

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 11 December 2020

Subject: Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre

Report by: Director of Culture Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: Eastney and Craneswater, St Jude

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide the cabinet member with an update on the progress made towards securing the future provision of a new swimming pool in the south east of the city. This will likely either be by rebuilding Eastney Swimming Pool, or re-providing a pool nearby.
- 1.2. To provide the cabinet member with an update on the outcome of the structural survey of Eastney Swimming Pool, and of the structural assessment at Wimbledon Park Sports Centre.
- 1.3. To provide the cabinet member with an update on an options appraisal which identifies Bransbury Park as a potential location of a new facility as an alternative to the option to rebuild Eastney Swimming Pool on its existing site.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **That officers widen the scope of the £100,000 capital allocation which originally was for 'feasibility and outline planning for a new Eastney swimming pool'. Instead, the scope will be 'feasibility and outline planning for the continued provision of a swimming pool and dry-side sports offer in south east Portsmouth'. There will be several options to consider to achieve this, including re-building facilities on the existing sites of Wimbledon Park Sports Centre and Eastney Swimming Pool, but also the building a new combined pool and sports centre. The combined pool and sports centre could be on the site of the existing Eastney Community Centre at Bransbury Park (this would include a new community centre), or it could be on another site in the south east of the city if an alternative is found.**
- 2.2. **That officers report back to the Cabinet Member by mid-January 2021 with a full options appraisal having consulted with existing users of both Eastney**



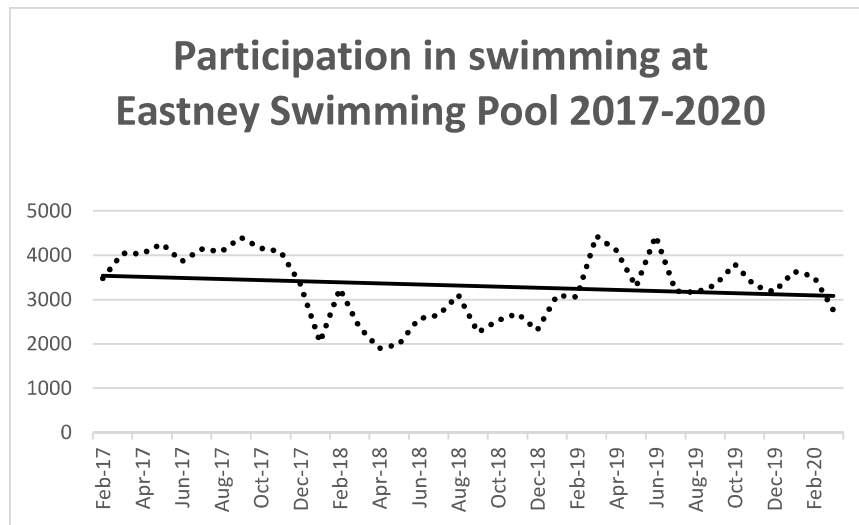
Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre as well as the wider community.

- 2.3. **That the cabinet member endorses the inclusion of this scheme within the council's overall capital strategy.**

3. Background

3.1. Eastney Swimming Pool background

- 3.1.1. Eastney Swimming Pool was built in 1904 as part of the Royal Marines Barracks. It is notable for its use in training the Cockleshell Heroes¹, a group of marines who in 1942 canoed up the river Gironde to Bordeaux to attack Nazi ships. It was also the site of the first competitive games of underwater hockey².
- 3.1.2. The pool measures 20m x 8m (a non-standard size³) and has four lanes. It is located at the eastern end of Eastney Esplanade, and is not well served by public transport, although the new bus route 25 does pass nearby this is dependent on subsidy by the council. There are 17 on-site parking spaces.
- 3.1.3. As well as general swimming the pool is used for swimming lessons and various aqua clubs. It has a regular customer base of older people (15% of customers at Eastney Swimming Pool buy senior tickets, compared with 1.6% at both the Mountbatten Centre and Charter Community Sports Centre). Swimming Lessons stages 1 to 3 are least attended here as the pool does not have shallow water.
- 3.1.4. Participation numbers are in gradual decline, broadly in line with the national and city wide picture. The council's Sports Facility Strategy⁴ found that it was operating at only 47% of capacity (compared with 95% at the Mountbatten Centre and 100% at Charter Community Sports Centre).



