



Cabinet 12 February 2020

Item

Public

Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury

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1. Summary

At its meeting of 13th February 2019 Cabinet approved the findings of a report on the different location options for swimming provision in the town centre, which concluded that the most suitable town centre location is the existing Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre site.

Members agreed a budget of £500,000 to undertake the full feasibility assessments, due diligence, site investigations and progress to full design. As part of the next phase of work officers were also to 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.

Following this approval by members, discussions were held with Sport England and it was evident that an insight and feasibility report was required to ensure that the strategic objectives of the project were clearly identified.

As a consequence of this advice, Sport England agreed to fund the study into the optimum facilities mix required to meet the long term health and wellbeing of the Shrewsbury and wider Shropshire population, what a new facility would need in order to respond to the required outcomes and the likely revenue implications for such a facility.

This report is intended to update members on the outcome of that insight and feasibility work, which looks in detail at the nature of swimming provision needed in the town. This report also recommends that we move forward with the next stage of due diligence on the two preferred options for delivering that provision, before coming back to Cabinet with a recommended option.

Strategic Leisure were appointed by Sport England and have worked on the insight and feasibility for the last nine months. This included discussions with key stakeholders, establishing the shared strategic objectives, researching the wider health fitness and wellbeing needs of the people of Shropshire and Shrewsbury and an appraisal of the options.

The study identifies the opportunity for a completely different operational mix which helps to meet the need for improvements to the health and wellbeing of a greater

proportion of the population. It also has the potential to create a town centre destination for leisure in support of the Big Town Plan. The facilities mix proposed, based on the outcomes of this study, explores not only swimming for fitness and leisure, but also wider health and wellbeing activities, a spa and an improved food offering and links with health partners to deliver complimentary health services and social prescribing.

Four main options for delivering this provision were clearly identified and have been considered:

1. Do nothing
2. Redevelop the existing facility like for like.
3. Re-develop the Quarry site to include a 25m competition pool, as well as a leisure pool and the wider range of provision to support health, wellbeing and fitness.
4. Re-develop the Quarry site to provide a town centre pool facility, health, wellbeing and leisure destination and develop a new competition pool at the Sports Village.

The option to do nothing (option 1) was considered and discounted in the previous report.

A list of the strategic objectives is included in the Background section of this report.

Refurbishment (Option 2) fails to meet the majority of the outcomes required or support the delivery of the desired operational mix, so further work was done to compare options 3 and 4 in greater detail and to look at their deliverability.

Based on their ability to meet the strategic outcomes, option 4 looks to meet the greatest range, but we need to test the deliverability and affordability of this option and wish to look at both option 3 and option 4 in more detail to understand their potential to meet the outcomes, their relative costs and ability to generate income and reduce subsidy.

Once further due diligence work has been carried out on both of these options, the outcome can be consulted on and a report brought back to members with a recommended final option.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- A. Acknowledge the outcome of the report on Swimming In Shrewsbury – Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance Report and the options appraisal for swimming provision in the town, attached at Appendix 1.
- B. Approve the recommendation that option 3, which delivers all swimming provision at the Quarry, as well as some additional health and wellbeing facilities and option 4, which delivers swimming provision in Shrewsbury over a split site, with a health, leisure and wellbeing centre on the Quarry site and a competition pool at the Sports Village, should be taken forward to the next stage of full feasibility, due diligence and design.

- C. Authorise Council officers to provide a report at a future Cabinet highlighting final recommendations on the preferred option, with outline design and costs, the outcome of any consultation and a recommended procurement route.
- D. 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, Leisure, Waste and Communications.

