

# **Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date of meeting: 2 June 2009**

**Subject: Sports hall provision at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool**

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**Committee Secretary: A Hendry**

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## **Recommendation:**

- (1) To note the recommendations of the Leisure Task & Finish Panel;**
- (2) To consider whether:**
  - (a) to agree with the recommendations and forward to Cabinet for consideration at its next meeting;**
  - (b) to reject the recommendations; or**
  - (c) to formulate alternative recommendations for submission to Cabinet**

## Background

1. The Panel has met on two occasions to consider the possibility of providing a new sports hall on the site of the current Waltham Abbey swimming pool. These deliberations arose as part of the Council decision to bring the current Joint Use Agreement between the Council and the King Harold School, for the management of the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre to an end with effect from January 2010. This decision might result, subject to the intentions of the School Governing Body, in the community use of the facility coming to an end. However, it should be stressed that other secondary schools in the District make their sports facilities available for community use and every support and encouragement would be given to King Harold School to facilitate this.

2. The Panel recognised the importance to the local community of the sports centre and in particular the sports hall which provided for 5-a-side football, badminton, roller skating and a wide range of other sports and events. The Panel therefore felt that there was merit in investigating the possibility of re-providing a sports hall at another location, with the obvious site being that of the Waltham Abbey swimming pool. It is also worthy of note that Waltham Abbey has been identified as having one of the worst health outcomes of any area within the District and a new facility such as is proposed could greatly benefit the fitness of, and better health outcomes for, the local community.

3. The Panel therefore recommended to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, following its meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2008, that a feasibility study be undertaken and that Cabinet be requested to make the necessary capital provision available. This recommendation was endorsed by Cabinet in November 2008 and Council agreed a capital provision in the sum of £6,000.

## The core requirements

4. The core requirements for the new facility were identified as:
  - (i) a 35m by 17m sports hall (equivalent to 4 badminton courts – the same size as Epping and Ongar sports centres);
  - (ii) new changing facilities, separate from those used by swimmers;

- (iii) storage facilities;
- (iv) a reconfigured reception area;
- (v) additional car parking; and
- (vi) if possible a crèche to facilitate family use.

5. It was considered that these facilities would enable a suitably wide range of community activities and would provide a very welcome addition to the existing swimming pool and gym facilities.

#### The feasibility

6. Attached to this report are:

- (a) the addendum report considered by the Panel at its most recent meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2009.

7. The feasibility outcome suggests that, subject to detailed planning consent etc, it would be feasible to develop a sports hall facility adjacent to, but as part of, the existing Waltham Abbey swimming pool complex. The estimated capital cost of the new facility is just over £1.72 million, with a design and construction period of around 16 months from the time of planning consent.

#### Resources

8. The use of the £1.72 million identified above carries with it a range of revenue consequences, and these are set out in the addendum report at paragraph 6. The total revenue consequence is estimated at just over £64,000 per annum, which has to be seen in the context of the identified savings arising from ending the Joint Use Agreement of £270,000 (£68,000 in 2009/10 and an additional £202,000 from 2010/11 on) which has been built into future budget projections.

9. Within the £1.72 million is the £41,000 required to develop the project to the pre-planning application stage, at which point there should be reasonable certainty as to the likelihood of the proposal receiving planning approval. However, it should be noted that there is a risk associated with this component of expenditure, in that should the proposal not go forward at that stage, the capital expenditure up to that point in time (£6,000 feasibility and the £41,000 pre-planning) would have to revert to revenue as district development fund (DDF) expenditure.

#### Panel recommendations

10. The Panel considered 5 recommendations at its meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, all of which were carried. Recommendation (5) required the Panel to consider the consequences of the time period, some 16 months between the ending of the Joint Use Agreement and, if the proposal was to proceed, the availability of the new sports hall. The Panel were reminded that, following the end of the Agreement, the fate of the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre rested with the Governing Body of the King Harold School. The Panel were informed that the Governing Body had yet to formally respond to the service of the notice ending the Agreement, despite officers' attempts to engage with them. Officers undertook to press for a response in order to establish the Governing Body's intentions.

#### Overview and Scrutiny considerations

11. This Committee is being requested to consider the Panel's recommendations. It has three options available to it:

- (1) accept the recommendations in full and submit them to Cabinet for consideration;
- (2) reject the recommendations, in which case the proposal ends and no further work will be undertaken; or

(3) the Committee formulates an alternative approach for recommendation to Cabinet.

12. The key considerations are around the budgetary implications, and in particular the effects of capital reverting to DDF and the longer term revenue consequences of operating the new facility. However, in general capital costs terms, and subject of course to formal tendering processes, the new sports hall is considered to represent good value, and would provide a much needed replacement provision in the event that Waltham Abbey Sports Centre was no longer to be available for community use.

13. The timetable set out in paragraph 4 of the addendum report has been structured to take into account key decision dates in the Council's 2010/11 budget preparation cycle.