



Cabinet

13 February 2019

Item

Public

Update on Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury

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1. Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting of 12th July 2017, Cabinet confirmed that a review be carried out of the different options for swimming provision to be located in Shrewsbury town centre. This followed a change in Council administration and the public interest shown in the retention of swimming provision at a town centre site. Whilst no cost or evaluation of financial impact has taken place during this review, previous reports had recommended the preferred location to be Shrewsbury Sports Village at Sundorne.
- 1.2 The review work that has been undertaken since then has focused on the identification of a suitable town centre location rather than on the development of a full business appraisal and plan.
- 1.3 The findings of the review confirm that the most suitable town centre location is the existing Quarry site. (Appendix 1 – Site appraisal – Scoring Matrix).
- 1.4 The sites were evaluated using specific criteria informed by Sport England and the Council's vision for the project which included locality of site and ability of users and staff to physically access the site, land ownership, ability of site to deliver the services identified in the vision, site condition and enhancing the public realm, stimulating economic regeneration and contributing to long-term social and community regeneration. (Appendix 2 – Site Evaluation Process).
- 1.5 A condition survey undertaken in respect of the facility in November 2018 has concluded that there are a number of urgent maintenance items that have been identified. Work has commenced on an action plan to address these to ensure the centre remains operational. In undertaking the full feasibility assessment, consideration will be given to the economic viability of undertaking any further required repairs and maintenance in the context of either a major refurbishment or a rebuild. This will form part of the final preferred option that is recommended to Cabinet in the future.
- 1.6 A rebuild or major refurbishment on the existing site provides the potential to explore a wider footprint and opportunity to integrate other uses beyond purely leisure use. This could include, for example, office, meeting,

community and education uses, and it is important these uses are considered within the framework of the recently approved Shrewsbury Big Town Plan.

- 1.7 As part of the next phase of work officers will seek advice from leisure and health specialists to ascertain the exact nature of swimming provision required for the long-term health and wellbeing of the Shrewsbury and wider Shropshire population.
- 1.8 It is acknowledged that depending on the timeframe for the works, swimming provision would be required to ensure continuity of provision. This will be explored as part of this next stage of work and will look at a range of options for location considering all key factors including cost, access and new facility build time.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- A. Acknowledge and approve the findings of the recent review that the most suitable location for any town centre facility is the existing Quarry site.
- B. Authorise Council officers to commence initial discussions with the operator, Shropshire Community Leisure Trust, and their managing agent, Serco Leisure Ltd., to investigate the potential to develop a new facility on the existing Quarry site.
- C. Authorise officers to explore options at Sundorne Sports Village to ensure continuity of public swimming within Shrewsbury whilst works to the Quarry Pool site takes place.
- D. Agree a revenue budget of £500,000 to undertake the full feasibility assessments, due diligence, site investigations and progress to full design of the recommended options above. This will be funded from rescheduled projects within earmarked reserves.
- E. Agree that the detailed implementation of all aspects of the recommendations made within this report are delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure.

REPORT

1.0 Opportunities Appraisal and Risk Assessment

- 1.1 A number of issues related to the successful implementation of the long-standing project to develop improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury have been previously identified and reported. However, the project being proposed is a unique opportunity to develop an iconic public building in the Quarry Park in Shrewsbury. The iconic status is such that it could provide the opportunity for a high-profile architectural competition.

A competition would raise the profile of the project on to the national stage. An exhibition of short-listed projects would engage the public locally and

enable community and stakeholder ownership. This would lead to an improved public perception of the project and an enhanced customer experience.

- 1.2 There is an opportunity to diversify the function of facilities on the Quarry site to incorporate complimentary uses and help to deliver the vision of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, this could include the ability to:
 - Increase usage through an improved leisure offer.
 - Provide additional income generation opportunities from any associated facilities with the leisure offer and the wider public/park visitors to become a destination location.
 - Include leisure/fun water in any re-development.
 - Provide facilities for office accommodation and wider community and education use.

