

Subject:	King Alfred Leisure Centre – update on urgent works and potential improvements		
Date of Meeting:	11 June 2009		
Report of:	Director of Environment Director of Finance & Resources		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ian Shurrock	Tel: 29-2084
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: CAB10426	
Wards Affected:	Central Hove		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the urgent works being undertaken at the King Alfred Leisure Centre, a request to release further funding and options for further works to improve the building in the medium term prior to redevelopment.
- 1.2 The works are required in order to keep the facility open to the public.
- 1.3 The King Alfred Leisure Centre is the city's largest wet and dry sports facility. The extensive wet facilities including the main, teaching and learner pools provide the only public swimming facilities in the west of the city. The pools provide a range of opportunities for recreational and club swimmers, learn to swim programmes and school lessons, as well as the recently launched 'Free Swimming' Programme. These facilities together with the sports hall, fitness room and indoor bowls are all very important to the health and well-being of local residents.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the progress on the urgent works undertaken from the initial allocation of £859,000 to the capital programme as agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2008.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves an allocation of £641,000 to the capital programme to complete the health and safety and planned maintenance works as identified in the report to Cabinet on 20 November 2008.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approves an allocation of £0.75 million to undertake improvement works to benefit the operation of the building in the medium term (3-5 years).
- 2.4 That Cabinet agree that the Director of Environment and Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Cabinet Member for Finance, determine the priority of works referred to in 2.2 and 2.3.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 At the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2008, members approved an allocation of £859,000 to undertake health and safety and maintenance works to keep the Leisure Centre operational.

3.2 The decision to invest monies into the King Alfred Leisure Centre was taken in the context of the following:

- The current economic climate is not one that can currently deliver the valuations to support wholesale redevelopment of the site to deliver a mixed use scheme and a sports centre which meets the current sports brief. For this reason the council will have to re-examine the available options in the medium and longer term to deliver a new sports centre.
- A redevelopment of the current site, even if project objectives were agreed immediately, would not result in a start on site for several years but certainly not for 3 years at a minimum. The timescale to revisit the briefs (including consultation), go to the market, analyse and evaluate and consult upon any proposals, test out proposals, work up further to Stage D design stage and undertake pre-planning discussions would take considerable time and this is assuming that viable project can be found in the present economic conditions.
- Closure of the King Alfred Leisure Centre would significantly reduce opportunities for participation in sport. The Centre provides a wide range of sporting and leisure opportunities for a cross section of the local population.

3.3 The decision taken to invest in the Leisure Centre also followed a Property Performance Review undertaken as part of the Asset Management Process. Further investment would need to be considered in light of this review and the need to achieve value for money. The review includes two performance indicators and the conclusions for the Leisure Centre were as follows:

- Suitability Assessment – indicated that without a suitable replacement the current service delivery would be significantly reduced in the city, so the existing centre needs to be open.
- Condition Assessment – indicated that in general the condition is fair to poor relative to a modern sports facility, and the maintenance requirement is well above average to bring the property to a state required to deliver the service to a reasonable level.

Value for Money

3.4 Options need to ensure that costs are kept to a reasonable minimum and that value for money is achieved while keeping the building open and safe.

3.5 Investment into the facility needs to reflect reasonable pay back periods and to ensure that money is well spent in the priority areas identified to attract users.

- 3.6 Due to the condition and lack of suitability of the building it is not cost effective or possible *in some areas* to bring the facility up to the required standard of a modern sports centre.

