

Report to Cabinet

Report Reference: C/044/2006-07.

Date of meeting: 4 September 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Leisure and Young People.

Subject: Waltham Abbey Sports Centre - Installation of Disabled Toilet.

Officer contact for further information: Julie Chandler (01992 – 56 4214).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendation:

That, in order to enable the re-location of the District Sportability Club to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre, a Supplementary DDF Estimate for 2006/07 in the sum of £10,000 be recommended to the Council for approval for the installation of a Disabled Toilet.

Background:

1. In October 2005, Leisure Services in partnership with West Essex School Sport Partnership (WESSP - based at Davenant Foundation School) launched the District's first sports activity club for children and young people with learning and physical disabilities.
2. The club, which is named Epping Forest Sportability, has been in operation on a regular weekly basis on Saturdays over the last 8 months. Currently the club is based at Oakview School in Loughton. Two activity sessions are provided in the morning and afternoon each week, with participants being organised into respective ability groups for a range of sports activities. The sessions are delivered by qualified and experienced coaches and local sports clubs are involved in providing monthly 'sports specials'. In addition, a range of events, day trips and activities are provided during school holiday periods throughout the year.
3. All Sportability staff are currently employed by WESSP through New Opportunities Fund and Sport England Community Sports Coach Funding. Leisure Services Sports Development Team provide support and direction for the programme.

Future Aspirations:

4. The Oakview School has been an adequate site for the initial Sportability programme, but participation levels are limited due to the constraints of the building. The long-term aim for the club is to make it accessible to a much wider audience and to enable siblings and carers to also be involved in the provision. In addition, it is hoped to include children that are diagnosed with Dyspraxia, a coordination and motor skills condition, who are unable to participate in mainstream sports provision.
5. Leisure Services Sports Development team have also been successful in securing 7,000 revenue funding, over the next two years from the Children's Fund Essex, to widen the opportunities available through Sportability. This could be achieved by transferring the main club to a larger venue where a much wider programme of activities can be provided. Swimming classes at Waltham Abbey Pool and a new weekly coordination and core skills programme at Epping Sports Centre, have also recently been introduced to widen opportunity.

6. Currently, out of the Sports Centres operated by the District Council, Waltham Abbey Sports Centre is the most accessible for wheelchair users. Additionally, the Centre provides facilities for trampolining, which is an excellent sport for disabled youngsters. However, the Centre does not currently have a disabled toilet. Space for a new toilet facility is not available in the centres' existing changing facilities, but the Head teacher from King Harold School, who currently have a joint use agreement with the Council, has agreed for the Staff PE room located in the Sports Centre, to be converted into a disabled toilet facility.
7. The Council's Building and Estates officers have assessed the potential for the conversion of the PE staff room and have reported that the room lends itself to this, due to the existence of the required pipe work and mains water supply.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

8. The provision of a disabled toilet and subsequent full disabled access to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre would enable many more children with disabilities to access sports and leisure provision who currently do not have the opportunity to do so. The expansion of the provision would also provide the opportunity for structured integration with siblings, families and carers. Members may be aware that the future of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre is currently under review by the Leisure Task and Finish Panel in advance of the end of the Dual Use Agreement in September 2007. However, Officers recommend that irrespective of the outcome, that the Council should fund the toilet provision in recognition of the considerable community benefit to children with disabilities and to ensure Disability Discrimination Act Compliance. The school are not required to improve Disabled toilet facilities for curricular use.
9. As previously mentioned, Epping Forest Sportability Club provides the only multi-sport environment for children and young people with disabilities in the District.

Other Options for Action:

10. That the Council does not fund the conversion and that the current limited provision at Oakview School remains and the £27,000 external revenue funding is not fully optimised.
11. The Cabinet seeks a Supplementary DDF Estimate in respect of the proposed installation of a disabled toilet at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre.

Consultation undertaken:

12. Sportability Club, King Harold School, Children's Fund Essex.

Resource implications:

Budget provision: £10,000.00 DDF requirement.

Personnel: Building and Estates Officer time to oversee works.

Land: N/A.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: To provide accessibility leisure opportunities for all sections of the community.

Relevant statutory powers: Disability Discrimination Act, Local Government Act 1974.

Background papers: Management Agreement with KHHS.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision Reference (if required): N/A.