

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-nnn-2008/09
Date of meeting: 10 November 2008



Portfolio: Leisure & Young People

Subject: Feasibility of the provision of a new sports hall etc at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool

Responsible Officer:

Name	
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Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992-564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To consider the recommendations of the Leisure Task & Finish Panel and Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the feasibility of providing a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool; and

(2) Subject to recommendation (1) to make capital provision of £6,000 to enable the feasibility to proceed

Executive Summary:

At its meeting on the 10th of March 2008, Cabinet resolved to request Overview & Scrutiny Committee to add the issue of the possible relocation of the sports hall & changing rooms from Waltham Sports centre to Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool to the terms of reference of the Leisure Task and Finish Panel. This was agreed by Overview & Scrutiny, and the Panel at its meeting on the 8th of July 2008 agreed that an initial appraisal of the feasibility of the project should be undertaken.

At its last meeting on the 23rd September, the Panel, having considered a report on the options resolved to seek capital funding to undertake a feasibility study. This resolution will be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 6th of November and the Chairman will provide an oral report at this meeting of Cabinet.

This is not considered to be a key decision at this stage.

Council Plan 2006 – 2010 “Fit for Life”: “Residents of the districthaving access to effective, high quality leisure and cultural services” (FL1, 2 & 3)
BVPP – L4, L6 and L8

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable a feasibility study to be undertaken, in sufficient detail to be able to determine whether the project should be pursued further.

Other Options for Action:

The options are:

- (1) to not undertake the feasibility study; or
- (2) to defer the feasibility study

Neither can be recommended since, as set out in the main body of the report, the condition at Waltham Abbey Sports centre are less than satisfactory and the residents of Waltham Abbey and its environs would be denied the possibility of a more modern facility based at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool

Report:

1. In March 2008 Cabinet received a report setting out problems with the problems arising from the dual use agreement of the Waltham Abbey Sports centre, and in particular the lack of investment in the facilities. The centre was now in need of major investment, and given that the building was owned by the school, there was little or no prospective in the short to medium term that this investment would be forthcoming.

2. The Portfolio Holder set out an alternative proposal whereby it might be possible to transfer some of the facilities, namely the sports hall and changing facilities, to the site of the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, a facility owned by this Council and managed by SLM as part of the current contract for the management of Council leisure centres. Cabinet resolved to request that Overview & Scrutiny Committee add this issue to the terms of reference of the Leisure Task & Finish Panel. This was agreed by Scrutiny and the Panel amended its terms of reference at its meeting on the 8th of July 2008

3. The Panel met again on the 23rd of September when it considered a report on the possible transfer of the facilities and it resolved to seek the funding for a feasibility study. The study is intended to assess:

- (i) whether, given local planning and other constraints, a sports hall could be constructed; and
- (ii) the estimated cost of construction including associated fees

This feasibility will not include detailed or intrusive site surveys at this stage but will recommend what surveys should be undertaken should the Council be minded to take the project further.

In addition to the construction associated studies, it is also intended to produce an indicative business plan to identify the potential revenue consequences of any new facilities. It should, however, be appreciated that the final management costs will be subject to negotiation with the Council's Leisure management Contractor, SLM Ltd.

4. The cost of the feasibility study has been estimated at £6,000 and Cabinet are therefore requested to consider:

- (a) whether the feasibility should proceed, and if so:
- (b) to make capital provision of £6,000

5. This report will also be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 6th of November, and its comments will be made to Cabinet by the Committee Chairman.

Resource Implications:

The new sports hall provision has been estimated at £2.5 to £3.0 million.

Capital provision of £6,000 required to undertake the preliminary feasibility study. If the actual works do not proceed it should be noted that the £6,000 has to revert to revenue.

The Waltham Abbey Sports Centre has a net expenditure cost of £359,000 for 2008/09. Whilst all of the sports centres (i.e. those under the management control of SLM) also require a significant financial input through the management fee, the costs at Waltham Abbey should also be considered in the light that the Council does not own the asset, that the facility is in poor condition and has the lowest levels of participation given its restricted public opening hours.. The provision of a modern sports hall at Waltham Abbey Pool is seen as advantageous by SLM and should result in a reduction in management fees overall given the consolidation on one site, economies of scale and the ability to cross sell between the existing pool and fitness user users and new users of a new sports hall. This is subject to further negotiation.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council can commission this study using its general community well-being powers
There are no known human rights issues arising from the recommendations

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

No direct issue at this stage although a decision not to proceed with the feasibility and any future decision to undertake the development may have a negative or positive impact on communities in and around Waltham Abbey through improved or restricted access to modern sporting facilities.

Consultation Undertaken:

Initial discussions with SLM regarding impact on present contractual arrangements – no adverse issues at this time

Background Papers:

Papers to Cabinet in March 2008 and to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Leisure Task & Finish Panel

Impact Assessments:

There is the financial risk associated with the £6,000 capital being converted into revenue if following feasibility the project does not proceed.

If the project does not proceed the Council will face mounting difficulties at Waltham Abbey Sports centre as the fabric of the building and its facilities deteriorate. The Centre also does not meet DDA requirements and nor can it be realistically altered to do so.