

Select Committee on Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education

Wednesday 16 January 2008

Report of the Director of Urban Environment

Leisure Centre Investment

Purpose of Report

1. To review and scrutinise the proposed schedule of investment in major leisure facilities over the first six months of 2008.

Background

2. Information produced nationally and sub-regionally suggests that there is a growing problem facing all local authorities in connection with the age of the built leisure provision and the level of investment in such facilities. Sport England suggest that to bring all sports facilities up to a modern standard there is a huge investment requirement, with £500 million required for swimming pool repairs alone. It must be noted that similar investment is required in other sports facilities, but the issue also affects many other public buildings and is not isolated to sport and recreation provision.
3. Figures extracted from a report produced in 2003 which considered the major sport and recreation facilities in Dudley suggested that in order to bring facilities up to a modern standard investment of £14.5 million would be required. These figures will have increased with inflation and to reflect further ageing of each of the assets over the past four years.
4. It is accepted that demands for multi-million pound investment from the public purse in sport and recreation facilities competes with similar demands for capital finances to support educational establishments, facilities for older persons and vulnerable adults, and many other Council premises. Therefore wholesale replacement of facilities, or major modernisation projects, are unlikely to be considered to be at the top of the Council's priority listings for investment.
5. Following the leisure centre review in 2003 it was recognised that a more pragmatic approach to investment may be required. The pool hall refurbishment at Dudley Leisure Centre was completed following intervention from the Health and Safety Executive in connection with lighting issues and after significant deterioration of the tiling had been identified. This project cost £500,000 and was financed from within Council budgets.

Health and Fitness Developments

6. Potential improvements to health and fitness facilities were considered in the context of competing provision in the private sector and to inform the decision making process an independent report was commissioned to establish the likelihood of success of such developments. The Sport and Recreation Section manages three health and fitness facilities at Crystal Leisure Centre, Dudley Leisure Centre and Halesowen Leisure Centre and all three had developed in a rather ad-hoc manner over a period of ten years, one with a private sector partner, a second which had attracted Lottery funds and the third that had been completely financed from within Council budgets.
7. It was recognised that such facilities had the potential to generate significant amounts of income but that each one needed to be improved and brought up to a more modern standard. Through a market testing exercise a partner from the private sector with significant experience of developing such facilities was identified and it was decided to progress with a modest development at Halesowen Leisure Centre.
8. The amount of equipment available was increased from 15 pieces to 39 pieces, and by working closely with the private sector partner, membership has grown from 200 members to more than 800 members over the eighteen month period that the facility has been open. The facility is operating at virtually full capacity and imaginative solutions to providing for members and users at peak periods have had to be found.
9. Following ongoing evaluation of the projects success it is now time for the other two health and fitness facilities at Crystal Leisure Centre and Dudley Leisure Centre to benefit in a similar manner and that a larger facility could be successful at Halesowen Leisure Centre to maximise both usage and income and to contribute to the challenge of increasing physical activity levels within the Borough.
10. The three projects have been developed with input from a preferred private sector partner and detailed schemes are in the process of being finalised. The total project value is £1.410 million of which £1.125 million is being financed through prudential borrowing and £0.285m is being borrowed from the partner organisation. This arrangement with the partner secures their contribution in a project management capacity and over the duration of the five year agreement in the promotion and marketing of the health and fitness product similar to existing arrangements at Halesowen Leisure Centre.

(i) Crystal Leisure Centre

Expand the size of the health and fitness offer with an increase in equipment from 29 pieces to 53 pieces plus enhanced fitness studio facilities. Soft play for children will be relocated to the upper floor in addition to the management suite.

(ii) Dudley Leisure Centre

Extend the current health and fitness facility into two adjacent underutilised squash courts, building on a more modest development completed some ten years ago and increasing the equipment level from 24 pieces to 46 and remodelling the entrance arrangements to make them closer to the Centre's changing accommodation.

(iii) Halesowen Leisure Centre

Increasing the size of the health and fitness offer by transferring operations to the Lutley Suite on the first floor and increases the number of pieces of equipment from 39 to 54. The current room utilised for health and fitness would be retained and available for a variety of uses including aerobic

11. Market assessments suggest that through investment in health and fitness facilities at the three major sites there will be an increase in memberships from the current 1200, of which 800 are members at Halesowen Leisure Centre, to more than 3000.
12. These developments are in line with recommendations contained within the draft Black Country Sports Facilities Strategy which advocates increasing levels of health and fitness provision in the Borough by 100 stations over the next eight years, and by a further 225 stations up to 2031. The increase in the number of stations in the Borough's leisure centres from 94 to 153, an increase of 59 stations, significantly contributes to the target for the first eight years.

DDA – investment @ £215k

13. Following access audits completed by both Dudley Property Consultancy and Access In Dudley, the representative group for people with disabilities in Dudley, schemes of work were developed. The schemes will deliver reasonable adjustments to ensure high levels of compliance with the requirements of the Act and will include replacement of signage.

(i) Crystal Leisure Centre

£40,000 of adjustments throughout the Centre will ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Act.

(ii) Dudley Leisure Centre

£110,000 of adjustments throughout the ground floor of the Centre will ensure a high level of compliance with the requirements of the Act. Visual contrast work in the pool hall was completed at the time of the refurbishment of this part of the facility and accessible pool steps were also provided at this point in time.

At the same time as Health and Fitness provision is being upgraded the counter in reception will be completely replaced to make it compliant with the requirements of the Act and also to address health and safety issues which have been identified. This additional investment in the internal fabric of the building is £68,000.

(iii) Halesowen Leisure Centre

£88,000 will be invested in the facilities at Halesowen Leisure Centre and this investment will deliver a high level of compliance with the Act.

Floodlight replacement @ The Dell Stadium - £105,000

14. The floodlights at The Dell Stadium have been in situ for over twenty years and lux levels to meet current requirements for athletics and football had fallen below national guidelines for both sports. A project plan was developed to replace eight existing columns and the lighting units with higher columns and modern lights. This will provide better illumination for all users with the control of light spillage to the activity areas. This scheme provides lighting which will serve the main Stadium for the next twenty years.

Finance

15. Funding for the health and fitness developments has been secured by means of prudential finance and borrowing from the partner organisation. The capital costs related to this borrowing will be funded from increased income generated at the sites, mainly as a result of increased membership levels.
16. DDA and access works have been financed by a combination prudential finance and available section 106 resources.
17. The replacement of the floodlighting system at The Dell Stadium has been financed by available section 106 resources.

Law

18. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers the Council to take action to implement measures it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the Borough.
19. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972, enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.
20. Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976, empowers the Council to provide recreational facilities in its area.
21. There is a duty under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to account for the implications of the impact on community safety of actions and decisions relating to service areas.

Equality Impact

22. Continuous improvement of the Sport and Recreation service in Dudley includes the enhancement of the facilities on offer particularly in connection with the legal obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments. By making these reasonable adjustments access to facilities will be improved for people with disabilities and as a consequence access for all users will improve.

Recommendation

23. It is recommended that:-

- Members scrutinise the content of the report and comment accordingly



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List of Background Papers

Sport England Investment Requirements
Black Country Sports Facilities Strategy (Draft - 2007)
Leisure Centre Review 2003
Matrix Report on Health and Fitness Facilities
Alliance Leisure Assessment of Leisure Facilities