- 1.3 The facility could also present significant future cost savings as a result of;
 - Energy efficiency by virtue of huge improvements in sustainable building design and materials since the 1960s;
 - Opportunity to further reduce energy use by incorporating innovative technologies.
 - The potential for private sector investment

- 1.4 In summary, these proposals provide the potential to secure 'fit for purpose' and affordable swimming provision for Shrewsbury and beyond for the foreseeable future.

- 1.5 Conversely, there is the potential impact of not progressing with these proposals informed by the recent condition survey:
 - The existing facility will become increasingly expensive to operate as building elements continue to be retained beyond their effective lifespan; replacement parts and materials are more difficult to source, and fixes are 'workarounds' rather than satisfactory solutions.
 - Increasing energy costs and pressure to reduce the carbon footprint will become unsustainable within the current building fabric.
 - Continuity of service becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as crucial elements fail and are not cost effective to replace; e.g. diving boards, spa pool.
 - Deterioration of core elements of the facility affecting health and safety results in facility closure and the loss of any public swimming provision in Shrewsbury.
 - Reduction and loss of users to alternative facilities and decreasing footfall to the Quarry and wider town centre as a result of the above risks.

- 1.6 A number of risks associated with the successful delivery of this stage of the project have been identified and these are summarised below together with mitigating actions:

| Risk | Mitigation actions |
|--|--|
| Significant constraints are identified during the feasibility stage, rendering the costs of the overall project unaffordable and resulting in abortive costs. | Initial piece of feasibility work to inform the decision to proceed and to assist in shaping the brief before committing to the full project |
| Design competition fails to deliver high quality affordable designs. | Quality of the brief. Using appropriate channels and networks and applying necessary RIBA building standards |
| Timeframe expands so that many of the risks identified in 1.5 above begin to impact unduly on service continuity. | Establish realistic project programme, with key decision milestones identified and project and governance team suitably resourced to undertake the feasibility work. |
| Reputational damage as Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre and swimming provision in Shrewsbury are the focus of considerable public interest and a number of commitments and announcements have been made. | Project team established once Cabinet confirm approval to progress and budget for feasibility work identified and establishing a clear and extensive communications plan |

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1 This report is written in the context of the Council's Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2018-2023 and on the assumption that the Council wishes to support the continuing availability of public swimming in Shrewsbury for the benefit of the community, but that given financial constraints, it must be provided and operated as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 2.2 The demolition or refurbishment of the existing facility, the design and construction of a replacement and the installation of alternative swimming provision during the construction or refurbishment period will require significant capital investment by the Council. A full assessment of the costs and recommended outcomes of proposed funding options will form part of the final Council report once the next stage feasibility assessment has been completed.
- 2.3 The next stage feasibility study will require a revenue budget of £500,000 to enable a full assessment of options to be considered against affordability and funding proposals. The outcomes are expected to establish and identify the following:
- Deliverability
 - Affordability and sustainability
 - Shortlisted designs
 - Meets the Council's vision and strategy for swimming provision
 - The potential for any grant funding or private sector investment
 - Provides additional social, environmental and economic benefits and supports delivery of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan
 - Potential for working in partnership with local stakeholders

- 2.4 A full financial appraisal of the options considered and final recommendation will be detailed in a final report to Cabinet and Council. This will be completed giving full consideration to the requirements of assuring affordability detailed in the Treasury Management and Capital Strategy.

3.0 Background

The Cabinet report of 12th July 2017 can be viewed on the Council's web site at: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=3418&Ver=4>

The following recommendations were resolved:

- I. That a review is carried out of the different location options for swimming provision in Shrewsbury town centre.
- II. That the current Terms of Reference for the submission of Full Business Cases is stopped until the outcomes of this review are concluded.
- III. That a report on the outcome of the review be brought back to Cabinet in due course for a recommendation on the preferred location for public swimming in Shrewsbury.
- IV. That the detailed implementation of all aspects of the recommendations made within this report be delegated to the Director of Place and Enterprise in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure.

