

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	21 SEPTEMBER 2022		
TITLE:	SPEND & FUNDING APPROVAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO LEISURE FACILITIES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR ADELE BARNETT- WARD	PORTFOLIO:	LEISURE & CULTURE
SERVICE:	CULTURE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 It is proposed to make improvements to South Reading Leisure Centre's Pool Tank and install a waymarked paving route for vision impaired users from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium. Both are to be funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme. This report also seeks delegation to agree and sign the Sport England Strategic Facilities Funding agreement, subject to agreeable terms and conditions, of £1.5m towards the costs of the new leisure facilities at Rivermead and Palmer Park.
- 1.2 The concrete and reinforcing within the pool tank structure is corroding. Spend approval for £295,000 is sought to make repairs to extend the life of the swimming pool. The repair of this structure is the responsibility of the Council as set out within the Leisure Contract with Greenwich Leisure Limited.
- 1.3 Spend approval for £36,000 is sought to provide a waymarked pedestrian route for vision impaired users who use the local transport network (no17 bus) from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Committee is recommended:

- 2.1 To grant spend approval of £295,000 for the repair to the structure of the South Reading Leisure Centre Pool Tank and £36,000 to install a waymarked paving route for vision impaired users from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium, funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme.**
- 2.2 To delegate to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture to procure and enter contracts for the works to the vision impaired paving route (£36,000) from Wokingham Road to the new swimming pool at Palmer Park Sports Stadium, funded from the Small Leisure Schemes in the capital programme.**
- 2.3 To delegate to the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services and the Lead Councillor for Leisure and Culture to enter into Sport England funding agreements for £1.5m in line with Standing Orders, subject to acceptable terms and conditions. There will be two separate agreements one for Rivermead (£1m) and one at Palmer Park (£500k).**

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Since the commencement of the leisure contract in 2021, Reading's leisure facilities have started on a journey of transformation. South Reading and Meadway Sports centre have had significant investment in the last year to bring them to a good standard, whilst new facilities are being built and Rivermead and Palmer Park stadium. The Council recognises that the provision of suitable and readily accessible sports facilities underpins participation in sports and physical activity and supports the delivery of the social and economic benefits that can be attributed to an active community. With over 750,000 people using the Borough's sports and leisure facilities across the town each year, Reading needs a leisure offer that meets its needs and that aligns with the Council's wider policies and priorities, including public health objectives and tackling inequality.**
- 3.2 An extensive procurement process to find a leisure partner to design, build, operate and maintain (DBOM) boroughwide leisure facilities culminated on 20 January 2020, with Policy Committee awarding a 25-year DBOM contract to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL). Officers were in the process of finalising the DBOM contract terms with GLL, when the Covid19 pandemic broke out in March 2020 delaying the contract terms. The DBOM contract was signed on the 1 July 2021.**
- 3.3 The pool at South Reading forms an important aspect of the overall leisure provision within Reading. From January 2022 South Reading Leisure Centre has had 5,727 swimmers participating in sessions. This equates to around 1,000 swimmers a month. Since April, South Reading have started a swim school with 474 swimmers across the quarter. In addition to this. South Reading have average of 10 school swimming sessions per week with an average of 30 children per class.**

4. THE PROPOSAL

SOUTH READING LEISURE CENTRE POOL TANK

- 4.1 Pool water ingress into the pool tank concrete over the last 2-3 decades has corroded the steel reinforcement making the concrete crack and break away in small areas of the structure.**
- 4.2 The problem was identified during investigation into water ingress into unexpected areas of the pool undercroft (passages under the pool surround). These confined spaces/areas are not easily accessible and require appropriately trained technicians to**

access. An assessment of the cracking and necessary works was arranged by the GLL in partnership with the Council.

