

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	8 JULY 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO RIVERMEAD LEISURE CENTRE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAUL GITTINGS	PORTFOLIO:	CULTUR, SPORT & CONSUMER SERVICES
SERVICE:	SPORT AND LEISURE	WARDS:	ABBEY
LEAD OFFICER:	GRANT THORNTON	TEL:	0118 937 2416
JOB TITLE:	HEAD OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	E-MAIL:	grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This reports sets out planned improvements at Rivermead Leisure Complex and seeks committee approval to proceed with the three highest priority schemes, namely: outdoor synthetic turf pitch replacement, new boilers and refurbishment of swimming changing facilities. The report outlines the rationale for proceeding with these schemes as a matter of some urgency and the financial provisions in place that enable the Council to fund the works in accordance with the agreements in place with Greenwich Leisure Ltd. (GLL). With regard to the artificial pitch replacement, it recommends that a sand based surface is specified in order to facilitate the continued use of the facility for hockey as well as football. Finally the report summarises the approach taken by the relevant Director and Head of Service to improve partnership working with GLL in order to jointly secure a better leisure offer at Rivermead.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 provides a cost breakdown for the proposed artificial pitch replacement.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee gives scheme approval to proceed with the replacement of the synthetic turf pitch at Rivermead as outlined in section 4.2 of the report.
- 2.2 That Committee gives in principle scheme approval for proposals to replace heating equipment and to remodel the wet-side changing facilities at Rivermead as outlined in section 4.2 of the report.
- 2.3 That Committee gives delegated authority to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services, in liaison with the Head of Finance and Lead Councillor for Culture, Sport & Consumer Services, to approve the detail of proposals to replace boilers and remodel the wet-side changing facilities at Rivermead.
- 2.4 That Committee welcomes the proposed investment of approximately £1.15m to improve facilities at Rivermead and notes that budget cover for this investment is provided for in the approved capital programme.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of high quality sports and leisure facilities offering accessible opportunities for participation to all the community is a key element of the Council's Cultural Strategy.
- 3.2 With recently acquired responsibilities for Public Health the Council has worked with partners to develop a Health and Well-being Strategy for Reading. The provision of high quality facilities that encourage active lifestyles is an explicit objective of this strategy of particular relevance to the high priority within the strategy for tackling obesity, ill-health and improving outcomes for those with long term conditions.
- 3.3 On the 14th July 2003 the then Cabinet received a report on the Strategic Review of Sports Facilities. It approved the initiation of a process to identify preferred partners to refurbish and operate facilities at Rivermead Leisure Complex and South Reading Leisure Centre. On the 11th July 2005 Cabinet agreed to recommend to Council the principal of entering into partnership arrangements for the management of some of the Council's sports centres, including GLL as the preferred partner for a 15 year contract in relation to operating Rivermead. This meeting also gave an over-arching spending approval of capital expenditure that was associated with the proposals then under consideration. At its meeting on the 18th October 2005 Council approved changes to its policy framework to enable the proposed partnership agreements for management of the leisure facilities to proceed. Following the granting of a number of 6 month licence agreements to enable GLL to operate the facilities whilst further work was undertaken to enable all terms and conditions of the contract to be complied with, the contract was finally completed and signed on the 23rd May 2008. The contract with GLL to operate Rivermead runs until the 31st December 2022. A schedule of relevant background papers is provided in Section 10 of this report.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

In developing and refining the proposals for the partnership with GLL, the Council agreed to provide funding for a fixed amount of capital expenditure over the lifetime of the contract to cover major lifecycle replacement and improvement works. This arrangement was adopted because it provides better value for money in terms of the cost of borrowing and VAT and therefore the quantum of capital works that could be supported. In turn GLL would be responsible as our agent for delivering the agreed capital works within the overall budget set out in the financial model. The agreed level of funding over the period of the contract was approximately £3.92m, of which £2.47m has been spent to date (the most significant element of expenditure being £1.9m on the new gym and fitness facility that was completed in February 2009). The remaining funding as per the original agreement is therefore approximately £1.45m over the remaining life of the contract. Decisions on the priorities for this 'investment fund' were meant to be jointly agreed as part of the ongoing partnership working and contract monitoring. The current approved Capital Programme includes provision for Rivermead of £1.4m spread over the 3 financial years 2014/15 - 2016/17.

Over recent years the level of capital spending via the investment fund has been modest, totaling approximately £100k over the 4 years 2010/11 - 2013/14. The Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services and the Head of Economic & Cultural Development have been meeting regularly with GLL to consider options to improve the offer at Rivermead and to work more closely in promoting the health and well-being benefits of leisure activity.

As part of these discussions GLL have outlined their ambitions for the centre, namely to increase levels of use and to make it a destination of choice for the whole family. In order to achieve this GLL have acknowledged that there is a need to:

- Invest in the quality of the facilities;
- Develop new products and services, e.g. a social hub for 60+ users;
- Ensure a high quality customer service through committed staff;
- Work closely with partners and stakeholders.

In order to realize this ambition GLL have, for example, appointed a new General Manager for the centre in June 2014 and a new Health and Fitness Manager in May 2014. They have also sought to invest in the quality of the facilities, for example new poolside lighting and gym equipment, whilst looking to work with the Council on identifying priorities for more significant levels of investment via the investment fund.

Whilst there is a range of desirable improvements that could be made at Rivermead, GLL and Council officers have identified three immediate priorities for investment and these are outlined in more detail below.

4.2 Options Proposed

i) Outdoor Synthetic Turf Pitch (STP) Replacement

The current outdoor STP was built in 1986 and the carpet surface is the original. The surface has been patched on numerous occasions and the pitch as a whole has suffered from settlement making it sloping and uneven.

Phoenix and Ranelagh Hockey Club, who previously trained at Rivermead and have a strong local Reading membership, have relocated currently because the surface is too dangerous for hockey to be played. All current use is therefore for football although Rivermead is seeing an increase in complaints about the pitch from football users too. Due to the poor condition of the pitch it is likely that unless action is taken the pitch will need to be closed for safety reasons at some stage in the next football season. Replacement is therefore needed urgently if the facility is to remain operational and available for the Autumn season when football bookings recommence.

Some discussion with GLL has taken place regarding the nature of the replacement surface and Council officers have also liaised with Sport England and England Hockey regarding their strategic view of provision in the area. In light of these discussions and in order to retain provision for a wide range of sports, it is considered that a sand-based replacement surface should be specified in order to ensure that the site can continue to accommodate both

hockey and football use. The costs outlined below reflect the specification of the sand-based option.

GLL have worked with consultants Martin Arnold Associates (Chartered Surveyors and Construction Consultants) as project managers and Nottsport Synthetic Surfacing (a design specialist) to specify and tender the proposed works with appropriate specialist contractors. In order to remedy current defects the following works are proposed:

- Level the playing surface;
- Replace carpet and markings;
- Replace fencing;
- Upgrade the floodlights;
- Replace goals and other equipment.

The costs of the works as per the successful tender are £402,723.74 and a more detailed breakdown is attached at Appendix 1. Full scheme approval is sought in order to progress the works as quickly as possible and enable the refurbished facility to open in September.

ii) Replacement Boiler Installation

The heating and hot water boilers at Rivermead are at the end of their serviceable life with replacement parts no longer available. Due to a number of the original boilers no longer functioning there is currently insufficient capacity to heat both the leisure pool and all other areas of the building. For example the bowls hall is without heating and the resident club have already and understandably complained about the cold temperatures. The remaining boilers could fail at any time, particularly in periods of high demand, such as the winter months, with the potential consequence of forcing the centre to close completely.

GLL have commissioned initial condition survey and design work for replacement boilers from ENG design and preliminary cost estimates are that up to £500k will be required to carry out the required works.

It is proposed to establish a joint working group with representatives of GLL and RBC to work with ENG design to develop a detailed specification for the works and to manage the subsequent procurement process. In principal scheme approval is sought, with delegated authority to agree the detail, so that this work can be taken forward with some urgency as ideally the new boilers would need to be in place prior to the onset of winter.

iii) Wet Changing Room Replacement

Built in 1986 the pool changing rooms are now outdated, a poor use of space and in urgent need of improvement. Despite best efforts the age and condition of the changing rooms means that they are difficult to maintain and even with the use of modern chemicals to ensure cleanliness they still appear grubby and in poor condition. Customer complaints about the swimming changing rooms have increased notably over the last 3 years and customer

dissatisfaction is contributing to a decline in the number of swimmers using Rivermead, especially the target family market for this type of facility.

