

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive - 13 July 2011

Task and Finish Review: Future Swimming Provision in Taunton

Report of the Chairman: Councillor Andrew Govier

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Catherine Herbert)

1. Executive Summary

In October 2009 the Community Scrutiny Committee considered a report by the Strategy Manager entitled The Future of Swimming in Taunton. The report recommended that a new pool be built in Taunton to provide adequate swimming facilities for the growing town, especially in light of the imminent closure of St James Street Pool. This report reinforced the recommendations of an earlier Swimming Pool Feasibility Study provided by Strategic Leisure Ltd in 2004. As a consequence of this, the Community Scrutiny Committee recommended a Task and Finish Review be set up to assess the options for a new pool in Taunton.

The Task and Finish Review met over the course of 12 months between December 2009 and December 2010 to look at viable options for a new pool in Taunton. A lot of further work was undertaken between these meetings by officers from the Council, Tone Leisure, the Amateur Swimming Association, Project Taunton and Southwest One to assess a range of potential sites, options and funding streams.

The recommendations of the Task and Finish Review are for the Council to undertake a detailed business case to identify a way forward to:

- (a) undertake essential works at Station Road Pool to keep it operational and viable for a further 15-20 years, with an estimated cost of £1.5m to £1.8m.
- (b) build a new 'no frills' 25 metre pool with smaller teaching pool onto the side of Blackbrook Sports Pavilion using design and build designs similar to those used at Ivybridge and estimated to cost between £2m and £2.5m.

Both of these options would be on the assumption that the St James Street Pool would be closed and sold.

2. Task and Finish Review Membership:

2.1 Members of the review were:

- Councillor A Govier (Chairman)
- Councillor M Edwards (until 13.05. 2010)
- Councillor K Durdan
- Councillor C Herbert (until 13.05.2010)
- Councillor L James
- Councillor P Smith
- Councillor S Lees
- Councillor E Waymouth (from 14.05.2010)
- Councillor J Allgrove (from 14.05.2010)

2.2 The group would like to thank Dennis Freeman-Wright from the Amateur Swimming Association who gave up his time to do a visual condition survey of the Station Road Pool and also the members of the public who attended the meetings and made valuable contributions to the outcome of the review.

3 Background

3.1 The Station Road Pool was built in 1974 and is a 6 lane 33 metre pool. The St James' Street Pool is somewhat older having been built in 1935. Whilst the Station Road pool is used for open sessions, the older pool is used almost exclusively by schools, clubs, organisations and private hire.

3.2 The steady deterioration of the two Taunton municipal pools led to the commissioning of a feasibility study in 2004, conducted by Strategic Leisure Ltd for a new pool in Taunton. They identified that a new swimming pool would be more cost effective than the two existing pools, with net revenue costs and capital investment costs increasing significantly in future years. They suggested that the new facility should include an 8 lane 25 metre pool with a four lane 20 metre pool and smaller fun pool. In addition, a Health and fitness suite would be needed to support income. The cost of the new facility would be approximately £6 to £7 million and would last between 25 and 40 years. At the time this was seen as unaffordable and the project did not progress further.

3.3 In October 2009, the Strategy Manager wrote a report to the Community Scrutiny Committee that brought the subject back on the agenda for councillors. This was in light of recent failings of plant and equipment at the St James Street Pool and the increasing urgency to address this before its imminent closure in the coming years. Furthermore, expected housing and population growth in Taunton would increase the demand for swimming and add further pressure to this issue. Swimming, after walking, had been identified as the most

popular leisure activity in Taunton Deane and accounted for 40% of Tone Leisure facility use.

- 3.4 The recommendations of the Community Scrutiny Committee were to form a task and finish review to investigate options and identify the best way forward to deliver a new pool in Taunton.

4 **Methodology**

4.1 Potential Sites

- 4.1.1 The Group reconsidered the original sites for a new pool identified in the Strategic Leisure 2004 report, however most had since been earmarked for Project Taunton or were unavailable.
- 4.1.2 The Group considered the potential of different new sites including the Cricket Club, Tangier, St Augustines School, Blackbrook Sports Centre and the existing Station Road location, using advice and input from Project Taunton.
- 4.1.3 The Group considered the possibility of partnership work to deliver a pool with the Cricket Club, Musgrove Park Hospital, the YMCA and Education providers, including 'Building Schools for the Future'. None of these led to any proposed partnership approach.