3.1 The need for improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury

The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre in Shrewsbury is a well-used facility that has been in operation for over 100 years. As a result of the facility's age and condition, the centre is costly to keep repairing, is not energy efficient nor cost effective to run, the site layout is restrictive, and the quality of customer provision and experience is not as good as it would be for a more modern facility.

Over 239,000 visits were made to the Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre in 2017/18 a decline from a recent peak of more than 345,000 visits in 2009/10. The quality of the facilities and competition, particularly from 'high street' gym providers, are both implicated in the decline.

3.2 Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy, 2018 - 2023

Cabinet confirmed a new Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy for Shropshire at its meeting on 21 June 2017 following a period of public consultation and stakeholder engagement. In summary the Strategy is firmly embedded within a range of opportunities that increase physical activity levels, and use physical activity and sport to raise aspirations, support health improvements, tackle inequality in communities, grow the economy, create more jobs and underpin the continued social, physical and economic regeneration of neighbourhoods.

The Strategy sets out a vision in which the provision of indoor leisure facilities will support a wider vision in which “Shropshire will be a county where healthier, active lifestyles are encouraged, supported and facilitated for everyone”.

The Strategy sets out a hierarchy of leisure facility provision and describes, based on an assessment of need, how the Council will meet the recreational and sporting needs of Shropshire residents by supporting:

- Six Tier 1 Leisure Hubs – “destination” facilities within Shropshire’s larger market towns that provide a wide range of facilities and leisure opportunities.
- Four Tier 2 Community Leisure Centres – “local” facilities within smaller towns and settlements potentially providing a more limited range of leisure opportunities.

89% of Shropshire residents will be able to access leisure facilities within one of these ten locations within a 20-minute drive time.

Shrewsbury is in Tier 1 leisure facility provision. The Strategy does not make any specific recommendation for the future location of swimming in Shrewsbury, but does set out some headline considerations for its future management and Council support:

- Fully staffed
- Managed by third parties
- Ongoing revenue funding support with the aim to be profitable with no public subsidy required over an agreed timeframe
- Opportunity for Community Asset Transfers to suitable local groups in support of social, economic or environmental benefit, dependent on local circumstances.

3.3 Shrewsbury Big Town Plan

November 2018 saw the adoption of Shrewsbury’s Big Town Plan, a jointly funded visioning document for the future development of the town centre.

https://issuu.com/shrewsburybid1/docs/6313_report_final_210mm_high_res?e=31696755/66041145

Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury BID (Business Improvement District) and Shrewsbury Town Council have worked collaboratively on the plan that sets out how the evolution of the town will be shaped over the next 20 years.

The Big Town Plan highlighted four key themes. Providing a modern, efficient swimming facility sits within one of those themes ‘Supporting, creating and nurturing vitality, life and a mix of uses.’

3.4 Brief chronology of events

The table below describes notable work carried out in recent years in support of the development of improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury.

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| 2007 | Major remedial works amounting to approximately £300,000 were carried out by the former Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council to make the building safe for public use and to extend the life span of the current swimming pool for a 5-year period and until a replacement facility was built. |
| 2007 | Consultation with the public, clubs and schools; existing changing facilities and car parking identified as the major issues. |
| 2007 | Torkildsen Barclay Leisure Consultants were commissioned to undertake a 'Shrewsbury Swimming Facility Needs Assessment'. They concluded that, based on the demand and needs assessment, the ideal facility mix to meet the future swimming needs of Shrewsbury would be a 25m x 8 lane pool with longitudinal boom and floating floor able to accommodate county competitions and appropriate spectator provision; a diver / learner pool (10m x 10m) with floating floor; a leisure water area; a fitness and aerobic studio; and ancillary accommodation. Reference: Shrewsbury Swimming Facility Needs Assessment, A Report to Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council, May 2007, Torkildsen Barclay. |
| 2009 | Torkildsen Barclay Leisure Consultants undertook a further needs assessment. This confirmed that all of the options proposed within the 2007 study would continue to meet and to satisfy demand within the centre's catchment. The assessment also provided a justification for a 50-station gym and aerobics facility at the replacement pool both in terms of latent demand and capacity. Reference: Shrewsbury Swimming Facility Needs Assessment Update, February 2009, Torkildsen Barclay. |
| 2009 | Strategic Leisure undertook a countywide assessment of future indoor facility provision within a strategic assessment; this confirmed that a key focus should be on the provision of a new swimming facility in Shrewsbury as identified within the Torkildsen Barclay feasibility study. Reference: Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2009 - 2019 and Playing Pitch Strategy 2010 – 2020, Cabinet, 29 June 2011. |
| 2011 | A Building Condition survey identified a requirement for a total of £666,609 works and repairs over a five-year period. This includes over £200,000 for roofing repairs and £45,000 for the provision of a new generator. However, the building condition survey did not make a comprehensive assessment of the pool and all the services. |
| 2012 | Following a procurement exercise the Shropshire Community Leisure Trust through their managing agents, Serco Leisure Ltd, were appointed contractor for the Council's leisure centres for ten years with the potential for a five-year extension. |
| 2014 | Public petition with over 1,400 signatures received. 22 sites short listed and subsequently further narrowed down to 5 locations. Shropshire Council approved the recommendation to undertake detailed work on different options for swimming provision within Shrewsbury. Reference: New pool for Shrewsbury, Cabinet, 30 July 2014 http://new.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/swimming-provision-in-shrewsbury/ The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre (QSFC) was registered as an Asset of Community Value A further condition survey was commissioned of the Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre. |

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| | Various works (amounting to £1,405,295, of which £923,564 were considered to be essential) were identified, including work to ceilings, roof, walls and cladding, furniture and fittings, floors and stairs, mechanical services, and redecoration and sanitary services. |
| 2015 | <p>A Variation of the Contract with SCLT to enable the Council to implement the preferred option for future swimming provision in partnership with the current operator.</p> <p>Detailed Options Analysis and Needs Assessment completed by leisure experts, Strategic Leisure.</p> <p>Sport England completed an assessment of swimming pool provision in Shrewsbury, using the Facility Planning Model tool.</p> <p>Over 1,900 people responded to a five-month public consultation on seven different pool options. An Independent analysis of the consultation was carried out by industry experts, 4global.</p> <p>Strategic Leisure updated the detailed Needs Assessment.</p> |
| 2016 | <p>Shropshire Council confirmed that the preferred location for the replacement of existing swimming provision is the Shrewsbury Sports Village.</p> <p>Reference: future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury, 13th July 2016 http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=3358&Ver=4</p> <p>Shropshire Council confirmed detailed Terms of Reference for the preparation of Business Case for the Council's preferred option, the Shrewsbury Sports Village, alongside any alternative business cases put forward by interested organisations who wish to retain swimming provision at the Quarry and / or any other town centre location. It also confirmed again the preferred location as Shrewsbury Sports Village.</p> <p>Reference: Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury, 28th September 2016. http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=3256&Ver=4</p> |
| 2017 | <p>Cabinet confirmed that a review be carried out of the different location options for swimming provision in Shrewsbury town centre following a change in Council administration who subsequently directed officers to undertake the review following the public interest shown in the retention of a town centre location.</p> <p>Reference: Update on Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury, 12th July 2017 http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MId=3418&Ver=4</p> |
| 2017/18 | Review undertaken of the location options for swimming provision in a Shrewsbury town centre location. Appendix 1 – Site Appraisal Scoring Matrix; Appendix 2 – Site Evaluation Process. |
| 2018 | Conditions survey in November, containing intrusive structural and building framework elements to identify urgent and essential maintenance requirements and assess the potential to refurbish the existing facility. Appendix 3 – Site Conditions Survey – Executive Summary. |