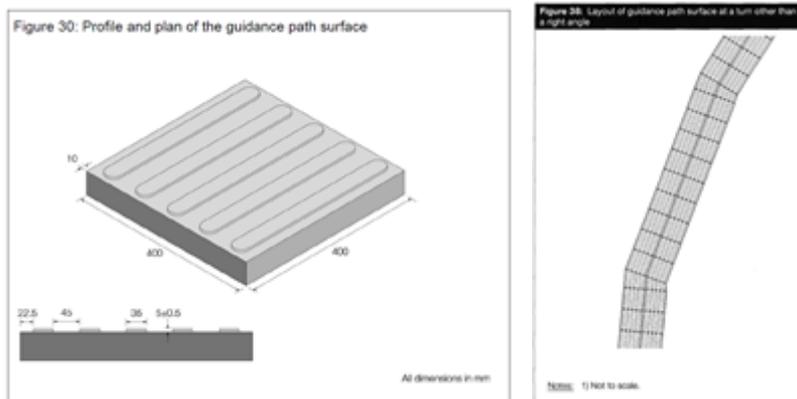
- 4.3 It is proposed to undertake repairs to the pool tank at South Reading Leisure Centre. Failure to address this will lead to greater problems and ultimately the failure of the tank if not addressed. The longer it is left the greater the expense of repair.
- 4.4 As the repairs are in a confined space, specialist contractors are required and the pool to be emptied. The work will include:
- replacing sealant and grout above the pool side, further testing of concrete and sealing of vulnerable areas to prevent further water ingress.
 - Break out affected areas, remove corrosion and install preventative treatments.
 - Resurface/fill affected areas injecting any small voids cracks
 - Replace any movement joints in the pool deck surrounds using a proprietary sealant
 - Replace any defective areas of grout using a proprietary grout
 - Make good all areas.
- 4.5 Estimation of costs was carried provided by a specialist contractor to the Council and GLL. This does include, enabling works (moving plant and equipment preventing access) contingency and management fees. However, with invasive works there remains the risk that further defects may be found. The defects found so far present themselves as repairable and, if addressed now, straightforward.
- 4.6 The Council will retain risk of any unforeseen work or repairs as a result of any defects found whilst carrying out the associated works. The estimate for the work is £295,000. It is anticipated the work will require the pool to close for approximately 3 months. The breakdown of the proposed closure is as follows:
- Pool Tank work starts Monday 9th January 2023
 - Pool Tank work completed and handed back to GLL - 17th March 2023
 - Pool Tank filling, heating and chemical dosing and testing 20th - 31st March 2023
 - Pool reopens 31st March 2023
- 4.7 The work has been timed to coincide with the brand new 6-lane community pool at Palmer Park being open in late 2022 to ensure that there is swimming availability whilst South Reading is closed.

Vision Impaired Person Paving Route

- 4.8 Visual impaired users of the existing facilities at Palmer Park Sport Stadium who use the local transport network (no17 bus route) have approached the Council to request a waymarked paved route to be installed from Wokingham Road leading to the new swimming pool currently in construction at Palmer Park.
- 4.8 Guidance from the Department of Transport (DfT) on the use of tactile paving surfaces notes that the purpose of the tactile paving is to guide vision impaired persons along a route when traditional cues such as a property line or kerb edge is not available. The aim is to guide a person along the route either by walking on the tactile surface or by maintaining contact with a long cane.
- 4.9 There are long stretches of footpath to the Palmer Park sports centre and new swimming pool that do not have these 'cues' to guide a vision impaired person. A length of the existing footpath along this route is in poor condition and will require resurfacing as part of these works.

- 4.10 DfT guidance recommend an 800mm wide buff coloured tactile paving with flat top bars running in the direction of travel is installed to act as a guide. The works will follow this advice and install 230m of buff coloured tactile paving from existing Victorian gated entrance on Wokingham Road (by the children's play area) along existing footway, past the existing football courts to the new swimming pool.

Images of tactile paving



Sport England Strategic Facilities Fund

- 4.11 Throughout the procurement, planning and build process the Council has been working closely with Sport England. The Council were invited by Sport England to submit an expression of interest to the Strategic Facilities Investment Fund in 2021. The expression of interest for the £1.5m grant was submitted in May 2021.
- 4.12 A bid for £1m for Rivermead and £500k for Palmer Park were applied for and Sport England have advised the Council that it has been successful in its application. The Terms and Conditions of the Grants have been received and the implications reviewed and are deemed acceptable.

