

**CULTURE & LEISURE REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

14 October 2008

25 METRE POOL PROVISION – RATIONALE FOR SPECIFICATION

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the development of the two new 25m swimming pools at Silksworth and Hetton and to advise members of the rationale behind the agreed specification for the facilities.
- 1.2 Sunderland's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2005-2010 sets out how Sunderland's Local Strategic Partnership would contribute to the achievement of new sports facilities, through the development of sport and physical activity opportunities across the city. Developing new sports facilities will support increasing participation in sport and physical activity by 1% annually, further reducing the city's health inequalities.

2. Background

- 2.1 A balanced swimming offer in Sunderland is viewed as an important provision to residents. As a coastal city, there is an added expectation to ensure that every young person in the city has an opportunity to learn to swim for both pleasure and their safety. The importance of swimming and learn to swim programmes in Sunderland was reflected in last years review of swimming by the Culture & Leisure Review Committee.
- 2.2 In 2004 as part of a detailed exercise to review leisure facilities provision, Sunderland City Council identified that whilst a number of pools existed in Sunderland, the city potentially faced a number of challenges. Many pools were based on school sites which in addition to being very old, were often not widely accessible by the community beyond the school day. Also, the design of many of the school pools prevented efficient or affordable public access, beyond the school day, due to increasingly stringent safety legislation.
- 2.3 The funding arrangements associated with 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF) acknowledged funding would not be provided for new or replacement swimming pools. Meanwhile, it was also recognised that the community stock of pools in Sunderland were ageing, requiring significant investment to improve efficiency and to provide an appropriate quality of service for residents to encourage participation in swimming and exercise in general.

- 2.4 A detailed research and mapping exercise was undertaken which analysed the current provision against future provision post-BSF. This enabled decisions to be taken on the best approach to providing high quality access to swimming citywide in years to come and protect the opportunity for every school to have easy access to learn to swim opportunities. It was also noted at this time that whilst the Primary Sector have curriculum responsibilities associated with teaching children to swim, historically school pools had been located on Secondary School sites.

3. The New Planned Provision

- 3.1 Leisure Facilities Research (LFR), agreed by Cabinet in October 2004, identified a range of key issues relating to current facility provision and operation of its buildings. The LFR identified two strategic sites for the future development of leisure provision, which included swimming. These were:
- North Sunderland: Stadium Park
 - South Sunderland: Silksworth Sports Complex
- 3.2 The report proposed that a 50m pool would be located in North Sunderland as a local and regional resource, and new water space in South Sunderland. A subsequent Cabinet report in January 2005, agreed that further feasibility work should also be completed to determine the preferred location and scale of provision for the Coalfield area. The Hetton pool had, at this stage, been forced to close due to structural failure.
- 3.3 The provision of high quality swimming opportunities relies upon substantial investment, both in terms of capital investment, and the ongoing annual revenue costs for resources including heat, light, qualified staff and so on. Swimming pools are expensive to operate, although clearly offer mass participation opportunities. Sustainability of facilities and their operation, therefore, relies upon sensible location, good design, strong demand and usage, and efficient operation of facilities.

4. Sunderland Aquatic Centre

- 4.1 Earlier this year, the first stage of the new planning came to fruition when the Sunderland Aquatic Centre, a strategic site for the North, and new regional resource, opened to the public. The facility offers the equivalent water space of 4.5 standard, five lane swimming pools. As agreed by Cabinet in 2006, whilst this new provision was accompanied by the closure of two ageing swimming pools (Crowtree and Newcastle Road Baths), the new Sunderland Aquatic Centre provision exceeds (by 2.5 pools) the volume and quality of water space of the previous provision.
- 4.2 Whilst clearly providing access to the public on a local area and city basis, the impressive provision is the only 50m pool and diving facility in the region and between Leeds and Edinburgh. It has state of the art water space, with moveable floors, blood testing/physiotherapy space, spectator area, media provision and timing equipment, which together facilitate a range of aquatic disciplines beyond local learn to swim and participation levels.

This resource is recognised as the hub for the city and region in terms of county and regional licensed galas and performance development, in line with the new Beacon Scheme led by the Amateur Swimming Association and British Swimming.

5.0 Sunderland South

- 5.1 The LFR evidenced a strategic need for a swimming pool in Sunderland South to accommodate demand for both casual and school related swimming and to ensure an equitable distribution of facilities in the city.
- 5.2 In December 2006, following extensive feasibility and consultation, Cabinet approved the decision to locate 25m swimming pool adjacent to the Sunderland Tennis Centre at Silksworth. As a strategically important site, Silksworth was considered the most appropriate location for the new swimming pool, both acknowledging the synergy with the other facilities on the site and acknowledging that the complex is a recognised “family destination”.
- 5.3 Feasibility work identified that a range of possible options existed around the development of a swimming pool on the Silksworth site. Whilst a large facility mix would fit the site, the demand for provision is influenced by five feeder primary schools, combined with available water space at Sandhill View which is equidistant for some schools and residents.
- 5.4 As detailed in the Cabinet report (6 December 2006) and based upon the feasibility study and demand analysis, the following facility mix was viewed as the most sustainable and affordable both to build and to operate.
- 25 metre x 4 lane, single depth
 - Changing Village

The design does not preclude the hosting of local or school based galas and events. It is however clear that the design is tailored appropriately to meet local need.

