

# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Young People
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Director of Environment and Leisure
<b>DATE:</b>	11 January 2018

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Leisure Culture and Young People
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	Shadsworth with Whitebirk
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBJECT: Update on Leisure Review**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015 and 2016, in the face of continuing and severe cuts in funding from central government, the portfolio held public meetings to discuss the future operational management of Audley Sports Centre, Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre. Following consultation processes, the Council subsequently transferred the operational management of the three Council owned leisure facilities to third party operators.

The alternative management arrangements at Shadsworth Leisure Centre involved the Centurions swimming club having exclusive use of the pool, the club would allocate one lane for public swimming during club swim sessions and they would life guard the pool to enable the Council to reduce staffing costs. The club also proposed to pay pool hire fees to the Council to cover pool operating costs.

Unfortunately these arrangements have not been able to be fully implemented. The Council has had to provide lifeguard cover for some swim sessions at a considerable cost because the club have been unable to lifeguard all the swim sessions. The swimming club membership has not expanded as much as anticipated; consequently, the club have been unable to pay the Council the agreed pool hire fee.

As a result the operating costs for the swimming pool remain significant and are not affordable within the cash limited budget for the Leisure, Culture and Young People's portfolio.

The purpose of the report is to update members of the consultation process which was undertaken between 27 November and 24 December and make recommendations regarding the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Notes the report and the consultation processes outlined within the report.
- Approves the closure of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre from 1 February 2018 and the relocation of the Centurions swimming club and casual swimmers to other council owned swimming pools across the Borough.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

The report to Executive Board on 14 December 2017 informed Members that Shadsworth Leisure Centre is creating a budget pressure of £136,000 which cannot be managed by the portfolio. The main reason for the budget pressure was the operation of the swimming pool which is costing circa.£102,000 to operate.

In 2016, The Council approved a proposal that gave the Centurions swimming club exclusive use of the pool, in exchange for this, the club agreed to allocate one lane for public swimming during club swim sessions and they would life guard the pool to enable the Council to reduce staffing costs. The club also proposed to pay pool hire fees to the Council to cover the utility costs associated with the swimming pool.

Unfortunately and despite best endeavours, the Centurions swimming club has experienced slower volunteer uptake than they had anticipated and as a result, they have not recruited sufficient qualified lifeguards to supervise all the swim sessions. Therefore the Council has had to provide lifeguard cover at certain times during the week at a considerable cost. The club membership has grown in size but it has not expanded as much as the club has anticipated, accordingly the club are not collecting the subscription fees required to cover the required pool hire fee.

Members were informed at the December Executive Board meeting that a public consultation process was being undertaken from 27 November to 24 December regarding the future operation of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre. The public consultation process included:

- Three meetings with the Centurions committee members to discuss the operation of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre and the club requirements for pool time
- Hosting an open public meeting which took place at Shadsworth Leisure Centre on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017
- Making available a survey questionnaire from 27 November 2017 to 24 December 2017 to enable users and non-users to provide feedback and make suggestions about the future operation of the swimming pool.

The consultation process also assisted the Council to identify if there are any organisations or groups who wished to consider operating the swimming pool at no cost to the Council.

### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

- The Centurions swimming club have exclusive use of the pool but have allocated one lane of the pool for casual swimming alongside their swim squad training sessions. However, public swimming has reduced to the point where there are only six casual swimmers using the pool on a regular basis. The club has insufficient lifeguards to supervise all the swim sessions so the Council is still providing some lifeguard cover to ensure the safety of swimmers at a considerable cost.
- Shadsworth Leisure Centre is creating a budget pressure of £136,000 in 2017/18 which is unaffordable and cannot be managed by the portfolio.
- The Council has embarked on a consultation process from 27 November 2017 to 24 December 2017 to elicit feedback and views from users and non-users of the swimming pool. The Council has met with the Centurions swimming club on 3 occasions. An open public meeting took place at Shadsworth Leisure Centre on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and a survey questionnaire was made available for users and non-users from 27 November 2017 to 24 December 2017 to elicit feedback and suggestions about the future operation of the swimming pool.

