

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – RINGWOOD HEALTH & LEISURE CENTRE
CREATION OF A MIND-BODY/DANCE STUDIO**

Summary of Purpose and Recommendations:








Conversion of two squash courts at Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre to a purpose built dance/ mind-body studio

Development of New Milton Health and Leisure Centre as a specialist squash facility for the area

Cost to Council: £45k (3 year payback)

Within existing budget? Yes

Contribution to Corporate Plan (Minor/Moderate/Major/Neutral):

| | + |  | - | | + |  | - |
|---|----------|---|---|--------------------------------|----------|---|---|
|  | Moderate | | | Priorities | | | |
|  | | Neutral | | Clean Streets and Public Space | | Neutral | |
|  | | Neutral | | Crime and Disorder | Minor | | |
|  | Major | | | Housing | | Neutral | |
|  | | Neutral | | Managing our Finances | Moderate | | |

Comments on Impacts on Corporate Objectives and Priorities:

The Council is continually seeking to improve its services to the Community and improve its financial performance. The proposed squash court conversion to a dance/ mind-body studio will create a wide ranging programme of activities for all age groups which will increase participation and income and also make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of the Community.



Organisation of excellence



Working with public and partners



Economic well being



Social well being



Environmental well being

RINGWOOD HEALTH & LEISURE CENTRE CREATION OF A MIND-BODY/DANCE STUDIO

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Providing Leisure Services is a dynamic business which needs to respond to changes in the market and the Council historically has responded to these changes through innovative expenditure plan proposals.
- 1.2 One of the key outcomes from the Best Value Review of Recreation Centres was the need to Benchmark performance across the service in order to identify where improvements could be made.
- 1.3 The Benchmarking showed that action needed to be taken in health and fitness in order to attain the participation and income levels achieved by the private sector.
- 1.4 In recent years the expenditure plan has included schemes to extend the gyms in all of the Recreation Centres and provide purpose built fitness studios where appropriate.
- 1.5 The expenditure plan for this year includes funding for a scheme to upgrade and improve the gym at Ringwood and for a proposal to create a new dance studio.
- 1.6 The purpose of this Report is for Members to consider and evaluate the options available for the creation of that dance studio.

2. PERFORMANCE AND PROCESS BENCHMARKING

- 2.1 The benchmarking of our performance across other New Forest Centres and against other providers has shown that the participation levels and income from Ringwood's aerobics and fitness programme is poor by comparison.
- 2.2 On investigation it is clear that:-
 - 2.2.1 The facility (the G.A. Room) at Ringwood is limited in terms of its capacity
 - 2.2.2 The class size and the range of programme and activities available are restricted.
 - 2.2.3 The infrastructure including flooring and ventilation is below standard
 - 2.2.4 There is unsatisfied demand for many of the classes in the programme evidenced by growing waiting lists for Pilates courses and restricted access to casual sessions.

3. CORPORATE POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Any Capital Project must be evaluated for its contribution to Corporate objectives and the wider cross-cutting issues. They must also be regarded as an important element in Members' deliberations on options.

- 3.2 The key Corporate Plan objectives which are relevant in this case are Leisure, Social Inclusion, Young People, Older People, Health, Managing our finances and Managing our physical assets, and Members may well wish to consider these when evaluating the proposals.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The proposal in the Capital Programme for a larger studio involves the conversion of two of the Centre's three squash courts.
- 4.2 Participation levels in squash have fallen nationally in recent years and this has been reflected at a local level, whereas in contrast the demand for and participation in health and fitness has dramatically increased in recent years and is projected to continue into the foreseeable future.
- 4.3 Comparisons across current usage levels and experience from other Centres where health and fitness facilities have replaced squash courts shows that health and fitness:-
- 4.3.1 Attracts much higher participation levels than squash
 - 4.3.2 Involves a much wider age range and user base
 - 4.3.3 Facilitates a much broader range of activity and intensity levels
 - 4.3.4 Allows the development of specialist programmes such as Healthy Horizons, Cardiac Rehabilitation and obesity.
 - 4.3.5 Allows a much more closely monitored method of improving health and fitness levels.
- # 4.4 A comparison of current income and participation levels for the existing squash courts and those projected in the business plan for use of the new studio are included as Appendix 1

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 In order to consult with users on the proposals, a series of meetings have been held which were well attended by a number of users and groups who currently use the GA room. These include squash players, fitness and aerobics class users and clubs
- # 5.2 A summary of the individual points raised at the meetings together with the officer response is shown in Appendix 2. There was however a consensus that the Council should consider any options which would allow for the improvement of the fitness facilities but still enable a minimum of two squash courts to remain.
- 5.3 The other options raised were:-
- 5.3.1 Convert one squash court only
 - 5.3.2 Install a moveable partition wall between two squash courts
 - 5.3.3 Convert the existing main hall store into a dance studio
 - 5.3.4 Build a new dance studio externally
 - 5.3.5 Extend the current GA room
- 5.4 The possibility of use by the Centre of the newly constructed performing arts studio at Ringwood School has also been mentioned.

- # 5.5 An evaluation of all of these options is shown as Appendix 3
- 5.6 As Members will see only one option meets the expenditure plan guidelines of a 5 year payback whilst another comes very close. Both give an appreciable increase in participation, however only one can be built within the existing budget.
- 5.7 In addition to the points raised at the meeting a number of letters and emails supporting the retention of the squash courts have been received including one from Squash England as well as a petition containing thirty-three signatures.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- # 6.1 The financial implications for the Council will depend on which option is chosen. An evaluation is shown in Appendix 3. Other than the original proposal all the options will exceed the allocated capital budget and only one comes close to the guidelines for payback.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The creation of extended health and fitness facilities will generate significant community health benefits.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER

- 8.1 Increased participation in leisure activities across a wider age range may have a beneficial effect in terms of crime and disorder.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 A comparison of performance with other leisure providers shows that Ringwood is a poor performer both in participation and income from their fitness programme.
- 9.2 The main cause is the capacity and quality of the aerobics studio and funding exists in the current year to upgrade the facility.
- 9.3 A new facility would generate increased participation across a much wider range of user groups and allow an expansion to the health and fitness programme promoting new opportunities for a healthier community.
- 9.4 Following extensive consultation a number of options to create a new dance studio have been considered and the only one which meets all of the scheme objectives is the conversion of two squash courts.

10. REVIEW PANEL COMMENTS

- 10.1 The Leisure Review Panel met on the 8th June to consider the options outlined in this Report. They also considered the views of a representative of the Ringwood squash users and two representatives of the fitness users who reinforced the points summarised in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 10.2 In particular they raised the following points:
 - 10.2.1 That although both the squash and fitness users wished to continue to use the facilities at Ringwood they did not wish to compete for space and felt that the option to convert the Sports Hall Store should be pursued.

- 10.2.2 That the existing fitness/ aerobics facility was well below the standard required and represented poor value for money for users.
- 10.2.3 That the costs quoted for the Sports Hall Store conversion were high and that the payback could be reduced
- 10.2.4 That the option to convert the Sports Hall Store was the best in terms of participation and income generation.
- 10.3 Having considered all of the information available in the Report and from user Representatives the Review Panel decided to support the recommendation currently before Cabinet.
- 10.4 They did however feel that consideration should be given to developing New Milton Health and Leisure Centre as a specialist Centre for squash and that the competitive element of squash at Ringwood should consider a move to New Milton on that basis

11. RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 That the option to create a dance/ mind-body studio at Ringwood Health and Leisure Centre by converting two of the three existing squash courts be approved .
- 11.2 That consideration should be given to developing squash at New Milton Health and Leisure Centre as a specialist activity to cater for the demand for squash over a wider area to include Ringwood.

For Further Information:

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Background Papers:

None.

APPENDIX 1

| | SQUASH COURTS (ACTUAL) | | | FITNESS (PROJECTED) |
|-------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------|------------------------|
| | SQUASH | OTHER ACTIVITIES | TOTAL | |
| UTILIZATION | 20% | 6.5% | 26.5% | 73% |
| FINANCIAL | 15,080 | 6,120 | 21,200 | 36,460* |
| ACTIVITIES | 1 | 5 | 6 | 20 |
| USER BASE | 6,160 | 3,380 | 9,540 | 27,700* |

*Includes additional fitness use/ income and retained existing use/ income.

