

## **OUTSOURCED SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**

**27 September 2016**

Present: Councillor T Williams (Chair)  
Councillor A Rindl (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors J Dhindsa, K Hastrick, A Joynes, P Kent and S Bolton

Also present: Councillor P Taylor (Portfolio Holder for Client Services)  
Ian Cook, SLM Regional Manager (for minute numbers 7 to 10)  
Gary Foley, General Manager, Central Leisure Centre (for minute numbers 7 to 10)  
Richard Longhurst, Operations Manager, Central Leisure Centre (for minute numbers 7 to 10)  
Kyle Mondrell, Operations Manager, Woodside Leisure Centre (for minute numbers 7 to 10)

Officers: Corporate, Leisure and Community Client Section Head  
Partnerships and Performance Section Head  
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (JK)

### **7 Apologies for Absence/ Committee membership**

There was a change of membership for this meeting; Councillor Bolton replaced Councillor Cavinder.

### **8 Disclosures of interest**

The Chair advised that he was a member of Woodside Leisure Centre. Previously it had been advised by the Head of Democracy and Governance that such a membership was not a pecuniary advantage and as such did not mean that he had to leave the room.

### **9 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2016 were submitted and signed.

### **10 Scrutiny of the Leisure Centre Management Contract**

The Panel began by reflecting on the tour they have undertaken of Central Leisure Centre and agreed that it had been worthwhile.

The representatives from SLM introduced the presentation by providing councillors with an overview of the company and its success in running leisure centre services. They also gave an overview of the recent history of the sites and the issues faced in the market.

They presented the 2015-2016 annual report for Watford citing statistics around the increased usage, health and safety and the staff employed in the centres.

The Corporate, Leisure and Community Section Head underlined the social value of the contract and the large number of people employed in the supply chain locally. He agreed to provide an updated version of the Leisure Centre Overview to the Panel when it was available.

There was a discussion about the employment status of the staff and it was underlined that SLM did not use zero hour's contracts and staff received a living wage. A number of apprentices were employed by SLM. It was noted that the table in the Annual Report showing details of the colleagues employed needed to be reviewed; the Panel asked to receive an amended version.

Councillors reviewed the health and safety statistics and the SLM representatives explained that an accident reduction plan was in place, there was often a spike in reporting after staff received additional training.

Central Leisure Centre and Woodside Leisure Centre had received 'good' and 'excellent' respectively in the Quest external accreditation for leisure facilities. These were significant achievements and SLM staff provided further details of scores for the respective categories to the Panel.

The Panel discussed the levels of complaints and compliments. Representatives from SLM gave details of the systems in place to encourage and record feedback. Some examples were given for reasons why there could be an increase in complaints, such as cancellation of classes and the recent flood at Woodside. They described the escalation process and the strict time limits on responses in the new customer feedback system. Officers underlined that there had been approximately 450 complaints out of 1.2 million visits.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the complaint escalation process and it was emphasised that this was the best way to address issues faced by users.

Following questions about how SLM worked with health providers, the Panel were provided with details of the exercise referral scheme which doctors could prescribe for their patients locally. Another example of working in the community was that SLM offered health MOTs to the employees of large companies as well as corporate day packages.

Panel members asked about how the maintenance of the centres was carried out. It was confirmed that local tradesmen were used where possible and that handymen were also employed. Measures to increase the energy efficiency of the centres remained a priority including the recent installation of LED lights.

Following a question about the provision of female-only swimming sessions, the Corporate, Leisure and Community Section Head agreed to bring back an update on this issue after speaking to colleagues.

Councillors reviewed the pricing comparison table and questioned why Watford was at the higher end of the range. It was noted that the market played a factor and that SLM paid a positive management fee to the Council. Officers underlined that the Panel's views on the pricing was welcomed in the light of the forthcoming retendering exercise. It was emphasised that it was not straightforward as centres structured their prices in different ways. Officers endeavoured to look for details from more operators and to include the level of monthly membership fees.

The Corporate, Leisure and Community Section Head was asked to find details of whether other councils received management fees from their leisure operators and at what level. It was suggested that there was a level of commercial confidentiality about this and so data may not be available.

Following a suggestion that there would be scope for a third leisure centre in the South and West Watford, SLM advised that they would be very pleased if this was ever possible. Members were directed to the Sports Facilities Strategy.

The Panel was satisfied that they had reviewed the report and presentation and action points had been raised. It was noted that a task group was being set up by Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the stakeholder engagement in the re-tendering of the contract.

The Chair thanked the representatives of SLM for attending and presenting their report to the Panel.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Panel note the report.

2. the actions requested be undertaken.

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## **Performance Report (Quarter 1 2016/17)**

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head introduced the report. She provided an overview of the indicators measured and those which were on target and those which required further action.

The Panel discussed the change in strategy by HQ theatres which had meant there were fewer ticketed performances at the Colosseum. The company was looking to show higher quality acts. There were also restrictions on West End Shows coming to venues within the M25, which could impact on what HQ Theatres could show in Watford. Representatives from HQ Theatres were coming to the Panel's next meeting and it was agreed that this would be discussed further then.

The issue of community days at the Colosseum was raised. Officers confirmed that the contract specification did not allow for this any longer as the operator needed to run the venue on a commercial basis. Community hires were still available at a discounted rate. The Corporate, Leisure and Community Section Head undertook to find out whether the specification had changed when the new contract began in 2010.

It was suggested that the Council could help promote events led by the community in the Colosseum. Officers noted that a lot of work was done with local schools.

The Panel discussed litter and fly-tipping. It was noted that the football season had an impact on levels of litter on the streets in the vicinity of the stadium.

The Partnerships and Performance Section Head undertook to speak to the Client Manager (Waste and Recycling) about a problem of persistent fly-tipping on certain adopted roads behind North Western Avenue. There was concern amongst some members of the Panel that the charge for the collection of bulky waste items had led to an increase in fly-tipping. The Portfolio Holder emphasised the importance of prevention in cases of fly-tipping.

There had been some recent changes to shared use parking bays in the roads adjoining Whippendell Road which was causing some confusion for residents. It was agreed that the Partnerships and Performance Section Head would raise the issue with relevant officers.

Members discussed the parking appeals and the reasons why the Council lost a proportion of them.

The Panel were pleased to note that more stretching targets would be put in place for Revenues and Benefits, acknowledging the difference this would make to residents.

RESOLVED

1. that the report and Members' comments be noted
2. the actions requested be undertaken.

Panel

The meeting started at 7.30 p.m.  
and finished at 9.20 p.m.

Chair  
Outsourced Services Scrutiny