

Cabinet – 24 October 2012

Leisure Centre Improvements

Portfolio: Councillor A Harris – Leisure & Culture

Service: Leisure & Culture

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals to improve the council's leisure centres. It seeks consent to submit for planning approval to replace Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres and to apply for Lottery grant funding from Sport England.
- 1.2 This is part of a larger piece of work to explore how to improve the health and wellbeing of local people by promoting greater physical activity. Officers have undertaken substantial research with councillors and partner organisations to determine how best the council's leisure services should be configured to contribute to physical activity and health. There are a variety of ways this can be done including encouraging more physical activity in green spaces and greater community use of school-based facilities. Work is underway to develop these as part of Walsall's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. However the data suggests that the greatest impact would come through a universal service underpinned by leisure centres.
- 1.3 Walsall's leisure centres are generally not in good condition. The strategy is to improve facilities, thereby maximising the increase in the number of users taking part in physical activity. There is a variety of funding sources for the investment required, one of which in the Sport England Lottery Fund. The report seeks authorisation to submit a funding application for this grant and to submit the required planning application.
- 1.4 Cabinet will receive a subsequent report setting out the strategy in more detail and the options for the management and delivery models for future leisure service provision, including the option of establishing a trust.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Confirm that the overriding purpose of its leisure services is to contribute to the health and wellbeing of local people.

- 2.2 Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to:-
- 2.2.1 Develop a detailed business case for the delivery of an improved, more efficient leisure service provision, including the option of building two new leisure centres at Bloxwich and Oak Park and / or updating / refurbishing existing Leisure Centres;
 - 2.2.2 Prepare and submit an application for grant funding of up to £2 million to the Sport England Lottery Fund's in support of building two new leisure centres at Bloxwich and Oak Park and / or updating / refurbishing existing Leisure Centres;
 - 2.2.3 Draw up proposals, undertake all other associated work and submit detailed planning applications for two new leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich and (if required) updating / refurbishing the other existing Leisure Centres;
 - 2.2.4 Engage external consultants and specialists to provide support and advise in relation to the planning applications, preparation of the detailed business case and any other issues arising where appropriate.
- 2.3 Authorise initial expenditure in respect of the upfront costs for design preparation, investigations, surveys, legal and planning advice, the planning application fees and other associated costs as set out in the report, and delegate authority to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel, for further spend above this and subject to reporting back to cabinet on levels of spend; and
- 2.4 Receive a report setting out options for management delivery models for future leisure service provision at a subsequent Cabinet meeting.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 It is recognised that the Council needs to address existing health inequalities in Walsall. The NHS Walsall Annual Public Health Report 2010 headline conclusion was that “the health of people in Walsall is generally worse than the England average” and “Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas of Walsall is 11 years less than in the least deprived areas.”
- 3.2 The Working Smarter review into Sport & Leisure Services is focusing on the problem of the large sedentary population of Walsall. Just over 16% of Walsall's adult population undertake the recommended level of physical activity a week and 55% of adults (approximately 110,000) undertake no physical activity whatsoever. Inactivity is estimated to cost Walsall £33m a year, on top of the £40m cost of obesity.
- 3.3 The fundamental justification for undertaking any new scheme is the need to address Walsall's health inequalities, with conditions such as coronary heart

disease, vascular disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer, stroke and osteoporosis ~ all directly linked to no or low levels of physical activity.

- 3.4 Using data from Sport England, public health and other sources, the Working Smarter review identified nine key groups that were most in need of undertaking physical activity but who were also those most likely and willing to make this change in behaviour; thereby helping themselves and their families. The nine target groups are:-
- a) Single Parents
 - b) Mid-life vocational workers
 - c) Older people
 - d) “Long-Term chronic Conditions”
 - e) Men over 40
 - f) Young People in Transition
 - g) Overweight & Obese
 - h) Looked after Children
 - i) Children with Disabilities
- 3.5 Building on this work, the Working Smarter review has helped identify that the activities most likely to encourage Walsall’s sedentary population to become more physically active are swimming and fitness ~ activities that are wholly dependent on built indoor leisure facilities.
- 3.6 Walsall’s leisure centres are generally old, out-of-date, often not fit for purpose, unattractive, poorly designed and will become increasingly costly to manage. Some parts date back to the 1930s. The centres are becoming increasingly unappealing to users especially young people, families and those who would actually benefit most, including the elderly and people with disabilities.
- 3.7 This situation now needs investment into the Council’s core leisure provision to deliver facilities and services that are fit for purpose and can be affordable to operate and maintain over the next twenty-five years. The proposal being put to Cabinet is to consider replacing the leisure facilities at Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres. These would then offer an attractive range of attractive, well designed, efficient wet and dry, indoor and out facilities for use by all Borough residents. Interventions for the nine target groups shown earlier in this report will be delivered from these “universal” services through a range of strategic partners and in-house services.
- 3.8 It is proposed that an application is made to the Sport England Lottery Fund for a grant of approximately £2 million. A condition of submission to Sport England is that planning permission has been granted. Full planning permission will be required for Oak Park and outline permission would be acceptable for Bloxwich.