¹ <https://www.combinedops.com/Cockleshell%20Heroes.htm>
² <http://www.reedconsulting.com/britishoctopush/history/evolution.html>
³ <http://www.sportengland.org/media/187176/swimming-pools-dgn-2013.pdf>
⁴ <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s14923/03.1%20Portsmouth%20City%20Council%20Sports%20Facility%20Strategy%202017%20-%20exec%20summary.pdf>



- 3.1.5. The Sports Facility Strategy found that Eastney Swimming Pool was of poor quality and in need of significant investment. It concluded that the pool will need replacing in the short term. It also recommended investment in providing an on-site café, and fitness provision, to generate revenue and make the facility more sustainable.

EASTNEY SWIMMING POOL	32%	Poor	Significant	Nice little facility and well-liked; age and condition of building of concern; reducing usage although a good facility for e.g. lessons, older people
-----------------------	-----	------	-------------	---

- 3.1.6. The 2019 Leisure Facilities Options Appraisal⁵ recommended that the existing facilities at Eastney Swimming Pool were considered further for investment or replacement given their age and current condition. "The quality and condition of the facilities do not provide users with a modern, fit for purpose environment in which to be physically active".

- 3.1.7. It is also important to note that access to Eastney Swimming Pool by residents with a physical disability which restricts their mobility is limited and the current building is not able to be sufficiently adapted to resolve this issue.

- 3.1.8. There are no family changing spaces at Eastney Swimming Pool which limits its potential to widen its customer demographic beyond its current one which is skewed towards older customers.

- 3.1.9. The site is identified in the current Seafront Masterplan as a potential location for an "Eco Cafe / Watersports Hub"⁶

3.2. Eastney Swimming Pool building condition survey

- 3.2.1. A condition survey undertaken in November 2018 found that there are a large volume of defects. The building is generally in a poor state of repair and does not meet current standards. The mechanical and electrical survey found that the electrical installations are also in a poor condition.

- 3.2.2. The 2018 condition survey raised the need for extensive structural repairs to the roof structure and potential replacement of the roof covering. During 2019 remedial repairs were undertaken to the roof and safety netting installed internally due to concerns of debris falling into the pool. Following the winter storms a further inspection was undertaken in March 2020 by a council structural engineer who raised serious concerns with the roof condition, and it was therefore decided to undertake a further detailed assessment of the roof and structure.

- 3.2.3. Due to the coronavirus pandemic this was delayed, but in July 2020 PCC instructed two independent structural consultants to undertake a condition survey of the roof structure so as to challenge or support this assessment. Faithful + Gould (F+G) and Ridge & Partners LLP (R&P) were appointed. F+G consulted out to WSP for the structural assessment but undertook a building survey and arranged and managed facilitation works on site.

⁵ Strategic Leisure Ltd (2019). Leisure Facilities Options Appraisal.

⁶ <https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20130410/Agenda/Cab20130410r3app2.pdf>