Options Appraisal

4.13 South Reading Leisure Centre Pool Tank

- 4.14 To not carry out the required work at South Reading would mean that the swimming pool at South Reading will deteriorate and shorten the life expectancy of the pool. Work could be delayed, but costs are expected to increase as the tank's condition deteriorates. Failure to undertake work and subsequent failure would lead to a loss of service and potential income claim from GLL.
- 4.15 GLL and RBC as part of the £40m investment programme in leisure have invested into South Reading Leisure centre in the fitness suite, group exercise and changing areas. Undertaking the pool tank work will mean all the main areas of provision at South Reading will have been improved within a 12-month period.
- 4.16 GLL will also take the opportunity whilst the pool is closed to refurbish and upgrade the wetside changing areas during the closure to ensure that all customer service areas have been upgraded within a 12-month period. This is funded within the agreed leisure contract.
- 4.17 Whilst the pool is closed customers will be able to use the other swimming pools within the Borough, which will include the new pool at Palmer Park, due to open in late 2022.
- 4.18 GLL have started a swimming school at South Reading Leisure Centre. There were 474 attendees from April - June 2022. The timeline of the work has been designed to have minimal impact on the swim school. Other clubs and users will be offered sessions in the Borough's other pools where possible.

4.19 Vision Impaired Person Paving Route

4.20 To not carry out these works may deter vision impaired persons from using the new swimming pool, which is being constructed to Sport England design guidance for accessible sports facilities. This will include access to the pool and fitness facility and a Changing Places' room. The use of tactile paving surfaces helps provide information to vision impaired people and others about their environment and directional guidance to the new facility, helping to support independent mobility.

4.21 Sport England Strategic Facilities Fund

4.22 The application to and subsequent funding offer from the Sport England Strategic Facilities Fund has been budgeted for within the financial forecasts. It was also mentioned in the June 2021 Council report, which outlined the increase in leisure spend. Without the funding the Council would have had a £1.5m shortfall in the budget. An additional £1.5m was added to the capital line agreed in June 2021 to reflect the expected funding.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Reading's future leisure provision will contribute towards the achievement of the following Council Priorities:

5.2 Healthy Environment

Both the improvement works to the South Reading Leisure Centre pool and the development of a vision impaired path contribute towards the Healthy Environment theme within the Borough's Corporate Plan. These projects will contribute towards a town which is easy to travel around and provide facilities which encourage physical activity and make Reading a more attractive place to live. The Council is committed to investing in walking routes and making it easier for people to make choices, which positively influence their physical and mental wellbeing.

5.3 Thriving Communities

With an increased focus on inclusion, we are focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded in our communities, ensuring young people, older people and those with long term health conditions or disabilities are supported to live their best lives. Our investment in leisure services is modernising facilities and creating accessible, affordable opportunities for residents to improve their physical and mental health.

5.4 The repairs at South Reading will aid the new leisure DBOM contract in modernising facilities and create affordable, accessible services to improve the physical and mental health of residents.

5.5 The Council will work with GLL in the delivery of key national and local strategic policies. It will also demonstrate that investment and action is making a positive difference to people's lives and show the impact the delivery of the leisure service is having on local individuals and communities and public health outcomes.

5.6 Whilst the town's culture and leisure opportunities are accessed by many residents there are significant cohorts who face barriers to access. This can lead to increased levels of obesity and poorer health and well-being for both adults and children in respect of physical activity, and poorer quality of life, mental health, social isolation and well-being. Addressing these barriers and widening participation is a key outcome requirement.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 Alternative arrangement to access pools at Palmer Park, Meadway and Rivermead will be made for the duration of the pool closure at South Reading. Members will be sent emails and communication will be put up on site. There will also be posts on social media to keep members and the public up to date. Vision impaired users originally requested the new tactile paving route and will be kept up to date with progress.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to 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 The installation of a tactile route through Palmer Park will not have a differential impact on people with any distinguishing characteristics. It is targeted at providing access for all.

