

## **Cabinet – 18 March 2015**

### **Gala Baths improvements**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Hussain – Community, Leisure and Culture

**Related portfolios:** Public Health, Children's Services and Education, Regeneration, Social Care

**Service:** Sport & Leisure

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 A 2,000 signatory petition to save the Gala Baths was presented to Council on 8 July 2013. A subsequent report was presented to Council on 23 September 2013.
- 1.2 Consideration of a proposal for the Gala Baths' future was put to one side whilst the Active Living project to replace the leisure centres at Oak Park and Bloxwich was negotiated. This was agreed by Cabinet in April 2014 and confirmed by Council in August 2014.
- 1.3 The council has allocated £1m in the 2015/16 Capital Programme to undertake a variety of improvements to the Gala Baths. Funding was approved by Council on 26 February 2015 and, subject to Cabinet approving the recommendations in this report, work on the project will be able to commence by the end of April 2015.
- 1.4 Through the SCAPE construction framework for minor works, Kier Construction has been working with Council officers to develop a scheme in-line with the Council's available budget. The proposed scheme will include a new changing village, multi-purpose room, café, reception, water features in the Brine pool and redecoration to the general circulation areas.

#### **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to

- 2.1 Approve the scheme as proposed for a total sum of £1m and delegate authority to the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services to award the contract to Kier Construction, and

- 2.2 Allocate the project to the existing Active Living Governance Board and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community, Leisure and Culture for monitoring purposes.

### **3. Report detail**

- 3.1 The existing Gala Baths was opened on 6 May 1961 based on the original baths in Tower Street of 1896. Its purpose has always been primarily for the health benefit of Walsall's residents, the 1960s marketing strap-line being "*For health's sake swim*". Its background in fact stems back to the Baths and Wash-Houses Act (1846) and Public Health Act (1936).
- 3.2 A 2,000 signatory petition to "save the Gala Baths" was presented to Council on 8 July 2013. A subsequent report was presented to Council on 23 September 2013.
- 3.3 During autumn 2013 to spring 2014 the Council was undertaking the EU procurement phase of the Active Living scheme to replace Oak Park and Bloxwich leisure centres. The work included the value engineering process and negotiation to achieve best value for money with ISG Construction. As a result of this work proposals for the Gala Baths were put on hold until the outcome of the Active Living scheme had been confirmed.
- 3.4 As part of the Council's aspiration to get "more people, more active, more often" and thereby improve residents' physical and mental health and overall well-being, on 11 August 2014 Council approved the construction and funding of new Active Living Centres at Bloxwich and Oak Park.
- 3.5 Members indicated that they would consider spending £1m on making improvements to the Gala Baths on the basis that it would make the facility more attractive, increase attendances and income and thereby reduce the Council's subsidy to the centre. Such an approach is intended to extend the Gala's operational life by a further ten years. A sum of £1m has been included within the Council's 2015/16 Capital Programme.
- 3.6 Using the SCAPE National Minor Works framework for public sector projects of up to £2m, a nationally recognised compliant construction framework, initial development work has been undertaken with Kier Construction with a view to improvements being able to commence on site in April 2015. The framework option has been used due to the time savings that this offers, generally four to six weeks over full OJEU procurement, and also that "value for money" assessment has already demonstrated value for money in other previous projects.
- 3.7 Officers were asked to consider three options, these being:-
- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Option 1 | What will £1m buy?                                    |
| Option 2 | What would a larger scheme cost?                      |
| Option 3 | What would it cost to open up the slipper baths area? |
- 3.8 For the avoidance of any doubt, the £1m is not the cost of the construction works. Taking into account a contingency, furniture and fixtures, design, overhead and

profit, the actual spend on the improvement works to the building would be just £787,200. A breakdown is shown in paragraph 6 of this report. Whilst the contingency and fittings allocation could feasibly be reduced this would have the likely impact of reducing the budget for unforeseen events and also the quality of the final finishes. This is not advised.

3.9 To deliver a scheme within the £1m budget (Option 1) and to maximise the impact of the expenditure in visible improvements that the public will benefit from, and in line with consultation (see **Appendix A**), the proposed scheme of improvements to the Gala Baths will therefore be:

- Modernise the out-dated changing rooms and replace with a single male & female Changing Village
- Create a multi-purpose room in the existing Brine changing space
- Create a new reception foyer and entrance area
- Create a café / bistro seating area
- Install several water features in the Brine Pool hall
- Fixed boom in Gala Pool

Photographs showing the existing facility and illustrative images of what is proposed are shown in **Appendix B**.

