



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 23rd November 2006

Title: SPORTS FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Report of: Director of Community Services

Report reference: CS 64/06

Summary:

This report provides as an appendix the Executive Report on the sports facility feasibility study. That report provides future options for consideration and is presented to this Committee for scrutiny.

Recommendations:

Members note the report and provide a response to the Executive on the options stated.

Contact Officer: Mark Beveridge

Ext: 7350

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The sports facility feasibility study was considered initially by the Executive on 12th June 2006 and by this Committee on 20th July 2006. Since then it has been available on the Council Website and a number of hard copies were made available.
- 1.2 Letters to clubs, organisations, parish councils and CLL were sent to elicit views on the study. The responses received are appended to the Executive report.

2. The Options

- 2.1 Given the responses and the progress with the Theatre/Arts Centre study and current funding sources, the options in the PMP Ltd study have been amended to reflect current circumstances. The principle change Members will see is to the swimming proposal due to site availability but primarily funding opportunities.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The sports facility feasibility study contains useful base line information. The amended options seek to provide a realistic and achievable programme for consideration, these need to be considered in light of other Council priorities which prevail. Funding either capital or revenue is a key issue which together with the corporate plan will determine how these options will be progressed.
- 3.2 The further work outlined in the option proposals will be reported back to Members within the timescales stated, at which point issues such as the school re-organisation for example will hopefully be resolved. Further development opportunities might also present themselves as the Carlisle Renaissance planning process progresses.
- 3.3 However, at the correct time the options presented are seen as a realistic approach to sports facility provision in the City.



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: LEISURE, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Date of Meeting: 20TH NOVEMBER 2006

Public

Key Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan:

Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: SPORTS FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Report of: Director Of Community Services

Report reference: CS 59/06

Summary:

This report presents feedback from the consultation process undertaken together with the options for potential infrastructure improvements to enhance sport facility provision in the City Council area in future years.

Recommendations:

The Executive is recommended to approve the options as set out in this report as the basis for future sports facility development in the City.

Contact Officer: MARK BEVERIDGE

Ext: 7350

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

- 1.1 The City Council received a copy of the PMP report earlier this year. Since then the Executive and Community Overview and Scrutiny have considered it and as part of the consultation process it has been made available to a wide range of groups and organisations.
- 1.2 The feedback from this process has been appended to this report for information. The report was commissioned to provide a framework, which the Council can use in the future when considering proposals. PMP used the Sport England Facility Planning Model as a means of trying to establish potential demand for facilities in the area. This provides a useful framework for facility provision but due to the generic nature of the model, which covers all types of local authority areas, the information it provides need to be considered as a guide and not definitive, even though local factors were used in the calculations contained within the full PMP report.
- 1.3 The Options
- 1.4 PMP in their study made a number of proposals, some of which the City Council is already underway with and were considering at the time of the study e.g. indoor tennis in Bitts Park, synthetic pitch at the Sheepmount. The primary capital option raised in the report was for a new pool facility.
- 1.5 After receiving feedback through the consultation process and in light of the work already being considered by the City Council, the following options are proposed for consideration, which amend the proposals in the report. Indicative time-scales have also been provided, showing when members can expect to see the outcome of any further work highlighted.
- i) Develop a strategy for the provision of playing pitches in the City, this would cover existing pitches and potential new ones and also involve an assessment of changing accommodation requirements. This work would be carried out through consultation with the Football Association, local leagues and clubs. This would be reported to members in May 2007.
 - ii) Multi-Use Games Areas - the City Council provides three of these sites currently; Melbourne Park, Petteril Bank and Hammonds Pond. They represent good value in terms of the resource provided in the local areas where they are located. Linked to sports development work, NACRO and CDRP, they offer a real opportunity to help engage with young people and help reduce anti-social behaviour. Identification of

other potential sites for these facilities would help to create a network, which could then be used to involve young people in cross community competition through sport.

Preparation of a community map with potential sites would enable opportunities to be taken in the future when future developments result in planning gain for recreational facilities. This work would be carried out using City Council staff and existing community partners and would be completed by April 2007, utilising a similar matrix developed for assessing the play areas in the City.

- iii) Develop the proposal referred to in the City Council feasibility study into a theatre/arts centre, for making the Sands main hall an events only venue for the City. Such a development would be complimentary to a theatre/arts centre and is not seen as a replacement for providing that facility in the City. However with a venue for events only, it would enhance the marketability of the Sands Centre, to promoters especially, but not exclusively in the entertainment field. Thus helping to raise the profile of the City nationally. The principle behind this option is moving the casual pay as you play sports activities from the Sands Centre main hall to facilities in the community. This could involve a combination of existing and new built facilities and work has to be undertaken to establish existing demand and capacity already available. Taking this route would free the Sands Centre to be an events venue which does not have to try and satisfy the very different demands of sport and entertainment, but would not preclude major sports events being staged there.

- 1.6 This work would be carried out by City Council officers working with CLL staff to establish the viability of such a proposal, and the implications in terms of capital revenue and impact on customers. A key element in the provision of community based facilities is the outcome of the current schools review and subsequent development of new or existing sites. Schools are seen as an integral part of the provision of sport in the community and the impact of this work cannot be underestimated. It is proposed a further report, specific to this option, would be presented to members in early March 2007.

1.7 Swimming Provision

- 1.8 PMP proposed the replacement of the Pools facility as the major capital option in their report. The reality currently is that funding options and site availability preclude a new build proposal being progressed at this time. However, the outcome of the Carlisle Renaissance development framework specifically in relation to the Caldew and Viaduct area could change this dramatically. Also, the

opportunities for major funding opportunities from sources other than the City Council for a pool facility are not abundant.

- 1.9 The Pools is none the less, the major public swimming facility in the City and as such does require significant investment. It is proposed that to quantify this, work is undertaken with CLL to determine a schedule of improvements together with costs of carrying out the work. This would be presented to members in June 2007.
- 1.10 This approach does not preclude a replacement of the facility in the longer term if conditions prevail which would enable the Council to undertake such a major capital project. However, for the short to medium term it is seen as the most appropriate way to address pool provision at the existing site.
- 1.11 In their report PMP dismiss the Brampton Pool option based on an assumption that Carlisle City Council would be the supplier. However, this failed to recognise that the project for a pool at Brampton has been from the outset and remains a community led initiative to which the Council has provided advice, as and when required. PMP did not consider the detailed business plan, which the community group have prepared and therefore it is suggested that City Council officers continue to assist the project through officer time.
- 1.12 Cricket Provision
- 1.13 The development of the riverside areas in the City presents an opportunity for provision currently alongside the Eden to be considered as part of the Three Rivers Strategy. The impact of the work the Environment Agency are developing to protect the City will inevitably have implications for this site and once known will enable the clubs there to assess available options. No time frame is proposed in this case as the work is principally being driven by other agencies.
- 1.14 Specialised Provision
- 1.15 There are many sports, which if provided an opportunity would welcome a purpose built facility for their members. However, it is not seen as a priority at this time for the City Council to provide any such facilities. This does not exclude officers providing assistance to clubs as opportunities arise, for example river access for the canoe club, cycling provision for Border City Wheelers. However, it is recommended that no specific work is undertaken on major capital projects for specialised provision where the City Council would be the project champion and expected to provide capital and revenue support.

1.16 Private Sector Provision

- 1.17 The private sector will provide facilities according to market demands and as such the City Council should seek to continue facilitating this provision when opportunities present themselves. This is primarily an outcome of the work in planning/property and no specific recommendation is suggested to promote the City to potential investors outside of that already underway through Carlisle Renaissance.

1.18 Conclusion

- 1.19 Sports facilities are an integral part of the City's cultural offer. From the crowds who make their way to see football or rugby to the young people playing on an open space. The City Council is a significant provider of facilities and has a history of investment in them, the Sands and the Sheepmount being two examples. The era of lottery riches being available to fund new facilities is now past and although funding sources are still available, obtaining them is a much more competitive undertaking than was once the case.
- 1.20 None the less the report sets out a number of options which provide an opportunity for future development of the City's own assets alongside those of the private sector and the voluntary sector. However, with the development of the Corporate Plan and the priorities that will set out, any of the options set out in this report have to be placed in the context of other Council corporate demands and not simply as a shopping list for new development.

