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**Halesowen Area Committee – 24th January 2008**

**Disposal of High School and Cradley Leisure Centre Site**

**Report of the Area Liaison Officer**

**Purpose**

1. To provide the further information requested at the last meeting of the Area Committee to enable Members to make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services about the future of Cradley Leisure Centre.

**Background**

2. Following statutory procedures, Cradley High School is due to close in July 2008 and the site of the school, including the Leisure Centre will be surplus to the Directorate of Children's Services requirements. (Area marked on the attached plan).
3. In accordance with normal Council procedure, other Council Directorates have been consulted and no operational use for the school site has been identified. It is, however, intended to retain the Recreation Ground, which provides one full size senior football pitch, two mini-soccer pitches, with a junior football pitch overlaid on the two smaller pitches, and the public open space to the south of the school.
4. At the last meeting of the Committee there was considerable public opposition to the closure of the Leisure Centre and the disposal of the school site and Members asked for further information.
5. Cradley Leisure Centre opened to the public as a dual use sports and recreation facility in June 1989. Responsibility for the Management and control of the leisure facilities transferred to the School's Governing Body in 1996.
6. The indoor facilities comprise a single court (four badminton courts) with a rubberised playing surface, a gymnasium with a spring wood floor overlooked by a spectator gallery, a modest health and fitness room, toilets, changing rooms, meeting room, reception area and manager's office. The leisure facilities are an integral part of the school and the mechanical and electrical plant serving the Leisure Centre are fed directly from the school boiler house.
7. Assuming that the Leisure Centre could physically be retained as a stand alone centre (detailed structural surveys would be required to ascertain this) the capital cost of the required structural work, providing new mechanical and electrical (M&E) plant and refurbishing changing rooms, the sports hall and others areas to bring the building up to the latest operational standards would be in the order of £2m - £2.5m. Retaining the Leisure Centre would also reduce the area of the site available for redevelopment and the capital receipt.

8. Officers have also assessed the running costs and income generation potential of a stand alone leisure facility based on current operational requirements and industry standards of other Council run leisure facilities, likely opening hours and local demand as follows:-

	£
Total Operational Costs	120,000
Less Projected Income	<u>78,000</u>
Subsidy Required	<u>42,000</u>

9. Discussions with Council Planners suggest that the school site (excluding the recreation ground which is to be retained) would be suitable for housing, including a proportion of affordable housing, although vehicular access to the site from Homer Hill would have to be widened and a visibility splay provided. It would also be a requirement that any developer would be required to provide changing facilities for the pitches on the recreation ground to satisfy the requirements of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy. There would be a significant capital receipt from the sale of the school site.
10. If the leisure facilities are closed at the same time as the school in July 2008, it will be necessary for the Council to provide temporary changing facilities for the recreation ground until the school site is developed. The cost of these temporary facilities is estimated to be about £45,000.
11. Details of the current usage of the Leisure Centre, which have been provided by the school, are set out in the Appendix 1. Appendix 2 gives details of the alternative facilities which may be available. Initial discussions have been entered into with some of these facility providers and the early indications are that the majority of existing Cradley users could have court space made available to them at these other venues to match, so far as is possible, their lost court space at Cradley Leisure Centre. This may require some flexibility on the part of the clubs regarding precise timings and numbers of courts used given the existing commitments/bookings at these venues.
12. The general catchment area for Cradley Leisure Centre as an urban facility would be 20 minutes walk time. The nearest major public leisure facilities are Haden Hill Leisure Centre in Sandwell (1.25 miles), Halesowen Leisure Centre (2.2 miles) and Crystal Leisure Centre (2.4 miles). There are sports and recreation facilities at Thorns Community College about 1 mile away.

## **Conclusions**

13. Cradley High School will close in July 2008 and the school site, including the Leisure Centre, will be declared surplus to requirements. The Recreation Ground and public open space will be retained.
14. Retention of the Leisure Centre facilities is not considered to be a viable option because:-
- (a) the capital cost of providing new M&E plant and refurbishment would be in the order of £2m - £2.5m
  - (b) the annual revenue subsidy required would be at least £42,000, for which there is no budgetary provision

- (c) the area of the school site available for redevelopment would be significantly reduced and the value of the capital receipt would, therefore, not be maximised.
  - (d) suitable alternative facilities can be made available to existing users of the facilities (see Appendix 2).
15. Provision of changing facilities for the Recreation Ground would be a condition of any development on the school site.

### **Finance**

16. The sale of the Cradley High School site will generate a significant capital receipt.

### **Law**

17. Section 123 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to dispose of its interest in land at the best price reasonably obtainable.
18. Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act, 1972 requires the Council prior to any disposal of open space to advertise notice of its intention to do so for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper circulating in the area in which the land is situate and to consider any objections which may be made.
19. The various statutory undertakers will have statutory powers to install equipment in Council owned land, but they do apply to the Council for a formal agreement, such as an easement, on a regular basis.
20. Section 32 and 34 of the Housing Act, 1985 and the General Consents for the disposal of Houses and Land, 1999, enable the Council to let and dispose of land and buildings held for housing purposes at the best price reasonably obtainable.
21. Section 33 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 enables the Council to apply provision to any land it sells restricting its future use, provided the relevant section of the Act are specifically referred to in the transfer document and are registered as a local land charge.
22. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or which is conducive to or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.

### **Recommendations**

23. That the Area Committee advise the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to declare the site of Cradley High School surplus to requirements to be sold on terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.



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**Mike Williams**  
**Area Liaison Officer**

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**Cradley High School – Existing Lettings**

<b>Day and Time</b>	<b>Number of Courts/ Other Facility</b>	<b>Club Name</b>
Monday and Friday 7.30 – 10.00pm	Each day 2 Courts	Lye Badminton Club
Tuesday 7.30 – 10.00pm	4 Courts	Quarry Bank Badminton Club
Tuesday 8.00 – 9.00pm	Gym	Akido
Monday & Thursday 7.00 – 8.30pm	Gym	Karate
Wednesday 8.00 – 10.00pm	2 Courts	Social Club
Wednesday 8.00 – 10.00pm	2 Courts	1940's Badminton Club
Wednesday 6.30 – 7.30pm	Football Pitch	Banjo FC
Thursday 6.00 – 7.30pm	Courts	Lye Badminton Juniors
Thursday 6.30 – 7.30pm	Football Pitch	Holy Trinity FC

\* Details provided by Cradley High School

**Alternative Facility Provision**

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Facilities Available</b>	<b>Distance from Cradley Leisure Centre</b>	<b>Spare Capacity</b>
Thorns Community College	10 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium	1 mile	√
Redhill School	4 Court Sports Hall Synthetic Turf Pitch	2 miles	√
Hillcrest School	4 Court Sports Hall	2½miles	?
Leasowes Community College	6 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium Synthetic Turf Pitch	3 miles	√
Halesowen College	4 Court Sports Hall	2 miles	?
Oldswinford Hospital School	4 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium	2½ miles	?
Ridgewood School	4 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium	3 miles	√
Pensnett School	4 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium	3½ miles	√
Campus 21 (Crestwood School)	4 Court Sports Hall Gymnasium	3½ miles	√