6. Coalfield Pool

- 6.1 Work associated with determining arrangements for replacing the Coalfield pool considered both Hetton and Houghton as a location and as Members may be aware the feasibility work was subject to a detailed range of demand analysis.
- 6.2 As detailed in the December 2006 Cabinet report, key factors to be considered in developing sustainable swimming facilities in this area included the population demand of each area, capital cost, planning statute and revenue costs. Based upon local and city consultation and the above analysis, Hetton was identified as the preferred location and the following facility mix was identified as suitable and sustainable:
- 5 lane x 25m swimming pool
 - Teaching pool, with small spectator area to support local lessons and club training sessions
 - Changing village linked to small sauna/steam
 - Small Wellness provision to support income generation / health improvement.
- 6.3 The Coalfield pool will provide for significantly greater number of primary schools in terms of key stage 2 requirements than Sunderland South. This is reflected in the provision for a combined learner pool in addition to a standard 5 lane main pool.

Once again, the provision is viewed wholly suitable to meet the demands of the area. The scale of provision is also affordable and sustainable within the capital allocation and the current subsidy level.

6.4 Gala provision at this pool can be accommodated at local, school and club level.

7. Progress to Date

7.1 The proposed specification for the two pools was approved by Cabinet on 6 December 2006. Since then, the schemes have been progressed with the procurement for a design and build contractor for the Sunderland South and Coalfields provision, who have subsequently designed both pools to the agreed specification.

7.2 Further public consultation has been undertaken regarding the external scheme layouts (for planning purposes) and the internal scheme layouts. Planning approval for both schemes has been secured and a number of internal changes to the layouts of both facilities have been put in place as a result of customer feedback. These changes have been accommodated on the basis of the agreed cost plan approved by Cabinet.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Sunderland has undertaken a forward thinking, citywide review of swimming provision. Significant investment has been predicated upon ensuring that in years to come, when school based pools and ageing provision closes, every resident will have equitable access to pool space to encourage participation and learn to swim programmes.

8.2 The Council have recognised the significant capital and revenue investment associated with swimming provision, and the need to ensure value for money and efficiency when determining both size and location of such valuable resources.

8.3 Detailed research, demands and feasibility work has been undertaken to inform the content of the facilities at both sites. As identified earlier in the report the key factors considered in developing sustainable swimming facilities included the population demand of each area, capital cost, planning statute and ongoing revenue commitments required.

8.4 Members will recall from last year's major review into swimming, the emerging scale of provision within the city is the envy of most authorities whether in the region or nationally. The Council's strategic approach to citywide investment will provide Sunderland with more accessible water space than ever before, to a high standard and tailored to meet local, area and city/region needs.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members of the Committee are requested to note the content of this report.

10. Background Papers

10.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report

- Cabinet report 13 October 2004

- Cabinet report 19 January 2005
- Cabinet report 6 December 2006

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COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

REPORT APPROVAL FORM

TITLE OF COMMITTEE	CULTURE & LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE	
DATE OF COMMITTEE	16 September 2008	
REPORT TITLE	2012 Olympic Preparations	
AUTHOR	THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES	
CHECKLIST		
CABINET REPORTS Have you prepared a briefing note for the relevant Portfolio Holder? The note needs to be forwarded to the Portfolio Holder on the Friday prior to the Labour Group Meeting.		
CABINET REPORTS Have you attached the briefing note for the Acting Chief Executive ? This must be submitted with the final report for the Director's approval.		
GERSHON – Have Efficiencies been considered ? If yes are they included in the report	Efficiencies Considered	Included in the Report
RISK – Have all significant risks been identified in the report?	Yes/No	Name of Risk Advisor Consulted <i>Delete as appropriate</i> Kevin Bond
EQUALITY – Has this report been equality proofed?	Yes/No	
FINANCIAL VERIFICATION	DATE	SIGNATURE
CITY TREASURER	_____	_____
VERIFICATION OF OTHER DIRECTORATES	DATE	SIGNATURE
	_____	_____
AREA COMMITTEE YES/NO If yes please identify Area Committee * North/South/East/West/ Washington/Coalfields *delete as appropriate	PRE-MEETING DATE	MEETING DATE
OFFICER ATTENDING AREA COMMITTEE (if applicable)	NAME	NAME
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NB All sections of this form must be completed and faxed to Audrey Lancaster Directorate Support Manager (Fax No 553 7550) at the same time as the report is e-mailed for approval.