REPORT

3.0 Opportunities Appraisal and Risk Assessment

- 3.1 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. The recommendation proposed is an opportunity to provide both a leisure and health focused destination in the heart of the town centre as well as a competition pool for Shropshire residents, on either the Quarry site, or at the Sports Village.
- 3.2 Through the strategic objectives work that has been completed, it has become clear that there is an overarching collective priority for Shropshire Council and a number of partners to improve health and well-being at all stages of life, and that physical activity is an integral part of this.
- 3.3 There is an opportunity to diversify the function of any new facilities on the existing Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre site to incorporate complimentary uses and help to deliver the vision of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, creating a new destination. The facilities considered to date include;
 - 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 e.g. spa, café/restaurant
 - Include leisure/fun water in any re-development.
 - Provide facilities for health and well-being complementary to the pool use and focused on Shropshire needs
- 3.4 A new facility could present significant future cost savings as a result of:
 - Revenue from increased usage of modern leisure and well-being facilities
 - Revenue generating activities including income from third party tenants
 - 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.
- 3.5 A new competition pool at the Sports Village, would attract users to the facility whose needs are currently not provided for. The edge of town facility has a number of dry sports facilities (indoor and outdoor) and a pool would provide a modern fit for purpose use that is accessible to a larger population of

Shropshire. The Council currently subsidises the Sports Village and increasing the attractiveness and mix of uses here will help to make this a sustainable facility in the future.

3.6 The impacts of not progressing the project with either option 3 or 4 have been considered and are summarised below:

- The existing facility at the Quarry 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 at the Quarry 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.
- Reduction in Shropshire population's physical activity as a result of not having a facility in the county town.
- Challenges relating to the sustainable operation of the Sports Village to reduce the financial subsidy from the Council are not resolved and become more difficult to find a solution to as the remainder of the facility ages.

3.7 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, the most significant of those are summarised below:

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
Timeframe expands so that many of the risks identified in 1.6 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. Clear communications plan established?

- 3.8 An Equalities and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) will be completed as part of the next stage to ensure that the impact of any change is understood and mitigated where appropriate.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 The design and construction of a replacement facility 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.
- 4.3 The feasibility study will require a budget of up to £500,000 investment, which will be funded from earmarked reserves. Should the feasibility study demonstrate that the project is not affordable, and it does not proceed, the £500k would not be capitalised.
- 4.4 The outcome of this due diligence will establish and identify the following:
- Deliverability
 - Affordability and sustainability
 - Most beneficial procurement route
- 4.5 A full financial appraisal for options three and four, including the proposed operational savings and income generation will be undertaken when considering the funding options, details of which will be provided in future Cabinet and Council reports.

5.0 Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 Energy and fuel consumption. This project will have a positive impact on energy and fuel consumption. The town centre location increases the opportunities for journeys to the Quarry be made by public transport and signposting to cycling and walking routes to the Sports Village and other locations will be emphasised. In addition, the new facility will be significantly more energy efficient than the current pool, which is nearing the end of its useful life. This will have a positive effect.
- 5.2 Renewable Energy Generation. There will be opportunities for renewable energy generation as part of the new building. This will have a positive effect.
- 5.3 Carbon offsetting or mitigation. This will have no effect.
- 5.4 Climate Change Adaption. The new building/s can be designed in such as way as to respond to climate change so will have a positive or no effect.

6.0 Background

- 6.1 At its meeting of 13th February 2019 Cabinet approved the findings of a report on the different options for swimming provision in the town centre, which concluded that the most suitable town centre location is the existing Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre site.

A new facility on the existing site provides the potential to consider the facility within the framework of the recently approved Big Town Plan and explore the opportunity to integrate a wider range of leisure and health and wellbeing facilities appropriate for a town centre destination. It also addresses the access issues inherent within the existing building and provides a modern, fit for purpose facility to reduce running costs and generate new income streams.

The background to this report, was a previous recommendation approved at the Cabinet meeting of 12th July 2017, at which Cabinet confirmed that a review should 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 a town centre location. Previous reports had recommended the preferred location to be Shrewsbury Sports Village at Sundorne.

Various sites were evaluated using specific criteria informed by Sport England and the Council's vision for the project which included location 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 growth and contributing to long-term social and community regeneration.