The existing Dance Studio and “Spinning” Studio on the ground floor and Fitness Suite on the first floor will be retained as they are.

All three spaces have been renovated within the last few years and there is insufficient funding within the £1m to move them around. The number of cardio vascular and resistance machines has recently been increased from 28 to 37 as a consequence of Bloxwich Leisure Centre’s closure in mid December 2014. With the recent opening of Pure Gym and Sweat Gym at the top of the town centre, adjacent to the Tesco / Poundland premises, a fitness suite of this size at the Gala is considered appropriate. A larger gym would have the potential to earn more income however the cost to deliver this is greater.

3.10 Option 2 would have included a larger Fitness Suite and relocated it to the ground floor, but at a cost of £300,000. The existing ground floor Dance Studio and Spinning Studio would then have gone upstairs at a cost of £145,000, a combined cost of £445,000. As the existing facilities are acceptable with the inclusion of the extra pieces of equipment, plus also taking into account the new town centre competition, this was felt to be an expensive option without necessarily giving good value for money.

A second part of Option 2 was to redesign the existing 33m Gala pool. By including a fixed boom (a type of wall), a 25m x 13.7m short course pool could be created leaving a 6m x 13.7m learner pool. A moving floor could also be inserted into the deep end of the pool, creating greater flexibility of use.

The cost of the boom has been estimated as £65,000. At this stage the aspiration is to include the boom in the scheme, funded through the contingency or furniture and fittings elements. This provision has been made within the budget presented in paragraph 6.1.

- 3.11 The moveable floor would cost an additional £145,000 and cannot be accommodated within the current £1 million budget. To include the moveable floor at this stage would require the allocation of additional resources. The floor however does not need to be installed concurrently with the boom and, if desired, could be added at a later date when resources allow.
- 3.12 Under Option 3 Kier Construction were also asked to estimate the cost of removing all of the old “slipper baths” (bath tub cubicles) on the first floor, remove some of the seating above and create an open space within the Gala Baths for alternative sports use. Option 3 would create a space of some 30m long x 5m wide. The space is however rather unusual and would only lend itself to indoor bowls or archery. Whilst the initial conversion cost would start at £150,000, no cost for demolition within the slipper baths has been possible at this stage but could be c.£250,000+. Taking into account the low levels of achievable income from such a space, it is recommended that Option 3 is not pursued.
- 3.13 If the scheme is approved it is proposed that the existing Active Living Governance Board, which monitors delivery of the Oak Park and Bloxwich Active Living Centres and is chaired by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community, Leisure and Culture, is tasked with the oversight and monitoring role of the scheme’s progress for monitoring purposes.

#### **4. Council priorities**

- 4.1 The proposals will make a substantial contribution to several of the objectives of the Marmot review and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, as incorporated into the council’s corporate plan, specifically:-
- Promoting health and well-being  
The Active Living Review has clearly evidenced provision of good quality swimming and fitness facilities is essential to increasing physical activity and the associated health and wellbeing benefits.
  - Improving Educational Achievement  
Research has indicated that physical activity and positive recreational opportunities are integral to children’s development and attainment.
  - Helping local high streets and communities  
A credible leisure offer is a key component to a high street offer and the future of Gala Baths features in the Town Centre Area Action Plan.
- 4.2 The council’s stated purpose is to maintain and improve the physical and economic environment for the health and well-being of all our residents within financial constraints.

- 4.3 The council also has other objectives against which it is measuring its future service delivery, including budget savings, impact on residents and businesses and staff morale. Taking these briefly in turn:

1. Budget savings

The outline proposals contained within this scheme will make the Gala Baths more attractive, bring the changing areas, décor and circulation spaces up-to-date, and increase the number of users and attendances. This ought to generate more income and thereby allow the Council to reduce its operating subsidy to the centre, thereby contributing towards future years' budgetary savings.

2. Impact on residents and businesses

The scheme outlined within this paper is clearly to increase the level of Walsall residents' activity (*"More people, more active, more often"*) as a key contributing factor to addressing the Borough's health inequalities. With conditions such as coronary heart disease, vascular disease, obesity, diabetes, cancer, stroke and osteoporosis being directly linked to little or no physical activity, this is a key proposal. It has been estimated that the annual health-related cost of physical inactivity in Walsall is at least £5.7m.<sup>1</sup>

Improved activity levels, exercise and the social interaction that more often than not goes with this is a major contributor to improved levels of mental health and well-being, personal happiness and feeling of worth. The overall outcome can in many cases lead to less time off work and a better overall quality of life.

