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FOREWORD

I was delighted to be asked to Chair this Task and Finish Group whose scope included looking at ways to increase the Council's income from the Abbey Stadium but also more importantly improve the offer provided by the Stadium to local residents.

As many of you will know Redditch waited many years for a new Leisure Centre and pool and I was determined when Leader to achieve this during my term of office. Many of you will also know that this project took place during a particularly severe recession and therefore whilst Councillors were keen to see as many facilities as possible at the new centre, finance was limited.

As Members will be aware the Sports Centre has been a fantastic success for the town with over 500,000 visits in the first year, 2012. The biggest success has been the increase in people wanting to access health and fitness facilities with over 2000 members enjoying the facilities on a regular basis and much of this is down to the hard work of the staff at the Abbey Stadium.

We visited the Abbey Stadium at the start of the process, firstly to look in detail at what was being provided but also to chat to users of the service. The general feedback was very positive and there is no doubt that for many the Stadium is not just somewhere to exercise but is part of their social life.

Two years on, it became clear to us that due to competition from other fitness centres, in order for the Abbey Stadium to continue to grow, but more importantly retain its existing members, the offer needed to continually improve. The fitness industry is very competitive and the Abbey Stadium is now having to compete against some 'big boys'.

I believe that this report and the recommendations, have addressed the issues confronting the Abbey Stadium going forward. I would like to thank all those officers whose brains we picked during this process as well as staff at both Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre who gave up their time to assist us. I would particularly like to thank Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce for their guidance and also their hard work in the background. I know that I am not always easy to control!

Finally I must thank the rest of the team, Andy Fry, Alan Mason and Derek Taylor. I believe we worked well together and throughout the process they continually demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that the Abbey Stadium goes from strength to strength.

**Councillor Carole Gandy,
Chair of the Abbey Stadium
Task Group**



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: LEISURE TRUST

Recommendation 1

The Council should explore the option for the Abbey Stadium to be managed by a leisure trust.

Financial Implications: There is the potential for significant financial savings to be made through the management of the Abbey Stadium by an external trust. However, the group is only suggesting that this option should be explored further and is not identifying a specific trust model for the future management of the stadium. It is therefore not possible at this stage for the group to outline the exact level of savings that could be secured for the Council if a trust was to manage the stadium.

Legal implications: The selection of a leisure trust partner to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council would be subject to a procurement process. The Council would also need to specify requirements in a legal contract to be agreed by the successful leisure trust.

Recommendation 2

Subject to the Executive Committee agreeing to investigate the trust management option further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrange to pre-scrutinise any final business case relating to the future operation of the Abbey Stadium.

Financial Implications: There are no financial implications to this recommendation.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation. Members are asked to note, however, that as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of the scrutiny Work Programme this pre-scrutiny can be resolved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CHAPTER 2: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendation 3

The provision of therapeutic services should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.

(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved).

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications for the Council. If a leisure trust opted to provide therapeutic services at the stadium in the future this could have financial implications for the trust, though the figures involved would vary according to whether the trust provided the services directly or through a franchise arrangement.

Legal implications: This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of therapeutic services is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

Recommendation 4

The provision of a sauna/steam room should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.

(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved).

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The group has been advised that a new sauna / steam room could cost approximately £64,500 to install and a further £8,000 for on going maintenance costs, though the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement process. The group is anticipating that these costs would be met by a leisure trust.

Legal implications: This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of a sauna / steam room is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

CHAPTER 3: MARKETING

Recommendation 5

Officers should identify appropriate marketing measures to promote membership of the Abbey Stadium to people aged 55 years or over.

Financial Implications: More proactive use of particular marketing tools may require some financial investment, though this is likely to be minimal if the Council continues to use existing resources. The group is not specifying which marketing measures should be adopted to achieve this objective and it is therefore not possible to clarify the exact expenditure required.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

There should be expansion of the offer and additional marketing (including displays) of retail provision at the Abbey Stadium.

Financial Implications: The group believes there is the potential for retail sales to make a larger contribution to revenue at the Abbey Stadium through secondary spend. However, it is difficult to determine the exact figures involved. If a leisure trust manages the stadium on behalf of the Council this revenue would benefit the trust.