CONSULTATION – USER COMMENTS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

| | USER COMMENT | OFFICER RESPONSE |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | The reduction to 1 court would effectively end competitive squash at Ringwood. | Agreed (17 players are currently involved in league squash) |
| 2. | The continuation and development of the youth squash coaching programme would no longer be possible. | Agreed (16 children are involved in the coaching programme) |
| 3. | That there were no suitable alternative facilities in the area for squash players to relocate to. | Alternative facilities are available at David Lloyd (Ringwood), New Milton Health & Leisure Centre (10 miles), Ferndown Leisure Centre (4 miles), Verwood Leisure Centre (4 miles) and Littledown Leisure Centre (10 miles). |
| 4. | That a lack of input from Centre Management had led to the decline in squash numbers. | <p>Squash was at its strongest when Ed Pooley (Duty Manager) worked at Ringwood. He had a personal interest in squash and devoted a great deal of his own time to developing the game.</p> <p>As a rule allocation of resources to promoting activities is based on participation levels and contribution to income, and as squash is low in both, very little resource was allocated once Ed left as this would have been at the expense of higher income generating activities.</p> |
| 5. | That squash had recently been given Sport England priority status and included in the list of top 10 priority sports. | Accepted although there had been no contact from Squash England thus far. |
| 6. | That the General Activity room was a substandard facility in terms of: | Agreed – all of these have been identified as contributing to poor performance in participation and income. |
| 6.1 | Its size in relation to demand for classes. | |
| 6.2 | The standard of ventilation | |
| 6.3 | The quality of the floor | |
| 6.4 | The height of the ceiling. | |
| 7. | That there was unsatisfied demand for many of the classes in the programme. | Agreed – long waiting list for Pilates course and users unable to access casual sessions. |
| 8. | That the crowded conditions represented a potential risk to class users. | A risk assessment had been undertaken and the programme and class sizes had been determined based on this assessment. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> | <p>That a larger purpose built studio would:-</p> <p>Increase participation levels</p> <p>Allow for a larger programme</p> <p>Facilitate a wider range of activities</p> | <p>Agreed – this was the basis for the proposal</p> |
| <p>10.</p> | <p>That the Council should seek a solution which met the needs of both user groups in providing a minimum of two squash courts and a purpose built studio.</p> | <p>Obviously this would be an ideal solution and a point for consideration by Members. However there was no doubt that in their assessment of the options they would need to take into account the capital cost, projected income stream and payback period.</p> |
| <p>11.</p> | <p>That if possible prices for clubs and individuals using the new facilities should not be a barrier to access.</p> | <p>This principle was accepted particularly given that one of the objectives of the proposal was to widen participation and extend the programme.</p> |
| <p>12.</p> | <p>That the squash players were prepared to input voluntary effort in order to develop the sport within the Centre.</p> | <p>This was welcomed as a very positive approach and would certainly be accepted depending on the outcome of the consultation.</p> |

APPENDIX 3

| OPTION | EST COST | +/- BUDGET | SQASH COURTS | MIND-BODY/ DANCE STUDIO | | | | PARTICIPATION EFFECT | ADDITIONAL INCOME | PAY BACK |
|--------------------------------|--|------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------|--------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|----------|
| | | | | SIZE | AIR CON | SPRUNG FLOOR | CAPACITY | | | |
| Status Quo | Nil | N/A | 3 | 68 m ² | X | X | 15 | – | – | – |
| Convert 2 squash courts | £45k | – | 1 | 130 m ² | ✓ | ✓ | 31 | 27,700* | +£15,200 | 3 yrs |
| Convert 1 squash court | £35k | -£10k | 2 | 71 m ² | ✓ | ✓ | 17 | 21,350* | +£3,500 | 10 yrs |
| Install movable partition wall | This option has been evaluated and is both structurally and impractical to achieve. | | | | | | | | | |
| Convert sport hall store | £153 | +£108 | 3 | 119 m ² | ✓ | ✓ | 29 | 34,300* | +£24,700 | 6 yrs |
| Extend existing G.A. room | This option has been investigated and there is no capacity to achieve and extension. | | | | | | | | | |
| School performing arts studio | Discussions with the school prior to the scheme commencing indicated that there would be a number of serious obstacles to public use of the studio. These have now been confirmed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No daytime and possibly limited evening access • Security issues regarding access to the rest of the school site • No changing facilities • Hire charge from the school would be reflected in the activity charge • Low profitability of the programme | | | | | | | | | |
| New build | This option has been investigated and there is no land available on which to build. | | | | | | | | | |

*Includes additional fitness and retained existing use