



Cabinet

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Item

13

Public

New Swimming Pool for Shrewsbury

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1. Summary

The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre in Shrewsbury is a well-used pool that has been in operation for over 100 years. As a result of its longevity and heavy use, the facility is costly to keep repairing, is not energy efficient and cost effective to run, the site layout/location is restrictive, and the quality of customer provision is not as good as it would be for a more modern facility.

In September 2007 major remedial works 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. At the same time Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council commissioned a 'Shrewsbury Swimming Facility Needs Assessment' undertaken by Torkildsen Barclay Leisure Consultants that identified the need to replace the Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre in the Shrewsbury area. The assessment considered a number of options for replacement. Further assessments were undertaken by Torkildsen Barclay and Strategic Leisure, both in 2009, the latter as part of a broader assessment of Shropshire's indoor leisure facilities. All assessments have confirmed that reducing the current water area would meet demand until at least 2019.

From summer 2012 the pool has been managed by the Shropshire Community Leisure Trust through their managing agents, Serco Leisure Ltd, under a contract with Shropshire Council.

2. Recommendations

- That agreement is given for officers to work with partners to progress the "replacement" of existing swimming provision at the Quarry with new swimming provision within Shrewsbury to the feasibility stage and that a further report will be provided to Cabinet once the different options are appraised.
- That a three month public consultation is undertaken to support the development of detailed costed proposals for future swimming

provision and that different options are assessed against a shared vision and list of future pool requirements.

- That delegated authority is given to the Director of Commissioning in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Libraries to enter into discussion with Shropshire Community Leisure Trust, the current operator, and their managing agent Serco Leisure Ltd and to agree a Contract Variation which will enable the Council to appoint Shropshire Community Leisure Trust to operate any new pool provision.

REPORT

1. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

Two major risks have been identified as part of this work:

- Future swimming provision continues to create huge public interest. In particular a petition with over 3000 signatures was received by Council in April 2014. Recently the Quarry Swimming Pool Forum has been formed to represent the views of pool users and Shropshire Council now have a good working relationship with them to ensure that their views are fed into this work. The development of a preferred future recommendation will be subject to a three month public consultation, and Equality Impact Assessment and detailed stakeholder engagement. We will also continue to work closely with Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association on the development of proposals that are firmly based on best practice elsewhere.
- Potential future project creep and management of spend. Whichever option is chosen this is a significant project with the risk of potential overspend and project creep. The project is being developed by a Project Board chaired by the Director of Commissioning and including relevant internal officers and external representation from Sport England and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA). The Board will develop a detailed project plan, risk framework and Equality Impact Assessment.

2. Financial implications

Capital funding will be required for the construction of a new pool. A number of options are available to the authority including:

- Council Capital Programme Funding
- Prudential Borrowing
- Sport England – Lottery Funding

Officers are working with Sport England and its partners (the ASA and Energize - the County Sport Partnership) on project development and initial discussions have taken place about Sport England capital programmes. There is a potential fit with the Strategic Facilities Fund which makes awards of between £500,000 and £2 million for major capital projects that are

strategically important and are focused on the rationalisation and replacement of ageing facility stock. Bids to the fund are solicited and follow joint work on project development and a strong business case which demonstrates compliance with current good practice (eg on design, costs, procurement and management) and the delivery of agreed outcomes.

At present, the cost of the construction of a new pool is difficult to determine and is based on a number of variables. Sport England have developed a detailed Model Community Tool Kit that seeks to provide practical and simple advice on the development, construction and operation of a new pool. A no frills cost for a new 25 m eight lane pool and a learner pool on a stand alone, 'clean site' is in the region of £5.8m. There will be additional costs, for example to meet BREAM Very Good standards, to include moveable floors, as well as additional items to ensure any new pool is able to host county galas (as The Quarry does at present) such as spectator seating. In order for any new pool to be financially viable it will also be important to include space for fitness provision. As a new pool is unlikely to be on a 'clean site' (for example a stand alone brown field site) it is likely, factoring in all of these additions that the facility could cost between £7 and £8 million, although this is a very broad estimate at present and will be further refined once the agreed location and approach has been finalised, following consultation.