Legal Implications: There are no legal implications to this recommendation as the Council already sell some products via a contractual arrangement at the Abbey Stadium.

CHAPTER 4: ITEMS TO NOTE

Car Wash Members wished to highlight that early in the review they identified the potential for a car wash facility to be introduced at the Abbey Stadium. This idea was welcomed by Officers who have already started the process to introduce a car wash.

Apprentice Opportunities Members explored the opportunities available for apprenticeships at the Abbey Stadium and have reached some conclusions which are highlighted in the report.

Café Members visited the café at the Abbey Stadium and wanted to promote this facility. Full details are highlighted in the report.

Bus Services The group investigated the potential for bus links to be extended between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough. However, conclusions were limited as this coincided with a countywide review of bus services.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The suggestion that the expansion of the Abbey Stadium be considered as a topic for scrutiny was raised by Councillor Derek Taylor during the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event in June 2013. Further consideration was given to this idea by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed that a Task Group should be launched to investigate the matter. Members considered that this review would be particularly timely following the redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium in 2012 as it would provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the redevelopment and any need for further improvement.

There were a number of key objectives to this review, as detailed in the scoping document. At the start this included consideration of the gym and dance facilities at the stadium. However, as the investigation progressed Members were advised that Officers were separately carrying out an investigation into actions that could be taken to revamp the gym and dance facilities at the venue. In part this was in response to the recent opening of a branch of Pure Gym in the town centre as Officers recognised that this could create significant competition in the leisure service field. Therefore Members altered their scope to include reviewing the Officers' business case (Please view Appendix 1).

The main objectives for the review were:

- 1) To review the business case for the revamped Abbey Stadium.
- 2) To investigate the potential to expand the facilities at the Abbey Stadium.
- 3) To assess the potential to provide more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people at the Abbey Stadium.
- 4) To investigate the potential for Hopper Bus service links to be expanded between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough.
- 5) To review the financial costs involved in delivering any actions that could be taken to expand the Abbey Stadium.

The review consisted of a variety of approaches to gathering evidence including a number of site visits. At an early stage in the review Members visited the Abbey Stadium to view existing facilities and to provide them with an opportunity to identify options for improvement. Following this visit Members concluded that it would be useful to visit other leisure centres for comparison purposes in order to view the services and activities provided at those venues and how they were managed. The group therefore visited Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre. Full details about the findings from these visits are detailed in the body of the report.

The group also interviewed a number of Officers with professional expertise in relation to leisure services. This included interviews with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, Human Resources Officers, the Democratic Services Apprentice and Finance Officers. Evidence was also obtained from the Portfolio

Holder for Leisure and Tourism, Councillor Phil Mould, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bill Hartnett.

The group finalised their recommendations in April 2014. One member was not present when the recommendations were agreed and will not be present when the group presents their report. However, he has confirmed that he is supportive of the group's recommendations.

CHAPTER 1: LEISURE TRUST

Recommendation 1	The Council should explore the option for the Abbey Stadium to be managed by a leisure trust.
Financial Implications	There is the potential for significant financial savings to be made through the management of the Abbey Stadium by an external trust. However, the group is only suggesting that this option should be explored further and is not identifying a specific trust model for the future management of the stadium. It is therefore not possible at this stage for the group to outline the exact level of savings that could be secured for the Council if a trust was to manage the stadium.
Legal Implications	The selection of a leisure trust partner to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council would be subject to a procurement process. The Council would also need to specify requirements in a legal contract to be agreed by the successful leisure trust.

The review took place in a context of continuing financial constraints for the Council and with this in mind the group was keen to explore any options that might lead to a reduction in costs whilst maintaining quality services at the Abbey Stadium. It became clear from data provided about numerous other leisure venues in the region that leisure facilities were often managed by external trusts on behalf of local authorities. With this in mind the group concluded that it would be useful to visit some leisure facilities run by trusts to learn about this model of management. This led to the group's visits to Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre.

Evesham Leisure Centre

The Evesham Leisure Centre was managed by Wychavon Leisure (Community Association Limited) on behalf of Wychavon District Council. Wychavon Leisure had first been awarded the contract to manage the centre in the 1990s in the year in which the trust was established to manage leisure facilities on a not for profit basis. The remit of Wychavon Leisure had since expanded so that the trust was managing leisure centres in a variety of locations and for a number of clients, including local schools, Malvern Hills District Council and Bromsgrove District Council.