- The consultation process was also undertaken to assist the Council to identify if there are any organisations or groups who wish to consider operating the swimming pool at no cost to the Council.
- No other organisations have shown any interest in operating the swimming pool as a result of the consultation process. There were no alternative proposals submitted which would enable the Council to operate the swimming pool at no cost.
- One of the options available to the Council is to close the swimming pool and relocate the swimming club and casual swimmers to alternative council owned pools within the Borough.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Sport England facilities planning model which was completed in 2012 demonstrated that the Borough had an over-provision of swimming pool facilities. If the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre was to close it would reduce swimming pool provision in the Borough, but there would still be sufficient swimming pool facilities for the residents of the Borough as highlighted by Sport England in the facilities planning model for pool provision (2 swimming pools in Blackburn and 1 swimming pool in Darwen).

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of operating Shadsworth Leisure Centre in 2017/18 were detailed in the 14 December 2017 Executive Board report and informed members that the Centre was forecasted to require a subsidy of £136,000 in 2017/18.

If the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre was to close, it would save the Council circa £102,000 pa in utility costs, staff costs and rates. The staff currently employed to lifeguard the swimming pool could be redeployed to other vacant posts within the portfolio so there would be no redundancies as a result of the pool closure.

A small number of staff would be employed to supervise the use of the dry side facilities including the sports hall, fitness gym, squash court, school gym and dance studio. The income from the dry side facilities would offset the staffing costs. There would be some costs associated with rates and utilities but these would be significantly reduced if the swimming pool was closed.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

In 2015 and 2016, the Council embarked on consultation processes with regards to the future management and operation of Daisyfield Pools, Shadsworth Leisure Centre and Audley Sports Centre.

As a result of these consultations, the Council secured alternative management arrangements for Audley Leisure Centre and Daisyfield Pools which remain in place to date. Unfortunately, the alternative management arrangements for the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre have not proceeded as planned and as a result, the Council has had to fund significant operating costs for which it has no budget.

As the previous consultation processes were undertaken in 2015 and 2016, the Council entered into a further consultation process from 27th November 2017 to 24th December 2017 regarding the future operation of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre.

The consultation process included three meetings with committee members of the Centurions swimming club, hosting an open public meeting on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and making available a survey questionnaire from 27th November 2017 to 24th December 2017 to enable users and non-

users to provide feedback and make suggestions about the future operation of the swimming pool. The results of the consultation are included within this report along with recommendations about the future operation of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre.

The Centurions currently operate the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre under the terms of a Service Level Agreement. If the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre closes, the Service Level Agreement will be rescinded and the Centurions will be allocated block bookings for pool space at Daisyfield Pools and Darwen Leisure Centre and will pay the agreed pool hire rates at each site.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

If there are no changes to the operation of Shadsworth Leisure Centre, the Council will have to allocate £136,000 to subsidise the operation of the centre.

If the pool was to close, a small number of staff would be employed to supervise the use of the dry side facilities including the sports hall, squash court, school gym and dance studio. The income from the dry side facilities would offset the staffing costs. There would be some costs associated with rates and utilities but these would be reduced greatly.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.**

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA link here*)

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. (*insert EIA attachment*)

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

A public consultation process has been carried out to determine the future operation of the swimming pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre. The consultation process included meeting with Centurions' committee, hosting a public meeting on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December and making available a customer questionnaire from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017 to 24<sup>th</sup> December 2017 to enable users and non-users to provide feedback and make suggestions about the future operation of the swimming pool. The consultation process will also assist the Council to identify if there are any organisations who wish to consider operating the swimming pool at no cost to the Council.

**Meetings with committee members of the Centurions** - Following a number of meetings with committee members of the Centurions, it was agreed that if the pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre was to close, the Centurions would be able to continue with their club swimming sessions if pool time was made available at Daisyfield Pools and at Darwen Leisure Centre. It should be noted that over 60% of centurions swimmers live in Darwen.