By way of a reference point the recent construction of a new leisure centre at Oswestry, which opened in 2011, cost nearly £11million, although this included a range of features that would not be required for a new pool in Shrewsbury.

A new pool would also make substantial year on year revenue savings. Key elements of this include:

- Energy savings based on significantly less water area and a building design that meets best modern practice
- Repairs and maintenance savings reflecting a smaller, simpler and modern building
- Improved income based on the provision of a new modern fitness suite, on-going increased uptake of Learn to Swim classes, etc.

In order to develop detailed proposals and a preferred solution it will be necessary to incur revenue expenditure on matters such as specialist legal advice, a detailed building condition survey and an options appraisal that will independently validate different site options before the the project is progressed into a Capital Scheme. A revenue budget of approximately £75,000 will be developed to support this and can be found within existing budgets.

3.0 Background Information

Demand for swimming in Shrewsbury is significant with nearly a quarter of million swims in the Quarry in 2013/14.

	Quarry swimming centre attendance	Quarry fitness suite attendance	Total combined attendance
2005/6	291,523	74,948	366,471
2006/7	254,150	52,032	306,182
2007/8	275,310	53,262	328,572
2008/9	270,823	46,583	317,406
2009/10	293,091	53,387	346,478
2010/11	231,486	52,765	284,251
2011/12	223,856	57,694	281,550
2012/13	213,947	58,918	272,865
2013/14	222,929	69,932	292,861

The Local Sports Profile for Shropshire shows that swimming is the most popular sport and is above the regional and national averages. It is also the sport that adults most want to do.

Swimming provision is well positioned to make a significant contribution to several key national and local agendas including supporting a healthy society and personalisation and children to reach their full potential. This is described more fully in Appendix 1.

4.0 The Facilities at the Quarry Pool

The original Quarry Pool (comprising 2 pools), located within the loop of the River Severn in the centre of Shrewsbury was opened to the public in 1864. The facility underwent extensive modernisation in 1968/69 when two additional pools and the spectator area were added. It underwent a major refurbishment in 1994; this included a new health & fitness suite, changing accommodation and the replacement of plant & equipment.

Today the Quarry Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre (amounting to 898 sq m on several levels) comprises the following facilities:

- Quarry Pool – 33.3 m x 12.8 m with diving boards & seating
- Priory pool – 25.5 x 9.5 m
- Claremont Pool – 17 m x 9.5 m
- Teaching pool 10.5 m x 6.5 m
- Fitness suite, extended in 2009 - 37 station multi room gym layout, providing 17 cardiovascular machines in one room and 20 resistance training machines in another room.
- Training room
- Catering area
- Health suite

Staff at the pool also manage the adjacent outside paddling pool, which is limited to summer use. The future of this pool falls outside the scope of this report.

5.0 The management of the Quarry Pool

From summer 2012 the pool has been operated by Shropshire Community Leisure Trust, with Serco Leisure Ltd acting as their managing agent, under a 10 year contract which included an option for the Council to agree a 5 year extension. The contract and associated leases were entered into with the current operator following an open market competition during 2011/2012. It was envisaged by the Council (and notified to the market) before this procurement started that the Council might want to develop options for a new pool within the contract period and therefore the contract and lease of the Quarry Swimming Pool lease provide that the Council can terminate this part of the arrangement. This was intended to provide the Council' with flexibility with respect to future pool developments. The Council was only able to take into account information available at the time when finalising the 2012 legal documents so they do not fully allow for the implementation of each of the potential options.

However, the contract does have a wide variation provision. This mechanism will enable the Council to agree a variation with the operator to enable the Council to implement the preferred option in partnership with the current operator. There have been informal discussions with the operator who have agreed in principle to the proposed approach.

The alternative approach of terminating the current lease and contractual arrangements at the Quarry Swimming Pool with the current operator and to separately procure a new operator for the new pool has been considered but is not the preferred option. A further expensive, time consuming procurement with an uncertain outcome is considered unnecessary as a variation mechanism is available. As well as being unnecessary it is considered inappropriate as the current contract was procured by an open market competition as recently as 2011/ 2012. In addition, such an approach may result in fragmentation of the provision in Shrewsbury and would be inconsistent with the Council's vision and strategy. Furthermore, it would be advantageous to have the benefit of the advice and support from the current operator as the preferred option is being developed. A fresh procurement approach is still open to the Council if the negotiations with the current operator are not successful.