The group conducted a detailed interview with senior representatives of Wychavon Leisure and a senior Officer from Wychavon District Council during their visit in December 2013. This included discussions around the operating model, the relationship that the trust had with the local Council, including

Councillors, details of membership packages and information about franchising arrangements. The group also undertook a tour of the facilities which included; two swimming pools, gym facilities, dance studios, badminton courts, sauna/steam room and Jacuzzi, café, beauty therapy treatments and a climbing wall.

Stratford Leisure Centre

The Stratford Leisure Centre was managed by Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) on behalf of Stratford-on-Avon District Council. SLM, which was established in 1987, worked with approximately 25 local authorities in the country and operations were managed by the organisation on a regional basis with the West Region including Stratford and covering 100 leisure centres. The trust had had the contract to manage Stratford Leisure Centre for 20 years and Members were impressed to observe that all marketing materials were provided with dual branding (for both the trust and the Council)..

At the time of the group's visit SLM was in the fourth year of their third contract with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and managed four sites on behalf of the local authority. The Council set performance targets which the trust needed to meet. They have now reached a stage where the trust is in a position to return money to the Council as part of an on going arrangement, though this was only possible after the contract had been in place for a number of years.

As with their visit to Evesham the group conducted an extensive interview with senior representatives of SLM during their visit in February 2014. This interview focused on a variety of issues including; SLM's operating model, aims and objectives; and the group was interested to note that SLM was widening their business portfolio to include museums, theatres and golf courses. The group also was provided with a guided tour of the venue, which was built in the 1970s. Facilities included: two swimming pools, three dance studios, a main hall that could be used for sports such as badminton and five-a-side football, gym facilities, a separate spin room, crèche and nursery, café and extensive retail facilities.

Trust Model Summary

The group identified a number of key advantages to management of a leisure facility by an external trust on behalf of a Council. These included:

- The potential to make financial savings as the trust would be employing the staff and covering overhead costs. However the group is not able to state what savings could be achieved for Redditch Borough Council as they are not specifying which model should be adopted and they recognise that the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement exercise.
- There is the possibility to receive an income in the long term, which could be reinvested in the services dependent on the model of trust chosen.
- Trusts have greater flexibility to borrow as well as to bid for external sources of funding than local authorities.

- At each of the venues visited the trusts had helped to invest in the centre, either via the infrastructure or an expansion of the services available.
- Trusts have greater flexibility than the Council to negotiate costs with potential contractors in any procurement process (creating opportunities to expand the venue).
- Staff would potentially be more dedicated to a specific site rather than having to cover various responsibilities as they do at the Council.
- Trusts, particularly those that are well established, often have the expertise and investment in professional marketing techniques which would help to promote the stadium.

The group recognises that if a trust was to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council a number of key considerations would need to be addressed for example:

- The content of the contract would need to specify clearly the requirements for managing and maintaining the stadium as well as the governance links between the trust and the Council. Performance monitoring arrangements would also need to be agreed and a break clause would need to be negotiated in the event the working relationship could not continue.
- If a trust was to manage the Stadium on behalf of the Council there is the potential that this could lead to a reduction in income from business rates.
- The position of staff currently employed at the Stadium would need to be considered carefully with options for TUPE transfer to be included in the contract and staff to be consulted alongside trade unions throughout the process.
- Senior Members and Officers may wish to consider whether a contract should be offered to manage the Abbey Stadium alone or alongside other leisure venues in the Borough. The group did not feel they could explore this option further as consideration of other leisure facilities was not within their remit.

Members are therefore proposing that the option for a trust to manage the Abbey Stadium on behalf of the Council should be explored further. However they recognise that there are many different trust models and options available to the Council and they have only investigated two of these arrangements. Members therefore do not feel that at this stage they should specify which model should be adopted.