4.0 Review of options for future swimming provision in Shrewsbury

As confirmed at Cabinet on 12th July 2017 the Council directed officers to undertake a review of the different site options for the future provision of

swimming in the town centre of Shrewsbury. This concluded that the most appropriate location for a town centre facility was the quarry based on an assessment utilising agreed evaluation criteria. A number of the areas where the location scored highly included locality of site, land ownership and deliverability and the contribution to long term social and community regeneration. All the key considerations which were included in the review are set out below. This decision was taken in the context of the on-going public interest in retaining swimming provision within the town centre (Appendix 1).

In carrying out the review the following key considerations were included:

- Locality of site and ability of users and staff to physically access the site and services (car/public transport/highways/pedestrian/cycle/disabled).
- Car parking
- Land ownership, difficulties with acquisition, title issues and timescales.
- Ability of site option to deliver the services identified in the Council's vision for future swimming provision in Shrewsbury.
- Site condition, ecological considerations and remediation costs.
- Enhancing the public realm, stimulating economic regeneration, contributing to long-term social and community regeneration.
- Revenue sustainability of the facility, ability to attract new users, potential to work alongside other leisure, educational, healthcare and community facilities and services in support of increased footfall and usage, scope for future development.
- Energy sustainability.
- Planning issues.
- Infrastructure requirements including utilities.
- Delivery complications and implications.

The decision on whether to go ahead with improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury will be taken in the light of Shropshire Council's financial strategy and Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy. An assessment will need to be made on the impact of any decision not just on the current cost to the Council of the Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre but also in the context of wider social value considerations, the impact on the wider costs of the Shropshire Community Leisure Trust contract, and the long-term financial impact of investing in swimming facility replacement.

5.0 Next steps

Subject to Cabinet approval further work will be undertaken to commission a full feasibility study, due diligence works and progress through concept design stages for a scheme on the Quarry site and Sundorne whilst the works are undertaken.

This will include due diligence work on the Quarry site looking at geotechnical constraints such as flooding, ground conditions, potential footprint; costs and impact demolition; drawing up a detailed design brief; consultation with Sport England, Swim England and other stakeholders; exploration of funding options and alignment with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy; potential to hold a design competition to RIBA Stage 2 with public consultation of short-listed designs and establish outline costs.

It is anticipated that following Cabinet approval, the timescale for providing final recommendations on the preferred option to Cabinet and Full Council will be 12 months.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

New pool for Shrewsbury, Cabinet, 30 July 2014

Shrewsbury Swimming and Fitness Options Report, Strategic Leisure, June 2015

Shrewsbury Swimming Pool update, Environment & Services Scrutiny, 22 June 2015

Shrewsbury Swimming Pool update, Environment & Services Scrutiny, 30 November 2015

Shrewsbury Swimming Pool update, Environment & Services Scrutiny, 13 June 2016

New Swimming Pool for Shrewsbury, Cabinet, 13 July 2016

Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury, Cabinet, 28th September 2016

Scrutiny call in, Environment & Services Scrutiny, 28 October 2016

Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy, Strategy, 2018 – 2023, Cabinet 21 June 2017

Update on Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury, Cabinet 12 July 2017

Shrewsbury Big Town Plan November 2018

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Lezley Picton, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure

Local Members:

Cllr Hannah Fraser, Cllr Alexander Phillips, Cllr Dean Carroll, Cllr Harry Taylor, Cllr Ted Clarke, Cllr Jane Mackenzie, Cllr Tony Parsons, Cllr Peter Adams, Cllr Alan Mosley, Cllr Peter Nutting, Cllr Ioan Jones, Cllr Nic Laurens, Cllr Pam Moseley, Cllr Julian Dean, Cllr Nat Green, Cllr Keith Roberts, Cllr Kevin Pardy, Cllr David Vasmer

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury – Site Appraisal

Appendix 2: Site Evaluation Process