

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

Subject: Update on Bransbury Park Leisure Centre

Date of meeting: 10 February 2023

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: Milton, Eastney and Craneswater

1. Requested by

1.1. Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Economic Development

2. Purpose

2.1. To provide the Cabinet Member with a high-level summary of the Bransbury Park leisure centre project status and to demonstrate continued business justification for the project.

3. Information Requested

3.1. Project status

3.1.1 The project is nearing the end of RIBA stage 2 (conceptual design) with the latest facility mix. RIBA stage 2 had previously been reached for a more comprehensive facility mix, and also for a tension membrane design but both designs were not affordable.

3.1.2 A RIBA stage 2 report is due at the end of February 2023, following which the public will be consulted on the stage 2 designs.

3.1.3 The project team is assembling an architect-led multidisciplinary design team to progress to RIBA stage 3 (spatial co-ordination) and a planning application in late summer 2023.

3.1.4 Subject to planning approval and an affordable design, construction will start early 2024 with completion mid-2025.

3.2. Facility Mix

3.2.1 Previous accommodation schedules included a larger leisure footprint (ie 3 studios and a 70-station gym) - supported by a sound revenue model and latent demand studies. However this inevitably translated to a higher capital cost for the facility.

3.2.2 From the start the new facility included accommodation for Eastney Area Community Association, initially with a high degree of sharing of space. The association insisted that they needed a like-for-like re provision of the current

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community centre accommodation with no sharing of spaces with the leisure operator. This inevitably led to a larger community centre footprint and higher capital cost.

3.2.3 Based on the accommodation above (ie the larger leisure footprint and the community centre), the RIBA stage 2 cost prepared for us by Alliance Leisure was not affordable. Consequently decisions have been taken to:

- Reduce the leisure accommodation to a core offer which still meets the strategically identified need for the south-east of the city
- Remove the community association accommodation (in full agreement with the association). This would mean that the existing community centre would be retained (with some essential works undertaken to ensure it remains in good condition).

3.2.4 The resultant facility mix for the new development is therefore as follows:

25m 4-lane swimming pool
8.5m x 10m learner pool
Wet changing
2-court sports hall
50-station gym
Group exercise studio
Dry changing
Café and reception
Publicly accessible toilets

This provides:

- a replacement for Eastney Swimming Pool (but a 25% larger pool)
- an additional learner pool which increases capacity for learn-to-swim classes (because the old Eastney Swimming Pool had no shallow end it was not suitable for the early stages). Along with the main pool this results in an overall 75% increase in water area compared to Eastney Swimming Pool.
- Modern changing facilities (the facilities at Eastney Swimming Pool were poor).
- A new 2-court sports hall which, along with school facilities which will become available later in 2023, will provide a replacement for Wimbledon Park Sports Centre.
- A new 50-station gym and group exercise studio. Latent demand studies have demonstrated the need for a new gym in this location.
- Toilet facilities which will be accessible to park users while the centre is open (likely to be 6:30 to 22:00 TBC)
- A new café to serve the centre and the park.

3.3. Possible inclusion of clinical space



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- 3.3.1 Local GP surgeries were initially approached in 2020 for potential inclusion in the new facility, but at the time none was interested in sourcing a replacement for their existing surgery. This view has recently changed, and officers are now exploring the possibility of adding a GP surgery to the Bransbury Park facility.
- 3.3.2 Initial discussions with the HIOW Integrated Care Board were positive and they have agreed to fund the feasibility work (£14,625) to allow an evaluation of the proposal. This will mean a twin-track design process up to RIBA stage 2 (ie with and without the GP surgery) so that if inclusion of the GP practice is not feasible there will not be a significant delay to the progression of the leisure centre.
- 3.3.3 The NHS has indicated that it can offer no capital contribution so whether or not a GP surgery is included will depend on whether the likely rental income can service the required prudential borrowing for the additional capital cost of building the surgery. The GP practice will need to be in a position to agree a 20-year lease of the accommodation also.
- 3.3.4 Sport England has indicated that it would be supportive of the co-location of health and leisure facilities (having promoted the co-location agenda for many years).