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2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Consultation to Date.
Executive, PFH, Community O&S, Carlisle District Forum, Parish Councils, Carlisle Leisure Ltd., Sports Groups and clubs
- 2.2 Consultation proposed.
Consultation period has concluded and no further consultation is proposed other than through Community O&S in the context of this report, although if approved some of the work emanating from the options will require further consultation in the future.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is recommended to approve the options as set out in this report as the basis for future sports facility development in the City.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the implementation of work to achieve the outcomes outlined in the report

5. IMPLICATIONS

- **Staffing/Resources –**
City Council staff in partnership will undertake the preparation of the various pieces of work required as part of the feasibility study with local groups and organisations. Once the outcome of this work is complete on the individual areas a clearer understanding of further resource requirements will be presented to members for consideration according to the time-scales set out
- **Financial –**
As no requests for capital or revenue proposals are made within the context of this report except for those projects already underway and no financial provision is currently required. If any budget proposals arise as a result of the options outlined in the report they would need to be assessed in light of the Corporate Plan and be determined as part of the 2008/09 budget process.
- **Legal –**
At this stage there are no contract or procurement issues related to the options, the work will be carried out by our own staff. Regarding the proposal to move sports activities out of the Sands Centre, if that became a reality the contract with CLL would need to be examined to identify whether there would be any income issues.
- **Corporate –**
The provision of sport and recreation facilities is not a statutory duty, however in providing such facilities and helping to facilitate them, the City Council is contributing to its own Priorities of Cleaner Greener and Safer, Learning City and Carlisle Renaissance. In addition to making a significant contribution to the LSP and the thematic groups: Healthy Communities; Children & Young People.
- **Risk Management –**
Any capital project that may be developed from this study would be subject to the normal Council risk assessment

- Equality Issues –

The equality of accessibility is integral to the provision of sporting facilities in both their design and location, any potential future developments will adhere to this principle

- Environmental –

The Council environmental policy would be applied if any new build or refurbishment projects arise to ensure that energy management, cost of life maintenance etc are taken into account during assessment

- Crime and Disorder –

The provision of facilities such as multi use games areas has provided an excellent means of engaging with young people, similar work using sports halls for midnight basketball has also provided to be equally valuable, there is significant evidence to show that sport is a practical method for engaging with and diverting young people away from anti social behaviour

Brampton Community Association

Registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission No 1054920

The Irthing Centre, Union Lane, Brampton, Cumbria, CA8 1BX

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By email

5 November 2006

Mark Beveridge
Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
Carlisle

Dear Mark,

CARLISLE SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY/BRAMPTON SWIMMING POOL PROJECT

Thank you for meeting with the representatives of the Working Group and the consultant, Glenn Armstrong.

Could you please make the contents of this letter available to the Executive Committee of the City Council prior to them considering the responses to the consultation about the PMP Report on 20th November 2006.

Since our original response we asked for further information, which you supplied, and also asked an independent expert in running pools, Glenn Armstrong, to consider the PMP Report and its impact on the case for a pool in Brampton. He manages a very successful community led pool in the northeast and has been instrumental in establishing a number of other successful projects in the country. We also asked him to review our Feasibility Study, business case with regard to its viability.

He has concluded that the PMP Report provides no further valid information than is available in the 2003 Feasibility Study. His view is that the formulae used cloud the issue of viability and the Report pays no attention to the fact that the Brampton Project would be following the style of other successful enterprises.

In his Report November 2006, which considers the Brampton Project business case, he takes into account the local surveys of the potential demand in the Feasibility Study, the performance of community driven independent pools, including pools with similar population configurations and he has given an up to date analysis of the budget proposals.

He cites that community driven and charity based pools perform better in attracting users, have financial benefits in tax relief, vat and fundraising terms, in mobilising volunteer support, and

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that it is evident from considering other pools similar to Brampton that they are able to balance their books without subsidy.

His models for income and expenditure for the Brampton Project indicate that the proposal has the potential to be financially viable in revenue terms and present no or very little risk of a requirement for external support. The level of community and school support already indicated in the Feasibility Study, his estimates of growing demand for specific activities based on his current experience, and the opportunity for savings in energy costs from new build, are particular strengths he identifies.

Given this, we would ask that the City Council accept the Brampton Project as an integral part of a strategy to meet the needs of people in the Carlisle area.

The Association's strategy for raising the capital to build the project will be based upon grant bids for the bulk of the funding together with community fund-raising and local sources. The intention is to seek to raise the necessary capital against a background of no significant financial commitment from the City Council, although any such commitment would be welcome.

However, it is essential, at this stage, that the City Council explicitly supports the proposal, acknowledges that it represents a cost effective option for meeting the needs of people in the area, and will actively support the community in seeking the capital funding required.