<p>Recommendation 2</p>	<p>Subject to the Executive Committee agreeing to investigate the trust management option further the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrange to pre-scrutinise any final business case relating to the future operation of the Abbey Stadium.</p>
<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>Legal Implications</p>	<p>There are no financial implications to this recommendation.</p> <p>There are no legal implications to this recommendation. Members are asked to note, however, that as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of the scrutiny Work Programme this pre-scrutiny can be resolved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>

Members understand that if Recommendation 1 is approved Officers will need to produce a business case exploring the various options which could be adopted for the management of the stadium by a leisure trust. This business case would need to be reported back to the Executive Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in recent years has increasingly made a valuable contribution to the decision making process by pre-scrutinising a number of items. It was felt that this business case would be suitable for pre-scrutiny due to the expert knowledge that non-executive Members have gained during this investigation.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to agree the content of its own Work Programme. This recommendation can therefore be resolved upon by the Committee and the Executive Committee will simply be asked to note this decision.

CHAPTER 2: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendation 3	The provision of therapeutic services should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	(The following is based on the group presupposing that recommendation 1 would be approved). There are no direct financial implications for the Council. If a leisure trust opted to provide therapeutic services at the stadium in the future this could have financial implications for the trust, though the figures involved would vary according to whether the trust provided the services directly or through a franchise arrangement.
Legal Implications	This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of therapeutic services is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

During the visits to other leisure facilities in the region, and from the data provided in respect of other venues, Members became aware of a number of additional services which could enhance the experience available to their customers. This included:

- Therapeutic services such as massage and other beauty related facilities.
- Sauna and steam rooms.
- Jacuzzi.
- Creche and nursery.

There is increasing competition within the leisure sector locally, following a growth in the number of leisure venues that have been opened in the Borough. Members feel that the offer at the Abbey Stadium needs to be continually updated to ensure that the venue remains an attractive proposition in the face of this competition. Whilst these additional services could help the Council to secure a small amount of income the group believes that the main benefits of these additional services are that they would be extra attractions that would help the stadium both to retain long standing members as well as new customers.

After further investigation the group agreed that the introduction of therapeutic services in particular should be explored further. Therapeutic services could be provided at the stadium in two different ways:

- 1) Delivered directly by a trust managing the Abbey Stadium. This might be more likely to occur if a large trust wins the contract to manage the stadium on behalf of the Council.
- 2) Provided through a franchise arrangement with an external company. This could apply whether the Council or an external trust is managing the Abbey Stadium in the future and would be a useful source of additional revenue as a regular income could be provided through the rent of the premises.

The group believes that it might be more appropriate to explore the potential to introduce therapeutic services at the Abbey Stadium once a decision has been reached in respect of the operational arrangements at the venue.

Recommendation 4	The provision of a sauna/steam room should be considered under any new trust arrangements put in place in future at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	(The following is based on the group presupposing that Recommendation 1 would be approved). There are no direct financial implications for the Council. The group has been advised that a new sauna / steam room could cost approximately £64,500 to install and a further £8,000 for on going maintenance costs, though the costs would be subject to the outcome of a procurement process. The group is anticipating that these costs would be met by a leisure trust.
Legal Implications	This suggestion would need to be incorporated into a contract with an external trust in order to ensure that the introduction of a sauna / steam room is investigated as part of future arrangements for managing the stadium.

Another of the additional facilities observed by the group during their visits and included in the list above, which Members felt would enhance the membership package available at the Abbey Stadium, was a sauna/steam room. This was a popular facility at both Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre and the staff at both venues concurred that whilst not generating significant profit this facility was a useful attraction.

The group discussed this idea in some detail with members of the Leisure Services team. Members were informed that external consultants had advised the Leisure Services team that saunas/steam rooms were being increasingly removed from leisure centres due to the high running costs and limited demand. However, the popularity of the services observed by Members during their visits seemed to contradict this advice.

Members acknowledge the significant financial implications involved in introducing a sauna/steam room at the stadium. Officers have advised that if the Council was to introduce a sauna/steam room the installation costs would be approximately £64,500 and there would be a further estimated £8,000 required to cover annual maintenance costs. Members understand that in the current economic circumstances the Council could not afford to meet these costs. However a trust would have greater flexibility to negotiate prices with potential contractors as part of the procurement process.

