

CABINET 12 FEBRUARY 2020

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Item 9 – Future of Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury

1. Question from Dylan Tomlinson:

As a resident of Copthorne in Shrewsbury & a long time Quarry pool user I'd like to ask how the split sites in Option 4 meet environmental concerns around sustainable transport? As most current users of the Quarry do not travel by car, is it the Council's intention to increase private car mileage by relocating the competition pool to Sundorne in an attempt to make the Sports Village profitable?

It is my understanding that the majority of current SV users drive from other parts of the town & county. Below is some relevant information that may inform the response from councillors or their officers.

Response:

If we were to proceed with Option 4 providing swimming and leisure on two sites places them in reach of a wider catchment area, potentially reducing the number and distance of private car journeys.

Those who wish to continue leisure swimming in the town centre will be able to do so, but we will also provide swimming in a popular residential area, reducing the number of journeys into town.

The continued provision of facilities in the Town Centre ensures that swimming remains accessible by public transport.

We know that many of the current users of the Quarry do arrive by car, or school bus, so this solution will reduce congestion in the town centre.

Your understanding around the Sports Village visitors is correct, but that is because the existing facilities mix attracts regional and county events, which inevitably bring users and visitors from further afield. Locally, there is already significant provision for active travel to the Sports Village ie. cycle and walking routes, which will be further developed as part of the project.

2. Question from Dylan Tomlinson

As a member of the Shrewsbury Canoe Club, and their representative on the Quarry Forum, both of whom are listed as Shared Vision & Outcome Partners, how soon will we be able to provide our input, as well as corrections to the errors and omissions that appear to have been carried over from previous reports?

It appears the same consultants who wrote earlier reports have been commissioned again and repeat many of the same inaccuracies & add new ones - such as the number of potential users of the Sundorne Sports Village; lack of parking near to the Quarry, with many hundreds of spaces within a short walk; alleged difficulty for disabled access to the Quarry, where there is parking & a lift provided for disabled visitors; that the Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre is a Victorian building; that a new "main pool on the Sports Village site would mean that for the first time Shrewsbury and Shropshire have a competition pool" [sic] when the 33m pool has been a competition venue since 1969 when it was built alongside the original building, which was then replaced.

Response

The Quarry Forum representative was consulted on 3 occasions and the information checked with him before re-use. We understood that he represented all members of the Quarry forum. There will be an opportunity for a greater input during the next stage of feasibility.

The issue of proximity of parking at the Quarry is a concern raised by Sport England, with specific reference to a competition facility. If a competition pool were to be built at the Sports Village, parking would be free of charge and readily available.

The 'Swimming in Shrewsbury' report does not mention the number of potential users at Sports Village, but the cabinet report says:

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

Whilst the Quarry Pool building shell was constructed in the 1960s, it was built over the footprint of the Victorian Pool and the facility has internal DDA compliance issues which need to be addressed.

The only way that the Quarry can be used as a competition pool currently is to put a boom in place, which is not compliant with Swim England requirements for competitive events (County level and above), although it is recognised such an arrangement may be used for schools' galas, or local club events.

3. Question from Alison McKittrick

What has changed since last February when this Cabinet approved a report by the same consultants Strategic Leisure which "confirmed that the most suitable location for swimming provision was in Shrewsbury Town Centre at the existing Quarry site" which the Cabinet then agreed to develop and progress to full design?

Response:

The previous report was a review of the town centre locations, following the change in direction from the previous decision to move the entire facility to the Sports Village. The report identified the Quarry as the most appropriate town centre site.

This latest report is a comprehensive leisure needs assessment, based on the priorities for swimming and leisure, health and wellbeing and town centre regeneration, following Sport England guidelines.

4. Question from Bernard Wills (as a resident)

What is the environmental impact and carbon footprint of moving the pool to an out of town site in NE Shrewsbury when 66% of the current users travel by foot and bike and most development is on S and W sides of town?

Response:

Shropshire Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and replacing the Quarry facility provides an opportunity to consider the impact this will have in a number of ways, including travel, thermal efficiency, construction methods etc.

We are not moving 'the' pool to the Sports Village, we are providing an additional pool facility there. The need to replace water at the Quarry has been recognised and is recommended at the Quarry, so that day to day use is provided for and can be continued.

A new facility will be significantly more energy efficient than the current pool, which is nearing the end of its useful life.

The town centre location increases the opportunities for journeys to the Quarry to be made by public transport and signposting to cycling and walking routes to the Sports Village and other locations will be emphasised.

5. Question from Bernard Wills (as Chair of Shrewsbury Masters Swimming Club)

How would a single 25m pool out of town fit the clubs? Currently Shrewsbury Masters and SASC club use two separate 25 metre pools and average 1856 individual swimmer visits a month, 29.5 hours of swimming sessions a week. Sub Aqua under water hockey and Canoe clubs use these spaces also. Buses from the town centre only function from 7.30 am till 8.00 pm Monday to Saturday with no service on a Sunday. This would seriously restrict swimmers getting to a out of town site with out using cars.

Response:

The next stage of work will refresh the work previously done on water space utilisation. Previous modelling, undertaken by Swim England demonstrated that all current use could be accommodated in a 25m 8 lane pool, plus learner pool.

The options at the moment look at the potential for rebuilding a significant facility on the Quarry site or retaining pool space in the town centre and a new pool at the Sports Village.

The future provision of swimming in Shrewsbury needs to consider the whole population, including clubs.

To attract Sport England funding there is a need to demonstrate that any future provision will facilitate increased participation levels and reduce levels of inactivity.

6. Question from Bernard Wills (as Chair of Quarry Swimming and Fitness Forum on Wednesday 12th February 2020 Cabinet)

The Strategy within the report Improving Lives aims to get younger and older people more active. How does an out of town site do this?

Response:

Getting younger and older people more active is not dependent on the availability of lane swimming, or indeed location. We need to stress fun, engagement and accessibility.

We would not be creating an 'out of town site'. If option 4 proceeds, we would be retaining a town centre facility and enhancing a further one in a residential area.

The aim of providing town centre water space would be to provide a destination leisure facility, with day to day access for families, young people swimming for leisure and fun, for older people who can walk to the facility, as well as a learn to swim programme. The options under consideration would enable a wider range of water based fitness activities with the opportunity to link to GP Referrals/Social Prescribing programmes run in partnership with the on-site GPs.

7. Question from John Brownlie

I am a resident of Shrewsbury. Why are non leisure activities now being given priority on the Quarry site which prejudices adequate centrally positioned leisure facilities as already agreed by this Cabinet?

Response:

Non leisure activities are not being given priority. The new Quarry facility will be able to provide a wider range of leisure activities.