

Executive

Meeting Date: 25/08/2022
Portfolio: Leaders / Culture, Heritage and Leisure
Key Decision: Yes
Policy and Budget Framework: No
Public / Private: Public

Title: Victorian Health Suite (Turkish Baths) future use
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive
Report Number: CS.31/22

Purpose / Summary:

To set out the implications and options for the Victorian Health Suite (Turkish Baths) after the Leisure Operator (GLL) moves to the new facilities at The Sands Centre

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- Review the information in the report and determine an option.

Tracking

Executive:	03/10/22
Scrutiny:	Not applicable
Council:	Not applicable

1. Background

- 1.1. The Victorian Health Suite forms part of the current “Pools” facility at James Street. The facilities commonly known as the Turkish Baths consist of a Victorian style sauna, steam room, heated rooms and a plunge pool.
- 1.2. The current Pools site comprises of two distinct elements: a 1970’s building containing the 25m pool and the historic James Street Baths building, which includes the 20m and 10m pools and the Edwardian Turkish Baths.
- 1.3. The Turkish Baths are of special historic interest and are Grade II listed as the original internal decorative tiling is of high quality and complete, rendering the building a rare example, with only around 20 remaining in England.
- 1.4. The Council is currently delivering a £27M Sands Centre redevelopment project which will combine the existing entertainment, and leisure facilities at the Sands Centre and existing swimming facility at The Pools sites, to provide a modern contemporary entertainment, leisure and swimming facility at a single location.
- 1.5. The final completion of the Sands project is targeted for October 2022 when all leisure and swimming activities will transfer from The Pools site to the redeveloped Sands Centre.
- 1.6. Concurrently, with the construction of the Sands Centre, Cumbria County Council, in partnership with the Council, Network Rail and Avanti West Coast have secured £20M of funding through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal for improvements to Carlisle Railway Station.
- 1.7. Relevant to the Victorian Health Suite building is the proposed Station Gateway development of a southern station entrance. As part of this, it is planned that the 1970s building will be demolished to assist with the creation of a new public space and the James St Baths building made into a standalone facility.
- 1.8. The work to make the building into a standalone facility focuses on the building management functions of the building and does not address the heritage work required to restore the listed internal decorative tiling.
- 1.9. The Station Gateway project work is currently scheduled to commence from January 2023. This work will require all public facilities to close to allow for the demolition works to take place and there is likely to be significant disruption to the operation of the building during the Station Gateway capital works. The County Council is the lead on the Station Gateway project and they will clarify the timings of the project and any implications when they are able to do this.

- 1.10. The opening of the Sands Centre and the move of services to this new facility will see the end of GLL's obligation under the Leisure Contract to operate The Pools site, including the operation of the Turkish Baths.
- 1.11. The Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths are campaigning to protect and develop the building as a health and wellbeing centre which would also include retaining the Turkish Baths provision in their current format.
- 1.12. The Friends have set out a vision that proposes to create a new facility that would include an expanded health and wellbeing offer. This may operate as a charity or Community Interest Organisation. Funding has yet to be identified, but the Friends have previously indicated that Heritage Lottery Fund capital funding would be sought to redevelop the facilities.
- 1.13. The Friends have been successful in securing funding for a viability study for their proposal, but the work has not been reviewed by the City Council.
- 1.14. The Friends have requested that the Victorian Health Suite remains open after GLL vacate until the end of December 2022.
- 1.15. On 1st April 2023 the Sands Centre and Victorian Health Suite will be part of an asset transfer to the new Cumberland Council as part of the local government reorganisation programme.

2. Operation of facility

- 2.1. The City Council has approached our current leisure provider, GLL, who are able to continue operating the service, subject to an appropriate agreement with the City Council and on an open book basis with the Council being liable for all associated costs.
- 2.2. If the building could be split and building management arrangements put in place the cost of this is estimated at **c. £15,000 per month** which covers the operators staff, utility costs and overheads. Members are reminded that this is an estimate, and the City Council may be liable for further costs should utility costs rise, or attendance drop.

3. Building management considerations

- 3.1. In order to enable the Turkish Baths to continue operating an assessment has been made on how this element of the building could remain operational whilst the vast remainder of the facility was mothballed for demolition in January 2023. The issues that need to be considered are:
- Whether the existing three pools were to be drained down and taken out of commission.

- Revised emergency access/egress arrangements may need to be created to the Turkish Baths.
- Budget to pay for maintenance of the building and facilities. The maintenance of the structure of the building currently sits with the Council and the facilities are maintained by GLL. In any new arrangement all costs would lie with the Council.
- As the facility was scheduled to cease operating minimal maintenance has been undertaken to the property, however the longer the property remains operational the greater the risk that additional expenditure would be required to the property. At this stage costs are unknown apart from the likely necessity to replace the steam generator, which is at the end of its working life, replacement cost **£5,000** and the installation of fire suppressant systems estimated at **£7,000**.
- Ongoing business rate liabilities

3.2. The continued operation of the Victorian Health Suite would necessitate a range of statutory compliance obligations being undertaken by the Council including the following:

- Gas Safety, Health & Safety at Work Act 1974; LOLER
- Fire Safety, including compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005
- Fire Risk Assessment
- Intruder Alarm
- Legionella Risk Assessment and ongoing water monitoring
- Asbestos Management.
- DDA compliance
- Compliance with insurance requirements.
- Listed Building considerations / restrictions
- Mechanical and Electrical works are being assessed to ascertain if there is any scope to reduce the building running costs in the short term. This includes a cost / benefit analysis for any potential alterations to take into consideration the short duration of the proposed extension.

3.3. Appendix 1 (to follow) outlines the estimated costs for works to make the Turkish Baths operate as a standalone facility and the ongoing whole building costs to operate it and the holding costs.

3.4. These costs need to be balanced against the holding costs associated with closing the facilities in the period up to the demolition commencing. These holding costs would include:

- Emergency repair and maintenance
- Void property inspections

4. Options

- 4.1. To commission GLL to continue operating Turkish Baths and continue to maintain the building in a safe and legal state until the end of December 2022 (and potentially beyond dependant on the exact demolition date) and source the funding to do this
- 4.2. To cease operating the leisure offer of the Turkish Baths and mothball the facilities until the demolition works begin.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. Members are asked to consider the information and determine a preferred option.

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Appendix (to follow): Building management and statutory compliance cost analysis

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL –

PROPERTY SERVICES

FINANCE – The report considers the options for the Turkish Baths considering the impending opening of the Sands Centre redevelopment. The options outlined in the report will all carry a cost for the Council to incur for which budget will need to be identified from a supplementary estimate or virement from existing budgets. The report only identifies a cost for continued operation to the end of December with a potential subsidy of £15,000 per month to the operator plus additional building management related costs.

The report does not identify any additional that would be incurred from mothballing the facility, but this will include potential additional insurance costs due to the building being unoccupied, therefore increasing the potential risk of incidents. The costs of closing the facility would need to be quantified and a budget identified if this was the preferred option.

EQUALITY

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE –