

**REPORT OF: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE,
CULTURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

TO: COUNCIL FORUM

ON: 1st OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT UPDATE ON LEISURE REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update members on the progress made on the review of leisure provision across the Borough and outline the proposals for consulting with residents, stakeholders and employees who may be affected by the outcome of the leisure review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Approve the consultation process referred to within the report to inform any final decisions.

2.2 Note that subject to the outcome of the consultation process, any subsequent proposals may involve change in the provision of facilities and as a consequence, staff currently involved in providing the services will be affected.

2.3 Note that the Executive Member will bring a further report on the review of leisure provision to Council on 3 December 2015 to report on the outcome of the consultation process and present proposals for approval.

3. BACKGROUND

The Council has continued to invest in leisure facilities for the long term benefit of the borough with £2.5m investment in a new athletic arena and associated leisure facilities at Witton Park which opened in April 2014 and £8.5m investment in the joint Blackburn Leisure Centre development with Blackburn College which cost £13.5m and opened in March 2015. These followed the £12.855m investment in Darwen Leisure Centre in 2010.

The opening of Blackburn Leisure Centre resulted in the closure of Waves which was in need of significant repair and improvement work if it was to remain a viable option for leisure services. Blackburn Leisure Centre is on target to operate at £320k less pa than the cost of operating Waves.

Alongside these investments, it was agreed at Council Forum in September 2014 that the portfolio would undertake a review of Leisure provision across the borough to achieve a budget saving of £731k pa. The portfolio has an overall budget savings target of £1.943m between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

A significant proportion of the portfolio budget is attributed to the operation of the swimming pool facilities. The portfolio cannot achieve the level of savings required without delivering swimming provision in different ways, and potentially from directly operating fewer pool facilities,

In order to review swimming pool provision, the portfolio commissioned Sport England to undertake strategic assessment of need for swimming pool provision in Blackburn with Darwen utilising their Facilities Planning Model (FPM) report.

The FPM report compares the **supply** of swimming pools against the **demand** for that facility from the local population; The FPM takes into account demographics, travel times, the level of car ownership, public transport links and walking times. The report also applies an average attractiveness factor based on the age of the swimming pool facility and the dates of any refurbishment.

The focus of the FPM study is Blackburn with Darwen; however the study also takes into account the supply and demand for swimming pool facilities in the following adjacent districts:

Ribble Valley	Hyndburn	Rosendale	South Ribble
Bolton	Chorley	Bury	

4. RATIONALE

Current Pool provision in Blackburn with Darwen

The FPM report was completed in September 2015 and it confirms that currently there are eleven swimming pools in Blackburn with Darwen spread across eight sites; these sites are a mix of council owned, school facilities and private sector provision.

The eleven pools provide a total capacity of 2,015 sqm of water space, which is the equivalent to 15.5 sqm of pool water space per 1,000 population in Blackburn with Darwen; compared to 12.8 sqm for England and 12.7 sqm for the North-West region.

The current supply of pool water space in Blackburn with Darwen is more generous than the national and regional comparators and is also higher than all other local authorities in the study area with the exception of South Ribble at 15.8sqm:1,000 population.

In terms of the Council owned pool facilities, the report acknowledges that there is only one pool in Darwen (Darwen Leisure Centre) to the south of the M65, the three other Council owned pools are located to the north of the M65 in Blackburn.

The current pool provision provides sufficient capacity to cater for 17,467 pool visits per week at peak times. However, the demand from a population of 148,330 residents is for 9,693 visits per week at peak time based on national and regional participation rates for swimming.

Darwen Leisure Centre is a modern 25m 8 lane pool with extensive opening hours, this facility provides for the greatest capacity at 4,524 visits per week at peak times. The new Blackburn Leisure Centre, a 25m 6 lane pool, also has significant capacity at 3,432 visits per week at peak times. Therefore, any reductions in pool provision would have to be focussed on Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre as these centres are significantly older (built in 1906 and 1974 respectively), with dated facilities and are therefore less attractive for public users.

5. CONSULTATIONS

It is proposed that the portfolio undertakes a thorough consultation exercise in order to inform the decision making process on future pool provision. The consultation process will provide opportunities for the public, staff, schools and other interested groups to give their opinions and views and for these to be listened to and taken on board as part of the decision making process.

Consulting and engaging with stakeholders in this way will allow concerns and issues and options that may not previously have been considered to be channelled into the process.

The consultation process will commence on 2nd October 2015 and run through to 31st October 2015. The public consultation will progress in two formats, a questionnaire and public meetings. The consultation questionnaire will be available at Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre and on the Council's website. Additionally, public meetings will take place at or near to Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre; the dates and times for these meetings will be advertised in the leisure centres, the libraries and on the Council's website.

The aim of these public meetings will be to collect as much intelligence from local people, partners and organisations on the value of their local swimming pool facility, to explore the possibility of it being operated differently, and what the anticipated impact could be if the swimming pool was to close.

Consultation with members of staff will be through questionnaires and staff meetings. Wider stakeholder consultation will also take place aiming to gather views from Councillors, Public Health, schools, clubs and groups that represent our users and their needs.

As part of this process, alternative operating models, including asset transfer may be considered if these were at nil cost to the council and ensured that the overall efficiency saving was achieved.

A more detailed report on future swimming pool provision and an EIA and HIA will be submitted to Council Forum on 3 December 2015 to enable members to deliberate and make final decisions.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The review of Leisure and swimming pool provision supports the Council's agreed financial strategy and commitment to meet efficiency targets.

The outcome of the Leisure review will be to retain sufficient leisure provision across the borough to meet the needs of residents

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has had unprecedented severe reductions in Central Government funding each year since 2010. In order to achieve the budget reductions, members agreed a range of Portfolio budget strategies and savings proposals at Council Forum in September 2014. The Leisure, Culture and Young People's portfolio has an overall budget savings target of £1,943m between 2015/16 and 2017/18.

Options regarding alternative ways to reduce the budget by £731k pa in relation to the delivery of leisure will be considered. However, saving options need to be viable and deliverable within a limited timeframe to allow the necessary savings to be achieved with full year effect in 2016/17.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The provision of leisure services is a discretionary activity. The Council has powers to provide as it thinks fit and deal with leisure facilities under the general power of competence provided by section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

The Council needs to ensure that its decision makers are correctly and adequately informed. As such, a timely, adequate and effective consultation needs to be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders. The outcome of the consultation will need to be considered and taken into account when formulating any change proposals. Any change in the provisions of facilities should be subject to a reasonable notice period. Consultation (in accordance with relevant employment legislation) will also necessary with any staff that may potentially be affected by any change proposals.

Any change proposals would be subject to the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010. This will be informed by way of an Equality Impact Assessment as outlined in this report, which will need to be considered alongside any health implications before a decision is made on any change proposals.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Council owns all its leisure buildings and premises, with the exception of Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre which is sited on land owned by Blackburn College. The Council has a 125 year lease with Blackburn College for the land and the facility.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation process and as a consequence of any subsequent change proposals, it may be necessary that a number of staff may be put at risk of redundancy in consultation with the relevant Trade Unions. Workforce implications will be informed by the outcome of the consultation process and decisions taken at Council Forum on 3 December 2015.

Trade Union colleagues have been consulted on the Leisure Review along with colleagues across Leisure Services. Further consultation with trade unions and colleagues will be included alongside consultation with customers and stakeholders.

10. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

As part of the consultation and decision making processes both an Equality Impact Assessment and a Health Impact Assessment will be undertaken, supported by Public Health colleagues.

Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officer: Martin Eden; Director of Environment and Leisure
Date: 23rd September 2015
Background Papers: