

**Report of:** Leisure and Cultural Services Interim Business Manager

**To:** Executive Board

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**Item No:**

**Title of Report :** Future Of Peers Sports Centre

### Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** Update the Board on the consultation process, work undertaken to accommodate users and discussions with the County and emerging Academy Trust and recommends a managed withdrawal from Peers Sports Centre from January 2008.

**Key decision:** YES

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor David Rundle, Stronger Communities

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Finance Scrutiny Committee  
Environment Scrutiny Committee

**Ward(s) affected:** All

#### Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder – David Rundle

Sharon Cosgrove - Strategic Director for the Environment

Chris Kaye - Finance and Asset Management

**Policy Framework:** Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2007 – 2010

- Be an effective and responsive organisation, providing value for money services

#### **Recommendation:**

That the Executive Board agrees the managed withdrawal from the joint use agreement at Peers Sports Centre from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008

## **Background**

1. In setting the 07/08 budget the Council agreed to the rationalisation of leisure facilities resulting in a first year saving of 100k
2. A report was taken to the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2007 Executive Board recommending the 'The principle of a managed withdrawal from the dual use agreement at Peers Sports Centre' and 'The redeployment of staff employed at Peers Sports Centre on open ended contracts affected by these decisions. These recommendations were accepted
3. The decision was subsequently called in by the Environment Scrutiny Committee and on considering Scrutiny's recommendations the Executive Board resolved:
  - a. The principle of a managed withdrawal from the dual use agreement at Peers Sports Centre be agreed, subject to consultation with users about accommodating them at other public leisure facilities;
  - b. Staff employed at Peers Sports Centre on 'open ended' contracts who were affected by the above decision, be redeployed;
  - c. It be noted that Councillor David Rundle (portfolio holder for stronger communities) would be having discussions with the County Council and the emerging Academy Trust about the clear needs of communities in the area and the need for a community access agreement to meet those needs;
  - d. The views of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and South East Area Committee be noted.
4. This report details the consultation work undertaken following the Executive Board resolution on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2007 recommending the in principle withdrawal from the management of Peers Sports Centre at the earliest opportunity to achieve the savings agreed by full Council within the 07/08 budget.

## **Consultation Methodology**

5. The Executive Board at its meeting requested that officers consult with service users, particularly clubs to explore how their needs might be met at other facilities within the city.
6. At a meeting to engage staff in the consultation process, staff proposed a series of meetings over a two-week period designed to cover times and user groups in the widest possible manner. Dates and times were posted throughout the centre and a letter was produced for customers.

7. In addition to these meetings, officers made contact with all regular user groups and clubs to assist in finding alternative usage with in other facilities

### **Consultation Feedback**

8. Approximately 32 customers attended the 5 meetings; some users attended on more than one occasion. Representations were made from squash players, swimmers, footballers and the parents of trampoline and gym users.
9. Issues and concerns raised by customers were:
  - Transport to other facilities
  - Facilitation of Squash club night
  - Pool Water temperatures
  - Accommodation of children's trampoline and gymnastic classes
  - Specific swimming classes
  - Group block booking times for swimming
  - Impact of Temple Cowley closing for one month in February for essential maintenance

### **Actions Following Consultation**

10. Progress to date on ensuring users' needs are accommodated at other facilities in the city is currently:
  - There is capacity at Ferry Sports Centre for the squash club to have their match nights
  - Trampolining can be accommodated at the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre
  - Gymnastic classes can be accommodated at the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre
  - Some specific swimming pool time can be made available for the groups at Barton Pool and Blackbird Leys Pool.
  - To facilitate as many of the individual needs as possible officers are also reviewing the swimming pool programme at all other facilities.
  - Muslim sessions are already available at Temple Cowley pool and specific sessions can be accommodated at Blackbird Leys Pool
11. Officers will continue to work with users to find alternative public facilities to meet their needs within the city prior to the withdrawal from Peers Sports Centre and will update the Executive Board at its meeting.

12. Members are aware that there is a brief closure of Temple Cowley Pools planned for 4<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008. This is to complete essential improvements to the facility. Officers have assessed the impact of this planned closure on capacity to accommodate users needs by analysing the closure for major refurbishment of Ferry Sports Centre in 2004/5. During this time swims across all other facilities decreased by 2% and, even if this pattern does not recur, additional capacity has since been provided by the opening of Barton Pool in 2006. Officers fully anticipate that existing pool facilities within Oxford will absorb usage created by the temporary closure of Temple Cowley Pool for this limited period.

### **Discussions with the County Council and Academy Trust**

13. The Portfolio Holder met the County Council and the emerging Academy Trust with the Strategic Director, Business Manager and Service Head to discuss the managed withdrawal and how the needs of communities in the area could be met through a future community access agreement to the improved facilities that will be developed on the site. The emerging Academy Trust were open to discussions about community access to their new facilities but made it clear that it is not proposed to provide a swimming pool on the site and that no public access is envisaged to the facilities between September 2008 and sometime in 2010 when construction is completed.

### **Financial Implications**

14. The Business Unit was tasked by Council of securing £100k savings in 2007/08 with an additional £300k in 2008/09. The likely savings from withdrawing from the operation of Peers Sports Centre in January would result in around £65,000 savings to the revenue budget for this financial year. The closure will then secure further savings of 300k for the next financial year. This saving is subject to the redeployment of all permanent members of staff currently working at Peers Sports centre into similar positions at other City Council facilities. Officers have assessed the full establishment and have identified positions for the majority of staff.

15. The Business Manager will examine options for delivering the shortfall with the Portfolio Holder.

### **Staffing Implications**

16. There are 17 staff (8 full time equivalent FTE) plus coaches/casuals employed at Peers Sports Centre. Of these, 3 members of staff (combined working of 60 hours) are on 'time-limited' contracts that will not be renewed. Those on 'open ended' contracts would be assimilated into the leisure service at other facilities where possible and would replace time-limited contracts as they come forward to expiry.

17. A meeting was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2007 with staff plus union representation. Staff were informed that it is the intention to redeploy staff to other facilities within the council and that full consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Organisation Change Policy. It is anticipated that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

### **Legal implications**

18. No legal implications have been identified.

### **Other Implications**

19. City Council officers will offer reasonable assistance and cooperation to the County Council and Peers School in the handover of facilities

### **Recommendation**

20. That Executive Board approves the managed withdrawal from the dual use agreement at Peers Sports Centre from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008.

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**Background papers:** None