3. Project funding spent locally

Under the proposed framework, there are Key Performance Indicators (KPI) commitments to at least 66% of the project funding to be spent with local SME sub-contractors, supporting the Walsall economy and employment prospects.

## 5. Risk management

- 5.1 A full risk assessment approach will be undertaken between Kier and the council's officers to ensure that the risks of the project are appropriately managed. A Risk Register will be created that will include asbestos, unforeseen works, and also that the detailed mechanical and electrical dependencies of the proposals are not yet known.

## 6. Financial implications

- 6.1 £1m has been included within the Council's 2015/16 Capital Programme to undertake improvement works to the Gala Baths. Taking into account a 10% contingency for the project, furniture and fixtures, design, overhead and profit, the actual spend on the improvement works to the building will be £787,200.

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<sup>1</sup> Sport England commissioned data from British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group for PCTs and reworked into estimates for LAs by TBR. 2009/10. <http://www.sportengland.org/media/86925/Local-Authority-table-FINAL.pdf>

		£
• Changing Village		465,000
• Multi-purpose room		120,000
• Café		75,000
• Reception		35,000
• Brine Pool water features		27,200
• Pool boom		65,000
Sub total 1		787,200
	%	
• Contingency	5%	39,360
• Furniture & Fittings	5%	39,360
• Design Fees	10%	78,720
• Sub total 2		944,640
• Kier overhead & profit	5%	47,232
• Sub total 3		991,872
• Scape fee	0.95%	9,423
Total Project Cost		1,001,295

- 6.2 Other schemes for the Gala Baths could be considered, however there is no funding allocated beyond the £1m in the 2015/16 Capital Programme.

## 7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Gala Baths are owned by Walsall Council and there are no restrictive covenants on the building or site.
- 7.2 The Council can award a contract of this nature to Kier Construction through the SCAPE construction framework as this is a recognised and EU compliant manner of procurement for such work. The framework option has been used due to the time savings that this offers (generally four to six weeks quicker than the OJEU procurement process) and also that “value for money” assessment has already demonstrated value for money in other previous projects.

## 8. Property implications

- 8.1 The Gala Baths was opened in 1961. As with any building of this age, asbestos is likely to be found in various parts of the building. It is not possible to quantify precisely where, nor how much without an intrusive and destructive survey in the areas likely to be affected by the proposals. Whilst a detailed survey will help to understand the likely impact and risk, inaccessible elements of the building, and this can only be ascertained by an investigative survey once the construction company is on site and commenced works.
- 8.2 Due to the proposed works, and as the Gala Baths has a fairly small public circulation area, it is thought unlikely at this stage that the building will be able to remain open whilst the works are being undertaken. It is anticipated that the building would have to be closed for up to three months. Notwithstanding finding

any asbestos, closing the Gala and handing the building over to the contractor in its entirety not only makes their work safer but also allows for a quicker programme of works.

- 8.3 As details of the scheme are worked up with Kier it will be a consideration as to whether one of the two pools (Gala Pool and Brine Pool) could be kept open throughout the improvement works thereby mitigating disruption to the centre's users.
- 8.4 Using a construction framework is approximately four to six weeks quicker than undertaking a full OJEU procurement process. The contractor appraisal has already been undertaken and an "open book" approach is guaranteed. Following the recession the construction industry is very busy at present and being able to commence this work during April 2015 so that improvements are complete by the Summer is a key consideration.
- 8.5 The Gala Baths is an essential component of the proposed Civic Quarter CHP (Combined Heat and Power) project. This project would see energy costs / carbon savings of 20-25% (estimated as £2.4 million over 15 years). For the CHP project to be viable, it requires the heating demand from Gala Baths and the electrical consumption of the Civic Centre / Town Hall complex.

## **9. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 9.1 It is estimated that 170,000 Walsall residents do not currently meet physical activity guidelines (150 minutes per week/ 5 x 30 minute sessions per week) with 100,000 taking part in no exercise.
- 9.2 The annual health-related cost of physical inactivity in Walsall has been estimated to be at least £5.7m.<sup>2</sup>
- 9.3 National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidance recommends a strategic approach to increasing population level physical activity rates.<sup>3</sup> A well rounded strategy will include leisure and recreational activity as well as other approaches in a variety of settings including active travel, recreation within green spaces, schools and workplaces.
- 9.4 The recommendation of the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers is that at population level, the target of 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity will only be achieved by *helping people to build activity into their daily lives*<sup>4</sup>. Their report states that "the benefits of physical activity can be gained from activities that can be incorporated into everyday life such as regular brisk walking, using stairs and cycling. Physical activity does not have to be vigorous to confer protection".

