

Report of: Environment Scrutiny Committee

To: Executive Board

Date: 3rd. December

Item No: 5

Title of Report : Call-in response – Withdrawal from Peers Sports Centre

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To outline the recommendations of the committee after consideration of the decision to withdraw from the operation of Peers Sports Centre in January

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rundle

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment Scrutiny Committee

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by:

Cllr. Phelps – Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee

Christopher Kaye – Finance

Emma Griffiths – Legal services

Policy Framework: No

Recommendation(s):

The Executive Board is recommended to:

1. Look again at the January withdrawal date from this facility and consider, both within the Business Unit and corporately, alternative ways to save the money required in 07/08.
2. That the withdrawal date should be as late as possible and if it is before Easter to be sure that the curriculum needs of the school and the needs of other users are adequately accommodated in line with the principles of withdrawal set by the Executive Board.

3. Examine, at least, the suggestions for alternative savings made at the meeting

1. Introduction and Background

The Environment Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the decision of the Executive Board to withdraw from joint use of Peers Sports Centre in January 2008. The details of the call in questions and information provided in response to these can be found at Appendix 1.

Alongside the attached information members considered representations from:

- Users of Peers Sports Centre (paper attached from Ruth Wilkinson – Appendix 2)
- Cllr. Rundle (Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities)
- Cllr. Tanner (originators of the call-in)

The Committee understood that this facility would close in September 2008 when the newly forming Academy took over education at the site. The Committee recognised:

- the high level of need and the significant effects the closure of the facility would have on general users;
- the lack of provision in other places in Oxford to reasonably accommodate existing users;
- the real problems faced by Peers School in delivering its curriculum, particularly in the area of swimming, should withdrawal happen in January.

Committee urged the Executive Board to look to deliver the 07/08 savings elsewhere in the Directorate budget or corporately and keep the Sports Centre open for as long as possible and certainly beyond the January date currently agreed.

2. Environment Scrutiny Minutes

37. PEERS SPORTS CENTRE CALL-IN

The Strategic Director Physical Environment submitted (previously circulated now appended), which had been to the Executive Board on 5th November and had been called in to the Committee to consider the Executive Board's decision further.

With the agreement of the Committee, Ruth Wilkinson, Vim Rodrigo and John Green addressed the meeting to speak in favour of proposals to prevent the managed withdrawal by the Council from the joint use agreement and effectively closing the sports centre. The speakers spoke about the high level of need in the area and argued that the closure of the sports centre would deprive the community of its only major sport and leisure facility. The closure would also have a detrimental effect on the curriculum and many of

the pupils studying at the school, and that the alternative suggestions made by the council such as transport to venues in other areas were unsatisfactory. The Committee agreed that the suggestions for alternative savings presented by Ruth Wilkinson should be forwarded to Executive Board (as set out in resolution 2 below). Colin Barlow said that in his experience, the suggestions would have no real effect as most of the costs involved were in relation to the upkeep and operation of the pool such as heating and testing the water which needed to be done every day as long as the pool was maintained. Suggestions such as bringing own life guard and assisting with locking up would not be feasible due to health and safety and insurance reasons.

The views of the public speaking were supported by Councillor Tanner who said that there had been a failure to give proper notice to Peers School to terminate the Joint Use Agreement or to provide alternative venues in Oxford for all existing Peers Sport Centre users.

Councillor Rundle, speaking as portfolio holder for Stronger Communities, outlined the situation regarding the development of the Academy and the implications for the sports centre and argued that the Executive Board decision had been made with regard to the need to balance the Council's budget and deal with ever increasing demands on resources.

The Committee noted the expected temporary closure of Temple Cowley Pool early in 2008 and recognised that a new Academy would very likely take over in September 2008, which would provide its own community facilities and that at this stage the Joint Use Agreement would end.

Various members said that the Executive Board should find alternative savings from both the Leisure and Corporate budgets to find the budget savings required, suggested to be £65K needed for 2007/8 and up to £150K in 2008/9. Sharon Cosgrove gave some guidance on the amounts of savings required.

Resolved to ask the Executive Board to:

1. look again at its decision to close the Peers Sports Centre in January;
2. examine, at the least, the suggestions for alternative savings that had been made as follows;
 1. open centre to block bookings only from 15.00 to 21.30 (not birthday parties);
 2. three days a week would probably be sufficient if slots were condensed;
 3. one administrator on fixed term contract till end of school terms (nominal leave/bank holidays factored in for July and August) having first aider training;
 4. bookings to be done via an administrator (if income secured for Council) or CEC/ School (if income to County Council);
 5. Cleaning done by school;

6. Only block booking for weekend is badminton Sundays, others can be fitted in within weekday evenings;
 7. Block bookings income per week was £750 in sample week in September (£690 dry, £60 swim) without birthday bookings;
 8. Small contribution by City for chemicals;
 9. Each hiring group for pool to bring life saver (which happened historically);
 10. One member of hiring group to assist with putting away/locking up.
 11. No additional energy costs needed to heat the pool
3. delay the closure of Peers Sports Centre beyond January 2008, ideally until August 2008 but at least until Easter 2008.

3. Portfolio Holder Comments

Officers have been asked to investigate the items suggested at the Scrutiny Committee as alternative savings. These will be commented on at the meeting.

4. Strategic Directors Comments

None received

Name and contact details of author:

**Pat Jones on behalf of Councillor Phelps
Chair of Environment Scrutiny Committee**

Background papers: None

Peers Sports Centre – Decision on planned withdrawal

Information provided alongside the questions raised in the call-in

Question

“To examine to what extent alternative provision has been provided for existing Peers’ Users”

Attached is a table of usage and details of where alternative provision exists

Question

“To scrutinise whether the projected savings of £65K this year and £300K next year will actually be made”

Attached is an establishment list – The advice from the Business Unit is that this includes 1 person on a time limited contract which expires at the end of March. All staff would be moved into vacancies elsewhere in the Service and that these do currently exist at the correct grade

07/08 Budget saving

The £65K figure is made up as follows:

Item	Amount
Total expenditure budget	£350k
Assumption that 70% of the income budget can be achieved	£89K
Net Budget	£261K
¼ of this representing Jan - March	£65K

The net budget for 07/08 is £223k i.e. £350k of expenditure less £127K of income. The assumption was that we would make £100k saving so the 30% of income underachieved within the table above remains as a pressure in the budget this year.

I was not able to see the income achieved so far this year.

The total budget for running the centre 08/09 would be:

Item	Amount
Staff	£221,182
Premises	£25,731
Transport	£275
Supplies	£24,419
Support	£36,489
Total expenditure	£308,096

Income	£124,586
Net yearly budget	£183,510

To achieve the £300k saving all costs would have to be deleted from the budget and all the income be achieved through migration or other increased use in centres elsewhere. This is a high risk assumption. At the half waypoint of 07/08 Leisure is underachieving against its income budget.

Question

“To examine the robustness of the data provided for staff and user numbers at Peers Sports Centre”

This appears in the establishment and usage tables attached. The Service Accountant confirms the staff numbers. The Executive Board was informed that there were 3 time-limited contracts but confirmation from the service is that there is 1. This would not have a material effect on this saving because it is proposed staff move on closure. It may have an effect in other areas on redeployment but this would seem limited to staff on permanent contracts being placed into time limited contracts or being placed in vacancies previously kept for permanent deletion within the budget.

Usage numbers are produced from the service computer systems. Scrutiny Officers have no method of validating this data in the short period but it would seem reasonable to assume it is as accurate as any computer data of this nature.

Question

“What alternative budget cuts could be made to make the same saving”

No information is provided here. Officers from Leisure Services will be available to advice on this

Question

“Whether it is possible for the Centre to be kept open until September 2008 when the Peers Academy is likely to take over the facility”

This relies on alternative budget reduction being found. Officers from Leisure Services will be available to advice on this.

Question

“To examine the Executive proposal to give priority to existing Peers’ users is available”

The table on usage shows alternative sights. The analysis does not show the extent of the spare capacity. This may be difficult with open pool time but it would seem reasonable for it to be available for dry sport facilities.

Members will see that not all alternatives are within City Service provision and it is not clear how priority can be given at these sights. School usage seems particularly problematic.

