

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 12th September 2019

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PART I

FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

SLOUGH GYMNASTICS CLUB

1 **Purpose of Report**

To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the current situation in regard to Slough Gymnastics Club finding suitable accommodation in the town to host their activities.

2. **Recommendation**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the assistance offered by council officers to date in finding suitable facilities for the gymnastics club.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Improving mental health and wellbeing

Physical activity and sport play a crucial role in maintaining good health, preventing illness, supporting mental wellbeing and generally enabling people to be healthier and happier for longer.

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful

Taking part in regular sport and physical activity is proven to improve the physical health and mental wellbeing of children and young people, along with educational attainment, confidence and self esteem.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

No budget has been earmarked in the council's medium term financial plan to support this.

(b) Risk Management

There are no reported risks associated with this report.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications associated with this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no requirement for an EIA.

5. **Supporting Information**

In March 2019 the council received a petition under the Council's Petitions Scheme, from Slough Gymnastics Club. The Petition contained 1,608 signatures, all of which were submitted online via the e-petition facility on the Council's website:

'We the undersigned petition the council to provide a location that is suitable to house Slough Gymnastics Club - either a building with suitable use, or a location to build a purpose built multi-sport venue that incorporates SGC, and provide space for a temporary building until a suitable location is found to build on.'

The petition organiser, Amy Jones, was invited to speak at the Council meeting held on 23 April 2019. Following discussion by Members of the Council it was recommended that officers report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2019 on this matter.

Background

- 5.1 Slough Gymnastics Club was established in 2010 and operated from a converted warehouse on Slough Trading Estate, leasing the provision from SEGRO. Since this date the club has grown in size with a membership of over 500; of all ages and abilities. The club is a private business set up as a community interest company.
- 5.2 In 2017 the council received information that Slough Gymnastics Club (SGC) had been given notice to quit by SEGRO from their bespoke venue on Buckingham Avenue and contacted the club to offer support. The club unfortunately were unable to find a suitable alternative venue and the council negotiated the use of a space at Montem Leisure Centre at a reduced rate of £3K per month. At this point it was explained to the club that this was a temporary measure up to March 2019, when Montem would be closed for demolition. The club moved to Montem in March 2018.
- 5.3 The council has no responsibility to provide facilities for community sports clubs in the town. At no point did the council agree to fund or subsidise any alternative provision for SGC.
- 5.4 During this period the council contacted Sport and England and British Gymnastics to discuss potential support for the club in reference to capital funding towards a new facility. Unfortunately they confirmed that no support was available.
- 5.5 In the summer of 2018, the council undertook a feasibility study to extend Cippenham Community Centre to house an artistic gymnastics venue. A master plan was produced and it proved it was possible to meet the gym club's needs at

this proposed venue. SGC would have been charged the full commercial rate for the hire of this facility. Unfortunately the project could not proceed when the planning authority confirmed that planning would not be granted as the development was situated on high risk flood plain. The club was informed of this as soon as we received this information.

5.6 The council subsequently met regularly with the club and searched for suitable sites in the borough including council owned facilities and commercial industrial units. All were declined by the club as either being unsuitable in regard to size or not affordable. These sites and options included:

- Cippenham Community Centre (without the extension to the existing provision)
- Weekes Drive Community Centre
- Thames Valley Athletics Centre
- Langley Pavilion
- 7 x commercial business units at various sites across the borough
- Keep Montem Leisure Centre open for 3 to 12 months
- Slough Cricket Club
- Wexham Park (privately owned facility)

5.7 In January 2019 the club presented the council with a temporary building design and costs and requested land for them to put a temporary structure on. The size of the structure was 800m² (8,611ft²) and the council's immediate response was that there were no affordable or suitable sites in the borough to house such a large structure, which would also require planning consent. Since the Council meeting held 23 April 2019, this remains the case that there are no suitable sites in the borough for a large structure of this type.

5.8 The council's assets team have confirmed that costs for commercial units across the borough have remained the same over the past year, averaging between £10 to £17 per square foot to rent. Therefore this remains an unaffordable option for the club to pursue, based on previous costs of suitable facilities.

6. **Conclusion**

Officers from the council's leisure and assets teams have liaised and worked with the club since 2017 in their pursuit to find new facilities for the gymnastics club, as they value greatly the work this commercial organisation carries out in the borough.

Unfortunately the club's requirements cannot be easily met in regard to the size of the building they require to meet British Gymnastics Association standards.

At present there are no viable options for the club to remain operational in the town. Council officers will contact the club if any suitable facilities become available.

7. **Appendices Attached**

None

8. **Background Papers**

Petition and report to Council 23 April 2019 - [Link to Council 23 April 2019](#)