

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	21 st April 2015
Report of:	Lorraine Butcher, Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning
Subject/Title:	Update on Congleton Leisure Centre
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Janet Clowes, Care and Health in the Community Cllr David Brown, Strategic Outcomes

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council is committed to improving the leisure facilities in Congleton as part of its strategic approach to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 1.2 This will be the second in a programme of leisure related improvements and follows the significant investment in new facilities in Crewe which are due to open in Spring 2016.
- 1.3 To inform what Congleton residents want in their local facility a pre-consultation survey was undertaken (Appendix 1). The key messages from the survey were that residents would like most to see modernisation/replacement of the existing leisure centre. Additionally there was no strong public desire shown to re-locate the leisure centre, nor to re-locate a wider range of services for vulnerable adults or children onto that site.
- 1.4 Hankinson's Field is highly valued by the residents of Congleton. This report therefore outlines the next steps required to optimise this fantastic asset that is the current location for the leisure centre and to deliver 21st century facilities for the benefit of residents on that site. To ensure the successful delivery of this and maximise opportunities for the site, Cheshire East Council is committed to working with sporting clubs and park users, including Congleton Rugby Club and Friends of the Park.
- 1.5 This project is linked to current and future regeneration projects in Congleton through the Local Plan and emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested
 - 1 to authorise the development of a detailed business case for the enhancement of the existing leisure centre facility, thereby allowing the Project Board to progress the modernisation of the existing leisure

facilities, through a consideration of refurbishment, enhancement and new build options, including the possible provision of a new swimming pool; and

- 2 to authorise the Project Board to review the financial structure for the scheme including the exploration of alternative financial delivery models to explore and determine the best overall solution for local residents.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The policy of improving health outcomes through the use of leisure and related services has been previously reviewed and following the development of a business case, implementation has commenced with new provision at Crewe. As part of the original consideration it was intended to review a roll out of such a policy in Cheshire East, including Congleton.
- 3.2 As a result a pre-consultation survey in Congleton was completed on 16 Oct 2014. The key messages from the survey were that residents of Congleton would like most to see modernisation/replacement of the existing leisure centre. There was no strong public desire shown to relocate leisure services to the town centre, nor to relocate a wider range of services such as Adults and Children's services onto one site.
- 3.3 Whilst there was no strong public support for the need to bring existing lifestyle type services into one asset, the project is cognisant the Councils policy to where possible develop the lifestyle concept. Consequently, the addition of such services has been actively considered and the demands in terms of space requirements and integration into the existing footprint have been made. However, the demand modelling undertaken has demonstrated the problems of bringing such additional services onto the site, which would render a full lifestyle centre as unachievable. These have included health related services such as GPs Practice and the local Police service.
- 3.4 The ongoing Community Hub pilot underway in Congleton is suggesting that local service delivery should meet the needs of the local population and supports the premise that providing services in one asset is not necessarily the best approach for Congleton residents. The Team has a very active local community represented on the Congleton Partnership and on the community hub. These community initiatives to self-provide for its residents should be encouraged.
- 3.5 Strong support has been given from local partners including Congleton Town Council to improve the provision in Congleton. It has been noted that whilst a redevelopment of the existing Congleton Leisure Centre is long overdue, any changes on the current site would be a vast improvement. The site has a unique feature in that it sits within a much valued and large public open space incorporating playing fields, open parkland and a riverbank. This project will look to integrate and enhance the open spaces within the design of any new pool construction and refurbishment of the exterior walls to the sports hall; this will make the building more aesthetically appealing from all elevations whilst taking advantage of the views from the facility,

particularly towards the river and parkland. Formal planning may result in some change to the current footprint. However, the intention of this project is that for any refurbishment to be more in keeping and reflective of the public open space so that indoor and outdoor leisure pursuits can be maximized for all residents and users.