Urgent works update

- 3.7 Significant progress has now taken place on the urgent works in the Leisure Centre as follows:

- Demolition of external flumes
- High level internal and external structural inspections
- Updated DDA access audit
- Some electrical testing and inspection of council operated areas of the Leisure Centre. Remedial electrical work to these areas including earthing bonding, lighting replacement, rewiring and power sockets
- Installation of new dosing system on water mains and new valves
- Deep clean of wet changing room floor and replacement lighting
- Environmental cleaning of external areas
- Cleaning of pool water balance tanks
- Repairs to main pool slide
- Fire alarm components replaced and upgraded in pool hall areas and ballroom suite
- Additional unexpected works have included repairs for main air handling supply motor failure, main poolside extract failure, sewer sump pump breakdown and repairs following a fire in indoor bowls
- A specification has been prepared for a package of further priority works which is due to go out to tender in June. Subject to gaining agreement, it is planned for these works to start on site by the end of July 2009
- An Action Plan is regularly updated to record and monitor progress of all works and actions to date against defects identified in the first condition survey of the council operated areas of the Leisure Centre.

Further planned works

- 3.8 Further works identified in the condition survey include:

- Brick parapet, concrete and boundary wall repairs
- Damp-proofing
- Further repairs to roofs and rainwater goods
- DDA access improvements and further structural assessments
- Further mechanical and electrical works on lighting, electrical supply, air handling, pool plant, phased boiler replacement and pipework replacement
- External repairs and redecoration (subject to options appraisal)
- Repairs to doors and windows (subject to options appraisal)
- Marking and labelling of electrical circuits/ distribution boards
- Phased electrical rewires
- Replacement of air conditioning units in redundant café (subject to options appraisal)

- 3.9 The priority of the original condition survey was the operational area of the Leisure Centre. The King Alfred building also includes a whole range of tenanted and obsolete areas. These areas include:
- External Amusement Area
 - Cheetah's Gym
 - Pro Am Gym
 - Hove Amateur Boxing Gym
 - Offices
 - Storage areas
 - Former Ten-Pin Bowling and Laser Centre
- 3.10 Separate condition survey reports have recently been completed for these areas, the only exception being the former ten-pin bowling and laser area which Health, Safety and Wellbeing have deemed not safe for the surveying team to enter.
- 3.11 To date it is anticipated that the actual cost of the works identified in the first condition survey report will fall within the original estimated figures in 2.1 and 2.2. The residual sum is therefore planned to be used towards meeting works identified in the second condition survey of tenant occupied areas. These relate only to works identified under landlord's obligations and urgent health and safety work.

Potential improvements

- 3.12 The unknown future life span of the existing Leisure Centre means that it is not possible to give building surveyors an exact timescale for recommended improvements. Therefore, some areas such as replacement of windows versus repair will need pragmatic decisions taken. While replacement would give a greater life-span than the 3-5 year time scale, it would give the frontage a lift to encourage users and have a positive impact on the existing operation. However, it is clear that a full scale refurbishment of the leisure centre would still not provide a facility of modern day standards, as the current building is a series of adaptations and alterations over its 70 year history.
- 3.13 Whatever decision is taken on the long term future of the site, it will mean keeping the existing leisure centre open and offering as good a service as possible for at least 3-5 years and possibly longer.
- 3.14 The council had identified £2m to support the provision of affordable housing within the King Alfred development and £1m to support seafront sustainable transport relating to the King Alfred project.
- 3.15 The Capital Resources and Capital Investment Programme 2009/10, approved at Budget Council on the 26th February 2009, included the earmarking of £0.641m to progress the urgent health and safety and planned maintenance works at the King Alfred during 2009/10. The approval of recommendation 2.2 will add these resources to the 2009/10 capital programme.
- 3.16 The allocation of the £0.641m added to the £0.859m already approved leaves £1.5m from the original £3m identified to support the development of the King Alfred site.