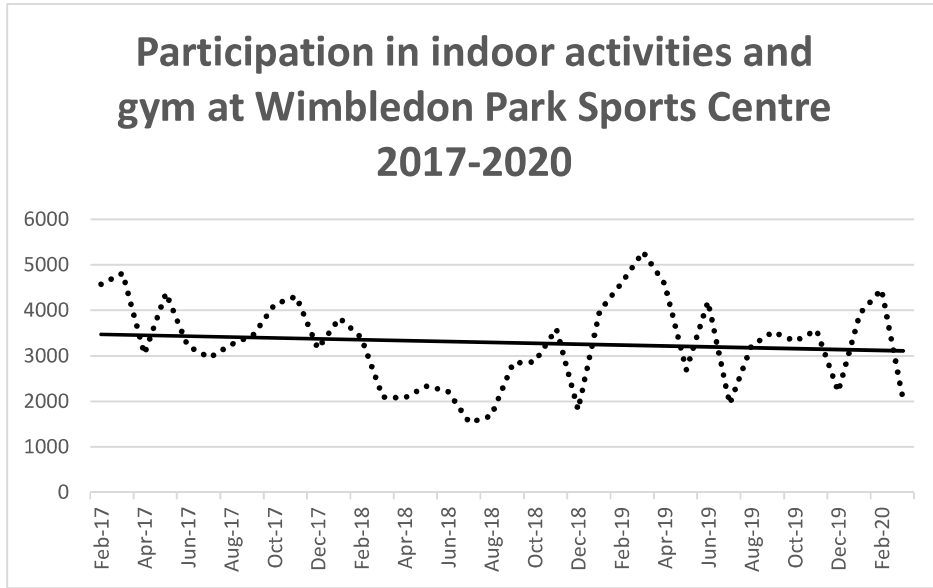


- 3.2.4. The roof structure to the main building is determined to be poor and a cause for concern with various significant defects including but not limited to:
- Purlins are heavily corroded, with delamination and significant loss of section. In several locations the purlins are at the point of collapse
 - Purlin brackets/sleeves are bent to the degree that there is no mechanical connection between the purlins and the trusses in various locations (effectively the roof just rests on the walls in various locations)
 - There is inadequate bolted fixings between the purlin sections
 - The sheet fixings are corroded. Consequently the roof covering is deemed to be unstable and insufficiently secured, with the very high risk that the roof covering could detach completely during high winds
 - Failure of the sheet fixings is allowing water ingress which in turn is exacerbating the corrosion of the steel purlins
 - Steel bracings are bowed, indicating movement of the roof structure
 - Truss ends are significantly corroded with loss of steel section
 - Insulated ceiling panels are bowing out of their grid and some have slipped. The grid is corroded
 - Repair work undertaken is ineffective and is contributing to water ingress, including the restraint strapping, additional fixings on the south west corner and flashing replacement.
- 3.2.5. A repair solution is not feasible and replacement of the roof sheeting and purlins is recommended in the short term (6 month period). Following works, the roof would have an estimated life expectancy of 10+ years, with on-going inspection of the internal trusses required every 2 years and regular maintenance to the steel finishes. Monitoring will be key to ensuring the building remains operational.
- 3.2.6. Whilst the Engineers would not give a definitive answer to whether the building can remain open, they have advised that there is a significant risk of falling debris (despite presence of netting) which raises serious health and safety concerns for the general public. Furthermore, there are concerns over the stability of the roof covering and purlins which requires immediate remedial works to avoid it detaching and collapsing respectively.
- 3.2.7. The building is in a poor condition through-out, requiring considerable investment in the short term to bring the property back to a safe standard. The main issues identified include but are not limited to:
- Deterioration of the felt and slate roof coverings to ancillary areas and subsequently the roof structures
 - Damage to masonry walls due to:
 - Embedded metal;
 - Failure of brick arches;
 - Subsidence/settlement;
 - Cavity wall tie failure.
 - Movement of roof structure

- Perished lime pointing to external walls and coping stones
 - Decay/deterioration of timber external doors
 - Lack of fire doors and fire stopping internally
 - Poor internal decorative finishes including tiling in and around the pool.
- 3.2.8. A maintenance plan has been provided with indicative costs to maintain the building over a 10 year period, inclusive of all necessary building repairs, improvement and mechanical and electrical (M&E) items. The sum is estimated to be in the region of £1,920,300 to £2,313,600, which allows for an initial spend of £925,900 to £1,319,200 in year 1. Repair items are input at intervals based on condition and priority, however, it would provide better value to the client to incorporate all essential works for the first four years within year 1.
- 3.2.9. The range of costs represents the difference between the consultant's figures. All costs are estimated and this should therefore be considered a high level budget. A detailed design and specification would be required to ascertain a more accurate project cost.
- 3.2.10. A separate desktop study looked at the possibility of demolishing the pool and re-building a replacement on the same site. The capital cost of this would be around £5.25 million and it would take over 3 years from decision to completion.

3.3. **Wimbledon Park Sports Centre Background**

- 3.3.1. Wimbledon Park Sports Centre was built in 1978 and comprises a five badminton court sports hall. A 19 station gym was added in 1990. The centre has 50 on site car parking spaces, although there have been issues over availability for sports centre users as the adjacent school and local residents also use the car park.
- 3.3.2. The centre is located in a largely residential area, and is around 5 minutes' walk from a bus stop.
- 3.3.3. The centre is predominantly used for badminton, with around 80% of visits to the centre for this purpose.
- 3.3.4. Participation levels are broadly stable, with some evidence of ongoing decline. The Sports Facility Strategy found that participation was at 100%.



