

**18 January 2010**

**Recommendations from Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Ward(s)**                      All

**Portfolios:**    Leisure and Culture

**Summary of report:**

This report informs Members of a series of recommendations made by the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel that were made at its meeting on 11 December 2009 during consideration of the council-wide financial position.

**Recommendation**

**That Members consider the recommendations from Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel and consider what action, if any, they wish to take.**

**Background**

The Constitution gives the responsibility for scrutiny of the Council-wide financial position to the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel (CSPP). To complete this task the CSPP review the budget proposals for each Cabinet Portfolio and the recommendations of the respective Scrutiny and Performance Panels.

**Report**

During consideration of the Council-wide budget position the CSPP were informed of some recommendations made to it by Willenhall Local Neighbourhood Partnership (WLNP) which was linked to the Cabinet budget proposal to close Willenhall Leisure Centre.

The recommendations from WLNP were:

- (1) That the Willenhall LNP express its concerns at the decision to close Willenhall Leisure Centre in view of the knock-on effect it will have on the general health of people in the area and the impact on school and voluntary group budgets and that it was contrary to the Council's vision, and;*
- (2) That the Willenhall Leisure Centre remain open whilst a scrutiny investigation takes place into the possibility of bringing the unit cost at Willenhall Leisure Centre down to the same level as the unit costs of other leisure centres in the Borough.*

The CSPP considered the recommendations from WLNP and made the following recommendations to the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

1. *The resolution from Willenhall LNP be noted and forwarded to the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel;*
2. *The Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel carry out a full options appraisal as to the future of Willenhall Leisure Centre;*
3. *If the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel are able to identify a suitable alternative saving to cover the cost of keeping the leisure centre open whilst this appraisal is carried out that Willenhall Leisure Centre remain open until completion of the review;*
4. *If no suitable alternative saving can be found, that Willenhall Leisure Centre is closed pending the completion of the options appraisal with a view to reopening if the options appraisal finds this to be a viable option;*

An extract from the draft minutes of the CSPP meeting from 11 December 2009 is attached at Appendix 1 to provide further information on the discussion of the issue that took place on the evening. Please note that the extract will remain draft until it has been approved by the CSPP at its next meeting.

Members are asked to consider the recommendations from WLNP and CSPP and consider what action, if any, to take.

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**Extract from draft minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel  
11 December 2009**

**45/09 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANELS**

The Chair invited the Chair or Vice-Chair from each of the other Scrutiny and Performance Panels to present their recommendations to the Panel.

The Vice Chair of the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel presented the recommendations of his panel (annexed), the Chair informed members that in addition to this panels recommendations he had also just received a resolution from Willenhall LNP, which read:

- (2) That the Willenhall LNP express its concerns at the decision to close Willenhall Leisure Centre in view of the knock-on effect it will have on the general health of people in the area and the impact on school and voluntary group budgets and that it was contrary to the Council's vision.;
- (3) That the Willenhall Leisure Centre remain open whilst a scrutiny investigation takes place into the possibility of bringing the unit cost at Willenhall Leisure Centre down to the same level as the unit costs of other leisure centres in the Borough.

Members discussed this resolution alongside the recommendations from the Community Services. Whilst Members were broadly in favour of carrying an options appraisal on Willenhall Leisure Centre, they felt this would best be completed by the Community Services Panel and that the resolution of Willenhall LNP should be forwarded to them for consideration. Members also commented that keeping the leisure centre open whilst this appraisal was carried out would have associated costs for which an appropriate alternative saving would have to be found if they were to achieve a balanced budget. They therefore felt it important for the Community Service Panel to either propose an alternative saving to cabinet that would meet the costs of keeping the centre open in the interim or else close the leisure centre pending the outcome of the options appraisal. Members further commented that any options appraisal should be robust, with detailed information including a report from the PCT on the impact of not meeting the obesity target within the local area agreement and also to ensure that any benchmarking undertaken was comparing like with like.

The Chair of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel presented the recommendations of his Panel (annexed.) Members queried the inclusion of recommendations for additional services alongside a support for the budget proposals with no alternative savings. The Chair of the Environment Panel confirmed that from the information they had received they believed these recommendations could all be met within the existing budget proposals. The Leader of the Council stated that all the recommendations bar the extended opening of Bloxwich public toilets were already included in Cabinets proposals and they he did not believe this one item would present a difficulty. Members were therefore supportive of the recommendations as long as it could be confirmed that the costs could be met within the existing budget proposals.

The Vice Chair of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel presented the findings of his Panel (annexed.)

The Vice Chair of the Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel presented the recommendations of his Panel (annexed) and explained to Members that members of the Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel had also been invited to this meeting to discuss cross over items.

The Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel presented the recommendations of his Panel (annexed) and commented that the Panel had been pleased to see the Cabinet had recognised the pressures in this area due to the predicted increase in demand resulting from the recession and recent high profile child protection issues elsewhere in the country.

## **RESOLVED**

- 5. The resolution from Willenhall LNP be noted and forwarded to the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel;**
- 6. The Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel carry out a full options appraisal as to the future of Willenhall Leisure Centre;**
- 7. If the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel are able to identify a suitable alternative saving to cover the cost of keeping the leisure centre open whilst this appraisal is carried out that Willenhall Leisure Centre remain open until completion of the review;**
- 8. If no suitable alternative saving can be found, that Willenhall Leisure Centre is closed pending the completion of the options appraisal with a view to reopening if the options appraisal finds this to be a viable option;**
- 9. The recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel be supported, subject to final clarification that costs can be met within the draft budget proposals**
- 10. The recommendations of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted;**
- 11. The recommendations of the Social Care and Inclusions Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted; and**
- 12. The recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted;**