

HOPE FADES FOR SPORTS CENTRE BID

WORTHING TOWN COUNCIL appear certain to drop out of the market for the Forest Road drill hall, killing any hopes that the hall and 2½ acres of land will be turned into a sports centre.

The Parade and Open Spaces Committee are recommending that the council take no action and their decision will be put before Thursday's council meeting.

It comes as no surprise because of the obvious expense of the operation. But their decision became all the more obvious when the council's officers put the facts on paper.

The corporation would face a bill of £101,000, they estimated. Of this, £80,000 would be the purchase price and the rest would go in adapting the building.

In addition, they calculated, the centre would run at an annual loss of £12,060.

STANDARD

On the other hand, a purpose-built sports centre with standard dimensions would cost £150,000, excluding land cost, furniture, equipment and fees.

The officers, in their joint report, said the building is very well constructed with no evidence of any structural or material failure, or of damp penetration. If maintained in its present condition, there would probably be no need for a major overhaul for between 10 and 20 years.

But, they said, the main hall is below the minimum standard for a games hall, and this applies to other rooms.

"It would be a costly process to provide alternative circulation routes outside the main hall and rooms without a considerable reduction in floor area. It is doubtful whether any alterations of this magnitude would be justified.

"Very little of the accommoda-

Council told: 'Don't buy'

tion would adapt easily and in most cases, the actual dimensions are below the minimum standard for competition."

Chairman of the Parade and Open Spaces Committee, Cr. S. Clinch, said his committee thoroughly investigated the matter.

"On Thursday afternoon we met representatives of a big number of sporting groups and discussed their views. We decided we could not recommend that the council purchase the drill hall."

With the council almost certain to wipe their hands of the drill hall, the question raised is just when Worthing is to get its badly-needed sports centre.

In 1949 the corporation approved in principle a plan to build a sports centre at Hill Barn, including an athletic track and stadium incorporating existing facilities at Hill Barn and the Rotary Ground.

More recently, in 1965, the tenants of the Manor sports ground put forward a scheme for two cricket tables, two tennis courts, better club facilities, two squash courts, more changing rooms and possibly a badminton club. There has been no action since.