

The background image shows the Northbrook Swimming Pool building, a single-story brick structure with a large glass entrance. A person is standing near the entrance. A sign on the brick wall reads "NORTHBROOK SWIMMING POOL" with a logo. To the right, there is a red commercial waste bin with the Exeter City Council logo. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Northbrook Swimming Pool

Presentation to Executive
24 June 2025

Recommendations

1. *The Executive agrees to the of closure of Northbrook Swimming Pool, based on the consideration of key income and expenditure reports, information gathered following public consultation and the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA).*
2. *The Executive delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Place to undertake the closure of the facility.*
3. *That support is provided to existing members and users, including local schools, in transitioning to alternative Exeter Leisure facilities.*
4. *Any increase in costs to the Leisure Services to be reported back to the Executive and Council for approval.*

Brief chronology

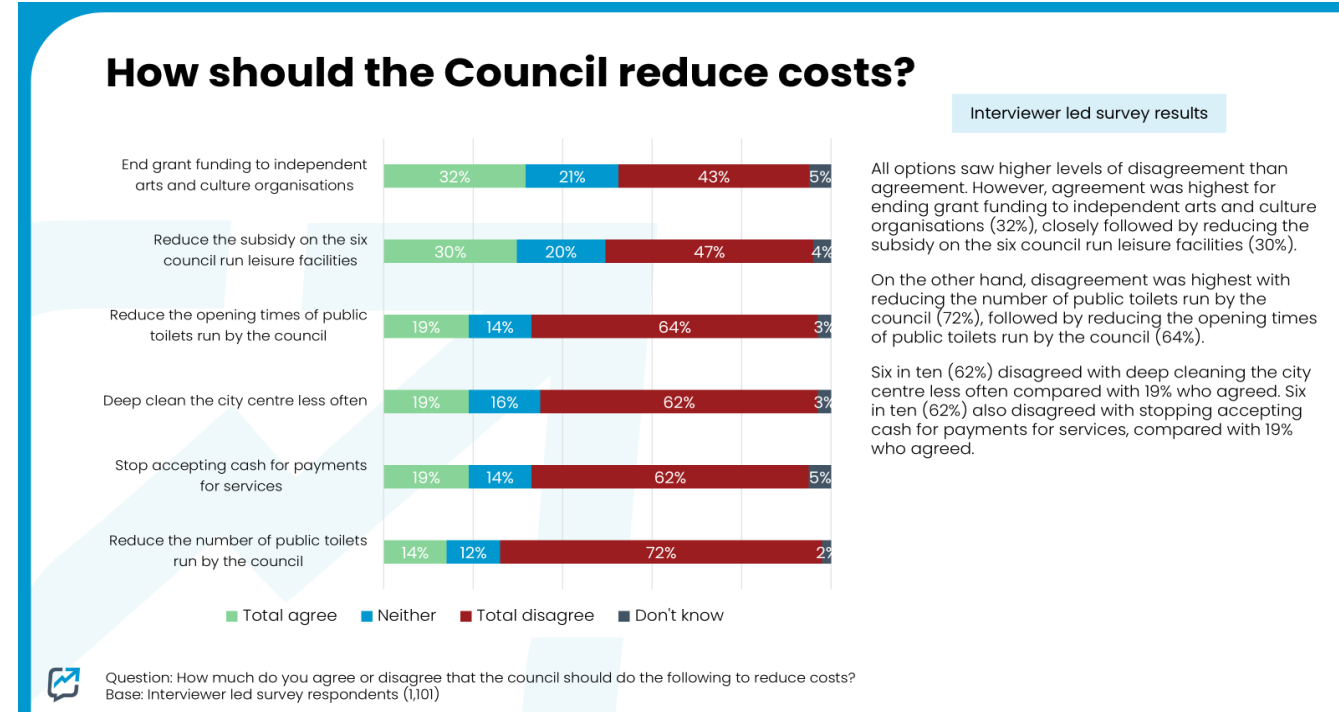
- In 2020 ECC brought back Leisure Service in-house, including Northbrook Swimming Pool.
- Between July 2022 - Jan 2024 13 separate marketing campaigns to boost attendance figures.
- Usage and revenue figures have seen little improvement.
- December 2024 to January 2025 resident survey on budget setting.
- On 25 February 2025, the Council set a balanced budget.
- **No decision was made to close Northbrook Swimming pool.**

Key information on which officers have based their recommendations on

1. Accurate financial data on usage & running costs: Despite targeted efforts to increase footfall and income since the Council brought Northbrook Pool back in-house in 2020, the pool continues to operate at a substantial loss and so far, has required £686,130.99 in subsidy to keep the pool open.
2. Estimates of the capital investment needed continue to make the building safe, accessible for people with disabilities and more energy efficient amount to approximately £2.1million.
3. The results of an open public consultation which lasted 6-weeks, including surveys, pool user focus groups, and follow-up telephone conversations. The consultation generated important qualitative information, on how a potential closure might impact on people's lives.
4. An EQIA has provided a comprehensive understanding of the potential impact of a closure of this pool on users with protected characteristics, whilst also setting out suggestions on how to mitigate the impacts.

