiltshire Council is committed to developing stronger and more sustainable communities and as such will work closely with users, residents and key stakeholders, parish council and Community Partnerships when undertaking any review of the leisure service in the future.

Conclusion

12. Taking the above factors into account, the time pressures associated with identifying preferred service delivery options for Leisure Services as part of the new Wiltshire Council are not perceived to be as critical as that of other Front Line Services such as Development Control.
13. As such the primary objective is to ensure that sufficient resource is allocated to the immediate priority, that of ensuring that the current levels of provision are maintained through the transition from five councils to one.

Recommendation

14. The JOSTB is asked to note the report: