

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 22 JUNE 2011

**PORTFOLIO: LEISURE, TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE,
INCLUDING BUSINESS/ENTERPRISE**

REPORT FROM HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

**SUBJECT: VIRGIN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT – GREAT WAKERING
SPORTS CENTRE**

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To issue Virgin Active with formal notice that Great Wakering Sports Centre is to be removed from the Leisure Management contract, as from 1 October 2011.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 As part of the 2011/12 budget setting process a number of efficiencies had to be made, one of which was the decision to look for alternative management arrangements, including transfer of ownership, or if no alternatives, closure of the facility.
- 2.2 As a result of this decision, the management of the sports centre would need to be removed from the Council's Leisure Management contract with Virgin Active, for which there is an appropriate clause within the contract.
- 2.3 This reduction in the contract would realise an annual saving of £71,832 which is the fee for Great Wakering Sports Centre, in addition to the NNDR of £9,004 per year.
- 2.4 In the 2011/12 budget, there is an identified saving of £40,000 which will mean that Virgin Active management of the centre will need to cease by 1 October 2011. Whilst Virgin Active have been kept fully informed of this decision, and are fully co-operative with the process, the Council is required to issue them with formal notification of this amendment to the contract, and in the discussions that have taken place, it has been deemed reasonable to give 3 months notice, as of 1 July 2011.
- 2.5 It is hoped that an alternative party can be found to take on the operation of the centre. However, if this has not been possible at 1 October, when Virgin Active withdraw from the centre, then the facility will remain closed and need to be boarded up and secured. Quotations for this work are currently being gathered but it is anticipated to be in the region of £5,000.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 With regard to trying to find an alternative organisation/party to operate the centre, discussions and exchange of information relating to the centre's operation has taken place with the local parish councils, namely Great Wakering, Barling, Sutton and Foulness. There has also been attendance at one of the recent meetings of the Roach group, to explain the situation with regard to the sports centre and that the District Council was interested in finding an alternative operative. However, as yet none of the parishes, either singularly or as a 'consortium', have expressed an interest.
- 3.2 There have however, been alternative discussions with another individual who has expressed an interest in taking on the centre's operation and maintaining its use for the community. This person has good knowledge of the centre. A couple of meetings have now taken place with the Head of Community Services, one of which involved a detailed site visit, and at the time of writing this report, the said party is giving the possibility further consideration, including analysing potential income and expenditure associated with the facility.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is important that there is a carefully managed programme of publicity, whether the centre transfers to another operator or closes, to ensure that the Council's future position in relation to the centre is clear.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Removing the operation of Great Wakering Sports Centre from the Council's Leisure Management contract by 1 October 2011 is necessary in order to realise the identified budget saving of £40,000 in 2011/12 and then £80,000 each year thereafter.
- 5.2 If no alternative operator is found, then the centre will need to be boarded up and secured for which there is an estimated cost of £5,000.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Consideration has been given to the provision of leisure facilities to the residents of that area of the district, both in trying to find an alternative operator and also in recognising that there are a number of other leisure facilities within a reasonable proximity of Great Wakering.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____

Head of Community Services

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Jeremy Bourne (Head of Community Services) on:-

Phone:- 01702 318163

Email:- jeremy.bourne@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.