4.2 Form and Function

- 4.2.1 Following a detailed discussion with Tone Leisure, the Group accepted that the St James Street Pool would need to close and must therefore be replaced.
- 4.2.2 A debate was had on the merits of a 25m pool and 50m pool and there was clear advice from the Amateur Swimming Association and Sport England that a 50m pool would not be appropriate or value for money in a town the size of Taunton.
- 4.2.3 The Task and Finish Group focussed on seeking a pragmatic solution that was affordable. A 'no frills / functional' approach was taken which brought forward options such as commissioning a 'design and build' pool onto an existing Council building. This model had seen pools delivered for around £2m in other areas.
- 4.2.4 A detailed Condition Survey of the Station Road pool by the Amateur Swimming Association concluded that this pool could remain operational for between 15 and 20 more years with investment of between £1.5m and £1.8m. The Group were keen that the town centre should retain a swimming pool and the survival of Station Road Pool therefore became a key objective.

- 4.2.5 The Group considered extending the Station Road Pool to provide further swimming facilities however this was ruled out as impractical due to the unorthodox design of the site.
- 4.2.6 It was acknowledged that the future operational viability of the pools was critical and would need a detailed business plan from Tone Leisure. This could result in further recommendations to modify the use of the Station Road Pool to bring in other complimentary activities to increase income.
- 4.2.7 Timing of the work on both pools would be critical to ensure that disruption to swimming provision (and therefore income) was minimised. This would need to be further explored as part of a detailed business case.

4.3 Funding

- 4.3.1 The Group considered a range of funding options open to pay for a new pool and recognised that there were real opportunities to deliver this. Funding options included:
- We currently have a Leisure planned maintenance budget of £317k per annum (for maintenance, insurance and water), plus there is £600k in the Leisure Capital Maintenance Reserve. However this is for all five leisure sites and the 2011 condition surveys have identified more work required than funding available across the leisure facilities. Therefore this budget and reserve needs to be prioritised. Nevertheless, a proportion of the required maintenance work at Station Road Pool would be funded from this source, reducing the amount of new funding required.
 - Community Infrastructure Levy: There is a development tariff included in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan of £5m toward new pools and refurbishment of existing pools until 2027. In practice we would be unlikely to receipt all of this due to development viability issues. Also, income would be most likely received from 2020.
 - Sale of assets (including St James Street Pool) would provide capital contribution toward a new pool.
 - Sport England grant pots. The Council could make bids to the 'Inspired Facilities Fund' of up to £150k and possibly other funding streams.
 - Prudential Borrowing – dependent on business plan from Tone Leisure detailing operational income projections. There is potential that significant borrowing would be required and that this debt would need to be serviced through additional revenue achieved from the facilities.

5. **Station Road Pool**

- 5.1 A condition survey was undertaken on behalf of the Task and Finish Review by Dennis Freeman-Wright from the Amateur Swimming Association. He reported that the pool was in good condition for its

age but required substantial improvement and renovation to remain operational beyond five years.

- 5.2 The refurbishment and modernisation programme he recommended would give the pool another 15-20 years of operational life and included:

Refurbishment

- Retiling and resealing pool surround
- Replacement of all single glazed metal framed windows with PVC double glazed units
- Clean and repair decaying external concrete columns
- Clean and reseal leak points in plant room
- Replace electrical distribution panel
- Replace horizontal filters

Modernisation

- Convert single sex changing rooms into pool side 'village changing' (including new lockers etc)
- Redesign foyer and reception
- Examine energy efficiencies to reduce operational costs and carbon emissions
- Consider introduction of a pool bulkhead to split the pool into a 25 metre pool and a learner/teacher pool. This would give the pool far more flexibility for different lessons and activities. This could involve installing a moveable floor at the deep end.

- 5.3 Indicative costings of the programme are detailed in Appendix A and total between £1.5m and £1.8m.

- 5.4 A detailed business case would need to be developed by the Council in conjunction with Tone Leisure that considered the long-term operational model needed to make the pool viable. This would help determine the extent of modernisation required and whether the pool would need to incorporate further complimentary sports and health activities to generate more income.