It is proposed to carry out an extensive refurbishment to improve the quality and the capacity of the changing rooms, especially the number of family cubicles. The ideal time to implement the proposed improvements is early December to minimise disruption to users and the lesson programme. The estimated cost of the works, based on an indicative layout, is £250k.

GLL have appointed Martin Arnold Associates as project managers and, as with the boiler replacement, it is proposed that a working group comprising representatives from GLL, RBC and Martin Arnold Associates is set up to agree a specification and to manage the procurement process. In principal scheme approval is sought, with delegated authority to agree the detail, so that the scheme can be progressed and implemented in December.

4.3 Other Options Considered

There is a clear commitment from the Council to work with GLL to jointly agree priorities for investment at Rivermead in relation to the agreed quantum of capital investment over the lifetime of the contract. In recent discussions with GLL a number of potential investment needs have been discussed, including for example refurbishment of the gym and fitness suite, creation of a hub for a 60+ hub, and provision of additional poolside water features to increase the attractiveness of the leisure pool.

Whilst desirable these other investment possibilities do not have the same critical impact on the centre's functional and operational capability as the three schemes outlined above. Officers will continue to work with GLL to develop further opportunities to improve the facilities at Rivermead and bring proposals back to this Committee for consideration as and when appropriate.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Improvement of leisure facilities primarily contributes to the strategic aim:

- To establish Reading as a learning City and a stimulating and rewarding place to live and visit.

Particularly in relation to improving health and well-being through encouraging an active lifestyle it also contributes to the strategic aim:

- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

5.2 Better quality leisure facilities have the potential to increase participation in sports and physical activity with a direct impact on health and well-being of the population thereby contributing to improving achievement against the desired outcomes of the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The proposed improvements at Rivermead Leisure Complex are in part a response to customer feedback on the quality and appropriateness of current facilities. Further engagement with stakeholders such as local clubs, centre users and the wider public will form part of the approach to maximising the use of the artificial pitch replacement and to the design of the new changing facilities. This engagement will also serve to broaden wider awareness of the improvements being undertaken.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 *Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—*
- *eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
 - *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
 - *foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*
- 7.2 As the proposals relate to significant improvement of an existing leisure facility any impact on equality is likely to be positive and it is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant to the decisions.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In acting as agent for the Council in the various procurements it will be a requirement that GLL comply with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Contained in the body of the report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 14 July 2003 Cabinet Report
12 July 2005 Culture & Sport Scrutiny Panel
18 October 2005 Council Report
5 December 2005 Cabinet Report
20 March 2006 Cabinet Report
29 March 2006 Culture & Sport Scrutiny Panel
25 September 2006 Cabinet Report
29 March 2006 Culture & Sport Scrutiny Panel
25 September 2006 Cabinet
9 January 2007 Cabinet Report
17 March 2008 Cabinet Report
1 December 2008 Cabinet Report

Cost Breakdown for Replacement Synthetic Turf PitchAt Rivermead Leisure Complex

Costs quoted are for a sand-based replacement that will enable both hockey and football to be played on the surface.

Item	Cost
Prelims	£2,800.00
Site Est	£2,495.00
Site clearance	£26,087.00
New dynamic base	£54,951.00
Kerbs	£4,931.00
Underlay	£57,697.00
Grass	£104,367.00
Mark out	£4,717.00
Perimeter fencing	£30,574.00
Reinstatement	£2,283.00
Dividing net	£2,072.00
Additional load bearing material	£13,741.00
Total cost for 4no sets of integral weighted 5 a-side football goals	£7,199.28
Total cost for 1no set of fence fixed full size football goals	£4,505.27
Total cost for 1no set of <u>integral weighted</u> full size hockey goals	£3,024.12
Additional cost for install permanently in laid hockey lines, sharing the perimeter of the line for football, using the pro-rata'd rate form the original tender	£2,964.07
Floodlights replacement-FULL	£50,316.00
Project management	£18,000.00
Contingency	£10,000.00
Total	£402,723.74