

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

18 November 2015

RIVER PARK LEISURE CENTRE – UPDATE ON PROCESS

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR

Contact Officer: Steve Tilbury Tel No: 01962 848256

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB2708 - Options for River Park Leisure Centre - 9 September 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides the Town Forum with an update on the steps currently being taken to inform the Council's decision about whether to refurbish or replace the existing River Park Leisure Centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report be noted.

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##### DETAIL:

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9 September 2015, Cabinet considered the advice provided by RPT Consultants on the affordability of the five options for the future of River Park Leisure Centre. This followed on from the work of Roberts Limbrick Architects and MACE to provide the likely capital cost of each option.
- 1.2 Cabinet determined that based on the financial projections the two options which could be considered further were a new build leisure centre on land owned by Winchester City Council/Hampshire County Council and the University of Winchester at Bar End recreation ground, and a significant refurbishment of the existing leisure centre. Officers are therefore pursuing only these two options in further discussions.
- 1.3 Cabinet did not determine the final facility mix for the proposed new leisure centre and this will ultimately be determined by site considerations and financial viability. The option for a 50m swimming pool is therefore still being considered, as is the provision of a larger than average sports hall.
- 1.4 Cabinet agreed to further evaluation and local consultation taking place before reaching a final decision on what should be provided, where it should be provided and what budget should be allocated.

#### 2 Current Work In Progress

- 2.1 Following the Cabinet report there are now three main strands of work being undertaken:

##### Partnership Discussions

- 2.2 The provision of a new leisure centre is an opportunity to develop partnership working with other local institutions such as the University of Winchester and the new County sports trust, as well as local sports clubs and governing bodies. This could strengthen the overall offer to the community from a new leisure facility and enable the nature and scope of those facilities to be greater than it would be if they were funded individually and provided separately.

- 2.3 Discussions regarding governance and funding for partnership arrangements are taking place, but they are always delicate and it is not possible or wise to try to provide a running commentary on them. As Members are aware, obtaining substantial external funding is likely to be important in determining the financial viability of a new leisure centre.

#### Seeking Views about a New Location

- 2.4 Clearly the relocation of a major facility to Bar End would be a major change for the local community of Highcliffe and Bar End. Some aspects of the proposal may raise understandable concerns if they require alterations to the existing arrangements on the recreation ground, and about issues such as access and parking. The new facility would also represent a very accessible asset to the community which many would welcome, and seeking their views about how the local benefits can be maximised is extremely important.
- 2.5 To test these issues, a programme of meetings and briefings in the Highcliffe/Bar End area has been organised and an update on this will be given at the meeting.
- 2.6 It should be stressed that there is as yet no detailed design or specific proposal for a new building to show beyond the concept design work contained in the Roberts Limbrick report. The purpose of the exercise in Highcliffe/Bar End is not to consult on any specific proposal. It is to establish what the key issues are for local people which the detailed proposals need to successfully address or incorporate.

#### Technical Studies

- 2.7 Although the detail of any proposed design cannot be fully worked up until it has been informed by knowledge of local issues, it is possible to do basic work to establish how various configurations could relate to existing facilities, their land use requirements and the difference between the requirements of various facility options. Roberts Limbrick have been recommissioned to undertake this work and it will both inform and be guided by the other on-going discussions.
- 2.8 It is possible that the technical requirements will play a significant part in the decision making process, as the Bar End site does have constraints which it may not be easy to overcome (or to overcome at an affordable cost) or which may limit the scale of facilities. However, the purpose of the technical work is to test these and understand their implications.

### 3 Next Steps in the Process

- 3.1 The next report back to Cabinet in the new year is expected to draw together the work described above. It will explain in detail what the nature, location, estimated cost and funding options for a new facility at Bar End could be, and recommend either that this proceeds to the next level of detailed work or that the alternative option of a refurbishment of the existing building is pursued.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

4.1 The provision of a major leisure facility is considered an essential part of the Council's contribution to community health and well-being.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no specific resource implications from this particular report.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

6.1 There are no specific risk management issues arising from this particular report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None