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<sup>2</sup> Sport England commissioned data from British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group for PCTs and reworked into estimates for LAs by TBR. 2009/10. <http://www.sportengland.org/media/86925/Local-Authority-table-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence 2012; Local Authority Briefing: Physical Activity.

<sup>4</sup> Start active, stay active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries. Chief Medical Officers, UK Department of Health, 2011

- 9.5 Increasing physical activity levels in Walsall will contribute to the prevention and management of over 20 conditions and diseases including coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer, positive mental health and weight management.
- 9.6 Improving uptake/ attendances through provision of high quality leisure services in the borough will contribute to these outcomes, although the impacts are currently difficult to quantify. Leisure centres play an important role in providing opportunities for large scale participation in physical activity.

## **10. Staffing implications**

- 10.1 To help deliver the Active Living Centres at Bloxwich and Oak Park, permanent staff from the old Bloxwich Leisure Centre have already been reassigned to Oak Park Leisure Centre, Darlaston Swimming Pool and Gala Baths. Closing Gala Baths at this stage would require the Sport & Leisure Service to consider other options for the estimated three months closure period.
- 10.2 If Cabinet decide to proceed with the £1m proposal, regular Sport & Leisure JNCC meetings will be held to discuss any staffing issues.

## **11. Equality implications**

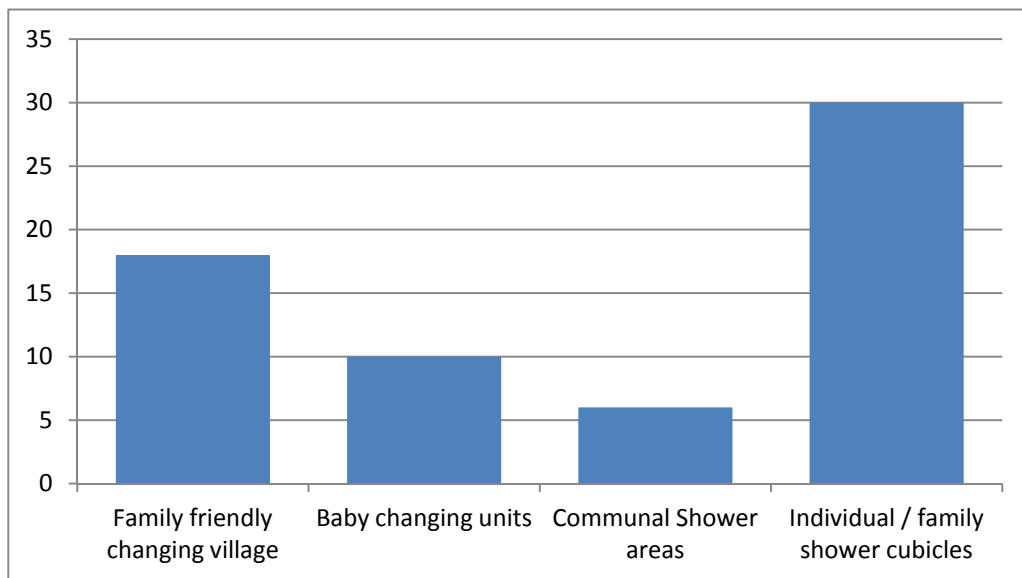
- 11.1 The Equality Impact Assessment for the Active Living project has indicated that improvement to leisure facilities widens access to opportunities. Work undertaken to date has already seen a significant shift in the demographics of the leisure centres' users with far more reach into more deprived groups.