6. Proposed new Pool Development at Blackbrook Sports Centre to replace the existing facility at St James' Street.

- 6.1 There was some concern about moving the main teaching pool out of the Town Centre. However, it was generally agreed that schools who bussed children to swimming would find a pool at Blackbrook more convenient.
- 6.2 The proposed extension to the Blackbrook site would provide a 25 metre pool, a small teaching pool and a café area. Additional parking would be created.

- 6.3 There is a sewerage pipe under the Blackbrook site that needs to be re-routed before development can start. Re-routing would need to be negotiated with Wessex Water however initial enquiries suggest the costs were not prohibitive and this has been built into costing estimates.
- 6.4 The estimated cost of new pools at Blackbrook to replace the facilities at St James's Street is between £2.25 and £2.5 million. The details of this costing can be found at **Appendix A**.

7. Prioritisation of Work

- 7.1 The Task and Finish Group recommended that the priority should be the work on the Station Road Pool to ensure that Taunton is serviced with one pool, should St James Street Pool close sooner than anticipated. All work should be undertaken in one go, to avoid disruption and loss of income from closing the pool. This recommendation should be revisited once the full business cases had been developed.

8. Finance Comments

- 8.1 This reports sets out indicative costs for the various options being considered, and the potential costs are significant. It is important that in progressing to the next stage of these proposals a full costed business case is developed detailing robust capital and revenue cost implications and options for funding the proposed investment.
- 8.2 In the context of the overall financial challenges faced by the Council for the foreseeable future it is important that the preferred option is both affordable and value for money, and the business case will need to address these points specifically.

9. Legal Comments

- 9.1 Any new pool or refurbishment would need to be DDA compliant.

10. Links to Corporate Aims

- 10.1 The proposals link to the 'Regeneration and Growth' Corporate Aim. The Council has significant growth planned and requires adequate leisure provision including swimming facilities. The new proposed swimming pool has therefore been built into the Infrastructure Delivery Plan that supports the Council's Core Strategy.

11. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Proposals for refurbishment of Station Road Pool include measures to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. A new pool at Blackbrook Sports Centre would be far more energy efficient than the one it replaced at St James Street. The new building would need to consider community safety as part of the ongoing running of the facility.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The refurbishment proposals of the Station Road Pool consider Equalities requirements and include provision for a new DDA compliant lift. Equalities will be properly considered in the finalised programme of refurbishment and modernisation at Station Road Pool and in the design and build of a new pool and this should be picked up in the detailed business plan.

13. Risk Management

- 13.1 A detailed business plan to progress this project would be expected to include a risk register that identified and managed risks.

14. Partnership Implications

- 14.1 The progression of this project will require close continued partnership working with Tone Leisure as well as support from Southwest One (Procurement and Asset Management) and Project Taunton (liaison on disposal of St James Street Pool). Further consultation with swimming clubs, schools and the local community would also be necessary.

15. Recommendations

The Executive are requested to consider and support the following recommendations:

- 15.1 A full business case should be developed to deliver the refurbishment and modernisation requirements at Station Road Pool to ensure it remains operational and viable for a further 15-20 years. The business case would need to include financial modelling of different proposed options and would need member sign-off of the preferred option. It would include full costing, operational business modelling, funding and repayment arrangements and consideration of risk, equalities, health and safety etc.
- 15.2 A full business case should be developed for building a new pool on the side of Blackbrook Pavilion Sports Centre, to include full costing,

operational business modelling, funding and repayment arrangements and consideration of risks, equalities, health and safety etc.

15.3 For the two business cases to be treated as one project so as to ensure a holistic approach is taken to include an integrated programme of swimming activities for Taunton and most efficient use of water space. The project would also determine the best priority order for delivering the required works. An outline approach to the next stage to develop detailed business cases and go out to tender are shown as **Appendix B**.