- 6.2 The Cabinet report of 13th February 2019 can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s21143/Update%20on%20swimming%20provision%20in%20Shrewsbury-%2013%20February%202019-Final%20Cabinet%20Report.pdf>

The following recommendations were resolved:

- I. To acknowledge and approve the findings of the recent review that the most suitable location for any town centre facility is the existing Quarry site.
- II. To 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.
- III. To 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.

- IV. To 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.
- V. To 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.

6.3 The need for improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury

Following the last Cabinet report and resolutions in February last year, there has been increased engagement with Sport England on the recommended options. Sport England agreed to fund a strategic objectives and feasibility report following their prescriptive guidance for projects. This ensures that projects follow a clear path to delivery which begins with identifying clear shared outcomes based on insight, evidence and local priorities. Strategic Leisure Limited were appointed through Sport England's framework and have worked with us over the last nine months to produce the Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance report which is appended at Appendix 01.

The report takes a holistic look at health and wellness statistics and expectations in Shrewsbury and Shropshire and the evidence to support them, as well as the positive impact that leisure and swimming can have on outcomes.

It also looks at the wider Shropshire Council strategic drivers, and those of our key stakeholders, around not only health and fitness, but leisure generally and puts this into the context of our aspirations for the town centre and its economic growth.

It is important to consider the specific demographic of Shrewsbury and how this shapes demand for access to leisure and wellness facilities. Energize Active Partnership identify the following key statistics in their Strategy – Actively Improving Lives 2022:

- 1/3 of the Shropshire population will be 65+ by 2033
- 42% of those aged 55+ are active
- 5 out of 5 young people aged 5-15 are not active enough; more than 1/3 are leading sedentary lives by the age of 15
- 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school; more than 1 in 5 children are overweight or obese by school reception year
- Families within lower socio-economic families are more likely to be inactive

Shropshire and Shrewsbury Health priorities identified in the JSNA (Health and Well Being Board Shropshire Sustainability and Transformation Plan 2016-2021) include mental health, including dementia, rising obesity, child poverty and the aging population.

The Shropshire Council emerging priorities sport and physical activity, as set out in the new Leisure Strategy (still being consulted on), are identified as follows:

Sport and Physical Activity Strategy Priorities		Links to Corporate Plan Priorities
Strategic Priority 1	To work with partners to support the people of Shropshire to live longer, healthier and quality lives through sport and physical activity with a focus on young and older people.	Yes - all
Strategic Priority 2	To support the resilience of local communities and the development of Place by strengthening local communities through sport and physical activity.	Yes - all
Strategic Priority 3	To support economic growth by developing opportunities for people to reach their full potential by providing employment, volunteering and tourism opportunities.	Yes - all
Strategic Priority 4	To take a cross county Place based approach to the delivery of high quality leisure facilities through targeted investment, partnership opportunities, community empowerment and commercial acumen in order to reduce levels of subsidy.	Yes - all
Strategic Priority 5	To aim to reduce our carbon footprint in line with the commitment of Shropshire Council to the declaration of Climate emergency to become carbon neutral by 2030.	Yes - all

It is clear that there is a collective priority (Shropshire Council, Health and Wellbeing Board, Energize (Active Partnership) and agenda to improve community health and well-being at all stages of life, and that physical activities are seen as integral to this, with a focus on older and young people and families.

There is also a need to ensure that provision (services, activities and facilities) is relevant and sustainable.

Shropshire Council currently provides a number of sport and leisure facilities across the County. The main swimming facilities (21% of the County's overall provision are in Shrewsbury).

At the heart of the Big Town Plan is the aspiration for the town to achieve balanced growth. This means providing greater encouragement to deliver housing and commercial development in and around the town centre to complement the delivery of new development on the edge of the town. This aspiration responds directly to the need to enhance physical connectivity between places and to re-think the role of town centres, particularly in light of changes to the retail sector.

