

<b>CABINET MEETING – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013</b>  <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I</b>
<b>Title of Report:</b>  City Centre Development Opportunity; Closure and Demolition of Crowtree Leisure Centre
<b>Author(s):</b>  Report of the Deputy Chief Executive
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>  The report seeks approval to the closure of Crowtree Leisure Centre and appointment of contractors, through an existing framework agreement, for the design of a scheme to secure the demolition of the building and to dispose of the cleared site in accordance with the Council's Strategy for Surplus Assets.
<b>Description of Decision:</b> Cabinet is recommended to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) agree to the closure of Crowtree Leisure Centre;</li> <li>(ii) agree to the appointment of contractors through the Scape National Framework to secure the demolition of the Crowtree Leisure Centre as set out in this report ;</li> <li>(iii) authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to explore options for the development of the site and if appropriate to market the site in accordance with the Council's Strategy for Surplus Assets and to report back to Cabinet on the results of the marketing exercise;</li> </ul>
<b>Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?</b> <b>*Yes/No</b>
<b>If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework</b>
<b>Suggested reason(s) for Decision:</b>  To enable the site of the Crowtree Leisure Centre to be prepared as a development opportunity for retail and other suitable city centre uses.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

The alternative option is to not proceed with the closure and demolition of the building. This would result in the site not being readily available for redevelopment purposes which would be to the detriment of the Council's stated aim of regenerating this part of the City Centre. A decision to not demolish will also result in the further deterioration of the fabric of the building. As a consequence significant capital investment would be required to make the building fit for purpose. This would not be in accordance with the Council's strategy for the delivery of leisure provision across the city, and would divert a finite resource for building maintenance away from other operational priorities which would be to the detriment of service provision in other areas.

This option has been considered but is not recommended.

**Impacts analysed;****Equality****Privacy****Sustainability****Crime and Disorder****Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution?****Yes****Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions?****Yes****Scrutiny Committee:**

**CITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY; CLOSURE AND  
DEMOLITION OF CROWTREE LEISURE**

**Report of Deputy Chief Executive**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The report seeks approval to the closure of Crowtree Leisure Centre and the appointment of contractors, through an existing framework agreement, for the design of a scheme to secure the demolition of the building and to dispose of the cleared site in accordance with the Council's Strategy for Surplus Assets.

**2. Description of Decision**

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to;
- (i) agree to the closure of Crowtree Leisure Centre;
  - (ii) agree to the appointment of contractors through the Scape National Framework to secure the demolition of the Crowtree Leisure Centre as set out in this report;
  - (iii) authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to explore options for the development of the site and if appropriate to market the site accordance with the Council's Strategy for Surplus Assets and to report back to Cabinet on the results of the marketing exercise.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Aim 3 of the Economic Masterplan is to bring about a 'prosperous and well connected waterfront city centre'. The Masterplan recognises the importance of improving the economic performance of the city centre and identifies the 'Minster Quarter' as one in which mixed use development is appropriate and which would contribute towards city centre regeneration. In particular the Crowtree Leisure Centre site and adjacent Town Park are identified as locations which offer the potential for further development of The Bridges shopping centre.
- 3.2 The future prosperity and growth of the city centre is in part dependent on the availability of development sites of the right size and location that will meet the modern day requirements of investors and developers. It is important that sites are readily available and free from planning and development risk that can at times deter development interest. By identifying and bringing forward a supply of sites which are

ready for development the city centre will be well placed to benefit from any upturn in the economy and to compete for investment opportunities which are available. In light of the re-alignment of St Mary's Way and the new public square proposals it is therefore considered timely, and in accordance with the Council's aims for the city centre, that the site of the Crowtree Leisure Centre be brought forward as a development opportunity. The Crowtree site would extend the Bridges and provide an opportunity for new retail units of a size that would add to the range currently available in the city centre. Whilst predominantly retail, any new development could also include other complementary uses such as food and drink.

- 3.3 In October 2004 Cabinet adopted a range of policy principles to inform arrangements for future leisure facility investment and development. These principles were founded on the basis of the Council achieving optimum return on any investment in facilities and to promote equitable community access and use.
- 3.4 Since 2004 the Council and its partners have invested more than £60m in developing new, modern sport and leisure facilities to benefit local residents and their overall health and wellbeing.
- 3.5 Each of the city's five areas now have a public 25m swimming pool, a sports hall and Wellness Centre. We have invested in Sunderland Aquatic Centre - the region's only Olympic sized swimming pool and two new Community Pools at Hetton and Silksworth, developed 7 Wellness Centres, upgraded football pitches and local facilities and transformed play areas for children and young people across the city. The Council has additionally made financial provision to replace Washington Leisure Centre and the procurement process is underway to secure a developer. This new facility will include a new swimming pool with slide and leisure features, sports hall, squash courts, a wellness centre together with a range of activities to suit the whole family.

