

# Crawley Sports Centre

## Proposed programme of use and facility allocation

While accepting that each Centre is unique and therefore its programme governed by limitations of the building and policies of the local authority or trust, it is felt that the solution which emerged at Crawley may be of interest to fellow members.

The two-court Sports Hall with its many ancillary facilities is the latest addition to the existing complex which the Crawley Borough Council is developing on the Haslett Avenue site and the protracted delay in its completion afforded US (Jack Fidgett and Roger Luke) an unprecedented opportunity to spend nearly eighteen months on refining a user programme. In 1964 a 33.1/3 metre swimming pool and 12½ metre teaching pool set them on their way and by 1966 an eight-lane athletics track, central arena and floodlit games area had been added.

The decision to build extensive indoor facilities was made soon after and it is this section which is due to open in the autumn of this year.

An early policy decision made by the Authority was that no facility would be monopolised by any one section of the user groups and that, wherever possible, some facilities should always be available to book by members of the public. These user groups were defined as follows:

Public  
Education  
Council Classes  
Clubs  
Uncommitted

A real attempt was made to learn from the development of time allocation for the swimming pool which had then been open for 9 years. Such is the demand for water time that apart from two hours on a Saturday evening for gala hire, all the rest was neatly parcelled and sold. No room exists for growth of new water activities or expansion of existing ones. The only real option left being to erode public swimming time and this is strenuously resisted by the Council.

To avoid this situation happening in the Sports Hall the idea of uncommitted 'white' time grew, and up to the point of opening is standing the test to which it will undoubtedly continue to be put.

Preserving enough 'white' time in all areas where there is competition between different activities for the same space, afforded us the opportunity to meet many sporting needs during their high requirement times. This may take the form of additional club training or coaching or an important match which one of our user clubs has to fit in. The year is divided into three seasonal periods of Spring (January—April), Summer (May—August) and Autumn (September—December) and priority claims for each period decided upon. For example during the spring cricket would have a high priority rating and possibly all the 'white' time in the range room containing three cricket nets would be provisionally allocated to it. Five-a-side soccer, golf driving, archery and roller skating—the competing activities for this space, sharing what is left. Cricket would not figure so high during the autumn and would be at the bottom of the list during the summer. Each sport was looked at and rated for the three seasons.

The concept of 'white' time was presented to the Council and accepted despite being told that to preserve enough uncommitted time to make the idea work it might on occasions mean underuse of some of their facilities. The benefits however were accepted as being greater than the losses.

The next stage of programming was to look at club allocation and in every case our prime consideration was to look at the preservation and development of the activity and then discuss with clubs, associations or leagues and the best way to help that activity and through this the clubs. Each sport had its own requirements and these were highlighted by a combined survey with the local Sports Advisory Council. Follow-up meetings with representatives took place until the negotiated solution was reached. Our aim was not to re-house all the existing clubs in the area—we

could not have done this even if it was desirable, so wherever possible an umbrella organisation was encouraged. Examples of the acceptance of this locally is shown by the formation of an indoor bowls league, covering all the established clubs in a ten mile radius; a fencing federation, the local FA running the indoor 5-a-side league and the Crawley Badminton Association taking the competitive badminton allocation of two courts for four hours on one night of the week for the formation of a super club. Our selling point for not offering more to competitive badminton was that those association members not fortunate enough to play at a level to earn a regular place in the super club would be able to use the centre's superior facilities only if adequate courts are available. We offered these people 40 court hours (5 times the super club allocation) per week in which to play.

Education is allocated much of the time between 9.00 am and 4.00 pm with squash courts, weight training facilities and the range room all available for public booking from 12.00—2.00 pm. The potentially quiet period between the schools finishing at 4.00 and the evening activities starting at 7.00 is allocated primarily to Council coaching classes with an approved rate of 20p per hour for children and 30p for adults including instruction, facility hire and all necessary equipment.

A further important Council policy is that major spectator events were to be encouraged at weekends and for that reason Friday is also left unallocated. Clubs who book at weekend will do so on the understanding that their hire could be cancelled at a months notice by the Management to run an International or a Tournament. From Monday to Thursday however all club bookings would have the guarantee of continuity with the provision that due to pressure for the facilities, purposeful use must be made.

When attempting to review and assess the programme certain key factors emerge.

1 Management involvement continuously in the scheme from the time the Architect's brief was prepared and could therefore influence design features to tie in with primary objectives.

2 A council convinced that recreation is for all and that the rate subsidy is well spent.

3 The assistance and advice from colleagues who made us so welcome on our many visits to Sports Centres within the region which has proved invaluable.

We hope that the details contained in this article will provide food for thought and we would welcome comments, observations and, if necessary, would be quite happy to provide further clarification. Contact may be made through the Manager, Crawley Sports Centre, Haslett Avenue, Crawley, Sussex. Telephone 0293-21015 and 0293-34731.