CHAPTER 3 - MARKETING

Recommendation 5	Officers should identify appropriate marketing measures to promote membership of the Abbey Stadium to people aged 55 years or over.
Financial Implications	More proactive use of particular marketing tools may require some financial investment, though this is likely to be minimal if the Council continues to use existing resources. The group is not specifying which marketing measures should be adopted to achieve this objective and it is therefore not possible to clarify the exact expenditure required.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications to this recommendation.

During the investigation the group received a significant amount of data covering membership figures and usage of the facilities at the Abbey Stadium. Members were advised that there were around 2,500 members of the Abbey Stadium, with monthly membership costs set at £25 for off peak use and £32 for peak use. The group considered that membership of the Abbey Stadium was value for money when compared to the costs of other local leisure facilities. Whilst there was significant use of the facilities during peak times there was more limited use during non-peak hours.

Officers have already recognised the benefits of targeting particular groups through active marketing to increase use of facilities during non-peak hours. Existing groups that are being targeted include:

- Mother and baby groups / Water Babies.
- Particular groups of elderly citizens, including a local Alzheimers' Group
- The Inspire Me Project, a health and wellbeing group.

From the information provided by Officers the group concluded that it was clear that promotional work in respect of these specific groups was carried out effectively. However, after further discussions Members agreed that there was one niche market which had not been targeted but had the potential to make use of the facilities at the stadium during off peak hours. This was people aged 55 and over. The data had shown that membership levels in this age range were currently low.

People aged 55 and over would be ideally placed to take advantage of all aspects of the Abbey Stadium at these times because they are more likely to be retired and / or have more leisure time available during non-peak times. In many

cases people of this generation may have the disposal income to take up this opportunity. The group is aware that promoting these facilities to this age group would enable Officers to address some of the health inequalities, particularly obesity levels, affecting residents living in the local area in line with the Council's commitments under the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy.

The group is not specifying the types of marketing tools that should be used by Officers to target this age range. Instead, they are encouraging Officers to use existing methods more effectively, in particular by concentrating on those tools which are known to appeal more to older residents.

Recommendation 6	There should be expansion of the offer and additional marketing (including displays) of retail provision at the Abbey Stadium.
Financial Implications	The group believes there is the potential for retail sales to make a larger contribution to revenue at the Abbey Stadium through secondary spend. However, it is difficult to determine the exact figures involved. If a leisure trust manages the stadium on behalf of the Council this revenue would benefit the trust.
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications to this recommendation as the Council already sell some products via a contractual arrangement at the Abbey Stadium.

Whilst it was accepted that currently there are some leisure products available for customers to purchase at the Abbey Stadium Members felt that this was an area which could be expanded further. This could be achieved at a minimal cost to the Council with the potential to generate additional revenue through secondary spend.

The idea that more could be done to promote retail sales was highlighted during the group's visit to Stratford Leisure Centre. In this centre, merchandise was displayed prominently in the reception area and produced a significant income for SLM. Members were also advised that in the opinion of experts within the industry, retail offers can also enhance the customer's experience, particularly in cases where key equipment has been forgotten or broken.

In the event that the Abbey Stadium develops a reputation for selling good quality leisure merchandise it is possible that these sales could help to attract new customers. The group therefore believes that investment in this area can only benefit the Abbey Stadium.

CHAPTER 4 – ITEMS TO NOTE

There were a number of issues that, whilst Members did not feel it was appropriate to use as the source for any recommendations, they wished to highlight in the report.

Car Wash

Early in the review Members identified the potential for a car wash facility to be introduced at the Abbey Stadium. The group felt that, given the close proximity of the stadium to local road networks and to a number of businesses, the introduction of a car wash on the site had the potential to attract significant business and therefore additional revenue for the Council.

Officers were keen from the start to explore this option further to the extent that after investigation it was concluded that a car wash could be introduced at the stadium on a trial basis. At the time of writing the Council was already undertaking a procurement process to identify a suitable company to manage this facility on behalf of the Council.

The group was advised that the permanent introduction of a car wash facility at the Abbey Stadium would be subject to receiving planning permission. In order to receive planning permission for this type of facility the stadium would need to be able to demonstrate that it was able to dispose of contaminated water satisfactorily which could require significant expenditure. Members have raised concerns as to whether these conditions are observed more generally by other car wash facilities in the Borough and feel that this should be investigated further.

