

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT FORUM MINUTES - 24 SEPTEMBER 2007

Present:

Councillor Gittings (Chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Beard	Reading Borough Council
Councillor T Harris	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Tickner	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Townend	Reading Borough Council
Michelle Ward	Academy Sport
Colin Lee	Member of the Public
Bob O'Neill	Member of the Public
C Bradfield	Reading Athletic Club
John Bayley	Reading Athletic Club
Christelle Beaupoux	Reading Borough Council
Gill Brookman	Reading Borough Council
Lisa Pearce	Reading Borough Council
Luke Lloyd	Reading Borough Council
Simon Hill	Reading Borough Council
Gary Johnson	Reading Rockets Basketball Club
Beverley Skelton	Reading Royals Synchronised Swimming Club
Sue Isaac	Reading Schools Sport Partnership
Peter Tiley	Reading Swimming Club
Alan Dines	Reading Table Tennis Association
Ian Davis	Rivermead

Apologies:

Councillor Lloyd	Reading Borough Council
John Cunningham	OLOP Table Tennis Club
Rob McKim	Reading Athletic Club
Jean Hulbert	Reading Royals Synchronised Swimming Club

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Further to Minute 3 of the last meeting, the Chair congratulated all those involved in the Healthy Workplace Challenge Corporate Family Fun Day, which had taken place on 22 September 2007.

Further to Minute 5 of the last meeting, Lisa Pearce reminded club representatives to submit details of talented athletes who could be eligible for the Sport Reading Futures Programme.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;

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- (2) That the form for clubs to register the details of talented athletes be distributed with the agenda for the next meeting of the Sports Development Forum.

3. SPORTS FACILITIES STRATEGY UPDATE

Steve Ward, Head of Parks, Sport and Recreation, gave an update on the current situation regarding the facilities at Palmer Park and Arthur Hill. Strategic Leisure Limited had been appointed to assist with finding suitable partners to develop and manage the facilities; they would be reporting back in October 2007, with the procurement process expected to take place between November 2007 and May 2008. The outcomes with the two sites would be a guide for implementing the strategy at other Council facilities.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

4. ACADEMY SPORT LEISURE CENTRE FACILITIES

Michelle Ward, Academy Sport Manager, gave a presentation on the new and improved facilities and programmes at the Academy Sport Leisure Centre. She said that a lot of work and effort had gone into the recent improvements, creating what was now a very welcoming and impressive facility.

Michelle outlined the facilities that were now available at Academy Sport. There was a main hall with a new Junckers floor, used for basketball, football and badminton. The fitness centre now had 40 exercise stations, a weights room and a techno-gym equipment room. The Royals Suite, a smaller hall used for aerobics and fitness classes, had a new floor, and in the 'wet-side' of the swimming pool there were new lockers and cubicles.

Michelle reported that the Centre had a good range of users and had received positive feedback from them. Reading Rockets Basketball Club were using Academy Sport for some of their training and matches. The Astro turf pitches were in frequent use for 5-a-side leagues, and there was a possibility of some Reading FC sides training there in the future. A large number of swimming lessons were taking place in the pool, and Blagdon Nursery School were using one of the multi-purpose areas during their refurbishment.

A number of community and partnership activities were also taking place at the Centre. The local Sure Start Children's Centre and Positive Futures scheme were using the facilities to provide activities for children and young people, such as the Whitley Wizards basketball team. In the summer holidays, children from twenty different primary schools in Reading had taken part in a week of sporting activities, organised by the School Sports Partnership. The Centre would also be working with partners including the Council's Sports Development team and Thames Valley Police on various schemes, including a Kickz Football Foundation project to provide evening activities for young people.

Michelle outlined various developments that were expected in the near future. More of the facilities inside the John Madejski Academy would become available, including a full-size Astro turf pitch, a rubber crumb multi-use games area pitch,

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and a main hall with a climbing wall. Efforts would be made to increase staff numbers and skills and promote the Centre more widely, both of which were needed to overcome the lingering negative stereotypes about the old South Reading Leisure Centre. Advertising in local cinemas and newspapers was planned, as well as updates to the Centre website, leaflet drops and an outreach programme in libraries and other local institutions. It was hoped that by the end of the year a more substantial re-branding effect would have occurred.

