

Report of Heads of Finance and Resources

REDWELL LEISURE CENTRE

1 Purpose of report

Redwell Leisure Centre is one of the two council owned and maintained leisure centres in the town. A number of issues relating to the centre have arisen recently, and this report aims to bring together all of the relevant threads in order that members can consider the future of the centre.

2 Executive summary

This report updates members and seeks a number of decisions in relation to Redwell Leisure Centre and: the review of the contract with Places for People Leisure Ltd; maintenance/repair; management arrangements for the 3G pitch; and the tennis courts.

3 Appendices

There are no appendices to the report

4 Proposed action:

The committee is invited to

- 4.1 **NOTE** that a report will be presented in relation to the management of the 3G pitch in due course;
- 4.2 **RESOLVE** to
 - determine the future use of the tennis courts at Redwell Leisure Centre as a car park and instruct officers to submit a bid for capital funding;
 - review the future of the leisure centre approximately two years before the end of the existing contract;
 - receive a further report on capital requirements to enable the leisure centre to continue functioning effectively until its future is determined;
 - receive a further report on the relocation of existing sporting facilities or the development of further facilities at Redwell Leisure Centre.

5 Background

- 5.1 Redwell Leisure Centre (RLC) is currently managed by Places for People Leisure Ltd (PfP) on a contract basis. This excludes the football pitches and general grounds maintenance which are provided by Wellingborough Norse.
- 5.2 When the contract with Places for People was reviewed in 2014 a decision was

taken by Resources Committee on 25 June 2014 to amend the opening hours of the leisure centre, closing it to casual use during the day. This enabled the council to agree a contract extension to expire on 31 March 2025 which had no revenue implications for the council. The contract provided for a review of RLC on the 3rd and 6th year of the contract.

- 5.3 As part of the contract extension the council agreed to provide some capital funding to make improvements to the building and its equipment.
- 5.4 Since the daytime closure has been in place at RLC, Places for People have agreed its use for a nursery, alongside groups and clubs who have block bookings.
- 5.5 A decision in principle was made by Services Committee on 21 March 2016 to install a 3G pitch, floodlights and tennis/netball courts at Redwell Leisure Centre. The capital match funding of £300,000 for the 3G pitch and floodlighting was recommended for approval by the Resources Committee in September 2016, with further information to be provided to members on options for the tennis/netball courts. This is addressed below.
- 5.6 Once Wellingborough North begins to be built out, the sports facilities in the borough will benefit from S106 contributions, which could be used to improve or replace the facilities at Redwell.
- 5.7 Findings from the emerging local plan have identified that the following additional sport/leisure facilities are required by 2031:
- 9 senior or 22 junior football pitches
 - 4 cricket pitches
 - 2 rugby pitches
 - 1 synthetic turf pitch in the short term to meet requirements to 2031
 - 2 outdoor bowling rinks
 - 3 tennis courts
 - a 6 lane athletics track or small athletics facility
 - 21 golf driving bays
 - 1 2m 6 lane community pool
 - 1 sports hall (min 4 courts).
- 5.8 These figures do not take into account the proposed facilities within schemes with planning permission, therefore some of this provision will be provided by Stanton Cross and Glenvale Park.

6 Discussion

Management of a 3G pitch

- 6.1 The decision to site a 3G pitch at Redwell Leisure Centre has been made subject to various approvals, including planning.
- 6.2 Further progress cannot be made until these and other elements are in place.
- 6.3 If it appears that the project can progress, three immediate issues will need to be

resolved:

- (a) Whether Wellingborough Norse or PfP will manage the new pitch booking system, its income and maintenance. An options appraisal will be carried out;
 - (b) The relocation of the cricket square, which will be removed if the 3G pitch is built;
 - (c) The potential need for additional car parking at Redwell if the new pitch is popular and well-used, especially as this is likely to coincide with busier times for the gym at the leisure centre;
- 6.4 Members are asked to note that a further report will be submitted in relation to (a) above; the other points are considered below and may need to be the subject of future reports.