Question

“To examine the impact of closure on the curriculum at Peers School”

The operation of the Sports Centre is within a Joint Use agreement with Peers School. An Academy School will replace the school, in its current form in September 2008.

Scrutiny Officers have contacted the school to determine:

- The use the School makes of the facilities at the Sports Centre within both the delivery of the curriculum and the “life of the school”; and
- The effects this planned withdrawal will have.

Before considering their response members should be aware that the pupil body at Peers School is taken from the 5 most deprived wards within the city and so they face many challenges within their term-by-term management of the school. In addition to this an increased burden is being placed on the school in managing the demands and transition to an Academy.

It could be reasonably judged that the management of this further change at this time is not welcome and places another burden on this high profile City school.

City officers have not spoken directly with the school on the matter of withdrawal but are dealing directly with County Council Officers. Discussions have been on-going for some time with the January date for withdrawal posed about a month ago. The school has met with County Officers to discuss the effects of this withdrawal and a compromise position

A statement from the County Council is included below:

When OCC and City Officers met to discuss the future of the joint use agreement on 17 October we agreed that County Council Officers would prepare a statement to go into the Executive Board report. The statement that was sent to Steve Holt and Colin Barlow was as follows:

"The County Council's preferred date for any withdrawal from the joint use agreement is September 2008 to allow continuity of school use. County Council Officers have indicated they are willing to investigate with the School

whether or not there is any possibility of accommodating withdrawal at the earlier date of the end of March."

This should have been included in the report that went to City Councillors.

Since then I have met with the School to explore this option and we feel that while the end of July/September date is still our preferred date, the end of term 4 is a possible compromise. Use by Peers School of the dry side facilities would continue but it would not be possible for the School to operate the swimming pool. We would like to explore this further with the City Council.

The joint use arrangements, both as expressed in the drafts of the joint use agreement between the two councils and as operated by the two councils over many years to enable joint use, bring together obligations and liabilities for both councils in maintaining the sports facilities. These arrangements as expressed in the draft joint use agreement indicate that the joint use should run for a minimum of 60 years, and should only be terminated by either council after 60 years by giving not less than a full year's notice. There is no provision for either council to make a unilateral decision on terminating the agreement before the initial 60 years in the manner currently proposed by the City Council, and it is not practical to do so. Further discussion and work is needed to bring the joint use arrangement to an end in a way that both councils will find satisfactory.

1. The use the school makes of the facilities in the Sports Centre

Detailed timetables are not included in this paper but are available on request.

The school's use of the facilities falls in to 3 categories:

- Delivery of National Curriculum requirements
- The promotion of physical activity as a lifestyle choice and enrichment to the curriculum
- As an examination hall

National Curriculum

This is delivered from year 7 to 13 covering Key stages 3 to 5. The facilities mean that the range of physical activity taught and coached is broad. The PE Department uses the swimming pool, sports hall, gym and hard court throughout each school day. The squash courts are also used but less frequently. In particular the school runs a BTEC course (Key stage 4 and 5) in sports that includes a number of extra curricular activities.

In years 10 and 11 (Key stage 4) pupils have a degree of choice within the curriculum around physical activities. The range of facilities, particularly the swimming pool, enhances this choice.

Physical activity as a lifestyle choice and enrichment to the curriculum

The school has a very active PE Department who make the most of the facilities available to promote physical activity both inside and outside of the curriculum. They:

- Offer extra PE lessons, run football, hockey, rugby, rounders, Frisbee etc. tournaments
- Promote swimming and use the pool every day
- Run after school and lunchtime clubs and activities such as trampolining, gymnastics, circuit training, rowing and netball

Examination Hall

The sports hall and gym is used as the main examination hall covering exams through all the key stages. The examination period is intense and runs from November through to June. During the period of GCSE examinations (Key stage 4) the hall is in use all of the time.

2. Effects on the school of withdrawal

It is clear from the information provided that the school will have to take on the management of the facility from the City Council to allow them to continue to deliver their curriculum until the end of the academic year in July. It has already been outlined in introduction that the school is currently under more than usual pressure in other areas and this will prove a significant burden for them particularly in the area of management of the pool. Closure of the pool will mean that students will not be able to complete curriculum choices and clearly this is unacceptable both to them and the school.