4. Council priorities

The proposals will make a substantial contribution to several of the objectives of the Marmot review, as incorporated into the council’s corporate plan, namely

- giving every child the best start in life

- enabling all children, young people and adults to maximize their capabilities and have control over their lives
- ensuring a healthy standard of living for all
- strengthening the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

5. Risk management

There is a risk that the Lottery funding streams will close early and schemes already in the pipeline be unable to proceed or have to identify alternative sums to finance the projects.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 To reach the position of being able to submit the required planning applications on 31 October 2012 a considerable amount of work has already been undertaken. The upfront costs of design preparation and associated costs for both leisure centres are shown in the table below:-

	£
Council's in-house design team	41,000
Surveys, investigations,	30,450
Building condition surveys	7,750
Other associated costs	14,800
Planning applications	36,000
TOTAL (estimated)	130,000

Some of these costs, such as staff design time, are internal reallocation of resources whilst planning fees are made by the applicant, in this case the Council, to the Council. Every effort will be made to keep these costs as low as possible.

- 6.2 In terms of addressing the Council's future facility provision against a decreasing budget, this proposal is one part of a longer term scheme to offer enhanced facilities for Walsall residents whilst still being able to make the required budget savings of £644,500 for 2013/14 to 2016/17.
- 6.3 No further funding rounds for the Sport England "Iconic" Facilities programme has been advertised beyond December 2012. There is precedence that Lottery funding streams have been closed early and schemes already in the pipeline have been unable to proceed. There is therefore an urgency to submit a full and comprehensive bid on 14 December 2012. It is worth noting that the earlier the scheme can commence then the earlier additional income streams can be generated and potential savings released.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 Consideration of the legal form for the delivery of future Leisure Service provision will be reported in a subsequent Cabinet report.
- 7.2 Whilst there is no statutory obligation to provide leisure centres per se, there remains an obligation to provide adequate recreational, social and physical facilities for school purposes.

8. Property implications

- 8.1 The on-going future costs of the Council's leisure centres, in particular Oak Park, Bloxwich and Gala Baths, will become increasingly expensive for the Council whilst at the same time not providing fit for purpose facilities. The proposal to replace Oak Park and Bloxwich with modern, energy efficient centres will be essential to manage better, and reduce, future costs to the Council whilst delivering an improve service to residents.
- 8.2 It would be stipulated within the OJEU notice that the Council would expect interested contractors to approach Trade Walsall and explore how they would deliver a successful construction contract utilising companies, personnel and skills that already exist in Walsall. It is expected that the successful contractor would also show a clear commitment to staff training and development, an apprenticeship scheme and also work experience where safe and appropriate.

9. Staffing implications

The work to develop the planning applications for 31 October 2012 and all associated work is being undertaken by officers in conjunction with support from legal and planning consultants where required.

10. Equality implications

The proposals to replace the two leisure centres with modern, well designed, customer friendly facilities will offer equality of access to all Walsall residents without barrier to access or discrimination. An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and will be updated as the scheme progresses.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Walsall NHS, Sport England (National and Regional level), Amateur Swimming Association, English Federation of Disability Sport, the National Governing Bodies for Football, Badminton, Volleyball and Netball, whg, Wolverhampton University, Community Activity Network, Black Country Shared Service working group (Leisure), West Midlands Pensions Fund, Eastside Consulting, V4 Services, Black Country Consortium Sports

- 11.2 Internal consultation has been undertaken with Legal, Human Resources, Property, Finance, Procurement, Social Care, ICT and Shared Services, Strategic Planning et al
- 11.3 Initial public consultation is being undertaken on the outline proposals with effect from 16 October 2012 with comments reflected in the planning application.
- 11.4 Consultation with the trades unions has been held at the Neighbourhoods' JNCC and a Sport & Leisure sub JNCC committee has been formed and has met on 12 October, with further meetings scheduled.

Background papers

- Strategic Leisure ~ Management options (2006/7)
- Black Country Consortium strategy (2008)
- Building Schools for the Future (2008/10)
- Asset Management review (2009/10)
- Community Services Scrutiny & Performance Panel review (2010)
- Independent management consultancy on target groups (2010/11)
- V4 Services Management options (2011)
- Transforming Community Services (2011/12)
- plus on-going consultancy from Sport England (throughout)
- NHS Walsall Public Health report 2010 "Future Proofing Health"
- Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities (Marmot, 2010)
- Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Government Strategy for Public Health in England (2010)

Authors

Chris Holliday
Head of Leisure & Community Health
☎ 01922 650339
✉ hollidayc@walsall.gov.uk

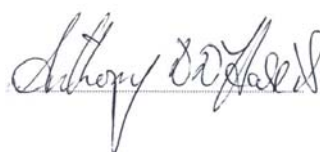
Ben Percival
Sport & Leisure Service Manager
☎ 01902 605500
✉ percivalb@walsall.gov.uk

Jamie Morris
Executive Director



15 October 2012

Councillor A Harris
Portfolio Holder, Leisure & Culture



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