

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Joint decision made by Cllr Paul Crossley, Leader of the Council Cllr David Dixon, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Cllr David Bellotti, Cabinet Member for Resources	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 14th February 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2724
TITLE:	Community Asset Transfer of South Wansdyke Sports Centre, Skate, Adventure and Play Parks, Toilets and Car Park to Writhlington Sports Trust	
WARD:	Midsomer Norton North	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 - Supporting information sheet		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 To agree the terms of a Community Asset Transfer of South Wansdyke Sports Centre (SWSC), the adventure and play park, skate park, toilet block and Car Park to Writhlington Sports Trust to deliver Sport, Leisure and Health provision for 99 years from 1st July 2015.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 To agree the transfer as set out in this report and authorise the Head of Property, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to agree the terms of the disposal.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

Future Finance Position

3.1 The lease of the SWSC, adventure and play park, skate park, toilet block and car park to Writhlington Sports Trust would be on the basis of a peppercorn lease. At present the annual cost of running the leisure centre is estimated to be in excess of £150k, although this is included within the current Aquaterra contract so the precise costs are not separately identifiable. The leisure procurement exercise currently excludes SWSC and it is estimated that its inclusion in the new leisure contract would see an ultimate cost to the Council of up to £200k. The financial benefit to the Council of carrying out this transfer is therefore estimated to be in the region of £150 to £200k per annum.

3.2 The saving, as a result of transfer of the toilet block, is estimated to be £10-11k per annum; this saving will be recognised as part of the public conveniences savings target.

The car park does not bring income to the Council and there will be a small saving in property maintenance as a result of this transfer.

3.3 The Play Equipment was installed by the Council in 2010 along with the skate park in the same year; these are both maintained by the play team. The responsibility for maintenance, repairs and ultimate replacement will fall to the Writhlington Sports Trust and this will lead to an annual saving of over 500 hours for the play team which can be redirected to maintaining other play areas. The responsibility for grounds maintenance costs will also be removed.

3.4 The lease agreement is linked to the Proposal from Writhlington Sports Trust. This proposal, which is an appendix to the lease, must be delivered as stated and any amendments agreed in writing with the Council. The Trust would invest an initial £530,000 in the first 12 months in order to make facility improvements and, in total, £800,000 in the first 5 years.

3.5 All current staff will transfer under TUPE and the transfer will create increased employment opportunities for the local community.

3.6 The Trust is an admitted body to the Avon Pension Fund. 9 staff will transfer and their past service will be fully funded by the Trust and the admission agreement closed to new entrants.

3.7 There are no VAT implications for the asset transfer due to the zero based lease with no income or profit share

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 Property Services comments:

In order to satisfy the requirements of a Community Asset Transfer, it is required that disposal is not at less than open market value.

The Council's Chief Property Officer states "We have taken external valuation advice and confirm that the transfer by way of 99 year lease at nil rent on the terms proposed will not represent a disposal at less than open market value."

4.2 Full Property sign off for the market value and asset transfer has been received. Secretary of State approval is not required as the transfer value is not less than market value. Head of Property Services has signed off the internal DRF (Decision Record Form) which is the legal Property Asset Transfer form which Cllr Bellotti approved. Property Services used external valuers to gain the market value and they are satisfied the transfer can take place as it is not less than market value.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 Writhlington Sports Trust's offer to manage SWSC comes with a proposal that has been evaluated and found to be thorough and sound. They have experience in building a successful leisure facility in the local community, based at Writhlington School.

They are enthused about expanding and improving the facility and service at SWSC and the whole site including the skate and adventure play park. This would be of benefit to B&NES Council as all maintenance and developments would be managed by the Trust under the proposed arrangements. They plan to maintain the external toilet block and upgrade this into a toilet and concession block opening this up for the users of the park and site. They also plan to manage and maintain the car park (agreeing to fund this themselves whilst agreeing to keep the parking free for all). This Community Asset Transfer is therefore highly recommended by officers and has been verified by external leisure consultants who agree this proposal is positive for all parties including the local and wider communities who will benefit from improved facilities, service and programmes.

See [Appendix 1](#) for supporting information

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The proposal is that a single operator manages Paulton Pool, South Wansdyke Sports Centre and Writhlington Sports Centre in order to offer the most effective and appropriate services for the local and surrounding communities.

A quote from the proposal:

“We are committed to developing a broad spectrum of leisure facilities and opportunities, catering for every section of the community whilst strengthening and supporting the social, cultural and physical well-being of the community as a whole. Key aspects of the proposal include:

- Writhlington Sports Trust (WST) has an annual turnover of £1.3m and employs over 90 staff with all employees living in the local area
- WST will be fully responsible for every aspect of the site and building including current dilapidations and all building, plant, machinery, equipment and grounds
- The proposal commits to an investment into the facility of £800,000 in the first 5 years
- No financial contribution is required from the Council
- There is an offer for a B&NES representative to take a seat on the Trust board
- WST commit to work alongside the Council in helping deliver the ‘Fit for Life’ Strategy
- A 99 year Community Asset Transfer lease to deliver Sport, Leisure and Health in the spirit of the proposal and in line with local, national and industry demands
- The transfer will take place on 1st July 2015
- Proposal includes a name change to Midsomer Norton Leisure Centre (to be consulted locally and politically) by the new provider
- The Car Park would remain at free use to all and all the servicing and maintenance paid for by WST. There is also a plan to increase the parking bays, again funded by WST.

Advantages of the proposal

- Local charitable employer
- Increased usage
- Increased opportunities for the local community
- Better links to education and youth provision
- Toilets to remain open and the community welcomed into the Leisure Centre
- Improved facilities across the site
- Outdoor café and seating offer, overlooking the play park

- Expansion of the WST apprenticeships and work experience schemes and industry specific vocational training and qualifications
- Secure, improved and increased parking

Opportunities

- Staff development opportunities and increased jobs for the local community
- For the whole community, young and old
- Local trade gains benefit from greater visitors to the site and Midsomer Norton town centre
- To work with the Somer Centre to increase usage and awareness
- Work with the Town Council on a number of local projects including Youth Provision

Disadvantages

- Whilst the full proposal by Writhlington Sports Trust (WST) offers the development and service required, the control of the site is handed to WST for their management. WST must follow in principle their proposal and any changes need authorisation from the Council. The lease covers these points.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 To include the management of SWSC in the current main Leisure procurement process which is being run to appoint an operator to manage other leisure facilities across the area.

This option was discounted as it would provide fewer beneficial outcomes (see paragraph 6) for the authority and service users than the proposed transfer.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 An Open Space Notice was posted in the local newspaper in October 2014 and on Council and Leisure notice boards for 2 weeks. No comments were received.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	<i>Christian Stephens, Contracts Manager, Environmental Services, Place 01225 396430</i>
Background papers	<i>None</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	