15.4 The Task and Finish Group requested that they could continue as a forum to oversee the development of the project plans

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APPENDIX A: STATION ROAD REFURBISHMENT/MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

Items	Cost	Essential/ Necessary/ Desirable	Comments
Plant Refurbishment and Labour	£400,000 (£310,000 equipment and £90,000 installation/labour)	E	Would not necessarily replace existing plant 'like-for-like', but will require technical advice to assess most suitable plant i.e., efficiency, environmental impact etc. Cost would still be circa. £400,000 - but reduced annual operating costs and reduce CO ₂ emissions.
Roof Replacement/ Parapets	£100,000	E	SW1 confirmed this work needs doing. Would expect to be funded from Planned Asset Management Plan, but unclear whether it is in the current AMP.
Electrical Distribution Board	£20,000	E	ASA report states it needs replacing 'sooner rather than later'. Would expect to be funded from AMP, but not clear if it is costed.
Windows	£10,000 (Repair) OR £50,000 (Replace)	N D	Merely replaces existing failed sealed units to windows. (Tackle draughts and condensation) ASA report recommends replacement of all single glazed metal framed window units with pvc, double glazed. Would help meet climate change ambitions A business case with ROI would be needed for this decision.
Pool Hall - including new floor screed	£209,000 (? £105k D; £105k E) (this split is a guess)	E and D	Some retiling and resealing of pool surround essential to prevent further leaking to ground floor and external walls and to replace manhole covers. The whole job is desirable for aesthetic reasons and to prevent future leaks
Stretch Ceiling	£35,000	D	Would significantly improve general appearance and lighting. Logically this work should be done at the same time as the Pool Hall works.
Lift	£25,000	E	Current lift is a 'goods lift'. Not DDA compliant.
Modernisation of Changing Rooms	£304,000	N	Without this work the income levels at Taunton Pool likely to decline - will impact Tone's business plan and TDBC revenue position. See ASA report.

Items	Cost	Essential/ Necessary/ Desirable	Comments
Main Reception Foyer	£97,000	N / D	Current entrance not very accessible - no automatic doors. NB. ASA report refers. Some renovation seen as necessary to attract customers and ensure sustainable business model
Staff Area - convert to activity area	£75,000	D	Will enable greater revenue potential to improve annual running costs.
Café Area - refurbishment/ conversion.	£40,000	D	Will enable greater revenue potential to improve annual running costs.
Extension and Lift Shaft	£78,440	D	Will enable greater revenue potential to improve annual running costs. New lift shaft would enable better positioning of the lift.
Fixed Boom and Moveable Floor (the costing is for both options, however a Boom on its own would be considerably cheaper)	£150,000	N	Not worth considering unless the Changing Facilities are modernised. This would be necessary if we want to provide additional 'overflow' learner pool capacity to support Blackbrook, once St James Street closes. However, constraints include pool temperature not being ideal for learners and investment and teaching in a noisy environment. This would give greater pool programming flexibility. A business case with ROI would be needed for this decision.
Infill Deep End of Pool	£35,000	-	Reduce pool depth from 3 m to 2 m. Energy savings of approximately £6,000 per annum. Desirable if it meets required payback period on investment.
Ultraviolet disinfection	£25,000	-	Reduces chlorine requirement from 1.5mgp/l to 0.8mg/l

£1.6m

1. Above costings take no account of any 'loss of income' associated with pool closure required to undertake the pool works. Costings will increase (potentially significantly) if works are done piecemeal. Better VFM achieved through one closure and contractors having clear access to the site.
2. A further £200k for essential and necessary works would be required for professional fees, taking the cost to £1.8m

Summary of Costs for Pools projects and proposed sources of funding

Station Road Pool

Category of Spend	Includes	Total
Essential	Infrastructure refurbishment to ensure physical viability of pool (Plant, Roof, Electrics, DDA compliance etc)	£750k (includes £100k professional fees)
Necessary	Modernisation to ensure continued customer use, a flexible swimming programme and a viable operational business model (Changing rooms, reception, boom and moveable floor)	£613k (includes £100k professional fees)
Desirable	Upgrades to include make facility more attractive and to attract greater usage. These will need to be reviewed during business case modelling to look at ROI	£381k (excludes £50k window replacement)
Other	'Nice to haves' that may be justified through business case and ROI	£60k

TOTAL

£1.8m

Blackbrook Sports Centre Pool

Category of Spend	Includes	Total
Pool extension	New Design and Build – budget price fully fitted as complete build, includes design fees	£1.9m
Other costs	Sewer, car parking, services, external area	£350k

TOTAL

£2.25m

Appendix B: Indicative Timeline of next steps: Detailed Business Case, Selection of Preferred Business Model (Station Road Pool) and Tendering (to be led by Scott Weetch: Community Development Lead)