- 3.17 In order to manage the pressure on the existing revenue budget on the Leisure Centre, it is important that improvements are made to retain existing customers and attract new customers, particularly as users have higher expectations following the development of new facilities in other areas. It is proposed to allocate £0.75m of the remaining £1.5m King Alfred resources to fund improvements.
- 3.18 Potential options for improvement are suggested in an indicative order of priority at 7.11 of this report. These options require feasibility studies to be completed with full costings obtained that take into account the loss of revenue and amenity as well as any potential increase in revenue from increased usage following improved facilities.
- 3.19 The prioritisation will take into account the 3-5 year lifespan and the need to demonstrate value for money in terms of financial and user benefits. The priority order would then need to be considered in relation to the funding available as it would not be possible for all the improvements to be undertaken within a budget of £0.75m.
- 3.20 The allocation of £0.75m to fund improvements will leave £0.75m as a contingency to cover any further works required to keep the building operational, future years planned works and to support any future development proposals.
- 3.21 The approval for any of the options to be undertaken could be delegated to the Director of Environment and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

Potential Medium Term Options

Options to Improve Exterior Facade

- 3.22 One of the main issues of the existing building is that the 1980's swimming pools are built on the southern side, with the entrance on the west side, and an uninviting 'frontage' of the 1938 building. It is not practical from an operational perspective to re-open the 'front doors' on Kingsway. Therefore, a replacement of existing signage, a programme of window and door replacement / repair, together with replacement of the existing entrance canopy, would seek to highlight to customers that the Leisure Centre is open. Such improvements would require consultation with Planning Officers.

Options for Empty Café

- 3.23 The existing small fitness works gym is located at the front of the building away from the main hub of the Leisure Centre. As the successful conversion of the café at the Prince Regent Swimming Complex to a fitness room has shown, such an improvement can have a positive impact on generating income in a facility. The longstanding café tenant could not make a café financially viable and a further tenant also reached the same conclusion. Therefore, the use of the large space in the heart of the sports centre would also provide a positive message that the facility is very much open for business. As at the Prince Regent, vending machines would provide a refreshment service. If the gym is moved from the

front of the building, the subsequent vacant area could potentially be used as a community room.

Options to Refurbishment of Wet Changing Facilities

- 3.24 The usage of the King Alfred Leisure Centre is dominated by swimming (72% of all users) in the main, leisure and teaching pools. Poor drainage plus heavy usage over a 25 year period have resulted in the wet changing rooms having the highest number of complaints. While not having the same potential to enhance income as moving the gym, refurbishment of the wet changing rooms would have the biggest positive impact on the standard of service to existing users and would attract new swimmers (particularly in conjunction with the Free Swimming scheme).
- 3.25 The refurbishment of the wet changing facilities has been a success at the Prince Regent Swimming Complex. However, there would be a significant capital cost involved and an initial negative impact on revenue as there would need to be at least a three month closure of the wet facilities to enable the work to be undertaken.

Options to Improve Internal Decoration

- 3.26 Many internal areas of the sporting facility would benefit from internal decoration. Due to the height of such areas including the sports halls this would require a phased approach and significant cost. However, this would provide a positive impact on the quality of the facilities across large areas of the building.

Options to Improve Equipment /Features

- 3.27 The existing features such as the internal slides in the swimming pools will shortly be obsolete. In order to maintain interest for existing users and attract new customers it is important that such features are replaced.

Options for Redundant Ten-Pin Bowling/ Laser Centre Area

- 3.28 This area has been vacant since the closing of the Ten-Pin facility at the end of the 1990's and the closure of the Megazone Laser Centre a few years ago. Health, Safety and Wellbeing have deemed the area unsafe for the surveyors to undertake a condition survey. Therefore, the possibility of re-opening such an area would need to be considered in light of this assessment. Comparison could then be made against the cost and practicalities of demolition of the area (which would need to be considered carefully in relation to shared services such as electricity and water with the main Leisure Centre) to provide an area of hard standing.
- 3.29 The potential options for improvements include items that would be revenue rather than capital expenditure such as internal decorations. Although the £0.75m was originally allocated to the capital programme these resources can be switched to revenue if required. Therefore in determining the priority of work, the allocation of the £0.75m will be reflected in either the revenue budget or capital programme as appropriate.