The Sports Village has previously been considered as a potential location for the new swimming facility, but previous consultations undertaken have raised issues of accessibility regarding swimming and a desire to see the ability to swim retained in Shrewsbury town centre. This is because for those reliant on public transport, town centre accessibility means having to take only one bus. For older people, young families and other town centre residents, it is important to be able to access central opportunities to be physically active, which reduce the need to get in the car. The increasing population to the south of the town centre, due to new residential development, further intensifies this need.

Nevertheless the Sports Village provides a significant opportunity to contribute to the overall objectives, situated in an area of some social deprivation, with a wide range of fitness opportunities and excellent access and parking. It is currently predominantly used as a team training facility and mostly at weekends. The facility currently operates at a financial deficit to Shropshire Council.

7.0 Review of Options

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.

Based on the research and discussions with stakeholders and the opportunities identified, the objectives for swimming in Shrewsbury are:

- To create a destination offer in the town centre
- To address wider health needs and take the opportunity to work with partners to deliver wider health benefits
- Investment in high quality facilities to increase participation, across the community in physical activity
- To retain the opportunity to swim in the town centre
- To improve the fitness offer in the town centre
- To consider the benefits of also providing swimming facilities and improving the sports offer at the Sports Village
- To consider provision of a spa, leisure water, improved food and beverage offer and multi-purpose space, in the Quarry
- To co-locate other services and provision with swimming and fitness in the town centre
- To provide a hub facility in the town centre, which will be used by both residents and visitors to the town
- Take advantage of the opportunity to link with the wider open space and encourage active travel (cycling, walking etc)
- Support for the delivery of wider health services, collocated with swimming and fitness
- All Shropshire Council swimming facilities to be operationally sustainable in the long term
- To contribute to Shropshire Council's environmental sustainability targets.

The Quarry site provides an excellent opportunity to address a large number of those priorities, due to its location in the heart of the town, but that location also brings constraints.

Based on the outcome of the Sport England study, the following main options were identified:

1. Do nothing
2. Redevelop the existing facility like for like.
3. Re-develop the Quarry site to include a 25m competition pool, as well as a leisure pool and the wider range of provision to support health, wellbeing and fitness.
4. Re-develop the Quarry site to provide a town centre pool facility, health, wellbeing and leisure destination and develop a new competition pool at the Sports Village.

