

CABINET

18 DECEMBER 2020

REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A.3 **SCRUTINY OF THE LEISURE PROVISION BY THE COUNCIL IN THE DISTRICT**

(Report prepared by Keith Durran and Ian Ford)

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 September 2020 (Minute 87 refers) the Committee was provided with an overview of the Leisure Provision by the Council in the District.

The Committee was updated on a number of items on the Sport and Leisure work programme. The Assistant Director for Economic Growth and Leisure (Mike Carran) provided this background report.

UPDATES ON THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE COMMITTEE

a) The emerging District-wide Leisure Strategy as previously reported to it – progress with the development of the Strategy

Members were informed that the Sports Facilities Strategy had been due to be presented for consideration by Cabinet earlier in the year. One of the key focusses of that plan was a wholesale review of pricing and recommendations for a change in direction, based on an external review of the local fitness market and an evaluation of the number of the volume and value of pre-paid members. Due to the pandemic, that strategy had been postponed and was likely to be brought forward for consideration early in 2021.

b) The refurbishment of the Clacton Leisure Centre – to review arrangements for the refurbishment since they were last presented to the Committee.

The Committee heard that in July 2019, Cabinet had committed a budget for the refurbishment of the swimming pool changing rooms and health suite areas at Clacton Leisure Centre.

A tender process for those works was postponed earlier in the year due to the forced closure of the Sports Facilities. A full specification had been prepared by a specialist organisation acting on behalf of the Council and was then in a position to be advertised to prospective contractors. This Architectural Design and Contract Administration company would also act on behalf of the Council during the evaluation of tenders and throughout the construction phase.

Followed by the receipt and evaluation of the subsequent submissions, it was anticipated that the work would be undertaken at the end of the year, which was historically the quietest period.

c) The sale of land to Clacton County High School, community access to the pitches on that land, management of that community access and the conditional works on the existing 3G pitches at the Leisure Centre – progress/timescales.

The Committee was informed that the transfer of land to Clacton County High School (CCHS) had yet to be concluded and the final agreements were not at that time, in place.

In anticipation of its conclusion however, agreement had been reached with the school and Essex County Council (ECC) on arrangements for community use.

Grass Pitch

The grass pitch which was marked out on the 'new' school land, would remain available for community use outside of school hours. That would be booked through the same process as all other grass sports pitches under the management of the Council.

Artificial Grass Pitch

Officers had been working with the Essex Football Association and the Football Foundation (FF) to develop a 3G strategy for the District. Essentially, a 3G pitch was artificial grass suitable for football. A refurbishment of the current sand filled pitch into a 3G was part of the agreement with ECC/CCHS.

Working with the FF opened the door to the potential of external funding and a planning application for the refurbishment of the Clacton Leisure Centre pitch had been submitted. That was an essential requirement prior to a funding application being submitted.

d) The refurbishment of the Skate Park at the Leisure Centre – plans and timescales.

Members heard that Clacton Skate Park had opened in 2004 and had historically fallen under the management of the Clacton Leisure Centre team. The park was the only one in the Clacton area and was originally designed for both skate boards and BMX users. It was extremely well used and valued by young people and there was indicative evidence that it had significantly reduced anti-social skate board activity in the town centre and residential areas.

The following options were currently being considered.

Repair the Main Ramp & ancillary works

This is the most economical and short term option, which would allow the park to re-open in a fairly short space of time. It would include the required groundworks.

There are also outstanding works required to the wider park, following an inspection by a play inspection company. A budget cost for this work would be in the region of £60k.

Upgrade the Main Ramp to a concrete concept design

Two alternative proposals were requested last year, which would involve installing a new main ramp designed from concrete. This is a modern approach to skate park design, which is lower maintenance and less subject to vandalism.

A budget cost for this work would be in the region of £120-£160k.

Wider upgrade of the Skate Park

This would involve a wider refurbishment of the park to a concrete design, on top of the main ramp. The exact cost would be subject to the scope identified, as the park has a large footprint.

A budget cost for this work would be in the region of £220k.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO CABINET

After much deliberation the Committee **COMMENTED** and **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

1. the Committee notes the intentions of a sports and leisure strategy to be considered in early 2021. While the Committee would want a strategy as early as possible it believes that the additional time will ensure that the strategy can address the issues facing the District, including encouraging people to regress from being fairly active, to active and from inactive to fairly active and with provisions for those with disabilities. The Committee would welcome the early sight of the emerging strategy and the associated action plans to support delivery of that strategy. The strategy itself, should rightly address the position beyond COVID.
2. the intentions for the redevelopment of Clacton Leisure Centre has been shelved for the end of this calendar year and the Cabinet is reminded that this Committee has previously requested that the consultation with users should be undertaken and detailed examination of the costs of the works be undertaken to secure value for money and a positive contribution of the Council's aims of reducing its carbon foot print.
3. that proposals around Back 2 Business of Clacton's Skate Park to be refurbished, to be pursued and that the associated lessons from the site in Dovercourt delivered to the Harwich Town Council, be harnessed including funding for it.
4. the previous issue, of the vital importance of consistent and common branding identified by this Committee on 13 August 2020 in respect of tourism, should also be applied to leisure services to help promote the area and its facilities to residents and visitors.
5. all tenders for improvements to the leisure facilities contain a specific recommendation in respect of energy efficiency costs and savings and the long term impact of the carbon foot print of Tendring District Council.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

Portfolio Holder Comments

"The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism welcomes the comments of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The emerging Sports Facilities strategy has rightly been postponed until there is a stable operating position for our Leisure Facilities and robust, long term decisions can be made. The strategy will be subject to consultation with the committee as well as wider partners and stakeholders.

The planned Leisure Centre refurbishment has been carefully prepared by appropriately skilled and experienced professionals and the specification of works will be robust and invite proposals for carbon reduction.

The Committee will have noted the refurbishment of Clacton Skate Park was incorporated in the short term plans for the Council's Back to Business report. Officers will now work with park users to take the project forward and meet the aspirations of local people.

The Council has set out its objectives for branding in the draft Tourism Strategy, which will be finally considered in the New Year, following a period of consultation."

Recommendations to Cabinet

That the comments and recommendations of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and the comments of the Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder, in response thereto, be endorsed.