

The Liberal Democrat group wishes to call in the decisions concerning Improved Swimming Facilities for Shrewsbury, taken by the Cabinet on Wednesday 28 September 2016. The reasons for calling in the decision, and the proposed alternatives, are as follows:

- 1) The Report states in recommendation A that the Council's preferred location for improved swimming provision is the Shrewsbury Sports Village, based on the options appraisal which was reported to cabinet on 13th July 2016. At the time of the Cabinet meeting on 28th September, no such decision regarding the preferred location of swimming provision had been made; in fact the Cabinet decision of 13th July deferred such a decision until such time as all acceptable business cases could be put forward for evaluation. The options appraisal includes assumptions regarding gym and swimming attendance, costs and income which are not well supported in evidence and require further scrutiny. The past, present and forecast attendance rates should be made available for scrutiny

Alternative: No decision regarding the preferred location will be made until all acceptable business cases are put forward. (This need not preclude a business case for the Sports Village being developed by Shropshire Council, but it removes a strong bias from the future decision making process..

- 2) The report states on P1 that '*Business cases will be evaluated against whether they meet the Council's minimum requirements referenced within the Terms of Reference for the pool to be sustainable and affordable; to meet the Council's vision for future swimming provision in Shrewsbury; to respond to the Council's draft sports facility strategy (DSFS); and to provide social, environmental and economic benefits.*' The Council's vision for future swimming provision has been repeatedly stated to include a modern and efficient 8 lane 25 m pool (i.e. new) facility at a multi-sports facility, together with a 20 m by 10 m pool with a moveable floor. It is evident that a reasonable and sustainable business case to refurbish the existing facility at the Quarry will not meet these requirements. The DSFS specifically states that the replacement of the Quarry swimming facility is developed on 'a site where there are existing leisure facilities', which may or may not preclude the Quarry Park, depending on whether the Council views the Park itself and the play facilities there to be 'existing leisure facilities'

Alternative: A refurbishment bid at the Quarry pool will not be excluded (non-compliant) simply on the basis of its location, or the number, size or arrangement of the pools, the nature of the surrounding leisure facilities, or other aspects of the site that cannot be readily changed.

- 3) The report states in recommendation E that '*a report on the outcome of the evaluation of all submitted Full Business Cases will be brought back to cabinet in due course for a decision on the final preferred location*'. It is considered important, given the level of public interest, that the business cases are examined by the relevant scrutiny committee prior to a decision being made by Cabinet.

Alternative: That a report on the outcome of the evaluation of all submitted business cases, and the business cases themselves, will be made available for scrutiny by the relevant scrutiny committee, and Cabinet will receive the outcome of that scrutiny process prior to making its decision.

- 4) The Terms of Reference on P15 set out three possible future Management Arrangements. The options as listed preclude the sensible and pragmatic approach of a community organisation taking over management of the site, whilst Shropshire Council retains liability for major repairs and maintenance of the building. This is the approach currently in place, and that proposed for the many other services that are to be run by community organisations or town and parish councils. The legal advice appended to the terms of reference requires further scrutiny, as it precludes this sensible option on the basis of one paragraph which requires clarification. Clarification is also required as to whether and how any financial penalties for changing management arrangements will be considered when evaluating bids.
Alternative: A fourth Management Arrangement is included, whereby an organisation can run and operate the facility whilst Shropshire Council retains the responsibility for the land, buildings and major repairs.
- 5) It is not clear from the report whether the process of assessing the Outline Strategic Business Cases will be available for scrutiny.
Alternative: The preliminary assessment of the Outline Strategic Business Cases and the OSBCs themselves will be made available for scrutiny by the relevant scrutiny committee.
- 6) The report states that the Council wishes to run the facility 'subsidy-free' (P18). However, the business case for a swimming pool at the Sports Village will consider the subsidy for both the swimming pool and the sports village, whilst any proposal to retain swimming at the Quarry Pool will have no effect on the subsidy at the Sports Village. It is possible that a sustainable and 'subsidy free' proposal will be put forward for the Quarry Swimming pool, which is ultimately rejected as it does not diminish the Sports Village subsidy. Scrutiny is required of the existing subsidy and management arrangements for both sites, including an investigation of performance against the contractor's projected performance at bid stage. The measures that might be taken to reduce the subsidy to the Sports Village should be considered without moving swimming provision to that site. Given the level of public support for a town centre pool, it would be perverse to move this facility to Sundorne in order to make the Sports Village break even.
Alternative: All bids will be judged on the affordability of swimming provision and not on the combined affordability of the Sports Village and swimming provision.
- 7) The report lays down how each Evaluation of Business Cases is to be assessed. The 4th criterion needs further clarification.
Alternative: What does the business case provide in terms of social, environmental and wider economic benefits?