

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

**EXECUTIVE - 14 JUNE 2004**

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

FOR ACTION

NAME OF WARD ALL

FP REF NO: ES-03/04-203

**REPORT TITLE : WILLESDEN SPORTS CENTRE CLOSURE - RELOCATION**

**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an overview of the relocation plan for individuals and clubs/schools that currently use the Willesden Sports Centre for the duration of the closure period.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Note and agree the proposed relocation strategy as set out in this report.
- 2.2 Delegate Authority to the Director of Environment to make adjustments to this strategy from time to time as necessary.

**3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Willesden Sports Centre requires a subsidy of £660k per year. It has already been agreed that on closure the majority of this subsidy will be rolled into the future PFI unitary payments. It was further agreed that £162k per annum of this subsidy would be used to fund any relocation costs during the relocation period.
- 3.2 To date the total cost of the relocation strategy is estimated at £151,500 per annum. Details of these estimates can be found in section 8 of this report (and Appendix 1). Relocation costs are still to be finalized however, they are not expected to exceed the available level of funding. Any underspend will be rolled into the PFI payments for future years.

**4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None specific to the relocation strategy.

## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None specific to this report.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 All users of Willesden Sports Centre will be adversely affected by the closure period. The draft Sports Strategy for Brent identifies a number of target groups who are currently under represented in terms of participation in sport. These groups are young people, black and ethnic minority people, disabled people, women and girls and older people. To mitigate the effects of the closure on these groups, users will be “signposted” to other facilities where they can continue to participate and where targeted sessions take place eg: women only sessions.

7.2 This report details specific actions that are being taken to ensure continued opportunities for participation by groups currently using the Willesden Sports Centre; the pensioners swimming group and disabled swimming group. In addition, where possible the Sports Development Team will organise sports activities for young people during the school holidays.

## **8.0 DETAIL**

8.1 Willesden Sports Centre is due to close during summer 2004 (exact date subject to the conclusion of ongoing contract negotiations) as it is being redeveloped under a private finance initiative (PFI). The demolition of the existing centre and build period for the new centre is approximately 18 months from the date of closure.

8.2 During the 18 month closure period current users will need to use other facilities. Whilst for the majority of individual users it will be a matter of moving to the nearest preferred alternative venue, some groups, especially clubs and recognised target groups, need additional support to help with use of alternative venues.

8.3 Willesden Sports Centre provides both ‘wet-side’ facilities (i.e. swimming facilities) and ‘dry-side’ facilities (i.e. sports hall, fitness rooms, etc). It is relatively easy to relocate ‘dry-side’ users and clubs as there are a number of other facilities within a mile radius. It is harder to relocate ‘wet-side’ users as there is only one other Brent Council-owned pool in the borough (Vale Farm Sports Centre) and therefore the relocation requires non-council owned facilities in surrounding boroughs to be used.

- 8.4 In general, all other facilities in the area (both wet-side and dry-side) are relatively well used and currently operate to busy programmes of use. As a consequence of this, it has not been possible to relocate every club and school session at Willesden Sports Centre to exactly the same day and time at another centre. In fact, if it were possible to do this it would raise the question of 'is there a need for Willesden Sports Centre?' Negotiations have been underway with the operators/management of nearby facilities to obtain the best alternative options for clubs/schools currently using Willesden. At Vale Farm Sports Centre some changes have been made to the existing programme in order to accommodate use from Willesden Sports Centre.
- 8.5 Due to the need to relocate, some clubs may experience greater costs as a result of needing to store equipment, having to travel a greater distance and/or having to pay more for the hire of facilities. The Council does not wish to see any clubs having to disband as a result of the temporary closure and of course wishes to see these clubs using the new Willesden Sports Centre when it re-opens. As a consequence it is recommended that financial support is given to clubs where evidence of additional costs can be identified. Similarly, the Council is taking some action as detailed in this report to minimise additional expense to existing individual users.
- 8.6 The remainder of this report provides an overview of the proposed relocation programme in terms of the main user group; schools and colleges, sports clubs, specific user groups and individual users.

### **Schools and Colleges**

- 8.7 School use of the existing Willesden Sports Centre is predominantly by primary schools for swimming lessons. All schools have been sent details of alternative venues and some additional time slots were made available at Vale Farm Sports Centre. To date, eleven schools will be transferring to Vale Farm Sports Centre and one school to Harrow Leisure Centre. Schools will be offered financial support with travel costs if there is a significant increase to the school and this is estimated at £52k per annum.
- 8.8 The College of North West London uses the gym at Willesden Sports Centre. This use is transferring to the Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre and Charteris Sports Centre

### **Sports Clubs**

- 8.9 Willesden Sports Centre is used by a variety of different sports clubs and discussions with clubs to help with their relocation have been underway since the end of last year. The following paragraphs outline the relocation proposals for the main clubs.