In an effort to bridge this gap City Officers have offered to see if places can be found at other pools. The school's view is that this is unacceptable because of timetabling, transport and available time difficulties.

A statement from the school is included below:

The school wishes the City Council to continue to manage this well used facility till July and in doing this support the Peers School through a difficult and intense period. If this is not possible we believe that a fair compromise would be for the City Council to manage the facility until the end of term 4 whilst we seek alternative ways of meeting our needs.

07-08 Establishment

POST REF	POST TITLE	Perm	Temp	Total
AB30CM01	Centre Manager	0.5	-	0.5
AB30AM01	Assistant Manager 1	1.0	-	1.0
AB30AM02	Assistant Manager 2	0.7	-	0.7
AB30AM03	Assistant Manager 3	1.0	-	1.0
AB30SR01	Snr Rec Assistant 1	0.7	-	0.7
AB30SR02	Snr Rec Assistant 2	1.0	-	1.0
AB30RA01	Rec Assistant 1	0.3	-	0.3
AB30RA02	Rec Assistant 2	0.2	-	0.2
AB30RA03	Rec Assistant 3	0.4	-	0.4
AB30AD01	Administrator	0.4	-	0.4
AB30RE01	Receptionist 1	0.6	-	0.6
AB30RE02	Receptionist 2	0.2	-	0.2
AB30RE03	Receptionist 3	0.1	-	0.1
AB30RE04	Receptionist 4	0.4	-	0.4
AB30RE05	Receptionist 5	0.2	-	0.2
AB30RE06	Receptionist 6	0.4	-	0.4
AB30RE07	Receptionist 7	0.2	-	0.2
				8.2

