

COUNCIL MEETING - 28 MARCH 2017

AGENDA ITEM 5

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Roger Lightfoot to ask the Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services:
South Reading Leisure Centre

For what reasons is the Council considering bringing operation of the South Reading Leisure Centre, currently operated by Academy Sport, back in-house, and what will be the expected cost of this ?

Please provide a breakdown of payments made to Academy Sport towards operation of the South Reading Leisure Centre for each year since the Council entered into a contract with the company to run the centre, and including pre-contract payments

REPLY by Councillor Gittings Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport and Consumer Services

Thank you for your question Mr Lightfoot. The primary reason the Council is seeking to progress the transfer of South Reading Leisure Centre from Academy Sport back to the Council is to enable a new Academy Chain to take over the running of what is currently John Madejski Academy (JMA) and provide a better education for young people in this part of Reading.

Following an Ofsted inspection in November 2015 JMA was judged to be 'Inadequate' in the subsequent report published in January 2016. Since this report the Government's Education Funding Agency (EFA) has been progressing negotiations with JMA to transfer the management of the school to a new Academy Chain. The local authority has not been directly involved in these negotiations, but has been approached as the new Academy Chain do not see running the leisure centre as part of their core business of improving educational outcomes at the school. The Council respects this position and recognises the imperative of securing a better education and future for young people in South Reading and this is why the Council is progressing taking back the leisure centre.

South Reading Leisure Centre was built in 1983 and significant improvement works were carried out prior to the transfer to JMA in 2007. The site has also very recently benefitted from investment of over £350,000 from the football foundation for the creation of a new full-size 3G football pitch which is extremely well-used. As one of the Borough's larger and more modern facilities, South Reading Leisure Centre will now be incorporated in the Council's procurement of a new leisure operator. As previously set-out in reports to the Council's Policy Committee, this procurement will also facilitate the development of a new competition standard pool to replace Central Pool and a new pool at Palmer Park Stadium to replace Arthur Hill (which as you know has been closed because of its extremely poor condition and high running costs).

We are aware that some significant urgent work is required at South Reading Leisure Centre, especially as regards air handling plant associated with the swimming pool. The Council will look to undertake these urgent works to prevent further deterioration of the asset prior to it being transferred to a new operator once the procurement process is completed. Further work is currently being undertaken to more accurately assess the works required and associated costs.

This fully accords with the Council's wider asset management strategy of prudent investment in those buildings and facilities that have a long-term future in providing services for Reading

residents whilst not wasting tax-payers money by spending scarce resources on those that do not.

With regard to your request for a breakdown of payments made to Academy Sport over the life of their contract with the Council I set out the relevant information below:

2006 - 07	£ 12,491	(Part year)
2007 - 08	£ 74,948	
2008 - 09	£ 116,948	
2009 - 10	£ 146,948	
2010 - 11	£ 118,613	
2011 - 12	£ 118,613	
2012 - 13	£ 36,942	
2013 - 14	£ 27,471	
2014 - 15	£ 18,000	
2015 - 16	£ 18,000	
2016 - 17	£ 18,000	(expected)
Total	£ 706,974	