**Public Meeting on 5 December 2017** - The public meeting was attended by 34 people, the key questions and answers discussed at the meeting are as followed:

**Q How have volunteers in other venues managed to run facilities and access funding?**

**A** The Pelican Centre in Wigan was provided as an example of a council owned swimming pool being asset transferred to a community group and subsequently attracting significant external funding of c.£500k to improve the facilities.

**Q Why can't Shadsworth be school swimming hub?**

**A** Many primary schools prefer to use other centres to learn to swim because they are more modern (Blackburn Leisure Centre and Darwen Leisure Centre) or because the facility has small pool facilities with more shallow water space in which to teach the children to swim.

**Q Shadsworth Pool is not fit for purpose and will take a huge amount of money to refurbish, why can't Council maintain buildings?**

**A** The Council has had its budget reduced by over £100m since 2010 and doesn't have the funding available to operate and maintain the range of buildings it owns which is why alternative management arrangements were sought for the three leisure buildings in 2015 and 2016.

**Q The swimming pools at Darwen Leisure Centre and Blackburn Leisure Centre have low numbers of swimmers during some of the peak opening times which is not an efficient use of valuable pool space. Can this be reviewed?**

**A** The types of bookings and the attendances will be reviewed at Blackburn Leisure Centre and Darwen Leisure Centre to ensure that the pools are used efficiently and maximise the usage. (it should be noted that the Centurions have been offered some pool time at Darwen Leisure Centre if Shadsworth swimming pool was to close)

**Q The main pool at Daisyfield Pool is not as wide as the other main pool facilities within the borough and the five lanes are too narrow for the older members of the swim squad, can the council resolve this matter to ensure the older swimmers do not pick up any injuries from colliding with lane ropes?**

**A** The Council will have the lane rope fixings adjusted and re-drilled to create four wider lanes for swimming rather than the current five narrow lanes

**Q If the land surrounding the School and Leisure Centre was sold for development in the future, would this release capital funding to invest in Daisyfield Pools?**

**A** The Council has no control over the future use of the school building if or when Tauheedhul Boys School relocates to new premises. The future of the school building is a matter for the Department of Education.

**Q What will happen within the community if Shadsworth closes and they lose their facility?**

**A** The Council is not making decisions about the whole building at this time, the consultation relates specifically to the Pool. The reality is that the local community do not use the pool at Shadsworth Leisure Centre.

**Q How long will the consultation process last?**

**A** The consultation period will last one month period. The feedback is important and could provide proposals for the future operation of the swimming pool which the Council will seriously consider.

**Q What's the responsibility of Half Fish to Club/Hirers?**

**A** If the Centurions relocate to Daisyfield Pools they will be treated as a paying customer with booking rights and booking arrangements as agreed with the operator, Half Fish.

## Survey Questionnaire

A total of 44 survey questionnaires were completed. The key issues raised as a result of the questionnaires are as followed:

- More people disagree with the pool provision focus of the Leisure Review than agree with it, with the main reasons given for this being the value of the facilities to the swimming club, the detrimental impact it would have on club training times and a lack of suitable alternative facilities to use.
- The vast majority of respondents feel any closure would have a very or fairly big impact on them, with over 70% of people who use the facility for club training at least 3 times a week feeling it would have a very big impact
- Around two in three indicated that, given the option they would swim at Darwen Leisure Centre and one in three would swim at Blackburn Leisure Centre. Only 18% would choose to swim at Daisyfield Pools due to the condition of the building.
- The main alternatives suggested to the pool closing related to investing in a new swimming pool facility to replace Shadsworth swimming pool, charging for car-parking on the land surrounding the leisure centre (but not for staff or centre users), increasing the opening hours of Daisyfield Pools.

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Martin Eden</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	2 January 2018
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Executive Board report, Update on Leisure Review, 14 December 2017
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