5. **Coaching & Instructors**

- 0.8

Casuals

- 1.2

- - 2.0

ACTIVITY	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	TOTAL	Spare Capacity at other sites
Swimming	462	905	801	801	1167	999	999	583	402	655	716	893	9383	Blackbird Leys Pool, Temple Cowley Pools,
Total Attendance last yr	219	839	1030	834	1304	947	947	866	363	866	1015	990	10220	Barton Pool, Ferry Sport Centre
Attendance Difference	243	66	-229	-33	-137	52	52	-283	39	-211	-299	-97		
Attendance %	111%	8%	-22%	-4%	-11%	5%	5%	-33%	11%	-24%	-29%	-10%		
Swimming Lessons	398	1026	342	342	1	234	1116	1058	560	312	313	332	6034	Blackbird Leys Pool, Temple Cowley Pools,
Total Attendance last yr	162	1338	1350	264	180	1032	1032	1223	814	1092	948	1077	10512	Barton Pool
Attendance Difference	236	-312	-1008	78	-179	-798	84	-165	-254	-780	-635	-745		
Attendance %	146%	-23%	-75%	30%	-99%	-77%	8%	-13%	-31%	-71%	-67%	-69%		
Squash	744	758	602	602	589	649	659	812	576	878	867	909	8645	Ferry Sport Centre
Total Attendance last yr	634	633	776	607	730	810	810	773	522	855	807	909	8866	Non-Council
Attendance Difference	110	125	-174	-5	-141	-161	-151	39	54	23	60	0		Brookes University, Didcot Leisure Centre,
Attendance %	17%	20%	-22%	-1%	-19%	-20%	-19%	5%	10%	3%	7%	0%		Park Sport Centre, White horse leisure & tennis centre
Badminton	342	319	192	192	209	172	175	186	122	201	251	252	2613	Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Ferry Sport Centre
Total Attendance last yr	47	44	126	126	72	42	42	71	139	58	52	472	1227	
Attendance Difference	295	275	130	66	137	130	133	115	-17	143	199	-220		
Attendance %	628%	625%	210%	52%	190%	310%	317%	162%	-12%	247%	383%	-47%		
Exercise Classes	220	231	98	98	53	75	182	217	82	195	217	212	1880	Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Barton Pool
Total Attendance last yr	195	211	214	184	127	221	221	190	101	249	261	217	2391	Ferry Sport Centre
Attendance Difference	25	20	-116	-86	-74	-146	-39	27	-19	-54	-44	-5		
Attendance %	13%	9%	-54%	-47%	-58%	-66%	-18%	14%	-19%	-22%	-17%	-2%		
Children Activity	432	650	444	444	249	889	616	538	123	698	716	601	6400	Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre
Total Attendance last yr	356	682	336	799	380	316	316	576	339	504	330	760	5694	Ferry Sport Centre
Attendance Difference	76	-32	108	-355	-131	573	300	-38	-216	194	386	-159		(For gym, trampolining and parties)
Attendance %	21%	-5%	32%	-44%	-34%	181%	95%	-7%	-64%	38%	117%	-21%		
Activities	8	7	2	2	10	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	53	Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre
Total Attendance last yr	18	13	15	303	40	13	13	0	0	2	2	2	419	Ferry Sport Centre
Attendance Difference	-10	-6	-13	-301	-30	-13	-13	24	0	-2	0	-2		
Attendance %	-56%	-46%	-87%	-99%	-75%	-100%	-100%			-100%		-100%		
Schools Usage Swimming Pool*	859	859	858	644	644	644	644	0	644	644	644	644	7728	BLP, BP, TCP
Area Hire	3990	3995	3965	3965	1073	2917	2200	2802	1765	3866	3174	2924	36636	Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Ferry Sport Centre
Total Attendance last yr	8418	12537	1298	5535	1004	4332	4332	2785	1919	1738	2201	2280	48379	Rose Hill (Ext), East Oxford (Ext) Non Council -
Attendance Difference	-428	-8542	2667	-1570	69	-1415	-2132	17	-154	2128	973	644		Brookes University, Didcot Leisure Centre, Park Sport Centre
Attendance %	-53%	-68%	205%	-28%	7%	-33%	-49%	1%	-8%	122%	44%	28%		White horse leisure and tennis centre
Total Attendance	6596	7891	6446	6446	3351	5935	5947	6220	3630	6805	6254	6123	71644	
Last Yr Total	10049	16297	5081	8652	3837	7713	7713	6484	4197	5364	5614	6707	87708	
Last Yr +/-	-3453	-8406	1365	-2206	-486	-1778	-1766	-264	-567	1441	640	-584	-16064	
% Increase / Decrease on Last Yr	-34%	-52%	27%	-25%	-13%	-23%	-23%	-4%	-14%	27%	11%	-9%	-18%	

Shools usage is accounted for within the area hire total

5.11

2007/8 Usage at Peers

ACTIVITY	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	TOTAL
Swimming	867	791	729	791	1074	728	845	5825
Total Attendance last yr	462	905	801	801	1167	999	999	6134
Attendance Difference	405	-114	-72	-10	-93	-271	-154	-309
Attendance %	88%	-13%	-9%	-1%	-8%	-27%	-15%	-5%
Swimming Lessons	187	243	321	242	7	195	270	1465
Total Attendance last yr	398	1026	342	342	1	234	1116	3459
Attendance Difference	-211	-783	-21	-100	6	-39	-846	-1994
Attendance %	-53%	-76%	-6%	-29%	600%	-17%	-76%	-58%
Squash	587	709	1728	705	807	678	774	5986
Total Attendance last yr	744	788	602	602	589	649	659	4603
Attendance Difference	-157	-49	1124	103	218	29	115	1383
Attendance %	-21%	-6%	187%	17%	37%	4%	17%	30%
Badminton	184	196	124	187	147	143	2200	3181
Total Attendance last yr	342	319	192	192	209	172	175	1601
Attendance Difference	-158	-123	-68	-5	-62	-29	2025	1580
Attendance %	-46%	-39%	-35%	-3%	-30%	-17%	1157%	99%
Exercise Classes	205	225	168	164	129	136	166	1193
Total Attendance last yr	220	231	98	98	53	75	182	957
Attendance Difference	-15	-6	70	66	76	61	-16	236
Attendance %	-7%	-3%	71%	67%	143%	81%	-9%	25%
Children Activity	370	346	416	525	372	502	564	3095
Total Attendance last yr	432	650	444	444	249	889	616	3724
Attendance Difference	-62	-304	-28	81	123	-387	-52	-629
Attendance %	-14%	-47%	-6%	18%	49%	-44%	-8%	-17%
Activities	5	2	6	12	6	3	0	34
Total Attendance last yr	8	7	2	2	10	0	0	29
Attendance Difference	-3	-5	4	10	-4	3	0	5
Attendance %	-38%	-71%	200%	500%	-40%			17%
Schools Usage Swimming Pool*	644	644	644	644	0	644	644	3864
Area Hire	2674	3378	2479	3102	1556	2917	2200	18306
Total Attendance last yr	3990	3995	3965	3965	1073	2917	2200	22105
Attendance Difference	-1316	-617	-1486	-863	483	0	0	-3799
Attendance %	-33%	-15%	-37%	-22%	45%	0%	0%	-17%
Total Attendance	5079	5890	5969	5728	4098	5302	7019	39085
Last Yr Total	6596	7891	6446	6446	3351	5935	5947	42612
Last Yr +/-	-1517	-2001	-477	-718	747	-633	1072	-3527
% Increase / Decrease on Last Yr	-23%	-25%	-7%	-11%	22%	-11%	18%	-8%

5.12

Appendix 2

Alternative (lesser) option for Peers?

- Open Centre to block bookings only from 15.00-21.30
- Three days a week would be sufficient
- One administrator on fixed term contract till end of school terms (nominal leave/bank hols factored in for Jul/Aug) – needs to have First Aider qualification or training
- Bookings to be done via Administrator (if income to City) or CEC/School (if income to County)
- Cleaning done by School
- Only block booking for w/end is badminton Suns, others can be fitted in within weekday evenings
- Block bookings income per week = £750 (£690 dry, £60 swim)
- Small contribution by City for chemicals
- Each hiring group for pool to bring life saver
- One member of hiring group to assist with putting away/locking up
- No additional energy costs needed to heat the pool

- School caretakers knock off at 21.00 if adult ed (check) otherwise 17.00 so this could be additional cost if required

Advantage to users

- Fixtures can be played out and training sessions held by five a side, basketball, badminton
- More time to negotiate with Academy
- Helps alleviate congestion with rearranged Temple Cowley swimming bookings in Feb

Advantage to School

- Principle of community use still upheld
- Can continue with joint use of sports equipment as now
- Some help with purchase of chemicals
- Expertise on call if members of PE staff have problems maintaining the pool

Advantage to Exec Board

- May make a profit!
- Savings still made as projected
- Political damage limited
- Seen to make negotiated settlement

COUNCIL – 19 NOVEMBER – ADOPTED MOTION

Peers Sports Centre (Proposer – Councillor Sanders; Seconded – Councillor Turner; Amended by Councillor Rundle – amendment accepted by Councillor Sanders and Council)

“Council is concerned that the decision to close Peers Sports Centre is ill-thought out and will be damaging to some of the areas in Oxford in greatest need. Council believes that Peers Sports Centre helps to create a stronger community, it contributes to healthier life-styles and discourages unnecessary journeys by car.

Council asks the Executive to consider:-

- 1) to what extent alternative provision has been provided for existing Peers' users;
- 2) whether the projected savings of £65,000 this year and £300,000 next year will actually be made;
- 3) the robustness of the data provided for staff and user numbers at Peers Sports Centre;
- 4) what alternative budget cuts could be made to make the same savings;
- 5) whether it is possible to keep the Centre open until September 2008 when the Peers Academy is likely to take over the facility;
- 6) the impact of the closure on the curriculum at Peers School;
- 7) whether other schools been given notice of swimming sessions being terminated and where can they be fitted in;
- 8) whether the other pools at Temple Cowley etc can find space and time for group sessions that were held at Peers and whether they have got adequate staff to cope with them.

This Council asks the Executive to consider the alternative proposals for savings presented by Environment Scrutiny Committee for meeting the budgeted saving in 2007/8 and 2008/9 and to consider, if it is clearly demonstrated that acceptable cuts can be made elsewhere in the Leisure budget, delaying the closure of Peers Sports Centre beyond January 2008.”