



Agenda Item **23**

COUNCIL: 24th February 2016

Report of: Interim Director Community Services

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SUBJECT: LEISURE STRATEGY CONSULTATION RESULTS

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the results of the consultation on the draft Leisure Strategy and draft Playing Pitch Strategy which was considered at the Council meeting on the 21st October 2015.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the consultation comments be received and noted and the Key Action Plan in appendix B be approved.

2.2 That the Leisure Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy with the amendments agreed at 2.1 be formally adopted by the Council.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Community Services provides a leisure services function which operates under a number of strategic documents. These strategies/documents have been subject to a review and a draft Leisure Strategy and draft Playing Pitch Strategy was presented to members at the Council meeting on the 21st October 2015.

3.2 Members agreed to a period of consultation with an amendment of the Leisure Strategy action plan in relation to the Key Actions Timetable, 'Built Sports Provision, (b) Ormskirk' being amended to read: "In the context of the impact of the new Sporting Edge facilities and the finances available, undertake an options appraisal in relation to replacing Park Pool in the future."

- 3.3 A petition was presented at the Council meeting in relation to Park Pool. The petition was signed by 1068 individuals with the following statement 'We, the undersigned, call on the councillors of West Lancashire Borough Council to remove all references to the possible closure of Park Pool, Ormskirk from the draft Leisure Strategy when it is debated and voted upon on Wednesday 21st October 2015.

4.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS AND RESPONSES

- 4.1 The consultation was undertaken through the 'Your Views' section of the Councils web site, the period of consultation was from the 2nd November 2015 to the 10th January 2016, press releases were issued at the commencement of the consultation period with a reminder press release issued in December.
- 4.2 Below is a summary of the responses received, full details of the responses can be found at Appendix A. Numbers in brackets refer to the log number for the response. The names and contact details have been removed, but are available from the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services if required.

Summary of comments received for the period 2nd November 2015 to 10th January 2016.

57 responses were received from members of the public, including representative groups who responded via email to the consultation:

- 91% stated that they would like the reference to 'closure of park Pool' removed (P21, section C).
- 74% stated that they would like to replace the 'closure reference of park Pool' to a 'commitment to invest in facilities'.
- 25% highlighted that WLBC should take into consideration the high numbers of Primary Schools that use the pool to meet national curriculum requirements and also the high volume of members of the public who attend swimming lessons.
- 18% have expressed concerns that 'community use' at Edge Hill University is limited and their new facilities are predominantly for student use.
- 9% have concerns that the car parking facilities at Edge Hill University (alternative site named in strategy) would be far from adequate to accommodate additional cars for community use of pool.
- 7% have stated that when Park Pool was originally opened, it was the local residents of Ormskirk who raised funds towards the construction of this facility.

Additional individual comments included:

- Lengthy email re the 'importance of maintaining the WLBC Ranger Service' (26).
- Should take the opportunity to end involvement with Serco (32).
- Link cycling/walking routes to hubs of activity e.g. town/ village centres and sports & leisure facilities (32).
- Essential aspect of Strategy is promotion & publicity (32).

- Replacement/refurbishment of Nye Bevan is a priority (52).
- Vital that smaller parishes/areas not left disadvantaged by strategy (55).

Additional in-depth responses were provided, numbered 26 / 32 / 51 / 55 / 57.

- 4.3 The majority of the responses together with the petition handed in to Council on the 21st October relate to the facilities at Park Pool. The key action plan timetable was amended at the Council meeting in October and reflected the similar concerns and views of members in relation to Park Pool. The consultation responses do not vary from the amended view taken by Members and the revised Key Action Timetable circulated as part of the consultation process.
- 4.4 A revised action plan is attached at Appendix B which includes the revision to Built Sports provision item (b) Ormskirk and changes to Burscough item (c) which removes the notation regarding closure of Park Pool.

5.0 KEY ACTIONS

- 5.1 The Key Actions Timetable identifies an action to 'Establish a Project Team led by the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services with representatives from Finance and Legal, supported by the Procurement Executive with an external Specialist Adviser to undertake the procurement of a new partnership arrangement from 1 April 2020 which would include significant capital investment for the built sports provision'.
- 5.2 It is expected that any procurement exercise, negotiations and contract agreements will require lengthy contractual commitments in order to secure the capital investment required. The capital investment will need to consider a range of factors including future demands and affordability given the expectation that the Council will receive less government funding in the future and will need to reshape the way it provides services.
- 5.3 The current swimming facilities at Nye Bevan Pool and Park Pool are now over 40 years old and in need of replacement; a commitment to replace the Nye Bevan facilities with a new wet and dry sports centre in Skelmersdale has been part of the town centre development plan for a number of years. The options to be considered for Ormskirk and Park Pool should also consider a full replacement facility. However these issues will need to be considered in the context of the Council's challenging financial position, which will require significant savings to be made in future years.
- 5.4 Members at the Council meeting on 16th December considered a motion that £150,000 be allocated for investment in Park Pool, and this scheme approval has now been built into the capital programme. While this is welcomed it is intended to hold back on the funding allocation until a full assessment of the replacement option and discussions with prospective partners have commenced. The leisure trust partners have confirmed that the current changing room provision at Park Pool is in a condition that within existing maintenance resources could last a further 2 to 4 years.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The strategy does not provide a list of priorities or commitments to incur revenue expenditure or capital investment or any specific savings. Decisions will need to be taken regarding the level and approach to leisure service provision, to ensure sustainability with decreasing funding being available and the competing priorities of the Council.
- 6.2 The capital investment for new facilities identified in the strategy documents and action plan will need to consider future demands, but will also need to be affordable in the context of the Council's difficult medium term financial situation.
- 6.3 The Leisure Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy do not assume that all services will necessarily be delivered by the Council; Community Asset Transfers have demonstrated that alternative delivery models can prove not only affordable but also deliver quality services.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Agreeing and adoption of a Leisure Strategy is important to provide direction for the future for the services provided under the leisure section.
- 7.2 The adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy is particularly important in relation to external grant funding opportunities. The opportunities to bid for grant funding from Sport England, National Playing Fields Association and the Football Foundation for playing pitch improvements are predicated on either having or undertaking the work leading up to the adoption of a Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 7.3 The affordability of the proposed key aims/actions and recommendations will need to be assessed; and are all subject to resources being available.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a significant direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix C to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the recommendations contained within this report and the strategy documents.

Appendices

Appendix A	Consultation responses
Appendix B	Revised Key Action Timetable
Appendix C	Equality Impact Assessment Form