Yours sincerely,

for the Swimming Pool Working Group, Brampton Community Association

Sports Facilities Feasibility Study Consultation Form

Your organisation:

Organisation Burtholme Parish Council
Name of person completing form M Ryan
Contact address Bridge End cottage
Lanercost
Postcode CA8 2HU
Contact phone number 016977 42709

The Study

Please answer the questions below to help us with evaluating the study.

Do you think the study reflects the
needs/aspirations of your organisation? Yes ☒ No ☐

If No please give reasons why _____

Do you think the study has made any major
omissions in terms of facility provision
in relation to your organisation's needs? Yes ☐ No ☒

If No please give details _____

Any other comments about the study? _____

Thank you for your time in completing this form. I would be grateful if you
could return the form, no later than 30th September 2006 to:

**Mark Beveridge, Head of Culture & Community Services, Carlisle City
Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle CA3 8QG**

Sports Facilities Feasibility Study Consultation Form

Your organisation:

Organisation Wetheral Parish Council
Name of person completing form Kaeren Waldie
Contact address Council office, Primrose Hill
Wetheral
Carlisle Postcode CA4 8HD
Contact phone number 01228 561687

The Study

Please answer the questions below to help us with evaluating the study.

Do you think the study reflects the
needs/aspirations of your organisation? Yes ☒ No ☐

If No please give reasons why _____

Do you think the study has made any major
omissions in terms of facility provision
in relation to your organisation's needs? Yes ☐ No ☒

If No please give details _____

Any other comments about the study? Will the community
be consulted in choosing an option?

Thank you for your time in completing this form. I would be grateful if you
could return the form, no later than 30th September 2006 to:

**Mark Beveridge, Head of Culture & Community Services, Carlisle City
Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle CA3 8QG**

Mrs Maggie Mooney
Chief Executive
Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
CARLISLE



CARLISLE LEISURE LTD INCORPORATING



Sands - Arts & Events 01228 625208
Sands - Recreation 01228 625888
Carlisle Pools 01228 625777
Outdoor Recreation 01228 625543

Business Support, 16 Spencer Street, Carlisle, CA1 1BG
Tel: 01228 625555

10 October 2006

Dear Maggie

PMP SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY

I refer to the above study and strategy report from PMP Consultants. At a recent Board Meeting I was asked by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Mike Mitchelson, to formally forward to you our response to the findings of the report, especially in relation to where we are managing and operating the Council's leisure facilities.

I enclose our detailed response "*The Future of Leisure Provision in Carlisle*" and a copy of an initial report (27.13) to the Board as background information.

I understand that the Council's Executive is receiving a report on the strategy shortly with papers going out this Friday, 13 October, and hope that our response can be included during deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Douglas', is written over a horizontal line.

Jim Douglas
Managing Director

COMMUNITY SERVICES CULTURE AND COMMUNITY	
REC'D	12 OCT 2006
PASSED TO	
REFER TO	MB.
MAIL LOG	4765

ENCS

Copies to: Cllr Mike Mitchelson
Mark Beveridge ✓

CLL Management Team

– The future of sport and recreation provision in Carlisle.

1. Overview

Following deliberation by the CLL board and the management team a response to the findings of the PMP report is below and should be read in conjunction with the CLL board report 27.13 Enclosed.

This response looks at the PMP findings in three ways. The first is based on the assumption of capital money being available as outlined in the PMP report (**blue sky**), whilst the second takes a more realistic and perhaps more affordable response (**current site provision**) of improvements and developments of existing facility provision. The third commentary looks at the proposals for specialist sports, the outdoor facilities and our suggestions around new and additional provision that has not been considered or found their way in to the PMP review or report

We also make an access statement below, on the notion of the Sands being an extended facility, if the Council are minded to undertake major development on the site. This is an imperative if the facility is to maximise its potential outcomes and is in line with the vast majority of large city centre leisure centres up and down the country.

2. Sands Centre Site as an Expanded Leisure Site.

The Sands Centre site was viewed as a favoured site capable of additional and expanded facilities due to its reputation, recognition and status. It's central location and ease of access from the main city arterial routes and potential economies of scale in terms of management and operation offered potential. However the notion has a number of caveats which require attention including the loss of car parking spaces and a good deal of rearrangement for access to the building and the existing service road

The idea of a larger single site leisure solution is appealing providing that...