Members of the Forum welcomed the many improvements made since the re-launching of the Centre, and discussed various aspects of the facilities and programmes. The points made included the following:

- Various swim programmes were running, including Everybody Active, 50+ and parent/toddler sessions. At present there was public swimming every evening, but it was hoped to balance this with more swimming clubs and community lessons in the 2008 programme. A lifesavers club was suggested; Michelle said that she was very interested in this idea and that it could start in the New Year. She welcomed any other suggestions for new classes;
- The Centre were trying to keep prices low, for example by offering special swim memberships that worked out at about £2 a swim. Although it was difficult to compete with the private sector, prices were in line with other Reading Sport and Leisure facilities;
- The weights room and fitness equipment were popular with users, particularly the young men participating in the Positive Futures scheme;
- It was asked whether an apparent VAT liability for academies using more than 10% of their premises for commercial purpose would affect the financial situation of the Centre. Michelle said she was unaware of the issue and would investigate.

Forum members were invited to come and look around Academy Sport to see the improved facilities, and it was suggested that a future meeting of the Forum be held at the Centre.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That a future meeting of the Sports Development Forum be held at the Academy Sport Leisure Centre;
- (3) That Michelle Ward be thanked for her presentation.

5. RIVERMEAD GYM EXTENSION

Ian Davis, Rivermead Leisure Complex Manager, outlined the proposals for extending the Rivermead gym. The extended gym would have 120 fitness stations, including new techno-gym equipment. There would be a dedicated dance studio, which would allow the Complex to double the aerobic programme and offer more yoga and 'soft' exercise activities. The new facilities would be compliant with the

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Disability Discrimination Act and have greater scope for children's activities and use by 50+ groups and GP referral patients. A broader range of memberships was planned, including under-5, under-11, under-16 and over-55, with more community engagement than at present.

The current situation was that four tenders had been received, of which two were within the funding available; the bids were currently being reviewed. A 36-week build was anticipated, possibly starting in November 2007 and finishing in July or early August 2008. It was planned to open initially with a 'soft' launch, with a publicised launch and new programme to follow in 2009. This was a provisional timescale, and Rivermead staff and the public would be kept informed of appointments and plans as they were made.

Members of the Forum discussed the facilities at Rivermead, and the points made included the following:

- Young athletes in national squads were often asked to train with fitness equipment, and not all fitness clubs and centres allowed under-16s to use their facilities. Ian said that young athletes in this situation would be accepted at Rivermead on an individual basis, and it was noted that the forthcoming Sport Reading Futures Programme would help such athletes with the cost of training. Academy Sport also allowed young athletes to use their facilities;
- No reduction in the facilities currently available was expected while the extension work was carried out;
- The facilities at Rivermead were not currently being used by many sports clubs, although a number of elite athletes trained there as individuals.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. SCHOOL SPORTS FACILITIES AUDIT UPDATE

Lisa Pearce, Sport Reading Manager, gave an update on the audit being carried out of schools facilities that were available for use by sports clubs. Due to the summer break only three schools had submitted information so far, but more responses were expected soon, and a list of the facilities would be presented at the next meeting of the Forum. From the responses received so far it was noted that schools could potentially provide a substantial range of facilities to complement those available at the Council's leisure centres; swimming pools and large indoor spaces in particular were in demand with local clubs.

Members of the Forum discussed the potential for sports clubs to use school facilities, and the points made included:

- School facilities would only be available at limited times, so it was important to know exactly when these were;

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- Clubs would need detailed information about the facilities available, such as the depth of swimming pools and the dimensions of indoor halls, to know whether they were suitable for their use;
- Clubs' needs were not always obvious and the Chair asked representatives to communicate with officers regarding the kinds of facilities they were looking for.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That a list of school sports facilities be presented at the next meeting of the Forum.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair informed the Forum that the meeting of Cabinet on 24 September 2007 would be considering the proposals for the Sport Reading Futures Programme.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED:

- (1) That the next meeting of the Sports Development Forum be held on 27 November 2007 at 6.30pm.
- (2) That the meeting of the Sports Development Forum on 17 March 2008 be held at the Academy Sport Leisure Centre.

(The meeting started at 6.40pm and finished at 7.50pm)

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