

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

meeting date: TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2024
title: RIBBLESDALE POOL FEASIBILITY STUDY
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: MARK BEVERIDGE HEAD OF CULTURAL AND LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Committee with an update on the progress of the feasibility study taking place on Ribblesdale Pool.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To help make people's lives healthier and safer.
- Other - To help reduce the both the overall cost of operating the pool and to help make a positive contribution to the Councils' overall use of energy.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The pool is now over 50 years old and whilst to the casual observer it appears in a good state of repair, there are many ongoing issues the Council must address to keep the service running for the many thousands of people that use it every year. Not least of these are the annual running costs.

2.2 The site was subject to an extensive refurbishment involving the reception area and changing rooms in 2017, which was part funded by the Council together with a substantial grant from Sport England.

2.3 The feasibility study was awarded to Strategic Leisure Limited in November 2024, following a procurement exercise; they have considerable expertise of carrying out similar work with leisure buildings.

2.4 An extensive communications campaign has taken place to highlight the feasibility and its purpose. Although there has been some disquiet expressed in social media and concerns that the pool may close, The Chair of this Committee has publicly stated that this is not the case, and the study is to determine the best long term sustainable option for swim provision in the borough. This includes looking at refurbished or new facilities as well as more energy efficient designs.

3 THE STUDY

3.1 The study is designed to give the Council some options which it can consider for the site, these will address the basic swim offer, potential enhancements such as new facilities, plus how the current heating and ventilation and swimming pool plant can be improved to both maximise the use of and minimise the amount of energy consumed annually.

3.2 The study will look at the site which has by default become a sporting hub for the area. Although the Council has limited land holdings, alternative sites will be assessed for viability. This will also include an assessment of the overall leisure provision in the Borough and how that currently meets the standards of Sport England. The study will grab a snapshot of swimming and wider leisure provision across the Valley to feed into future plans for leisure in the Borough.

3.3 Strategic Leisure has already consulted with a range of stakeholders, including clubs and Parish Councils. A limited number of Parish Councils have decided not to engage

with the work but this may be due to messaging not stressing enough how this is a positive opportunity for Ribble Valley. The Director of Community Services is attending the Parish Council Liaison Meeting to promote greater engagement.

3.4 Strategic have been carrying out a public consultation and the response has been very good with 1,789 individual responses. Headline findings from the survey include:

- The majority of respondents rate Ribblesdale Pool as average- good.
- The majority of respondents think the Edisford location is good-very good.
- The majority of respondents think a new pool should be built at Edisford; almost as many respondents think the existing pool should be refurbished.
- For those that did suggest other locations, these were spread across the borough, in particular locations with free parking and town centres or on the A59.
- The overwhelming majority response for other facilities to be co-located with a new pool is a café.
- High response rates were also received on the need to provide: fitness facilities, soft play, group exercise studios, a spin studio, climbing wall and cross-fit facility alongside a new pool.

3.5 Next steps in the feasibility work will include detailed analysis of all consultation and use of this to inform the options for the future of Ribblesdale Pool. The consultants will then assess each option to identify which best meets local need, is sustainable (operationally and financially) and is realistic.

3.6 An architect is working as part of the consultant team to develop initial sketches and layouts for the identified facility options.

3.7 The final report will include recommendations setting out what swimming facilities should be provided in the future and where, how much this is likely to cost, timescales for development, and potential funding sources. The report will also consider and assess the best operational management model for swimming provision moving forward.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 The Council through including the study as part of the capital programme, recognised that strategically and financially it must have a comprehensive understanding of the issues and options available to it for the future provision of swimming. Based on the study and the report that will be provided to the Council, it can then make decisions about future investment options and how these fit with wider leisure provision.

4.2 The pool is a significant annual cost and like all Council activity it is essential that this very important service is as efficient and effective as it can be. By examining wider provision across the Borough as part of this study, it allows us to understand how swimming fits with a wider leisure vision for the Valley.

4.3 The Committee is asked to note the report and the final feasibility report will be brought to a future meeting in the new civic year.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

For further information please ask for Mark Beveridge, extension 4479.