- 3.6 There is also the potential to increase formal playing pitch provision within the overall design for the site. There is further scope to integrate and improve the skate park which although is extremely well used at present, it is acknowledged that its current location can attract elements of anti-social behavior. Relocating and integrating the skate park within the site could present opportunities to incorporate dedicated walkways, cycle and running paths around the perimeter of the public open space. The potential to incorporate new landscaping and planting to improve the biodiversity of the site will showcase this valuable asset as a standout indoor and outdoor leisure facility for the residents of Congleton and visitors alike.
- 3.7 The modernisation/replacement of existing leisure facilities would form part of a wider regeneration plan for Congleton which will bring modern public realm, connectivity improvements and development opportunities in a manner that meets the needs of Congleton.
- 3.8 The extensive refurbishment of the leisure facility and in particular a new pool would significantly reduce the maintenance backlog liability and lead to lower ongoing operational running costs and future maintenance liability.
- 3.9 A full highways assessment alongside other investigatory work will be carried out as part of the necessary requirements.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Primarily it affects residents using the existing facilities in Congleton, though users could be resident in any area of the Borough

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 The local wards in Congleton East. The Councillors are:

Cllr David Brown
Cllr Peter Mason
Cllr Andrew Thwaite

- 5.2 The local wards in Congleton West. The Councillors are:

Cllr Gordon Baxendale
Cllr Roland Domleo
Cllr David Topping

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 As an early part of the regeneration plan for Congleton, this refurbishment project will provide a much needed and visible investment in Congleton. This will contribute directly to the regeneration of the town and potentially improve participation in active leisure and sport activities.
- 6.2 Congleton Leisure Centre is already established as a well-used and important community facility, with a specific focus on the provision of wet and dry leisure facilities for the local and wider population. The existing land footprint has the potential for some expansion to provide an improved leisure facility and the potential for some multi use community space designed to a high standard. Facility improvements invariably bring increased income and usage benefiting improved health outcomes for local residents.
- 6.3 Wider consideration around the lifestyle concept has been considered within the demand modelling exercise which has highlighted the site constraints whilst still retaining public open spaces (Hankinson's Field). The unique features of the site presents a number of opportunities to elevate the profile of the leisure provision in Congleton for residents, through the enhancement and integration of the public open space. This will be subject to discussions with statutory agencies including the Environment Agency, Sport England and other park users.
- 6.4 Any refurbishment options will impact in the short term on service provision while upgrades are taking place. If the pool is refurbished rather than replaced, it may require a period of time where the pool is not available while refurbishment takes place. This process would be dealt with as part of the detailed business case.
- 6.5 Any form of refurbishment or redevelopment of the site will need the consideration of a number of 'key dependencies'. These include the Rugby Club, Scout Hut (next to the leisure centre) and users of the public open spaces in particular users of the skate park and the local 'friends' group.
- 6.6 This project will also have dependencies on the following strategies underway in the council:
 - a) Regeneration plan for Congleton – The Council is developing a Masterplan for Congleton. The benefits from this project will be fed into the wider master-planning activity.
 - b) Community hub – A pilot scheme is underway which is shaping the 'hub' of community services in the town. Some of those may be provided as part of the leisure centre upgrade.
 - c) If new or improved community space was provided in the final design, it could benefit both these existing council operated services and the wider community where good quality community space is demonstrated to be in short demand.

d) Indoor Facilities Strategy. A new strategy is currently being developed in support of the emerging Local Plan.

e) Congleton Neighbourhood Plan, this is an emerging plan being developed with the Local Partnership and will also feed into the Community Hubs project.

6.7 Key assessments will need to be undertaken during the next stage which will inform both the business case and the viability of a planning application. These will require additional assessments and studies which are listed in Section 10

7.0 Implications for Rural Communities

7.1 None

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The project currently has a budget of £8.5m within the Capital Programme for 2015/16 to support and enhance the facility. The scheme will reduce the expected maintenance liability though this would not result in a direct 'saving' towards the business case of a redeveloped asset.

8.2 Alternative funding models might deliver wider opportunities for redesign and these should be explored before a final determination of options is made.

