Provision of Facilities at Redwell Leisure Centre

1 Purpose of report

To seek approval to review the facilities available at Redwell Leisure Centre, by considering local needs and the long term viability of the centre, including options for refurbishment.

2 Executive summary

Redwell Leisure Centre has been operational for over 25 years and a review of the site and the services on offer is needed, having regard to changing needs and predicted population growth. This paper seeks approval to investigate possible options in more detail.

3 Appendices

None

4 Proposed action:

The committee is invited to RESOLVE to agree to explore the options regarding the facilities and services operating from the Redwell Leisure Centre and receive a further report on the assessment and feasibility of these options.

5 Background

5.1 The council has two leisure facilities, Waendel Leisure Centre and Redwell Leisure Centre, run on their behalf under a single contract with Places Leisure until 2028. This excludes the football pitches and general grounds maintenance which are managed by Wellingborough Norse.

5.2 Over recent years there has been considerable investment into the Waendel Centre to provide a modern, town centre facility offering a range of services comparable with commercial operators. Redwell Leisure Centre is, however, less up to date and its future offer needs to be considered and particularly in light of the imminent addition of a 3G pitch.

5.3 Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Various studies have been undertaken by the council to provide an evidence base for the recently adopted local plan (The Plan for the Borough of
Wellingborough). The studies provide robust up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.

5.4 All outdoor sports and recreational facilities in the borough, including the pitches at Redwell, are identified and protected in the local plan as Local Open Space (LOS). Policy seeks to ensure the sites are protected unless there is no longer a need for the facilities or they are to be replaced elsewhere. Policy also sets the framework for the future sports and recreation provision and seeks appropriate developer contributions to meet the needs of the growing population.

5.5 The council commissioned an assessment into indoor sports facilities which advised that the Redwell Leisure Centre will require redevelopment, investment and remodelling to improve its quality in the medium to long term. It also identified the need for the following additional provision:

- Sports hall – one 6-8 badminton court sports hall
- Swimming pool – minimum 17m x 9m learner pool with a moveable floor or a 4 lane 25m pool.

5.6 Various options were suggested for meeting this need, which require further investigation through specific feasibility studies, but these included new stand-alone facilities on the sustainable urban extensions (SUE’s) or extensions to Redwell or Waendel Leisure Centres.

5.7 A playing pitch strategy is in the process of being finalised. This is indicating a shortfall in youth football grass pitches; a shortfall of three full sized 3G pitches; and a shortfall in cricket provision. It also identifies various improvements in pitch quality that is necessary.

5.8 The building of a 3G third generation astro turf pitch at the Redwell site gives renewed scope for its viability and an opportunity to look at the wider sports and recreational offer on site and for this reason, and those stated above closure is not considered an option.

5.9 Planned development to the north of Wellingborough could provide a further 3,000 homes in the area, and consideration needs to be given to the health and wellbeing of residents and the facilities on offer in their local area. Redwell will be the nearest council owned leisure facility and contributions have been secured for the Redwell Leisure Centre in the S106 agreement.

6 Discussion

6.1 Redwell Leisure Centre has been operational for over 25 years and the fabric of the building is showing its age. Many of the internal building elements are now beyond repairable life and decisions will need to be made over the next 12 months regarding investment into heating, air handling systems and changing facilities just to keep the centre up to standard.
6.2 The extension to the contract with Places Leisure in 2015 to mitigate revenue implications for the council and the opening hours were agreed at resources committee on 25 June 2014, closing to casual use during the day. Places Leisure has used this opportunity to block book its use for a nursery, community groups and clubs. The site underperforms compared to the Waendel Leisure centre, and the level of user experience available in a small gym, for example, is unlikely to attract many new users.

6.3 The centre does, however, work in synergy with the Waendel centre to provide a complementary offer and hosts many community based sessions such as walking netball, disability football and the nifty fifties group. This broad community usage will be enhanced through the 3G facility. The centre is also currently used by a children’s nursery and a visiting physiotherapist.

6.4 Redwell sits on a site with a leisure centre building and outside sports space. It offers car parking and an accessible external change area; it borders one of the largest primary schools and there is existing infrastructure through the current contract with Places Leisure until 2028. The support of Football Association to provide the 3G pitch, and future S106 monies give the council the opportunity to deliver a superior facility within the town that could serve the wider borough.

6.5 Given the need for investment in the fabric of the building, the new investment into the sports pitch, and the upcoming housing developments, it is the right time to review the options for the site.

6.6 There are a number of options for the future of the centre – both the building and the outdoor space in the context of the changing needs and desires of residents, and to build sustainability for over the coming years.

