

Teachers' Notes

A role play which highlights different groups' perspectives on a public sector enterprise.

Syllabus coverage:	The objectives of public and private enterprise.
Skills:	Group work, presentational skills, evaluation of oral and written evidence, report writing, the democratic process.
Time:	1 hour plus write-up time.
Organization:	Pairs or group work. Individual write up.

IN THE CLASSROOM:

The local leisure centre has run into trouble. It is currently run by a private company which has failed to meet its objectives. The options are to be discussed and conclusions drawn from briefing sheets and presentations made by members of the class who represent different interests. You may wish to involve someone from your local council. The activity simulates a council meeting. Some students will be contributing, others observing or commenting from the public seats. The roles of councillors with strong interests are easier to present than others.

Stage 1

Divide the class into eight groups of three or four students. Provide each group with the evidence sheets and allow time for a brief discussion. Then hand out the roles cards. Each group will prepare to represent the views of one of the eight members of the recreation committee.

Stage 2

Select one or two from each group to attend the meeting. The others will become observers. The teacher, acting as chair, should follow the agenda as set out.

Possible follow-up work:

- *Draw a poster to attract people to the special meeting.*
- *Write a brief record of the meeting.*
- *Write a newspaper report of the meeting.*
- *Investigate local sports centres to find out who owns them and how their objectives are determined.*

EVIDENCE 1

The History of the Leisure Centre

In the early 1970s Bath City Council built a sports centre in the middle of Bath to provide sports facilities for use by all residents and visitors to this world-heritage city.

The centre contains a sports hall, two swimming pools, health and fitness facilities, and squash courts. There are three all-weather pitches. The car park is used by customers of the sports centre and by shoppers as it lies close to the city centre.

The leisure centre was run by the city council for twenty years until 1992, when a company called Contemporary Leisure won a contract to run it on the council's behalf for five years.

Contemporary Leisure won the contract because it promised to provide a good service for the lowest price to the council. Contemporary Leisure won several other contracts for other councils, including Bournemouth on the south coast and Hillingdon in London.

By 1992 the leisure centre was showing its age and within days of starting the contract Contemporary Leisure promised to provide details of a major face-lift to improve the facilities. The plans were never published. In November 1994, Contemporary Leisure asked the council if it could change its contract for the run-down sports centre. The company was not meeting its main objective of making a profit for its owners.



EVIDENCE 2

From the Bath Chronicle...

The local paper has been keeping close track of the events and the following are taken from headlines, articles and letters to the editor.

Swimming pool to be closed for 12 weeks because the tile cement is cracking

SPORTS CENTRE CHANGING FACILITIES ARE SLAMMED BY ITS USERS

SLIPPERY OUTDOOR COURTS ARE A DANGER IN THE RAIN

Sports centre staff fear for their jobs

'Number of users is in decline'

'Young foreign tourists continue to use the sports centre'

'Why won't the council accept responsibility for the poor facilities at the sports centre?'

'Why I won't be using the sports centre again?'

EVIDENCE 3

Sports centre users

Current users include: the general public as casual users and on courses, schools for swimming, disabled groups, swimming clubs, triathlon club, retired groups, youth groups, parents with young children.



You are a councillor who represents an area where there are many old people who wish the council tax to be as low as possible.



You are a councillor who represents an area where there are many teenagers. You believe that the council spends too much money on tourists and not enough to provide facilities for local youths.



You are a councillor who is interested in education and has a concern at the lack of sports facilities in some of the local schools.



You are the paid officer in charge of leisure and tourism for the city. You are there to give advice to the committee and you do not have a vote.



You are the union representative for the sports centre employees and you have to look after their interests. You have been asked along to express your opinion, but you have no vote.



You are a Director of Contemporary Leisure. You have no vote, but you wish to put forward the case for the Council to support the company by providing financial support (a subsidy).



You are a councillor who is undecided, but will decide on the option you think will be in the public interest.



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Bath City Council's

RECREATION COMMITTEE

A G E N D A

1. Brief outline of the history of the sports centre. (Chair)
2. The aims of the sports centre for the council.
3. Discussion on the options:-
 - a) Take over the running of the sports centre including all the workers' contracts.
 - b) Change the contract with Contemporary Leisure so that the opening hours become less and that the council provide more financial support.
 - c) Allow the sports centre to close for several months until a new company can be found to run it.
 - d) Allow the sports centre to close permanently as there is not enough demand for its facilities.
 - e) Other ideas.
4. Recommendations.