Car parking policy on the site requires to be changed to remove the existing barrier for access. We believe an expanded facility requires the car parking to be handed over to Carlisle Leisure for centre users only and FREE OF CHARGE to those users.

The existing site access and egress to and from Hardwick Circus is improved to enable better flow of traffic and the reintroduction of public transport to the site.

3. Swimming Facilities in Carlisle.

3.1 Blue Sky Provision:

Swimming provision at the existing school pools at Morton, Trinity and St. Aidans should be left as they are.

We believe that any new facility should be based wholly at the Sands site rather than further dissipate water based activity at additional sites. This will give economies of scale

and the ability to develop swimming through an academy approach covering all levels and disciplines of water based activity, "*a one stop aquatic shop*". This is in line with the current ASA thinking and their development programme "*agenda 21*".

This main swimming facility at the Sands Centre should have the following pool provision:

- 3 Pools.
- 1 x 25m x 8 lanes with spectator space for circa 350.
- 1 x 25m x 4 lanes.
- 1 x learning pool.
- Appropriate change facility.

The main pools should have appropriate depth and distance for their potential use.

A new and improve SPA facility including Sauna, steam and massage therapies should also be available on site.

3.2 Current Site Provision:

As previously highlighted the existing James St pools complex is very tired and dated and needs a comprehensive make over and infrastructure improvement programme. There has been absolutely no capital investment in to the pools since 1978. Any investment has been through the use of the maintenance budget, which is now becoming a major issue.

We endorse the consultant's comments regarding its high use and financial performance in spite of recent falls in usage and income. The pools is home to over 260,000 swims a year which reflects a loyal customer base but we also recognise that very many of these are regular repeat customers and there is a need to widen the user base.

We would welcome an in depth technical and design appraisal of the facility, which should lead to a fully funded refurbishment strategy. The following represents a specific but not exhaustive list of what we believe is needed:-

- Complete makeover of ancillary public spaces.
- Refurbishment and access review of the Turkish sauna area.
- Refurbishment of both sets of changing rooms and studio.
- Development of the café vending area.
- Creation of a new space above the ladies 33m change for a fitness room.
- Improvements to all three pool areas including tiling, decoration, ceilings and viewing facilities.
- Comprehensive energy and technical improvement and replacement programme.
- Replacement of the main pool slide.
- Extension of car parking.

4. Sands Centre Sports Provision.

4.1 Blue Sky Provision:

We believe that the facility would greatly improve with the addition of a dedicated new sports hall, which can accommodate a one team court for the following sports:

- Basketball.
- Five a side.
- Volleyball.
- Netball.
- 4 Badminton Courts.
- Suitable for trampolines, gymnastics and roller skating.
- Possible seating for local and national league games for above.

This would enable a 7 day a week continuous programme of activity which should build and develop regular users and meets the needs of dedicated sports people. This however requires further investigation, as currently the Sands sports and recreation usage is declining due to a number of reasons not least because of the growing demand from one off events and the level of disruption. There is also the growth of other sports facilities at schools/colleges.

This will also enable the existing main hall to become a dedicated 7 days a week all year round events venue meeting the growing demand for a wider and more extensive programme.

In addition it may be possible to further develop existing sports halls at Morton and Harraby for local community use.

4.2 Current Site provision:

Further develop the existing sports halls at the schools with the view of reprogramming some or all of the current weekly sports activities in to the community.

This would enable the tension between sports and events to be resolved and free up the main hall as a dedicated event's venue. Over recent years the events programme has grown its programme with sales of tickets almost doubling in value and many events/concerts are turned away because the centre cannot accommodate the demand. The vast majority of events are sold out or near capacity, which demonstrates demand. Whilst on the other hand, as previously mentioned above there is decline in the current recreation activity in the main hall.

We believe there is a need for a wider debate on this subject and the policies of use in general at the Sands.

5. Health & Fitness Provision.

5.1 Blue Sky Provision:

Further Extend the existing Sands gym space to meet the continued demand for fitness.

Create a dedicated exercise studio and additional function/utility space to ensure continuous class provision regardless of main hall use by fitting a first floor in to the secondary hall.

Soundproof the climbing wall and squash areas.

5.2 Current Site provision:

Would be the current status quo in terms of programming with a continued recognition of the tension between arts & events and sport & recreation provision and in particular exercise activity.