Costing and Prioritisation of Works

- 3.30 All of the above suggested options require detailed feasibility studies which need to be funded in order that prioritisation of the works can take place relative to the total resources available, potential positive impact on revenue generation for the centre and negative impact on the centre's income from any closures to undertake the works. Most of the works would require detailed plans, costings from a quantity surveyor and in some instances planning approval. The financing of these estimates would need to come from the additional resources requested for the improvement works, together with the cost of both client and contract project management. Property and Design does not have the resource capacity to contract manage these works but will support the client with advice and monitoring of the works. When such costed feasibility studies have been completed for the improvement works a decision on priority relative to the resources available can then be made via the suggested delegated powers.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 It is recommended that full consultation continues with the client (Sport and Leisure) to agree the prioritisation and logistics of undertaking the relevant work. Such consultation is required to programme the works, undertake procurement of works in certain areas and manage the works effectively to ensure there is minimal disruption to the service.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The financial implications are included in Section 3 of this report under Potential Medium Term Options.

Finance Officer Consulted: James Hengeveld Date: 08/05/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The immediate key legal implications revolve around health and safety issues, staff retention and the continued occupation of the building by tenants who had been previously advised that the building would be demolished as part of the redevelopment proposals.
- 5.3 The Council must ensure that the building is safe for staff, tenants and all users of the building. Staff and tenants must be kept informed of the proposals and where appropriate tenants/licensees will receive revised leases/licenses which will be granted by officers under delegated powers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 5.4 There are existing briefs relating to the site e.g. the Affordable Housing Brief, the Sports Centre Brief and the Public Realm Brief. In the context of a future procurement process for a replacement sports centre at this site, these briefs should be reviewed and as and when a new major project emerges a Project Board set up in accordance with the council's project procedures.

Lawyer Consulted: Bob Bruce Date: 17/04/08

Equalities Implications:

- 5.5 Closure of the King Alfred Leisure Centre would significantly reduce opportunities for participation in sport. The Centre provides a wide range of sporting and leisure opportunities for a cross section of the local population.
- 5.6 There is a need for a range of sporting facilities to be available across the City so that there is equality of opportunity for local people to participate in sport.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report. It should be noted however that the works to the building arising from this report will not be sufficient to bring the building into line with current good practice. With the introduction of Display Energy Certification in October this year for all public buildings, they will need to demonstrate their energy performance. A building of the age of the King Alfred (built in 1938 and remodelled in 1980) cannot be expected to perform to the same standard as newer buildings. Sustainability implications will be considered when deciding some of the improvement options e.g. window replacement.

Crime & Disorder Implications

- 5.8 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.9 The recommendations of this report are intended to mitigate issues of risk in relation to the continued operation of the King Alfred as a public leisure facility. Without this expenditure it is unlikely that the Leisure Centre at the King Alfred could remain open. With the expenditure there is a stronger chance that an extended lifespan can be achieved from the building.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.10 The King Alfred is the largest wet and dry sports facility in the City and draws users from a wide catchment area. The closure of the centre would have a significant negative impact on the opportunities available for local people to take part in sport. There is already a shortage of wet and dry facilities within the City. The works identified in this report are required in order to keep the present facility operating. While the centre does not meet the current standards of a modern facility, it does enable much needed sporting opportunities which provide a valuable contribution to the activity levels and health of the local population.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 An alternative option would be to not commit any further expenditure. This would create a situation of considerable risk for the council and result in the potential loss of a key leisure facility for the City.

Maintaining the service

- 6.2 The proposals in this report are about maintaining and improving a service for the community and the continued provision of sport and leisure facilities in the City. In addition, improvements would help alleviate the pressure on income at the facility in the medium term.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The underlying reason for the recommendations regarding expenditure is to ensure that the King Alfred Leisure Centre remains operational for at least a 3-5 year timescale and thereby maintain for the City the provision of much needed sport and leisure facilities.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents

1. Cabinet Report – 20 November 2008