Tennis courts

- 6.5 The tennis/netball courts at RLC are in a very poor state of repair. Work to repair and improve the surface and surrounding fencing has been carried out a number of times, but repeated vandalism has reversed any efforts on the council's part.
- 6.6 Two options have been suggested for this part of the site: either to put in place a hard-wearing multi-surface area which could accommodate a range of sports, or replace them with a car park to support the installation of the 3G pitch.
- 6.7 Multi-sport courts would provide facilities for sports including netball and tennis at an estimated cost of £80,000 .
- 6.8 The new surface would still require maintenance, but would be harder wearing than the current one.
- 6.9 Whilst there is a car park at the leisure centre, concerns may be raised by local residents if a 3G pitch is installed as it may increase in the number of people using the facility. Opportunities for extending the car park are limited because of the location of the bowling green and tennis courts. Of the two it would be easier to build a car park on the tennis courts and relocate them – either as tennis courts or courts suitable for multisports.
- 6.10 It is recommended that tennis courts be replaced with a car park and the the tennis courts/multi-surface area relocated. This would be subject to a survey and planning compliance, as well as costing. Further work will need to be carried out to determine the viability of this project, together with the submission of a capital bid. The local plan has identified a need for an additional 3 tennis courts by 2031.

Relocation of existing facilities

- 6.11 Depending on the decision in relation to the tennis courts and the outcome of the 3G pitch investigations, it may be necessary to relocate both the cricket square and the tennis courts to another location.
- 6.12 There are a few potential locations for these, some of which may be assisted by S106 monies – either currently available or linked with future development. Some options for suitable locations include:
- (a) Croyland Park
 - (b) Castlefields
 - (c) Disused football pitches behind Windsor Road
 - (d) Disused football pitch in Nest Farm Road
 - (e) Sites allocated for sport in Wellingborough North or Stanton Cross.
- 6.13 Members are invited to request options appraisals in relation to the above sites,

together with any others they may wish to consider.

- 6.14 In addition, members may wish to propose additional facilities at Redwell Leisure Centre for which feasibility studies would need to be carried out and reported to a future meeting.

Review of contract with Places for People

- 6.15 As part of the negotiations to extend the contract with Places for People it was agreed that the opening hours of RLC would be amended, but this approach would be reviewed after three years. The extension came into effect on 31 March 2015 and the review will need to be completed by 31 March 2018.
- 6.16 The contract with PfP will expire on 31 March 2025 and the tendering process for a new contractor will need to commence approximately eighteen months before that.
- 6.17 The council, as noted above, is likely to receive S106 funding for sport and leisure provision in the next few years. It is recommended that a review of the site and the funding available be carried out before tendering the contract for leisure services.
- 6.18 Potentially there is the opportunity for the new contractor (as part of the tendered provision) to provide advice, consultation and project management for a redevelopment of the site – thus enabling the council to fund a new facility with expert advice and – potentially – funding in addition. PfP have already stated their interest (should they win the contract) identifying the Redwell site as having – in the long term – more potential than the Waendel centre.

Repairs and maintenance

- 6.19 A report will be made to council in the near future on the monies required to maintain council operational buildings. Planned preventative maintenance surveys of all buildings have been carried out, and an approximate cost of £1.2m over five years has been identified. The likely cost of repair and maintenance of RLC is approximately £50,000 for repairs and maintenance, plus costs for replacement equipment. PfP have been asked for an estimate of the cost for equipment needed to keep the leisure centre in good shape until the end of the contract and their estimate is in the region of £300,000 to refresh, remodel and refurbish the building.
- 6.20 If the proposal above regarding the future review and development of the site is accepted, the recommendation is to carry out repairs and maintenance, plus a refresh of some equipment. This should be sufficient to ensure that RLC is fit for purpose until a more substantial approach to improvement and development is feasible and agreed. Funding has already been agreed for a new boiler from the capital programme.
- 6.21 One of the issues that has been raised by local people and councillors is the vandalism at the bowling greens at RLC. The police have been consulted and have advised that an improved CCTV system would assist with identifying the perpetrators. This could be included in the scheme of repair and equipment replacement. Any future redevelopment of the site would include consultation with members and local people, so the issue of rebuilding with additional security could be addressed at that time.

7 Legal powers

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 and these are not subject to any limitations that would prevent implementation of the various initiatives referred to in this report.

8 Financial and value for money implications

This report covers a range of different issues and the financial implications are covered in each section.

9 Risk analysis

There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations outlined above, apart from the requirement to provide a safe and functioning service.

10 Implications for resources

The whole report is relevant to council property and its uses. The points in relation to this are covered in the report.

11 Implications for equalities, and stronger and safer communities

There are no immediate implications in relation to this, but sport and leisure provision is a positive contribution both to the community and its health.

12 Author and contact officer

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13 Consultees

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14 Background papers

Correspondence in relation to the repairs/works required at RLC and WLC.
Notes of internal meetings related to this.