6. Specialist Sports Provision, Outdoor and New Provision.

6.1 Tennis:

We endorse the indoor tennis at Bitts Park but would prefer the facility to be a built structure

6.2 Squash:

Adequate provision via CSC and Sands casual courts.

6.3 Ice:

No requirement – agree with PMP conclusions.

6.4 Synthetic Pitches:

What currently exists is poor quality and has patchy public access. We support the addition of a new multi-purpose synthetic pitch at the Sheepmount suitable for all sports. We suggest the site is adjacent to the existing track along the back straight with the potential for shared seating for both athletics and soccer.

6.5 Cricket:

Would support two new all weather cricket wickets on the Sheepmount plateau.

6.6 Indoor Athletics Training:

An indoor training facility was contained in the original blue print for the Sheepmount site, unfortunately this was omitted due to financial constraints. The provision is a key to the regional success of the facility. This can be sited as a separate facility or as part of the proposal for new seating.

We see the opportunity of creating an indoor athletics training facility under the seating similar to many other facilities. This new facility should have a 60m 4 lane track with indoor jump and throw capability.

6.7 Extreme Sports Facility:

We suggest that an investigation into the potential for a new extreme sports facility to include climbing, rope works, skateboard and adventure sports should be undertaken.

6.8 Gymnastics/MartialArts:

We believe the council should look to create a centre of excellence for specialist sports where gymnastics, trampoline, martial arts could be housed.

6.9 Cycling:

Revisit the potential for a permanent 1km cycle track and the creation of a cycle bank for hire at the Sheepmount.

6.10 Golf:

Extension of Stony Holme golf course along the River Eden to allow a new par 5 hole and two further holes instead of the existing 15th and 16th holes.

6.11 Swifts:

Landscape and cover the range with a synthetic surface to overcome the problems and damage during winter months.

6.12 Cycle Path:

Metalled and lit surface from Sheepmount along Mayors Walk, passing Bitts and Sands Centre around Swifts and with a loop at Stony Holme to return to Sheepmount. Bikes available for hire at Sheepmount. Could include walk for health, jogging, circuit and nature trails and would connect and provide good access to all leisure facilities.

7. conclusions

We welcome the opportunity of commenting on the strategy and very much look forward to further deliberations around the implementation, whatever the council decides.

We recognise that CLL has a major role to play in assisting the council and can and should help shape the future for sport in the city in the widest sense.

The key to achievement of any or all of the aspirations lies in the funding of both capital and revenue and we are more than willing to discuss in detail where we can influence and assist through our unique social position.

We look forward to positive outcomes.

CARLISLE LEISURE LIMITED

DATE 26th July 2006

MANAGEMENT BOARD: Meeting no.27

TITLE: Carlisle City Council PMP sports facility
Strategy; an overview

ITEM 27. 13

LEAD OFFICER: Jim Douglas

1.0 introduction

The City council recently commissioned the leisure consultants PMP to undertake a review of the sports facilities throughout the city. The purpose was to ***produce a sports facility feasibility strategy in order to guide the future provision and management of existing resources in the Carlisle area in the context of national and local criteria.***

The purpose of this report is to present to the board the summary of findings from the review and to make comment as appropriate on the issues and assumptions contained in the executive summary. A copy of the executive summary is attached to this covering report

2. 0 key issues

2.1 The summary and main body of the report deals with a number of facilities and services which CLL are either directly or indirectly involved with.

2.2 It is crucial for CLL to be at the heart of any decisions that the council may take in regard to the strategy as we are the councils leisure management partner and both partners will be effected by any of the proposed changes and developments.

2.3 The main findings of the report which could have an impact on our business and services are :-

- swimming pool provision (the Pools)
- sports halls (the Sands Centre)
- synthetic sports pitches (the Sheepmount and or Morton)
- indoor tennis (Bitts park)
- health and fitness (Sands, Pools, Trinity, Sheepmount, Morton)

2.4 There is a need to consider and in some instances question the findings and assumptions within the body of the report. The depth and spread of the research was to say the least patchy. Many players and stakeholders were either missed or had little opportunity to fully assist with the information gathering. Most of the customer survey was carried out at the Sands Centre and the Pools with a limited amount of questionnaires being completed (400).

2.5 However the report does raise some interesting issues and statements. Some of these have been raised before such as the deterioration of the Pools fabric and the issue of the tension between sport and non-sports events at the Sands.