8.3 The design stage will look at maximising the efficiency of the asset to reduce the existing running costs.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 A contractor to undertake the refurbishment works can be procured by a mini competition under the North West Construction Hub High Value Framework or other Framework, procurement via this route could select a company in four months. Alternatively the Council can undertake an EU compliant procurement that will take between six to nine months.

9.2 The Consultation with local stakeholders will be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the scope of the scheme.

9.3 The Leisure Centre is managed on behalf of the Council by Everybody Sports and Recreation Ltd (ESAR). The Council may be liable to compensate ESAR for loss in earnings during the refurbishment.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 A full risk log collated during the work undertaken to reach procurement will be available in the detailed business case.

10.2 There are still significant risks with the delivery of this project which will be mitigated in detailed design and subsequent planning stage. These are highlighted below:

- a) Highways – The need to undertake local highway modelling based on the demand data to understand the highway impact of any new scheme, its viability and to identify any highway improvements for inclusion in the overall cost – Full transport Assessment to determine a transport strategy.
- b) Pre planning responses – The need to start initial conversations with planning application and statutory consultees such as Sport England. This will ensure that any proposal can be compliant with current local and national policies in relation to public open space.
- c) Demand modelling has been carried out, which has identified and validated the facilities in terms of size and number which will inform costs and provide base data for highway modelling.
- d) The site sits within a Zone 2 flood plain, early engagement with the Environment Agency has confirmed that any refurbishment or new construction would require sufficient defence mechanisms to lessen the impact of any flooding should this occur. This may have some impact on scope and budget.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 The Congleton Leisure Centre project was formally triggered by Cabinet in July 2014 and after a 2 month initiation period started delivery in September 2014. A number of consultation meetings have taken place with stakeholders and prospective services in order to establish the scope of services to be included. A pre-consultation survey was launched to gauge public opinion with over 500 responses. Public meetings with the Town Council and Congleton Partnership also took place.

11.2 Congleton Leisure Centre comprises two distinct elements built at different times with a number of separate power plants running different parts of the building. The pool building envelope/facades are in poor condition, resulting in energy inefficiency. The plant is maintained but nearing 40 years old, so suffers from poor energy efficiency. The current layout does not comply with current design standards (Sport England, Equality Act) which makes it an extremely inefficient building and presents construction complications for some design options.

11.3 A small feasibility team comprising architectural, mechanical and electrical and highways completed a desktop options appraisal advising the council of the options available. It has assessed the condition of the existing asset and undertook a costing appraisal for a range of options. These have formed the basis for this report.

- 11.4 Based on the responses provided through the survey, from other interdependent projects underway in Congleton and from the responses from the Town Council; a budget target of £8.5m has been earmarked with the scope focussed to provide modernised leisure facilities with a desire for a new pool.
- 11.5 A range of options for the site are being considered and are summarised in Appendix 2.
- 11.6 The final design may need to include additional land use in order to deliver the objectives above, particularly if the desire to construct a new pool is realised. There are constraints of the site in terms of access and existing footprint and the ability to temporarily house plant equipment to facilitate the refurbishment/redevelopment of the centre. This could include the potential to utilise elements of the surrounding open space but this would be subject to an agreement with the requisite statutory agencies including Sport England as appropriate.
- 11.7 The project is aiming to deliver a refurbished leisure centre with the possibility of a new pool facility and some community space all housed in a more efficient building. Appendix 3 contains photographs of the current site and the public open spaces that surround some of the site. Some illustrations are also provided to show how the new pool construction might look from the approach to the site from Worrall Street as well as how this may look when approaching from the park and Hankinson's Field.
- 11.8 The outline delivery timetable for the feasible options will consist of a 4-6 month procurement process followed by a 4 month detailed design stage to arrive at a design for planning application. Concurrently, further assessments and detailed business case planning would form supporting evidence.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Pre-Consultation Survey Report
- Appendix 2 – Design options
- Appendix 3 – Site photos & illustrations