- 3.3.5. At 19 stations, the gym is too small to be an attractive offer, and benefits from being part of the multi-site membership offer from BH Live. Without this benefit usage would be lower still. BH Live put forward proposals to improve Wimbledon Park Sports Centre in its tender submission in 2016 by building a single story extension to accommodate a larger gym. The planning application did not proceed for this plan.
- 3.3.6. The Sports Facility Strategy found that Wimbledon Park Sports Centre was of average quality and in need of significant investment.

WIMBLEDON PARK SPORTS CENTRE	45%	Average	Significant	Facility had some investment; sports facilities average, but lack of infrastructure e.g. good reception; ageing facility
-------------------------------------	-----	---------	-------------	--

- 3.3.7. The 2019 Leisure Facilities Options Appraisal recommended that the existing facilities at Wimbledon Park Sports Centre were considered further for investment or replacement given their age and current condition. "The quality and condition of the facilities do not provide users with a modern, fit for purpose environment in which to be physically active".

3.4. Wimbledon Park Sports Centre building condition

- 3.4.1. Following inspection of Wimbledon Park Sports Centre the main consideration is that the sports hall structure is nearing the end of its serviceable life unless remedial works are undertaken.
- 3.4.2. There is corrosion to the steel frame components and carbonation to the concrete infill panels of the sports hall. Unrectified, these issues will lead to failure of the structure. A report by Constructive Evaluation in June 2018 noted that without remedial action the Sports Centre would become uninsurable within 5-10 years (2023) due to structural concerns.



- 3.4.3. Prior to undertaking scheduled repairs as per the provisional plan it was recommended that a structural investigation be undertaken of the west elevation to determine the condition and repair options available for the sports hall.
- 3.4.4. We have now received the structural assessment report which advises that in its current condition it would not seem unreasonable to expect at least a further 5 years life expectancy but during this time there would be the risk of spalling of the concrete in publicly accessible areas. Further extensive protective repairing options could be undertaken within the next twelve months to prevent further deterioration and prolong the lifespan of the building by between 10 and 30 years. A number of options have been identified.
- 3.4.5. In addition, structural investigation is required to the east wall of the extension forming the plant room. There is evidence of subsidence which appears to be caused by inadequate foundation design considering the sites location on Portsmouth's Great Morass. It is recommended that the existing crack is monitored for 12 months to determine whether movement is current. If so the foundations will require underpinning for which costs could amount to £100,000.
- 3.4.6. In addition to the structural concerns the survey highlighted that the sports centre is generally in a dated and poor condition. The mechanical and electrical installations were also found to be in poor condition.
- 3.4.7. The landlord liability cost amounts to approximately £941,000 over the next eight year period, which includes costs of repairs identified following the structural assessment of the west wall. This also includes costs for much needed improvements to the changing areas which could be in the region of £100,000.
- 3.4.8. A separate desktop study looked at the possibility of demolishing the centre and re-building a replacement on the same site. The capital cost of this would be around £4 million and it would take over 2.5 years from decision to completion.

3.5. **Sport England**

- 3.5.1. Officers have been in discussions with Sport England about the strategic vision for Portsmouth's sports facilities since the publication of the Sports Facility Strategy in 2017.
- 3.5.2. The Strategic Facilities Fund⁷ aims to support local authorities to invest strategically in sport and physical activity to deliver outcomes essential to local communities. It requires councils to think about a whole area to make sure existing and future facilities will work together, not just looking at an individual building or the needs of an individual sport.
- 3.5.3. There are a number of requirements for a successful bid to the fund, but key aspects are: a facility mix that has been developed through a thorough understanding of the target audience and behaviour change; and integrated service facility offers (co-location where appropriate).
- 3.5.4. Sport England have supported the council in moving towards a potential bid to their Strategic Facilities Fund by commissioning Strategic Leisure Ltd to prepare a

⁷ <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/strategic-facilities-fund>

preliminary strategic needs assessment and a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the south of the city. The coronavirus pandemic has hampered this work in that it has not been possible to consult with users of the facilities as they have been closed.

