

Item 29 - Provision of Sports Hall - Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool

The Leisure & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder presented a report upon the provision of a sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. Revised recommendations for the report had been tabled at the meeting for the Cabinet's consideration.

The Portfolio Holder reported that following the Cabinet's decision to withdraw from the Joint Use Agreement with King Harold School regarding the management of the Sports Centre at Waltham Abbey, the Leisure Task & Finish Panel was charged with considering the feasibility of constructing a replacement sports hall as part of the existing leisure complex at the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. Having received and considered that feasibility study, the Task & Finish Panel accepted that the proposal should be recommended and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee subsequently referred the matter to the Cabinet and Council to seek the required capital provision for the project.

The Director of Environment & Street Scene explained the background to the revised recommendations and emphasised a number of points for the benefit of the Cabinet. It was accepted that there could be a shortfall in sports facilities provision when the Council withdrew from the dual use agreement with King Harold School and a feasibility study had recommended a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. There were clear benefits for the community identified but it was not clear that the project would generate the necessary income, hence the proposal to only proceed to the pre-planning stage. The project would only proceed from this stage if it was felt that it would be at least cost neutral to the Council in the future. Negotiations with the Council's current Leisure Service provider about assuming the role of delivery agent for the proposed new sports hall would commence. The current sports hall at King Harold School might still be available for community use in the interim but it had been difficult to get the school to discuss the future of the sports hall with the Council after the end of the dual use agreement. A working relationship had already been established between Stace and Sports & Leisure Management Limited, so this aspect of the project was not considered to be problematic.

Decision:

- (1) That the endorsement of the recommendations of the Leisure Task & Finish Panel by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) That the proposal to build a Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool be progressed to the pre-planning application stage at an estimated cost of £41,000;
- (3) That Contract Standing Orders be set aside to enable the appointment of Stace to undertake this work;
- (4) That a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £41,000 be recommended to the Council for approval;
- (5) That negotiations be commenced with the Council's leisure service providers, Sports Leisure Management Limited, in respect of:
 - (a) Sports Leisure Management Limited being the delivery agent for the proposed new Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool; and

(b) the taking up of the optional 3 year contract extension period from January 2013

(6) That, irrespective of the outcome of recommendation (5), the project be progressed only if the use of Capital resources and additional management fees had no subsequent adverse impact upon the Continuing Services Budget (i.e. were cost neutral); and

(7) That the indicative time frame for the project be noted, and in particular the time period between the cessation of the Joint Use Agreement with the Governors of King Harold School in January 2010 and the earliest likely date of opening of any new facility in the Summer of 2011.

Reasons for Decision:

To provide a replacement sports hall facility for the community of Waltham Abbey following the cessation of the Joint Use Agreement with King Harold School in January 2010. Although the cessation of the Joint Use Agreement did not preclude continued community use of the sports centre, there had to date been no indication by the school of its future intentions.

Waltham Abbey had been identified as having one of the worst health outcomes of any area within the District and a new facility such as that proposed could greatly benefit the longer term health outcomes of the local community.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not proceed with the proposed new sports hall; or

To defer consideration until a later date.