3.4. Cost

- 3.4.1 The most up to date construction cost for the facility was based on the larger leisure footprint and the inclusion of the community centre accommodation. This was **£16,294,000**. This was based on RIBA stage 2 designs and was conducted by two independent construction companies.
- 3.4.2 The removal of the community centre accommodation and the reversion to the smaller gym and studio has the potential to reduce the capital cost by around £1.2m.

Construction (with larger gym and community centre)	£16,294,000
Saving from smaller gym and omission of community centre	-£1,200,000
Client-side fees	£620,000
Client contingency	£600,000
Fixtures, fittings, equipment	£570,000
Capital saving from leasing gym equipment	-£350,000
Re-provision of netball courts at Mountbatten Centre	£348,000
Total project cost	£16,882,000

3.5. Budget

- 3.5.1 The capital budget as published in the council's budget papers is £15,048,900 made up of £1,782,000 borrowing with the remainder from corporate reserves.
- 3.5.2 Changes to the Public Works Loan Board (prudential borrowing) rate following the government's mini-budget in September 2022 meant that the projected revenue surplus from the new facility would service a smaller loan than previously allowed. This has added a £557,000 pressure to the project budget.

3.5.3 The budget breakdown is as follows:

Total project cost	£16,882,000
Budget (as published)	£15,049,000
Prudential borrowing capacity reduced	-£557,000
Shortfall	£2,390,000
Sport England funding	up to £2m
Youth Investment Fund contribution	£400,000

3.5.4 Sport England funding and a successful bid to the Youth Investment Fund would allow the project to meet its otherwise significant funding shortfall.

3.6. Sport England

3.6.1 Sport England has been involved in the development of this project for several years. They had some concerns with developing plans, but these are now largely addressed.

- Parking sufficiency: the parking strategy outlined above has been welcomed by Sport England, and importantly has strong evidence that it will deliver sufficient spaces to service the facility
- Sports hall sufficiency. The 2023 availability of 4 courts at a school site now realises a net gain of publicly available courts which mitigates the downsizing of the new sports hall compared with the current provision at Wimbledon Park

3.6.2 Sport England's Strategic Facilities Fund closes in 2022-23 and will be replaced by a new Place Fund. Sport England has indicated that Portsmouth would be likely to be considered for an early award from this fund in 2023-24.

3.6.3 Sport England's application process is being reviewed and is likely to be streamlined. Details are not yet available, so we have proceeded with a full SOPG report which demonstrates the strategic need for investment in facilities.

3.6.4 Sport England funding remains unconfirmed, and so is a funding risk. The design team and the council remain in an ongoing dialogue with Sport England's capital investment department, and they have invited further discussions as design progresses.

3.7. Other stakeholders (National governing bodies)

3.7.1 The Football Foundation invested in Bransbury Park facilities in 2007 - creating the floodlit ball courts. PCC has a 21-year obligation to maintain them - which we have done. For the construction of a new leisure centre to go ahead we would need agreement of the Football Foundation. They have indicated that they would be likely to support the project, dependent on the agreement of the other national governing bodies involved. Given that the project will result in the loss of 4 (currently un-used) tennis and netball courts (the courts are overlaid). This means the support of England Netball and the Lawn Tennis Association would be required.

3.7.2 The 4 tennis courts are surplus to requirements and are not used. This is because significant investment in recent years has seen improvements to tennis courts at Milton Park, Canoe Lake, Southsea Tennis Club and Portsmouth Tennis Centre.