Apprenticeship Opportunities

In line with the group's terms of reference Members did interview a representative of the Council's Human Resources team to find out more about employment and apprenticeship opportunities that could be made available at the Abbey Stadium. They were also delighted to have the opportunity to speak directly with the Democratic Services Apprentice, in order to obtain further information about the reasons why young people might apply for an apprenticeship and how opportunities were promoted as well as to hear about her personal experiences of the process.

During their visits to other leisure centres Members found that a large variety of apprenticeship opportunities were available at external trusts. In particular, at larger trusts there were greater employment and training opportunities available for both apprentices and other staff than would be available to staff employed by a local authority.

The group was advised that although in the past an apprentice employed at the stadium had not completed their placement the Leisure Service team was shortly due to employ two new apprentices. Members have been assured that one of these apprentices will be based in the Council's leisure centres. The group

therefore concluded that there was no need to make any recommendations on this subject.

Café

Members visited the café at the Abbey Stadium shortly after it opened in January 2014 and were delighted with the quality of the food and drink on offer. The group feels that this café should be promoted more actively wherever possible to customers as it will both help to enhance the experience of existing members and potentially attract new customers to the stadium.

Bus services

The group investigated the potential for bus links to be extended between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough. This included considering the potential for the Hopper Community Bus Service, which currently operates between Webheath and the Abbey Stadium, to cover additional routes that would enable residents living or working in various parts of the town to access the venue.

The Task Group review coincided with a review of bus services conducted by Worcestershire County Council. As part of this review the county Council was considering savings that could be achieved from reducing the subsidy the Council allocates to funding these services. Members acknowledged that it was therefore unlikely that Worcestershire County Council would consider funding any additional service for the Hopper Community bus which is provided by that Council.

Options for increasing use of the Dial a Ride service for Abbey Stadium customers were also considered during the review. However, the group was informed that the Dial a Ride service already transported some groups to the stadium. In addition, Members noted that, in line with a recommendation made by the Youth Services Provision Task Group in 2012 Dial a Ride vehicles are now available for groups to hire outside of normal working hours.

Lockers

During the group's visit to the Abbey Stadium Members were advised by female customers that they had concerns about the accessibility of lockers to keep their personal items secure. Following the visit the location of the lockers was changed. The group believes that this demonstrates the value of consultation with customers to the continuing improvement of the venue.

CONCLUSION

Members wish to highlight that despite the fact that the Council is currently experiencing difficult economic circumstance the Abbey Stadium is a well-run, well attended local leisure facility which is an asset to the Borough.

The recent redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium was largely successful. However, there is a danger, as indicated by the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, that the stadium could become a victim of its own success. The group felt it was important that the Council does not become complacent about the quality of services available and the ability of the venue not only to retain existing customers but also to attract new customers.

The group's recommendations are designed to contribute to the continuing improvement of the stadium so that it remains an asset for the people of Redditch for the foreseeable future.

APPENDIX 1
Scrutiny Proposal Form

(This form should be completed by sponsoring Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

Note: The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the Borough Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation	Councillor Derek Taylor	Date of referral	23/07/13
Proposed topic title	Abbey Stadium Task Group		
Link to national, regional and local priorities and targets	<p>Redditch Borough Council draft strategic purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide good things for me to do, see and visit. <p>Local Strategic Partnership Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health inequalities – (tackling obesity). • Developing the economy of Redditch. 		
Background to the issue	<p>As Redditch Borough Council's former Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism I was the lead Member for the Abbey Stadium at the time of the reopening in 2012. As the Portfolio Holder I met regularly with Leisure Services Officers and participated in a number of tours of the site. Over the past year I have continued to maintain an interest in the site and continue to use services available at the stadium including the swimming pool and the gym.</p> <p>As anticipated the revamped Abbey Stadium is a very successful venture and reached the targets for membership soon after the opening. We have a substantial site which is well established, with extensive surrounding land, good access and parking. The basics of facility, staffing and management are already in place on land that the Council owns.</p>		