## **12. Consultation**

- 12.1 The users of Gala Baths have been surveyed with regard to what improvements they would like to see (Appendix A). In terms of features users would like to see in the new changing rooms the results were as follows:

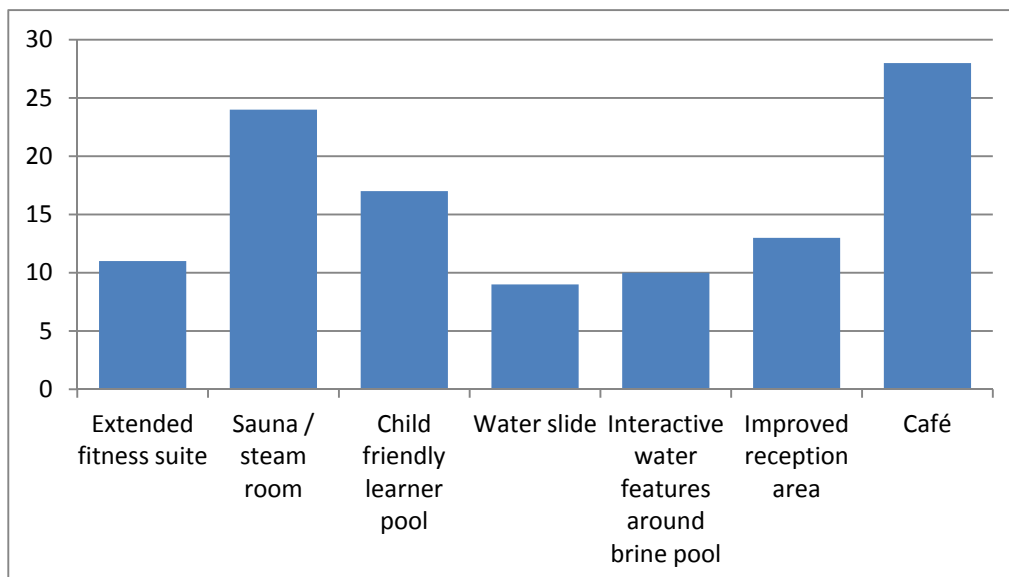
Family friendly changing village	18
Baby changing units	10
Communal shower areas	6
Individual / family shower cubicles	30





Other facilities users would like to see introduced are presented below:

Extended fitness suite	11
Sauna / steam room	24
Child friendly learner pool	17
Water slide	9
Interactive water features around brine pool	10
Improved reception area	13
Café	28



## Background papers

"Save the Gala Baths" petition report - Council 23 September 2013

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9 March 2015

Councillor Hussain  
Portfolio Holder



9 March 2015

## Appendix A

### Further consultation feedback

**We are currently investigating options to develop and improve the facility. Which of the following would you like to see provided at Walsall Gala Baths?**

#### Other comments:-

- Car parking
- Up to 20kg free weights
- More free weights needed (x2)
- A child friendly learner pool with water features for children around the learner pool (separate to Gala/Brine Pool)
- Kids fitzone separate from adult gym (to help kids get exercise outside of school)
- Extended pool opening hours (7am - pm) (x2) - or just swim @ 7am
- Simply leave Gala Pool same size for swimmers as it is a swimming pool and regular users appreciate it as such
- Instead of extended fitness sheet money would like money to be spent on maintenance programme to repair broken equipment "much" sooner
- More lockers in brine
- Proper functioning fitzone - not split over 2 silly 'rooms' and more fitzone sessions
- Fitzone for kids that is all in same room x 2
- The Brine Baths is essential to the area

**As part of any development undertaken one of our priorities is to improve the Gala pool changing area. Which of the following would you like to see in a revamped changing area?**







#### Other suggestions:-

- Gala changing rooms need a complete facelift not just a coat of pain
- Floor drainage/mats and more frequent cleaning
- Improved Lockers
- Gala changing, need re-vamping
- Improved toilet facilities
- Better, user friendly lockers, ie separate shelf to house shoes and umbrellas (when wet)
- Leave changing rooms as they are (separate), just may be tidy them up a bit
- Separate changing area and shower use for gym users x 2

- Hotter showers
- More open space

## Appendix B

### GALA BATHS (Current and proposed)

 A photograph of a long, narrow male changing room. It features a long green bench on the left and a row of yellow lockers on the right. The floor is tiled with a yellow line down the center.	 A photograph of a proposed 'Changing Village' area. It shows a bright, open space with blue and yellow lockers. A sign above an archway reads 'showers'.
Changing room (male)	Changing Village
 A photograph of a 'Redundant space' area, showing a doorway and a small, cluttered room with a blue metal frame.	 A photograph of a 'Café area' with several round wooden tables and chairs. A counter with a menu board is visible in the background.
Redundant space	Café area
 A photograph of a row of current grey metal lockers with silver handles.	 A photograph of proposed lockers, which are grey with yellow and blue accents and colorful handles.
Lockers	



Existing showers



Proposed concept



Fixed bulkhead (to create 25m pool plus learner pool)



Moving floor



Water Play features