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- 3.7.3 The netball courts are not used, but Portsmouth Netball League do want to return to council provided courts (they currently play at the University, Crookhorn and Charter Community Sports). There have been issues with antisocial behaviour at Bransbury Park when the netball league games took place, prompting them to leave. There is not a surplus of courts in the city and so the netball courts should be re-provided.
- 3.7.4 The preferred solution is to expand the current outdoor tennis courts at Portsmouth Tennis Centre to allow them to accommodate 4 netball courts for Portsmouth Netball League to use on a Tuesday evening.
- 3.7.5 Portsmouth Netball League and England Netball have both indicated their support for this proposal.
- 3.7.6 The Lawn Tennis Association has also indicated that they would be willing to support the proposal. They funded the courts at Portsmouth Tennis Centre so their agreement will be required. They acknowledge that the 4 tennis courts lost from Bransbury Park do not need to be re-provided in full but have suggested that surface improvements to existing courts at Milton Park, Cosham Park and Drayton Park (along with a single court at Baffins Pond) would mitigate the loss. The LTA have arranged to survey the courts (at their cost) to identify what improvements might be required.

3.8. Revenue modelling

- 3.8.1 Up to date revenue modelling (undertaken by Strategic Leisure Ltd and BH Live) based on the base facility mix (ie with a smaller gym and without the community centre accommodation) indicates that the facility would generate an **operating surplus averaging £61,284 per year over the first ten years**. Please note this includes provision for energy at current rates.
- 3.8.2 Please note that this does not include provision for buildings fabric maintenance and lifecycle replacement. While the tenant is responsible for servicing and day-to-day repairs across the council's leisure facilities PCC is responsible for major buildings maintenance tasks. On the assumption that a new facility to replace two old ones is not likely to represent a significant uplift in maintenance risk this is not considered a revenue budget pressure for the purposes of this report.
- 3.8.3 In comparison, Eastney Swimming Pool, when last open pre-Covid19 made an operational loss of £65,000. With the increase in energy costs for a similar size pool having increased by around 60%, a current estimate for the ongoing subsidy required for Eastney Swimming Pool in today's environment would be £123,000 per year.

3.9. Possible alternative for the provision of a new swimming pool

- 3.9.1 The provision of a co-located "wet and dry" leisure facility at Bransbury Park is the most favourable option for the re-provision of a new swimming pool to replace Eastney Swimming Pool.
- In combining the wet leisure offer (swimming pools) with a dry leisure offer (gym plus sports hall) the facility has the best chance of operating without the need for any operational revenue. This is not the case for standalone swimming pools (ie the dry subsidises the wet).

- The co-location of the leisure facility with the existing community centre, and the potential new GP surgery, increases footfall across the whole development as people are able to combine multiple purposes within a single visit. This benefits the new facility as well as the surrounding local centre.
- The greater availability of public transport at Bransbury Park compared to Eastney Swimming Pool and its location at the heart of the community (Bransbury) rather than at its periphery (Eastney Swimming Pool) makes it more likely that people will travel to the facility on foot or cycle rather than drive, bringing the health benefits of active travel and relieving pressure on the traffic and parking infrastructure.

3.9.2 The one potential alternative to building the new facility in its proposed location is to re-provide the existing facility (with modern comparable facilities - ie a 25m pool plus learner pool) either at Eastney or elsewhere (site yet to be identified).

3.9.3 While a lot has changed since this comparison was made in the report to this committee in Feb 2021 (like energy costs, construction costs) below is a top-level comparison of the re-build costs for Eastney Swimming Pool:

25m 4-lane swimming pool
8.5m x 10m learner pool
Wet changing
Small café and reception
Publicly accessible toilets

Capital cost: **£10,074,000**

Revenue subsidy required: **£123,000 per year**

3.9.4 This would not address the need for an indoor sports hall or gym and would not attract Sport England grant funding. Unless provision were made to replace Wimbledon Park Sports Centre there would be a net loss of indoor court space, and the latent demand for a gym in the southeast of the city would continue unmet. The potential for a GP surgery on site would also be lost.

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Signed by
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

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Appendices: None

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