#### **4.0 Proposal**

- 4.1 Members may be aware that the Crowtree building itself forms part of the first floor space above some of the retail units along the Bridges Crowtree Road mall. This part of the building, which was occupied previously by the ice rink, will therefore need to be retained, not only because it is integral to the construction of this section of The Bridges, but also because it offers the potential for future retail, food and drink development opportunities associated with The Bridges. As a consequence it is proposed to close Crowtree Leisure Centre and demolish only that part of the building to the immediate north of the public footpath that currently passes through the Crowtree site from the Town Park onto Crowtree Road. This will create a development site measuring some 1.6 acres between the footpath which will be retained,

and High Street West. The site is shown on the plan attached to the report.

- 4.2 It will be necessary to re-construct the supporting wall to the former ice rink area. This in effect will become a new and improved external elevation to the remaining building, the design, appearance and construction of which will be part of the proposed works and contract specification. It is proposed to work closely with Land Securities as operators of The Bridges, so as to ensure minimum disruption during the course of demolition. The cleared site will be landscaped and will include footpaths and lighting so as to provide an attractive city centre space until such time as development proposals are brought forward.

## **5. Current Leisure Provision and Building Condition**

- 5.1 From 1 October 2011 Crowtree changed its operational business to a club and sports hall block booking facility, therefore withdrawing the opportunity for casual bookings. The facilities currently in use are a sports hall, squash courts and indoor bowls, and it is important that efforts are made to direct those remaining customers to suitable alternative provision. In particular the sports hall users will be signposted, where possible, to the Seaburn Centre and the other sports halls and community facilities across the City. In terms of squash it is proposed to direct current users of the facility to provision which is available at Washington Leisure Centre, Wearside Health and Racquets Club and Ashbrooke Sports and Social Club. Options are currently being considered with regards to the indoor bowls provision. It is clear however that a replacement indoor bowls facility provided by the Council is not a viable option. The large capital cost and ongoing revenue commitments make this option unaffordable. Discussions are therefore underway with the bowls club with a view to identifying an acceptable solution to alternative provision.
- 5.2 The condition of the Crowtree building is giving cause for concern. It is maintained on a care and maintenance basis only and is not fit for purpose. In particular the roof suffers from significant leaks in multiple locations which at times prevent the use of the sports hall and have rendered parts of the building unuseable. The design of the roof is such that it is not possible to repair without costly wholesale redesign and replacement. Similarly the mechanical and electrical plant is ageing and requires significant capital investment to replace, and the water system in particular requires constant monitoring to check waterflow levels and useage.
- 5.3 The refurbishment of the building will require significant capital investment which cannot be justified given the alternative leisure provision that is now in place across the city, and importantly given that the site is seen as one which offers the potential for an expansion to The Bridges shopping centre.

## **6.0 Programme of Works**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the procurement process for design and demolition will be facilitated through the Scape National Framework, a local authority owned company which offers an OJEU compliant construction framework. It is anticipated that a start on site will be made in early summer 2013 with completion by the end of the calendar year/early 2014.

## **7.0 Reason of Decision**

- 7.1 To enable the site of the Crowtree Leisure Centre to be prepared as a development opportunity for retail and other suitable city centre uses.

## **8.0 Alternative Options**

- 8.1 The alternative option is to not proceed with the closure and demolition of the building. This would result in the site not being readily available for redevelopment purposes which would be to the detriment of the Council's stated aim of regenerating this part of the City Centre. A decision to not demolish will also result in the further deterioration of the fabric of the building. As a consequence significant capital investment would be required to make the building fit for purpose. This would not be in accordance with the Council's strategy for the delivery of leisure provision across the city, and would divert a finite resource for building maintenance away from other operational priorities which would be to the detriment of service provision in other areas.

This option has been considered but is not recommended.

## **9.0 Impact Analysis**

### **9 (a) Equalities**

An equalities impact analysis has been carried out in respect of this proposal. Work has been ongoing since 2011 to identify alternative venues to accommodate Crowtree bookings. Consultation meetings have been held with Sunderland Indoor Bowls Club, Crowtree Squash Club and the Cardiac Support Group to discuss their needs and requirements when they are no longer able to use Crowtree. In respect of squash, meetings have taken place with the English Squash Association to discuss the relocation options for Crowtree Squash Club to an alternative city based squash venue. In respect of Bowls the Council has also met with the English Indoor Bowling Association.

An action plan has been put in place so as to identify alternative venues for user groups and to continue discussions around exit arrangements. The equalities analysis will be updated as and when alternative venues are identified.

**9 (b) Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) – N/A**

**9 (c) Sustainability**

**Sustainability Impact Analysis**

Sunderland Strategy Objectives cross check with decisions outcomes;

- Prosperous City – the proposal will make available a new site for city centre regeneration thereby meeting the aims of the Economic mataserplan
- Healthy City/Safe City – no impact
- Learning City – no impact
- Attractive City – the proposal will result in the demolition of an unattractive building which is no longer fit for purposes and will lead to the improvement in the appearance of the site by way of short term landscaping and long term development

**9 (d) Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion/Social Inclusion – N/A**

**10.0 Financial Implications**

- 10.1 The Capital Programme makes provision for an allocation of £1.6m for the preparation of the development site by way of the demolition of the building and the landscaping of the cleared site. Detailed costs will only become available once a scheme has been designed and costed.

**11.0 Consultations**

- 11.1 The Head of Financial Resources and the Head of Law and Governance have both been consulted on behalf of the Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services and their comments are contained in the body of the report.

**Background papers:**

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