6.7 The options for a full appraisal will include the following. Members will receive a future report which will consider which of these options will meet needs for leisure facilities and the committee will make a recommendation to Services Committee on future provision.

a) Essential repairs only
b) Moderate upgrade
c) Extensive remodeling
d) Complete rebuild
e) Other options not outlined above

6.8 Any appraisal would need to include:

a) A study of emerging sports and recreational trends
b) Consideration of wider health and well being elements
c) The views of specialist sports, leisure and health providers
d) Customer views
e) Available capital funding; council, S106, or external
f) Current contractual considerations with Places Leisure
g) Predicted numbers of users and long term sustainability of the centre
7 Legal powers

7.1 Under section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 the council has express power to provide a very wide range of sports and recreational facilities. These powers are complemented by the general power of competence given to the Council by section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

7.2 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, as amended by s137 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 puts the Council under a general duty of best value to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

8 Financial and value for money implications

8.1 Changes to the contract with Places Leisure in 2015 enabled the council to agree a contract extension for another 10 years with no financial revenue implications for the council. The contract provides for a review of Redwell Leisure Centre on the 3rd and 6th year of the contract. As part of the swimming pool refurbishment project the council agreed to provide £300,000 to make improvements to the Waendel Leisure Centre building and its equipment matched by investment from Places Leisure. Before works commenced, it was agreed to extend the single contract for both sites for a further 3 years to 2028.

8.2 The S106 agreement for Wellingborough North secures a contribution of £1m (index linked) in phase 1 for a first off site sports contribution to be paid to the council prior to the occupation of 999 dwellings. This contribution is to be used to provide new and/or improving existing and/or enhancing existing indoor sports facilities at Redwell Leisure Centre.

8.3 Prior to the occupation of 500 units in phase 2 a second off site sports contribution of £466,667 (index linked) will be paid to the council prior to the occupation of 500 dwellings to be used to provide new and/or improving existing and/or enhancing existing indoor sports facilities at Redwell Leisure Centre or any other scheme agreed by the council.

8.4 The council’s current housing trajectory estimates that Wellingborough North would build 999 dwellings in phase 1 in around 2024. Assuming development continued at a similar rate, 500 dwellings in phase 2 would be delivered in around 2028. Therefore capital funding is likely to be required to forward fund the scheme in advance of S106 contributions. Revenue funding for an options appraisal, feasibility and project management will need to be considered to resource the project and will need to be met from within existing budgets.

9 Risk analysis

9.1 There is a high risk of not meeting BCW sports provision policy standards if we fail to provide suitable high specification sports and leisure facilities. This
could limit the opportunities for local people and put Wellingborough at a
disadvantage against neighbouring towns where such provision makes them
a more attractive place to live, work and invest in. We can reduce this risk by
providing high quality sports and leisure facilities within the town, which offer
access to all.

9.2 There is a high risk that if we do not invest in the Redwell Leisure Centre, it
will fail to meet health and safety standard and would be at risk of closure or
an unknown level of unbudgeted reactive maintenance costs to secure a
minimum standard of operation.

9.3 There is a medium risk that any improvements will fail to achieve income targets.
This will impact health and well-being targets and jeopardise future investment,
as well as the long term viability of the contract with Places Leisure.

9.4 The contract with Places Leisure includes a break clause in respect of Redwell
Leisure Centre. There is a risk that if the centre is not updated to reflect current
standards over the coming years, this clause could be invoked.

10 Implications for resources
Specialist expertise will be required for undertaking the project options and
feasibility together with project management for commissioning, building or
site remodelling and costing.

11 Implications for stronger and safer communities
Refurbished facilities and new equipment alongside the 3G pitch would
generate renewed interest in using the facilities, local sport and promote
healthy lifestyles and tackle obesity identified as being higher than the
England average in the Northamptonshire health and wellbeing board’s
‘Supporting Northamptonshire to Flourish’ joint health and wellbeing strategy
2016-2020. The improved quality of the services will also provide a better
training environment for aspiring local athletes and clubs, improving
opportunities to compete at a higher level. The refurbishment of the Redwell
Leisure Centre provides an opportunity to provide health and wellbeing
services to all the community.

12 Implications for equalities
An initial equalities impact assessment would be completed as part of any
options appraisal.

13 Author and contact officer
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14 Consultees
Senior Management Team
Victoria Phillipson, Principal Property & Projects Manager
Sue Bateman, Senior Planning Officer
15 Background papers

TEP (November 2015) Open Space, Sports and Recreation Audit and Assessment
TEP (March 2017) Open Spaces Assessments Update and Strategy
https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/health/health-and-wellbeing-
board/Documents/NCC149648_Health_Wellbeing_Board_Report_A4_24pp_AW
2_NoBleed-Singles.pdf
http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/778/resources_committee
http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/943/resources_committee
(Item 9 the Efficiency Plan and Key Projects Update)
http://www.wellingborough.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/960/resources_committee