Options	Impact And Implications										
	Retains Water In Town Centre	Addresses Town Centre Priorities	Reflects Btp	Addresses Community Need	Co-Location Of Services	Meets Club Needs	Increases Pa	Capital Cost	Revenue Impact	Resolves Sv Operational Subsidy	Temporary Pool
OPTION 1	Improved quality?	Only if there is a tangible change in quality and offer.	Only in terms of retaining 'something' in the town centre; not quality or attraction.	No; existing facility is ageing. No DDA, changing rooms poor, limited parking etc	No	Only partially; existing facility is ageing. No DDA, changing rooms poor, limited parking etc	Not significantly	Depends on what, if any improvements are made.	Unlikely to generate significantly increased income	No	No need
OPTION 2	Swimming needs met as a priority- this would be lane swimming, not necessarily leisure water	Provides a town centre facility, but this may not be a true destination attraction	Traditional swimming offer, so, as present, will contribute to economy, but not to same extent as an attraction.	Yes – improved quality swimming offer, better accessibility, new programming targeted at those who are inactive etc	No- constraint is site size	Yes – for training and competition	Yes	Unknown at present as depends on pool scale, extent of infrastructure etc Likely to be lowest of all options- one site investment.	Likely to generate increased income, but extent will depend on programme offered.	No	Yes – on Quarry, adjacent to Quarry, or SV site. Opportunity to work with Shrewsbury School. Possible School may be interested in taking temporary pool on as a new facility to replace their existing pool.
OPTION 3	Extent of water would depend on overall offer given site constraints	Potentially; will depend on extent and nature of on-site water, which will be determined by what else is brought onto site	Yes	Yes – improved quality swimming offer, better accessibility, new programming targeted at those who are inactive etc	Yes – extent will depend on nature and number	Depends on nature and extent of water space; of a smaller pool, unlikely.	Likely; extent will be determined by co-location mix and nature.	Unknown at present as depends on pool scale, extent of infrastructure etc Could attract some capital funding to development through co-location.	Likely to generate more income, but will depend on co-location offer and nature	Possibly, depends on nature of water space provided at the Quarry, and therefore what is needed at SV.	Yes – on Quarry, adjacent to Quarry, or SV site. Opportunity to work with Shrewsbury School. Possible School may be interested in taking temporary pool on as a new facility to replace their existing pool.
OPTION 4	Swimming and town centre needs met; focus would be on 'tourism and family water offer', with ability to deliver day to day swimming lessons	Co-located offer, with the focus on leisure and fun water; includes capacity and capability for leisure/fun water	Contribution to economic regeneration. Provides significant opportunity for a park restaurant.	Yes; two different water offers provide opportunity to focus on families, day to day lessons and leisure/fun water in town centre, and all other pool uses out of town.	Yes, in town centre; this would create excellent environment for social prescribing.	Town centre pool unlikely to be large enough for club training needs. Opportunity to consider increased hours at Shrewsbury school?	Yes – water offer is targeted at different audiences.	Likely to be highest, but revenue generation will off-set this to a significant extent, as long as fitness is also enhanced. Could attract some capital funding to development through co-location.	Likely to be highest; fitness is significant opportunity in the town centre, but also needs investment at SV.	Yes, because locating a pool to SV will increase local participation opportunities, increase user numbers and flow in daytime, and increase secondary spend. Existing operation will benefit, and staffing levels will only need to increase marginally.	Yes – on Quarry, adjacent to Quarry, or SV site. Opportunity to work with Shrewsbury School. Possible School may be interested in taking temporary pool on as a new facility to replace their existing pool.

The option to do nothing (option 1) was considered and discounted in the previous report. There is a very strong risk, due to the condition of the existing pool that the Council will need to close the facility in the foreseeable future.

Refurbishing the existing facility (Option 2) fails to meet the majority of the outcomes required or support the delivery of the desired operational mix established by the insight and feasibility report.

As a result of this scoring, further due diligence was carried out to indicate, at a high level, whether the facilities mix associated with options 3 and 4 fit on site and are deliverable and this work confirmed that they are.

Based on their ability to meet the strategic outcomes, option 4 looks to meet the greatest range, but we need to test the deliverability and affordability of this option

and wish to look at both option 3 and option 4 in more detail to understand their potential to meet the outcomes, their relative costs and ability to generate income and reduce subsidy.

Until that due diligence and detailed feasibility work has been carried out, it would be prudent to consider both of these options.

8.0 Next steps

Subject to Cabinet approval, work on the detailed feasibility into the deliverability and affordability of options 3 and 4 will progress. This will involve site due diligence, outline designs, continued discussion and appropriate consultation with key stakeholders and cost schedules for both options.

A review into the impact of putting the competition pool at the Sports village will be undertaken immediately.

Revenue modelling will be undertaken for both facilities as this will be fundamental to the deliverability of the recommended option.

The involvement of Sport England in the next stages will be key alongside other stakeholders including Energize and Swim England.

A procurement report will be prepared, which compares the various routes to delivery for both the construction and the operation of the facilities. This work will also inform the programme, which in turn will enable officers to report back to members on the benefits and risks associated with each delivery option.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Report – Update on Future Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury 13 February 2019
Cabinet Member: Cllr Lezley Picton, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Waste and Communications
Local Members: Cllr Nat Green, Cllr Kevin Pardy
Appendices: Appendix 1: Swimming in Shrewsbury Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance January 2020