3.0 Findings

3.1 The findings, conclusions and options as shown are complicated and require large investment. For instance the two recommended options for swimming require between £5m to £8m, whilst other options (synthetic pitch, new sports hall, indoor tennis) is estimated at £2m.

3.2 the funding appraisal identifies 8 various sources as well as an assumed potential reduction in the management fee to CLL. These sources, providing they could all be realised comes to around 50% of the requirement which leaves a large amount of additional funding requirement.

3.3 specific facility assessment raises a number of considerations.

The pools

- The report alludes to the staffing costs as high. The current % in terms of turnover is 54%, which is below the national average for wet facilities.
- It also states that energy costs are high. However it doesn't articulate what the costs should be for a facility of this nature. Current energy costs are around 20% of turnover. There are no national indices for energy costs.
- They state that the fabric and infrastructure is shabby and has lacked investment. This has been raised to the council by a previous CLL report. A programme of uplift would benefit the complex and increase take up, however access and car parking is still a problem.
- The current level of use is high in spite of the lack of investment. The pools programme of utilisation (occupancy and take up) is good with very little pool time available for new developments and demand.
- The pools has three pools (33m; 20m; 10m) which is around 650sqm of water. The proposed option of relocating to the sands only offers around 400sqm. Therefore to relocate and maintain current water space a second pool will be required south of the city.
- Whilst there is mention of the Victorian Turkish Suite in the main body of the report there is no comment on what would happen to this facility if relocation took place. Although not already a listed building, it definitely would be if threatened with demolition. Leaving this part of the facility as a stand alone is likely to lead to its closure.

The Sands

- The main comments and issues for this facility are based on relocating a wet facility to the site, the addition of a dedicated sports hall and finding a solution to the sport v non sport conflict.
- Certainly the facility is already very well known throughout the region and additional facilities would enhance its reputation. It could become a major facility similar to other large centres throughout the country and would certainly generate over 1m users and become financially self sufficient.
- However there are major issues around the access off and on to Hardwick circus and car parking for existing customers. This has proved to be a barrier to use and requires some radical and different thinking from the council who have over time have chosen to see the car park as not there to benefit the Sands but to raise car park income from shoppers and visitors. At present there are 24 spaces for Sands users!. Bus access also has to be considered.
- If relocating swimming to the site and the addition of a new sports hall took place this would mean the loss of a substantial amount of the land/car parking. The exact area is not stated but it could only be to the south of the existing building and consideration would be needed regarding the integration of any new build and a new entrance and reception area.
- The main hall service/access road and yard has to be maintained. Any development would need to consider alternative access to this part of the building.
- The current tension of the main hall programming needs to be discussed whether any development takes place on the site or not. An additional sports hall provision has been mooted ever since the centre opened some 20 years ago due to the high demand for events and sport. Many activities and events have not taken place because of the current policy of use. The development of the hall and its events programme would benefit the centre and the city at large and especially opening up opportunities for conferences, exhibitions and better entertainment.
- Consideration is needed regarding flooding issues and the environment agency would have to be consulted.

Tennis and synthetic pitch

- the development of both these new facilities would be welcomed.
- Bitts tennis air hall has already been allocated funding from the Lawn Tennis Association and I believe it is the council's intention to proceed with this in due course. At the moment the board has agreed to assist with this by way of allocating up to £30,000 part funding if needed. This may need reviewing given the current financial position the company finds itself in with the energy cost increases and the struggle to recover outdoor income to previous levels following the flood.

- Whether the synthetic pitch is built at the Sheepmount or Morton it will impact on CLL. It is more likely that it would be built at the Sheepmount due to matching funding. This would also make sense following the recent developments that have taken place and would greatly enhance the football provision and potential for an academy to be developed.

4. Conclusions

4.1 the commissioning of the feasibility strategy is to be welcomed. However without sight of the original brief it is difficult to assess whether PMP have produced what was asked for.

4.2 the overall research of users, stakeholders and operators was limited and some of the assumptions are questionable and a number of issues have not been fully addressed.

4.3 as with many reports of this nature they act as a stimulus for further consultation, discussion and debate and this is crucial if the city is to develop its sports and leisure provision for the benefit of the community at large.

4.4 it seems clear that the cost of the options require further thought , and it may that the proposals could be achieved through incremental stages.

4.5 it is crucial for both the council and the company that CLL managers are involved in any further deliberation and potential outcomes of this review.