- 3.5.5. It is important to note that Sport England requires bids to demonstrate an area-wide strategic approach to investment in order to be eligible for funding. A simple like-for-like re-build of Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre is unlikely to be regarded as a strategic solution, and so up to £2m funding may not be available in this circumstance.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1. Both Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre share a number of limitations that are preventing them from growing participation in physical activity and from operating sustainably, including

- Age and condition
- Layout
- Poor customer experience (eg no reception)
- Location (issues with accessibility)
- Limited facility mix
- No catering offer
- Parking issues

- 4.2. In the case of Eastney Swimming Pool, restricted disabled access both to the building and the water are also key considerations.

- 4.3. If they were to be renovated or rebuilt, a number of these limitations could be addressed, but by no means all. We would be left with a sub-optimal offer (albeit one in better or new condition). There is the very real possibility that this solution would not attract the support of Sport England and the council would lose potentially £2m of funding for its sports and leisure facilities.

- 4.4. In 2019 the independent Leisure Facilities Options Appraisal recommended that option 7, or option 5 were the best ones for the future sports and leisure provision in the south of the city.

Option 5

Close Eastney Swimming Pool

Close Wimbledon Park Sports Centre

Retain Pyramids (events venue only)

Develop one new wet and dry facility- location to serve existing catchment areas of the above

Option 7

Close Eastney Swimming Pool

Close Wimbledon Park Sports Centre

Close Pyramids



Develop one new wet and dry facility- location to serve existing catchment areas of the above

Both options resulted in the closure of both Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre, and recommended a new combined wet/dry facility to replace them.

- 4.5. In light of the cost identified above of renovating both facilities to allow continued use, officers believe that the 2019 options above and any other options, should be considered as an alternative to repairing and renovating the existing provision at Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre. It should be noted that there may not now be a viable repair option for Eastney Swimming Pool roof and building a new roof is the only way it could re-open. The significant cost of doing so would have little impact on the customer experience and is unlikely to influence the ongoing operational losses to any significant degree. This suggests that both buildings are effectively beyond economic repair and it would be a more effective use of money to rebuild or re-provide elsewhere.
- 4.6. This is an opportunity to take a strategic look at the sports and leisure offer in south east of the city and leverage Sport England investment into the city.
- 4.7. Consequently permission is sought to re-scope the £100,000 (already allocated to 'Feasibility and outline planning for a new Eastney swimming pool') instead to explore feasibility of alternative options, which will include the 'dry' offer at Wimbledon Park Sports Centre alongside the 'wet' offer at Eastney Swimming Pool.
- 4.8. A combined wet and dry sports and leisure offer on a different site from either existing facility would have the potential to address all of the limitations referred to above rather than just some. A new modern building could bring a reduced carbon footprint compared with the existing facilities, reduced energy costs and provide disabled access. It would have a better layout, and a catering offer bringing a better customer experience. Economies of scale would be realised which will reduce running and staffing costs. Maintenance costs would be lower than the existing old buildings.
- 4.9. Finding a new site for the combined facility closer to bus routes would make it more accessible. Locating it closer to other shops and community spaces would improve footfall and contribute to the local economy.
- 4.10. Officers have undertaken an initial evaluation of potential sites and the provision of a new pool and sports centre on the site of the existing Eastney Community Centre in Bransbury Park has been identified as the most suitable option. The new facility would incorporate the community centre into a health and wellbeing hub, where the existing busy community centre programme would run alongside modern swimming and exercise facilities.
- 4.11. Further feasibility work is required, particularly around identifying other potential sites, and also around finding suitable alternative uses for the existing Eastney Swimming Pool and Wimbledon Park Sports Centre sites, which may be valuable for many possible uses including for example sheltered housing.
- 4.12. Assuming a new combined facility is feasible, urgent work will be required to:



- a. Identify whether it is possible to reopen Wimbledon Park Sports Centre and keep it open until the new facility is ready to open; and
 - b. Identify whether there is any limited, financially viable intervention we could do to keep Eastney Swimming Pool open until the new facility is ready to open
- 4.13. While feasibility work continues, the administration should examine the possibility of including the cost of a new pool and sports centre within the 2021/22 capital programme.
- 4.14. Officers will consult with residents and leisure centre users and will explore options more fully, before reporting back to this committee in February 2021 with detailed recommendations.