7.3 The works at South Reading Pool will also not have a differential impact on people with any distinguishing characteristics.

7.4 The agreement of the Sport England Strategic Facilities Fund will not have a differential impact on people with any distinguishing characteristics.

7.4 It is not considered that a further Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required related to the information presented in this report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The current leisure facilities are ageing and do not have the benefit of being built to modern standards including current energy efficiency standards. GLL has committed to developing the designs for Rivermead and Palmer Park to BREEAM Excellent standards, to use renewables where possible to achieve building control compliance and to help reduce carbon emissions and improve environmental efficiency.

8.2 There may be some negative impacts whilst the construction work is ongoing at both sites. The inclusion of the path at Palmer Park is likely to have a positive impact on travel as this will allow people to make use of public transport. The overall project is likely to have a low to no impact.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Council has power under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit including the provision of buildings, equipment, supplies, and assistance of any kind. The Council may make such facilities available either without charge or on payment of such charges as it thinks fit.

9.2 On 1st July 2021 the Council entered a 25-year contract for the design, build, operation, and maintenance (DBOM) of new and existing leisure facilities in Reading with Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

- 9.3 Within this contract the Council retains entire responsibility for defects that were not identified in the Buildings Surveys forming part of the contract other than the new buildings. The South Reading Leisure Centre pool tank defects were not identified within these surveys.
- 9.4 In accordance with Schedule 23.7 of the DBOM Contract, GLL will procure the structural repair works to the South Reading Leisure Centre Pool Tank on behalf of the Council and recharge the Council for the cost of these works.
- 9.5 The contractor appointed to install the vision impaired tactile paving will be procured in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and a contract will be entered into with the successful contractor.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The cost of the repairs at South Reading is estimated at £295,000, funded from the existing capital programme approved budget for 'Small Leisure schemes'. Failing to carry out the work now could result in escalating cost of repairs as well as failure and closure of the pool at South Reading. Not only would this mean a closure of service but could result in a loss of income claim from GLL for the swimming provision at South Reading Leisure Centre.
- 10.2 The £36,000 cost of installing the vision impaired tactile paving route will be funded from the existing 2022/23 approved capital funding for 'small leisure schemes.'
- 10.3 The acceptance of the Sport England Grant will enable to Council to secure £1.5m of funding to offset the Capital spend. If this is not accepted the Council would incur the full cost of the programme and would not benefit from the £1.5m funding.
- 10.4 Revenue Implications**
The maintenance cost of the tactile paving is to be covered within existing revenue budgets for general maintenance of Palmer Park.
- 10.5 The Council will be liable for a loss of income for closure of the pool as the structural work remains with RBC as part of the DBOM contract. The estimated cost of the loss of income is circa £5k for the closure period. If the pool were to fail the Council would be liable for a further loss of revenue claim for the period that the pool is unavailable.

10.6 Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2022/23 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure (including funds slipped forward from 2021/22) Of which, allocated Of which, unallocated	331k
Funded by Grant (specify) Section 106 (specify) Other services Capital Receipts/Borrowing	331k
Total Funding	331k

10.7 Value for Money (VfM)

Works to the swimming pool tank offers VfM as to do the works now avoids increased costs and loss of revenue in the immediate future (item 4 refers). Works to install the

visual impaired paving is to improve access and mobility opportunities for vision impaired persons and will be procured seeking competitive quotes for the work. To leave these works to a future date with current fluctuating high material costs and the likelihood of high construction inflation (predicted to be 8% in 3rd qtr. 2023) will result in higher overall costs.

10.8 Risk Assessment

A costed risk approach to these works has indicated that to delay the pool tank works will leave the Council open to an immediate requirement to carry out the works if the pool tank fails. This planned approach provides a more informed method to resolve an age-related structural issue. The vision impaired tactile paving route will provide an improved mobility and access to new facilities from the no17 bus route.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.