6.0 The condition of the Quarry Pool

In September 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 an approximate 5 year period and until a replacement facility was built.

As part of the leisure outsourcing project a building condition survey was completed of the Quarry Pool in December 2011. This 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. As part of one of

the options to extensively refurbish and renovate the existing pool a further and more detailed assessment will be made.

7.0 Future swimming provision within Shrewsbury

In developing options for future swimming provision in Shrewsbury, Shropshire Council has developed and adopted a comprehensive suite of sport and leisure facility strategies and assessments. These have considered the need for new investment, both now and in the future.¹

The Indoor Facilities Strategy used Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM) to assess the supply and demand for swimming pools in Shropshire. This indicated that there is a good supply of water space in Shrewsbury and that the vast majority of residents that want to swim are able to do so. The FPM analysis also tested the potential implications of closing the current Quarry Pool and building a smaller replacement pool at either the existing site or in an edge of town location. The two main findings from this analysis were that:

- There is scope to significantly reduce the current amount of water space provided in any new facility
- There is no significant difference between a town centre location and edge of town location in meeting the demand for swimming in Shrewsbury

Further discussion has taken place with Sport England about the need to consider increased demand for swimming from planned housing growth. This growth would not have a major impact on demand for the water space described below. However, the location of new housing, the type of housing and the timing of delivery are all factors that will need further consideration when developing any new pool provision.

Initial conclusions, based on the demand and needs assessment and discussions with key partners such as Sport England and the ASA, are that the preferred facility mix to meet the future swimming needs of Shrewsbury would be:

- 25m x 8 lane pool (approximately 600 sqm) ideally with longitudinal boom and floating floor able to accommodate a range of uses, county competitions and appropriate spectator provision
- Learner pool (approximately 17m x 10m)
- Fitness and aerobic studio
- Catering area
- Village changing area, dry changing areas, toilets, showers, offices, reception, first aid room, plant rooms, etc.

Appendix 1 provides more detail of a future vision and detailed requirements for future pool provision. This has been developed by professionals in this

¹ Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2009 - 2019 and Playing Pitch Strategy 2010 – 2020, Cabinet, 29 June 2011

field including Sport England and the ASA as well as taking into account existing usage of the pool.

8.0 Other areas of existing swimming provision in Shrewsbury

Other swimming provision within the Shrewsbury areas is listed below:

Pool	m2	Access	Distance from town centre
Quarry Swimming Centre	898	“Pay and play”	
Shrewsbury School	325	School / no formal community use	
The Shrewsbury Club	120	Membership	
Bannatynes	160	Membership	
Albrighton Hotel	100	Membership	4 miles
Concorde College	120	School / no formal school use?	10 miles
Rowton Castle Country Club	150	Membership	8 miles

The Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre is the only public swimming pool facility available in the Shrewsbury area with Wem Swimming Pool, Wellington Swimming Pool (both 12 miles) and the Much Wenlock Leisure Centre Pool (15 miles) being the closest. At circa 900sqm the Quarry Pool makes up nearly half of the total water area available within Shrewsbury.

9. A New Pool for Shrewsbury – options on location

In broad terms there are four different options for future swimming provision in Shrewsbury:

1. The status quo – whilst an option it is recognised this will be unlikely to sustain swimming provision within Shrewsbury in the medium term
2. A major refurbishment and renovation of the existing facility
3. Rebuild on the existing site – If this was undertaken there would be no swimming provision for the duration of the build (possibly up to 2 years)
4. New build on a new site, either stand alone or alongside an existing leisure facility or other community facility

“Business plans” will be developed for different site options including indicative capital and revenue costs and these will be evaluated against the vision and requirements outlined within Appendix 1. The detailed options and requirements will form the basis of the three month public consultation and a recommendation on a final location will be brought back to Cabinet and Council as appropriate.

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

Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy 2009 - 2019 and Playing Pitch Strategy 2010 – 2020, Cabinet, 29 June 2011

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Libraries and Culture

Local Members:

Cllr Andrew Bannerman

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Shrewsbury Swimming Pool provision, Outcomes and detailed requirements