**Minutes of the PaRa Meeting held 13.1.14 at 7.30pm at Croft Sports Centre**

1. **Apologies:** Carole Bent, Malathy Sitaram, Daphne Hardwick

**Present:** Duncan Cunningham, Kareen Boyd, Judith Randell-Sly, Bea Menier, Cllr Watts, Cllr Bluh, Cllr Mattock, PC Tim North, Colin Doubleday, Susanne Webb, Claire Bouverie-Brine, Chris Hawkins, Linda Kasmaty

**Guests:** Sue Mendham, Bernie Brannan and Rob Richards from SBC to discuss concerns re Croft – part of wider leasing scheme and Children’s Centre.

1. **Minutes of Last Meeting**

Proposed by Kareen Boyd and seconded by Cllr Watts

1. **Matters Arising**

The meeting started with the guests talking about the future of leisure facilities in Swindon in general, and Croft in particular. SBC wants to maintain the leisure facilities in an increasingly difficult financial climate. They are looking for ways to make the leisure facilities sustainable, money cannot be put in to maintain and upgrade facilities because most of the council’s money will have to be spent on vulnerable adults and children in future. After an options appraisal, the Oasis is now being managed by Greenwich Leisure, an external leisure provider with a 99 year lease on the Oasis, and have improved the facility. With the apparent success of the Oasis, SBC are now awaiting bids from leisure providers to preserve and sustain leisure in Swindon, they realise they might not receive bids on all centres. Leasing out leisure centres is a property deal and so SBC cannot impose restrictions or controls on whoever takes over the centres.

**Questions**

1. **Why are the centres being offered bundled together?**

This is because a large operator likes to get established in a particular area, a single operator for all centres means it’s an attractive portfolio, it can be run by specialists geared up to run it more efficiently. At the moment the centres are not viable because they need a subsidy from SBC, national operators can cover 20 different towns. There will also be bids from not for profit organisations, although in the weighted evaluation criteria, there is a higher weighting on profit, but also need a company with financial stability and a good track record of meeting the needs of residents. Sustainability of leisure provision is the most important driver in making the decision of which company to use.

1. **Will the decision be made by full council or cabinet?**

Not yet decided.

**Action:** Sue Mendham will share weighting criteria with PaRa committee

**Action:** Cllr Mattock will engage on how bids will be processed. Too early in process to say how it will happen

1. **Why 99 year leases?**

It worked for the Oasis and gives companies a long time to invest/develop facilities.

1. **What’s to stop a change of use?**

The use can’t be changed without the council’s consent.

1. **Does the Covenant stay in place on the Croft?**

Yes.

SBC would not be doing this if they weren’t constrained to do so, they understand how important leisure facilities are to the community; at the moment, leisure facilities are being slowly strangled because of a lack of capital investment.

1. **How could croft be made profitable?- By enlarging the facility? Opening longer hours?**

It isn’t possible to say what will happen, there have to be areas of compromise, SBC would want to maintain football clubs access, but can’t guarantee this and something has to be done with a £1.5m subsidy and £6m backlog of works to be done on leisure centres. Potential operators will have to show a 5 year business plan, but there will be changes made during the 99 year lease, both in terms of operator and provision.

1. **Is there a baseline for traffic generated now?**

No, because this would not represent a change of use, proposed traffic won’t be part of any considerations. SBC do not have figures for traffic entering the Croft car park.

**General discussion**

The whole space is included in the lease, including the green space and the unadopted section of Marlborough Lane. This is because Marlborough lane is a key access area maintained at the moment by Croft Sports Centre and will be continued to be maintained by the new tenants because it is in their interests for people to have good access to the facility.

**Action:** Residents of the unadopted section of Marlborough Lane should check their Deeds to see what provision is made for the road in them.

Any road widening would be subject to planning.

There is an online questionnaire in leisure and culture sports forum on resident’s current use of the facilities. It will remain open until 5pm on 3rd  March.

**Link:** [www.leisureinswindon.co.uk](http://www.leisureinswindon.co.uk/)

Residents can also write to Keith Williams, no date has been set for a decision on bids which have to be sent in by 8th of February, sports bodies are part of consultation. It is anticipated it will take 6-8 weeks to review, clarify and make recommendations on bids.

Bidders will know of current use of facilities by community groups, and provision will be made elsewhere if they cannot be accommodated in the facility where they were.

The play area is not included in the lease.

We thanked Sue Mendham, Bernie Brannan and Rob Richards for giving up time to come and explain more about the leases.

1. **Police Update.**

PC Tim North said the reason why police officers had not come to check on the new Community Centre was that they went to the church and found it all quiet despite the fact the car park was full. PC O’Neill is investigating.

There have been 2 burglaries in Lakeside. Regarding the night time economy, on the 20th December there were 3 drugs offences, and over the Christmas period 4 drunk and disorderly people and 2 assaults. There have been 8 victims of card crime.

On The 15th December there was an assault in the back of St. Margaret’s Road prompted by blocking someone in. Re the graffiti, it was suggested rewards are offered for information leading to identifying those spraying the 4 different tags over Christmas.

A removal order was served on 10.1.14 on Mr Butcher, the shed resident in the Marlborough Lane layby. The situation is difficult because he has nowhere else to go to continue living in his shed.

1. **Councillor’s Update**

Cllr Watts informed us of the opening of the Community Centre @Christ Church, on 18.1.14 by Nick Hewer.

Waitrose is still on track to open at Easter.  Foxham Way and Mill Lane are still closed to the deep drainage work taking longer than expected and the inclement weather.  Foxham Way is due to open on 1 February and Mill Lane at the end of February. Recycling changes have been widely advertised.

Cllr Bluh was concerned about graffiti and feels there needs to be a real effort to get residents to sign disclaimer forms so it can be removed and also to identify culprits.

Cllr Mattock said there were no new planning applications on Marlborough Park, and planning has gone through on the Bell although no work seems to be being carried out.

1. **Play Area Consultation**

This is Saturday 25th January 10.30-2pm at Croft Sports Centre. Flyers will be issued informing people of this before the event.

1. **Proposal to have 420 pupils attending Croft School by 2015**

29th of January is the deadline for feedback on this.

1. **Road Traffic Consultation**

On hold

1. **Lay by Issues**

The main one being that the lay bys are not being used for resident’s parking, but blocked by residential sheds, breakdown lorries and removal lorries which remain there permanently.

1. **Venue for next Meeting**

This is the back bar at the Wheatsheaf – 10th February 7.30pm