Consultation on the budget

- Between December 2024 and January 2025, the Council conducted a resident survey as part of its budget setting consultation.
- Residents were asked to state to what extent they agreed/disagreed with a series of statements on service areas the Council was considering investing or disinvesting in.
- In response to the question “How could the Council reduce costs?” all 6 options saw higher levels of disagreement than agreement.
- However, agreement was highest for ending grant funding to independent arts and culture organisations (32%) **closely followed by reducing the subsidy on council run leisure facilities (30%).**



Consultation on the budget

- On further analysis the data showed that there was higher agreement on reducing the subsidy on the six council run leisure facilities amongst those aged 65 or over, females, non-white ethnic groups and Exeter City Council housing tenants.
- There was higher disagreement from younger people aged 24-44, males, those from a white ethnic background and those who did not have a disability or long-term condition and those living in areas of lower deprivation.

Variations by subgroups

Interviewer led survey results	Higher agreement	Higher disagreement
Reduce the subsidy on the six council run leisure facilities	Those aged 65+ Females Non-white ethnic minority groups Exeter City Council housing services tenants	Those aged 25-44 Males Those from a White ethnic background Those who did not have a disability or long-term condition Those in areas of lower deprivation
Reduce the number of public toilets run by the council	No differences	Those aged 45+ Those living in the North area Those from a White ethnic background Those who had a disability or long-term condition
Reduce the opening times of public toilets run by the council	Those aged 45+ Those in the South area	Those aged 25-44 Those in the North and Central areas Those who were not Exeter City Council housing services tenants
Deep clean the city centre less often	Those aged 65+ Those in the South area Those who had a disability or long-term condition	Those aged 16-24 Those living in the North area
Stop accepting cash for payments for services	Those in the South and Central areas	Those in the North area Those from a White ethnic background Those in areas of lower deprivation
End grant funding to independent arts and culture organisations	Those aged 25+ Males Those in the South area Those who had a disability or long-term condition	Those aged 16-24 Females Those in areas of neither higher nor lower deprivation



Question: How much do you agree or disagree that the council should do the following to reduce costs?
Base: Interviewer led survey respondents (1,101)

Council budget for 2025/26

- On 25 February 2025, the Council set a balanced budget.
- Members advised that they needed to identify £3.5 million savings.
- This included a reduction to the budget of the Leisure Service of £586,000.
- In response Leisure Service has reviewed the centres it runs.
- One of the potential savings is Northbrook Swimming Pool.
- Staff were informed, but it was also made clear that no decision would be made to close Northbrook Swimming pool, until a consultation and impact assessment was completed.

The Financial Case

	Amount (£)
Membership Revenue	105,798.56
Casual User Revenue	34,446.51
Block Booking/Club Revenue	59,913.06
General Maintenance and Repairs Costs	66,845.12
Operational Costs	819,444.00
Total Subsidy	686,130.99
Carbon Emission Reduction Quoted Cost	850,000.00
Upgrading to Industry Standards Quoted Cost	700,000.00
Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Quoted Cost	550,000.00
Total anticipated capital expenditure	2,100,000

Public consultation

- 6-week open public consultation from 11th March to 22nd April 2025.
- Full details in the Consultation Report (Appendix 2).
- 322 respondents completed the survey and the four focus groups were attended by 35 people.
- 30 individual telephone calls.
- Monitoring social media.
- It was clear that if the pool closes, it will have real-world impacts on many users.
- Older people, school children, carers, the elderly and lower income families are likely to be most impacted by a closure.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- The Council has undertaken a thorough and comprehensive EQIA, which is attached to the report as Appendix C.
- Members should have due regard to both the consultation results and the impact assessment, before deciding.
- The assessment highlights that the proposed closure of Northbrook Pool does have a negative impact on people with protected characteristics, specifically in relation to disability, sex and age.
- The assessment also highlighted that people with mental health conditions or those with neurodivergence would be impacted.
- Should the Council decide to close Northbrook Swimming Pool, officers will take steps to mitigate the impacts.

Next steps

- If the Council decide to close the pool; officers will design and implement a Closure Plan.
- The process is likely to take at least 12-weeks.
- The plan will include:
 - Giving notice to the Northbrook Community Trust
 - Notifying leisure members and staff
 - Working with staff as part of the Council`s organisational change process
 - Ensuring all the technical requirements in de-commissioning a swimming pool, are carried out
 - Dealing with any contractual issues concerning the building and services.
 - Return the building to the Northbrook Community Trust, in repair and in accordance with the lease obligations.
- Officers will also review existing class & club bookings and transfer as many as possible to our other two pools.
- Officers will also work with leisure members, users of Northbrook Swimming Pool and schools to help them transition to other facilities.