4.15. Desktop options appraisal

The table below represents a summary of desktop work into options, financial values are indicative at this stage and will need to be reviewed as options are investigated further.

Option	Pros	Cons	Capital cost	Revenue implications
1. Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids capital costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will inevitably result in the closure of Eastney Swimming Pool (ESP) and at some point in the next 3-5 years of Wimbledon Park Sports Centre (WPS). • Ongoing operational losses would continue, with no change to the customer experience. • Significant loss of sports and leisure facilities with no plan to replace them. • Failure to bring Sport England investment into the city 	<p>£0 (initially)</p> <p>Demolition costs approx. £175,000</p>	<p>Ongoing operational losses would continue and worsen as condition deteriorated until closure.</p>
2. Repair and renovate ESP and WPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains existing provision with likelihood of 20 more years operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not address all the limitations of the existing facilities (eg accessibility, layout, customer experience, parking, facility mix, and catering offer). • Likelihood that operational losses would continue as there would be only limited change to customer experience. • Probable failure to bring Sport England investment into the city 	<p>£3m capital (based on recent surveys, as above)</p> <p>Likely loss of up to £2m grant</p>	<p>Likely to be a modest increase in participation. Unlikely to eliminate operational loss especially at ESP. Will also have an ongoing impact on the council's landlord maintenance budget.</p>
3. Re-build ESP and WPS on their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains the existing provision with 30+ years future operation. • Opportunity to address some of the limitations of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High capital investment required • Short term loss of facilities as they are demolished and rebuilt (ie 3 years) • Does not address all the limitations, some will remain (eg accessibility, 	<p>£10m capital (desktop estimate only)</p>	<p>Likely to be a reasonable increase in participation. New buildings may reduce running costs,</p>

<p>existing sites</p>	<p>existing facilities (eg layout, disability changing requirements, disabled access, reception, catering offer)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probable increase in participation in new facilities • Opportunity to provide a larger gym 	<p>parking, possibility that footfall would not support a café and vending machines might be all that is available)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed opportunity to realign the offer to local need (ie like for like may not match demand) • Probable failure to bring Sport England investment into the city 	<p>Likely loss of up to £2m grant</p>	<p>although not management and staffing costs</p>
<p>4. Combine the facilities from ESP and WPS into a new build</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secures the provision in the south east of the city of swimming and indoor physical activity facilities for 30+ years • Opportunity to enhance the provision by aligning to local need • Combining two facilities into one will bring revenue benefits from reduced maintenance, running and management costs • Likelihood of up to £2m Sport England funding • Opportunity to address all of the limitations of the existing facilities (eg condition, location, accessibility, customer experience, facility mix, catering offer, disability compliance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High capital investment required • Compromises may have to be made depending on the location chosen (ie the size of the ESP and WPS sites may not be able to accommodate all the facility mix • Limited options in the vicinity for alternative sites for new build • Risk of loss of open space as a result of new build 	<p>£10-12m capital (desktop estimate only, but corroborated by independent consultants)</p> <p>Possible up to £2m from Sport England</p> <p>Net capital cost £.10m</p>	<p>Potential for significant increase in participation. Larger gym offer, reduced management and maintenance costs, better catering offer and economies of scale may offset costs of swimming pool to generate operational surplus.</p>



* The new build could be on the site of Eastney Swimming Pool, Wimbledon Park Sports Centre, Bransbury Park or somewhere else. The site chosen would clearly have a bearing on whether existing facilities could remain open until the new one is complete

ESP = Eastney Swimming Pool

WPS = Wimbledon Park Sports Centre

5. Integrated impact assessment

5.1. An integrated impact assessment is enclosed.

6. Legal implications

6.1. There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report as at this stage this amounts only to broadening the scope for the feasibility work to be undertaken in order to enable the further options identified to be considered.

6.2. It is noted that public consultation will be undertaken prior to the formation of detailed recommendations.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1. Provision of £100,000 is included in the approved capital programme for the outline planning & feasibility work.

7.2. New capital schemes for 2021/22 will be considered in the context of the City Council's Capital Strategy and available resources at the Annual Budget meeting in February 2021.

.....
Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Eastney Swimming Pool - Structural report summary
- Appendix 2 - Integrated Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development