

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY
6 NOVEMBER 2007**

**EXECUTIVE
20 NOVEMBER 2007**

NEW SWIMMING POOL AT CLIFTON HILL

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the results of the feasibility study into the suitability of Clifton Hill as a site for a new pool to replace Pyramids, and seeks approval for development funding of up to £85,000 to obtain a RIBA Stage C design for a 25 metre 8 lane pool.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Officers have been working on plans to replace the existing 6 lane 25 metre pool at Pyramids, which is coming to the end of its life.
- 2.2 Executive on 24 January 2006 agreed that Clifton Hill was the best available site for the pool replacement and approved the commissioning of a feasibility study to ascertain whether the site would be suitable. The study has concluded that as long as any development does not impinge significantly on the former quarried area that was used as a tip, the site is viable for a pool (see attached Plan A). There are a few outstanding expenses and the final cost of the feasibility study is expected to be approximately £42,760 from within a budget of up to £70,000 for the Leisure Facilities Review.
- 2.3 The site to be developed has one other occupant: Exeter Small Bore Rifle Club occupies a building which is shown on the current proposal plan as being removed in order to accommodate car parking for the pool. However, the building could be retained at the expense of 22-25 car parking spaces and further consideration should be given to this. The proposals also involve the removal of 2 squash courts (one of which is currently out of use) at Clifton Hill Sports Centre. If it is decided that the proposals are to go ahead there will need to be further consultation on these issues.
- 2.4 At the beginning of this process, we reminded Members that the general condition of the Pyramids and its major equipment is gradually deteriorating. Some of the key plant at Pyramids is now in rather poor condition and the most recent survey has suggested that the boilers may need to be replaced within a matter of months at a cost of approximately £50,000. This is now being planned such that if and when the pool is decommissioned the boilers will be able to be used elsewhere. There is a risk that other vital plant could fail before a new pool is built. Should this occur then a decision will have to be taken on whether to incur significant expenditure to keep Pyramids open for a relatively short time.
- 2.5 Coincidentally the basement at Pyramids is also occupied by a shooting club (The Fonthill Rifle Club), which will be displaced if the site is redeveloped and this will need to be addressed.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The feasibility study looked essentially at three options for a new pool for the city: a 50 metre pool, an 8 lane 25 metre pool and a 6 lane 25 metre pool. Each option was to include provision for a learner pool.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the 50 metre option not be pursued. We have concluded that there is insufficient space to fit it onto the site, even if it extended into the contaminated area. The costs of providing and running a 50 metre pool are much greater than for a 25 metre pool, and the cost of removing contaminated land fill is very high. The 50 metre option was therefore discarded by officers at the end of Stage 1 of the feasibility study, in order to save expenditure on working up, evaluating and pricing options that were effectively non-starters. It should also be remembered that a 50 metre pool needs substantially more ancillary room if it is going to fulfil national and regional competition needs.
- 3.3 Either of the two 25m options would fit on the site. An 8 lane pool will provide significantly more flexibility than a 6 lane pool. For example, swimming lessons could take place in 2 lanes leaving 6 for general swimming. An 8 lane 25 metre pool will also be able to host national events.
- 3.4 If the (preferably 20 metre) ancillary / learner pool has a moveable floor, it will have much more flexibility of use, including:
- swimming lessons
 - junior water polo
 - warm up/cool down at major events or additional seating area for competitors if required
 - water aerobics
 - sub aqua
 - canoe training
 - competitive swimming for juniors
- 3.5 Copies of the outline layouts for 6 and 8 lane 25 metre pools will be available at the committee meeting. The initial guide prices are approximately £6.7m for the 6 lane pool and £6.9m for the 8 lane pool, including fees. These prices assume a 20×9 metre ancillary pool and include for significant improvement works to the existing sports centre, but do not include moveable floors combinations which range from £168,000 (for half of a 6 lane pool), through £174,000 / £204,000 (all of the learner pool) to £438,000 for all of both pools.
- 3.6 The Council will need to spend more development time with clubs on the next level of detail, such as the precise sizes, depths, types and extent of moveable floor and other factors to determine what is most important. At this stage it seems likely that a 20m wide, 8 lane (2.5 metres width), 2.5m deep main pool would satisfy all of the main users' aspirations, especially if part of it has a moving floor. However, the costings and the fitting of the pool within the uncontaminated land are based on a 16 metre wide pool (2 metres per lane) so it may not be possible to achieve everything.
- 3.7 If Members are content with these findings, the next stage is to commission a design team (architects, structural and services engineers, a quantity surveyor, and a project

manager) to begin work on the project proper. We would recommend that the team should be appointed for the full project, with a break clause at RIBA Stages C and E, to give the Council opportunities to reflect on the emerging cost situation and approve, amend or abandon the project. Further formal reports would be submitted upon completion of these stages.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council is expected to have used all of its available capital resources during 2008/09 in order to fund its existing capital programme commitments. This means that it will have to use unsupported borrowing as a means of funding the proposed new swimming facility. The use of borrowing as a means of funding will however have an ongoing impact upon the Council's revenue budget. The current revenue cost of borrowing, consisting of interest and loan repayments, is about £85,000 for each £1 million that is borrowed. As an example, a new swimming facility costing £7 million will incur additional annual revenue borrowing costs of about £600,000. The prudential capital framework enables the Council to borrow within self-imposed limits largely based on affordability. Therefore before a final decision can be made regarding the proposed new swimming facility the Council will need to demonstrate that it is affordable within the constraints of its medium term financial plan and other revenue and capital commitments.
- 4.2 Officers are currently in the process of finding a leisure management contractor to manage all of the Council's leisure facilities from 2010, when the present contracts end. One option which will be investigated is to include the design and building of the pool within the leisure management contract. This can have advantages in terms of the transfer of risk in building and operation, but at a cost. The expertise of a specialist contractor could be useful, whether the pool is funded by the Council or the contractor, and further assessment is needed into what part that contractor should play in the procurement of the new pool.
- 4.3 The cost of proceeding to RIBA Stage C is estimated at approximately £100,000. It is proposed that the design team be appointed for the full project however. This would mean using the full European competitive procurement process.
- 4.4 There is approximately £27,000 remaining in the feasibility study budget. It is suggested that an additional sum of up to £85,000 be allocated for the work needed to reach RIBA Stage C, to create a development budget of up to £112,000.

5. RECOMMENDED that the Council

- a) confirms its intentions to build a new 8 lane 25 metre swimming pool at Clifton Hill to replace Pyramids subject to it being affordable within the framework of the Council's current medium term financial plans
- b) proceeds to the appointment of a design team
- c) allocates funding for the procurement of architectural services to design a 25 metre 8 lane pool to RIBA Stage C level of detail

HEAD OF LEISURE AND MUSEUMS

S:LP/Committee/1107SCC2
18 October 2007

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) **Background papers used in compiling this report:**

- Feasibility Study undertaken by Clarke Bond and partners