- 8.10 Brent Dolphins Swimming Club: This is the most difficult club to relocate as clearly they can only go to alternative wet-side venues and most pools are already currently very well used. The club needs pool time for both training for its competitive members and in order to run its 'learn to swim' programme. The latter is particularly important to the club as it is the mechanism through which it generates income to cover the clubs main expenses. It should be noted that most swimming pool operators are reluctant to allow clubs to use their pool for swimming lessons as the operators perceive this as competition to their own swimming lesson programme. The Council has explored a number of alternative venues for the club and the best option appears to be a mix of use of Hampstead School Pool, Kensington and Chelsea Pool and additional water time at Vale Farm Sports Centre. The club is currently discussing the alternative venues with its membership. It is likely the club will move out of Willesden Sports Centre during late June so that it can establish itself at the new venues before the summer break. It is expected that the club will need help with additional costs resulting from the relocation. This is currently estimated at £24k per annum.
- 8.11 Willesden Judo Club: This club is relocating to the Capital City Academy and the community centre on the edge of Gladstone Park. It is likely the club will need some support during the relocation period for the storage of judo mats. Officers are considering storage options at Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre or at Vale Farm Sports Centre. If enough storage space cannot be found at these centres financial assistance may be required to pay for storage. It is also likely that the club will need support to cover additional facility hire costs. It is estimated the total of these costs will be £9.5k per annum.
- 8.12 Queens Park Harriers: The majority of the club already train at Paddington Recreation Ground and the rest of the club will transfer to this venue.
- 8.13 Paws Basketball Club: This club have already transferred to the adjacent Capital City Academy and will remain at this venue when the new Willesden Sports Centre opens. The club is now renamed London Capital Paws Basketball Club and is developing an outreach development programme in surrounding primary schools.

### **Specific User Groups**

- 8.14 Disabled Swimming Group: Disabled people are identified as a key target group within the Draft Sports Strategy for Brent. There is currently a group of disabled people who use Willesden Sports Centre from 6.00pm to 8.00pm on a Monday. They have exclusive use of the pool during this period and a swimming instructor is provided. The group has been offered an alternative time slot at Vale Farm Sports Centre on a Sunday. It is likely that this group will require some support with transport to the Vale Farm Sports Centre. This is estimated at £9k per annum.

- 8.15 'Pensioners' Swimming Group: Older People are identified as a key target within the Draft Sports Strategy for Brent. There is currently an early morning 'pensioners' swimming session each morning at the Willesden Sports Centre. This is free to pensioners. Officers have negotiated an arrangement with the management of the Cannons private sports club at Brondesbury Park for up to sixty swimmers. Sixty swimming passes have been made available to the Council at a reduced rate and these have been allocated to Brent residents who regularly swim at this session on a 'first come first served' basis. The cost to the Council is approximately £13k per annum.

### **Individual Users**

- 8.16 Individual users will need to find an alternative venue that best suits their own needs during the relocation period. A newsletter has been produced to keep users up-to-date with the proposed closure and the second edition provides details on all the alternative venues, including contact numbers for obtaining further information. A database of addresses has been set up for the newsletter and further editions will keep people up-to-date on progress on the redevelopment of the Sports Centre and eventually will provide details on the re-opening. Information on alternative venues is also provided on the Sports Service web pages.
- 8.17 Leisure cards will be honoured at other centres in the borough and card holders will be able to transfer their card to an alternative centre at no charge.
- 8.18 All three other Council owned gyms (Charteris Sports Centre, Bridge Park Community Leisure Centre and the Vale Farm Sports Centre) are all offering free inductions and no joining fee for gym members who wish to transfer from Willesden Sports Centre. Casual gym users at Willesden will be offered inductions at half price.
- 8.19 Officers are also currently exploring the possibility of providing a 'shuttle bus' from the Willesden Sports Centre to Vale Farm Sports Centre on a couple of occasions a week. The exact times are yet to be agreed but it will be at a time that coincides with public swimming sessions, including junior swim sessions, and will help those people for whom a lack of transport may affect their ability to continue to swim. The cost of providing a shuttle bus is estimated at £ 29k per annum. The provision of the shuttle bus will be reviewed regularly to assess whether initial levels of provision should be maintained or amended.
- 8.20 Young people are another key target group both within the Draft Sports Strategy for Brent and the Corporate Plan. The Sports Development Team will provide school holiday sports activities for young people at the Capital City Academy during the relocation period to mitigate the effect of the Centre not providing holiday activities. The cost of this is estimated at £11.5k per annum. It should be noted that the Capital City Academy (CCA) operates on a five-term year and so it will only be possible to provide holiday activities when the CCA and general school holidays overlap.

## **9.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Details of Documents:**

Willesden Sports Centre – PFI Update – Executive Nov. 2002

Willesden Sports Centre PFI – Selection of Preferred bidder – Aug. 2003

Willesden Sports Centre PFI – Selection of Preferred Design – Sept. 2003

- 8.1 Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Gerry Kiefer, Head of Sports, Brent House, 239 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex. HA9 6BZ. Telephone 020 8937 3710.

**Richard Saunders**  
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**Gerry Kiefer**  
**Head of Sports**

**WILLESDEN SPORTS CENTRE  
RELOCATION COSTS  
ESTIMATES**

		Estimate per annum
1.	Shuttle Bus	£29k
2.	Pensioners Swimming	£13k
3.	Judo Club Support	£9.5k
4.	Dolphins Swimming Club support	£24k
5.	Swimming for disabled people	£9k
6.	Holiday Activities	£11.5k
7.	Transport for School Swimming	£52k
8.	General (Leisure Cards, gym inductions etc)	£3.5k
		<b>£151.5k</b>

(These are estimates and may change when all details have been finalised)