	<p>However, from my business and professional background I believe that we could expand this local, well used facility into something that would benefit the local economy, the Council and ultimately the residents.</p> <p>I believe there is the potential to work with the existing space available to offer more activities, facilities and services. This space needs to be managed in an innovative and flexible manner to ensure that we can meet the changing needs and expectations of visitors to the stadium.</p>
<p>Key Objectives Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To review the business cases for the revamped Abbey Stadium against current operation, taking into account: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) elements, if any, of the business case that were not delivered by the date of the reopening of the Abbey Stadium and the reasons why this occurred; and b) to review the business case for the gym and dance classes. <p><i>(This objective should enable all Members of the Task Group to clarify the current situation for the Abbey Stadium).</i></p> 2) To investigate the potential to expand the facilities and activities available at the Abbey Stadium. <p>This could involve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) interviewing Portfolio Holder and representatives of the Council's Leisure Services team; b) visiting the Abbey Stadium to view existing use of space, facilities and activities; and c) interviewing members of Redditch Town Centre Partnership to assess views on linking in with the potential day tourist economy in the Town Centre. 3) To assess the potential to provide more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people at the Abbey Stadium.

	<p>This could involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) interviewing representatives of the Council's Leisure Services team; b) interviewing representatives of the Human Resources team; c) interviewing officers from the Department for Work and Pensions. (Jobcentre Plus); and d) investigating the Government Apprenticeship schemes. <p>4) To investigate the potential for Hopper bus services to be expanded between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough.</p> <p>This could include investigating the potential for subsidies to be provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership; and b) businesses based in the town centre. <p>5) To review the financial costs involved in delivering any actions that could be taken to expand the Abbey Stadium, taking into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the capital costs; b) the revenue costs; c) potential borrowing costs; and d) the projected return of income from any proposed actions.
<p>How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)</p>	<p>I think that this review could be completed within six months by a dedicated Task Group.</p>

APPENDIX 2
Witnesses

The Abbey Stadium Task Group would like to thank the following people for providing evidence during the course of the review:

Scott Brinkworth (Operations Manager, Abbey Stadium)
Frances Collings (Democratic Services Apprentice)
Michael Craggs (Democratic Services Officer until 25th October 2013)
Tim Deakin (Development Manager, Wychavon District Council)
Toni Gaskins (Contract Manager, Stratford Leisure Centre – SLM)
John Godwin (Head of Leisure and Cultural Services)
Sarah Greenlowe (Motivator, SLM)
Councillor Bill Hartnett (Leader of the Council)
Iain Mackay (Senior Enforcement Officer – Planning)
Kay McBride (Evesham Leisure Centre Manager – Wychavon Leisure)
Sam Morgan (Financial Services Manager)
Councillor Phil Mould (Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism)
Jayne Pickering (Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Resources)
Dan Steed (Area Contracts Manager, SLM)
Becky Talbot (Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager)
Dave Wheeler (Leisure Services Manager)
Peter Williams (Business Development, SLM)
Peter Williams (Managing Director, Wychavon Leisure).

APPENDIX 3
Timeline of Activities

Date	Task Group Activity
2nd September 2013	Scoping discussion and interview with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin.
26th September	Visit to the Abbey Stadium.
16th October	Consideration of review progress and proposing amendments to the group's terms of reference.
29th October	Considering comparable data for various leisure centres in the country.
5th December	Interviews with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin, and the Operations Manager for the Abbey Stadium, Scott Brinkworth. Also initial scrutiny of the draft business case for the gym extension at the Abbey Stadium Sports Centre.
12th December	Visit to Evesham Leisure Centre and interview with representatives of Wychavon Leisure Community Association Ltd.
3rd January 2014	Reflections on progress with the review and initial brainstorm of potential recommendations.
24th January	Visit to the café in the Abbey Stadium.
27th January	Interviews with the Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Resources, Jayne Pickering, and the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin.
12th February	Visit to Stratford Leisure Centre and interview with representatives of SLM.

25th February	Interview with Councillor Mould, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism.
27th February	Interviews with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, Becky Talbot, and the Democratic Services Apprentice, Frances Collings.
12th March	Consideration of review progress
3rd April	Interview with the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, John Godwin, and the Financial Services Manager, Sam Morgan.
16th April	Consideration of feedback received in writing from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Hartnett, and agreement of the group's recommendations.
3rd June	Finalisation of the group's report.