

Item 14 - White Oak Leisure Centre: New Build and operator procurement

The attached report was considered by the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee on 27 February 2020 and People & Places Advisory Committee on 3 March 2020. The report was due to be considered by the Finance & Investment Advisory Committee but this had been cancelled due to the current Covid-19 crisis.

The relevant Minute extracts are below.

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee (27 February 2020, Minute 37)

The Chief Officer People & Places presented the report which set out the proposed construction of the new leisure centre, the demolition of the existing White Oak Leisure centre, and the appointment of an operator for the new centre. The report set out the facility mix and detailed costings and funding sources. Planning permission had been granted on 13 February 2020. The construction of the new leisure centre and demolition of existing leisure centre cost, together with fees and charges, was due to be £20m.

The Chief Officer People & Places advised Members of the proposed design of the new leisure centre, which included a Tag Active zone, multi-purpose rooms, a pool, a café, soft play area and parking provision for 144 vehicles and two coach spaces. There was focus on making the building as flexible as possible in its use. The new leisure centre was due to open in November 2021.

The preferred operator was Sport and Leisure Management (SLM). If the contract would be approved, then the net payment to the Council would be £507,248 a year on average. The preferred operator had shown interest in embedding themselves in the local community early on in the process. The Chief Officer People & Places advised that there would be 38 full time equivalent members of staff working for SLM which provide good operator resilience.

Members were advised that there were risks related to construction with Alliance Leisure Services Ltd (ALS) as well as risks outside their responsibility. These included utilities issues, prolonged extreme weather conditions, planning conditions imposed, changes to national building regulation, and unexpected ground conditions.

In response to queries regarding the new floor at Orchards Academy sports hall, Members were advised that the manufacturer had checked the new floor was suitable for sports currently using the hall, such as roller hockey.

In response to questions on timetabling, Members were advised that the operator would ask existing clubs what their needs would be and what times would be suitable. Timetables would be decided long before the opening of

the leisure centre. The communication between the operator and clubs would be overseen by the Community Projects and Funding Officer.

Following concerns over the popularity of the facilities provided, such as Tag Active zone, it was emphasised to Members that the building was designed to be flexible and would therefore adapt based on demand of facilities.

In response to a query on financial variation in the contract, Members were advised that there would be a monthly payment tied into the contract. If any income would be above what was predicted, the cost would be split between the Council and the operator.

Resolved: That the following comments on recommendations a) to e) as set out within the report, be passed to Cabinet

- a) That it be ensured that
 - i) the new floor in the Orchard Academy sports hall be able to accommodate sports such as roller hockey and netball; and
 - ii) early discussions take place with existing clubs during the redevelopment process

People & Places Advisory Committee (3 March 2020, Minute 41)

The Chief Officer People & Places presented the report which set out the proposed construction of the new leisure centre, the demolition of the existing White Oak Leisure centre, and the appointment of an operator for the new centre. The report set out the facility mix and detailed costings and funding sources. Planning permission had been granted on 13 February 2020. The construction of the new leisure centre and demolition of existing leisure centre cost, together with fees and charges, was due to be £20m.

The Chief Officer People & Places advised Members of the proposed design of the new leisure centre, which included a Tag Active zone, multi-purpose rooms, a pool, a café, soft play area, and parking provision for 144 vehicles and two coach spaces. There was focus on making the building as flexible as possible in its use. The new leisure centre was due to open in November 2021.

The preferred operator was Sport and Leisure Management (SLM). If approved the contract award net payment to the Council would be £508,248 a year on average. The preferred operator had shown interest in embedding themselves in the local community early on in the process. The Chief Officer People & Places advised that there would be 38 full time equivalent

members of staff working for SLM which would provide good operator resilience.

Members were advised that there were risks related to construction with Alliance Leisure Services Ltd (ALS) as well as risks outside their responsibility. These included utilities issues, prolonged extreme weather conditions, planning conditions imposed, changes to national building regulation, and unexpected ground conditions.

In response to Members' queries on the changing facilities at the Orchards Academy sports hall, the Community Projects & Funding Officer advised that the changing rooms and sanitary ware would be refurbished. Shower facilities were already provided on site. Following health and safety concerns from Members, the Head of Finance advised that an insurance policy set up for the new sports hall would consider health and safety risks. Members expressed an interest in a site visit to the sports hall.

In response to queries on the use of Orchards Academy sports hall, Members were advised that it would be used for sports such as roller hockey and netball taking place in the evenings and weekends. The school would be managing the use of the hall itself and may need to consider a community use agreement, which had not been discussed at this stage. It was advised that an agreement will be drawn up between SDC and Orchards Academy regarding the improvements, to give confidence in the future use of the facility.

Members questioned if the new leisure centre would meet the needs of older people and the 4 to 11 year old age group. The Chief Officer People & Places advised that the new operator wanted to engage and support the local community at the centre and beyond it, appealing to all ages and those harder to engage, hence the offer of activities such as Tag Active, the support for GP referrals and Shapemaster (supporting those recovering from illness and those who would need extra help to become fitter). In response to concerns over accessibility for those with a lower income, the Community Projects & Funding Officer advised that there would be concessionary memberships including junior, disabled and senior memberships. Members were advised that the new operator was a large company with experience of how to make an income without charging a high amount for its use. The flexibility of the leisure centre design would allow the operator to optimise the number of people using it.

In response to questions, Members were advised that a logistics plan had been drawn up to allow for parking provision in the run up to the new car park being completed in May 2022. The new contractor would have responsibility for a schedule of programmed maintenance at the new leisure centre, which the Council would be entitled to review. The Community Projects & Funding Officer advised that the Council would have access to all maintenance information online. Members queried what the lifespan of the new leisure centre was likely to be.

Action 1: That the Community Projects & Funding Officer circulate the predicted lifespan of the new leisure centre to Members

Following environmental concerns expressed by Members, it was pointed out that the new building was being designed to enable the new leisure centre to meet the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) 'very good' standard as stated in paragraph 14 of the report.

It was noted that c) in the recommendation to Council, as set out in the report, incorrectly referred to paragraph 46 when it should have referred to paragraph 53.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Officer People & Places.

Resolved: That the following comment on recommendations a) to e) as set out within the report, be passed to Cabinet:

- a) That the security and safeguarding of the Council's investment in the Orchards Academy site, be ensured