

Community Committee	
Meeting Date	6 January 2024
Report Title	Leisure Centre – Progress report on the Member Working Group
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members are asked to agree the Vision, Aims and Outcomes in appendix I. 2. Members are asked to agree the continued work programme and timescales in appendix II.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is to update the Community Committee on the Future Leisure Options work that has been undertaken to date by the members working group.

2 Background

- 2.1 The existing leisure contract (covering Swallows & Sheppey sites) is due to expire on 31 March 2025. Faversham Pools Trust has a long-term lease which is linked to an annual grant agreement.
- 2.2 The initial fifteen-year Leisure Centre management contract with Swale Community Leisure (SCL) & Serco Leisure was due to end in September 2019, but due to uncertainty in the leisure market and further investigations needed on facility investments, the contract was subsequently extended by 5 years and 5 months (to bring it in line with SBC's financial year). The pandemic created massive disruption to the leisure market and has only just started to recover. Therefore, now is the time to restart the work to look at future options.
- 2.3 The working group have met on five occasions and have prepared a draft vision, a set of four ambitions and four outcomes. See Appendix I.
- 2.4 The working group have considered and discussed several key areas at each meeting, full details are attached at Appendix II, but this included the pros and cons of a range of different operating models, potential short and long term options, facility improvements and potential funding sources.
- 2.5 The working group has considered 6 possible options which are detailed at Appendix III.

- 2.6 Options 1 (cease the service) and 2 (lease out the facilities) were discussed in detail but members felt that neither were options to be considered at this time. As can be seen by the draft vision and outcomes, Members recognised the benefits of the leisure service and therefore did not want officers to work up closure as an option. A new service may be able to deliver budget savings whilst adapting the offer to what residents want. Leasing out the facilities transfers long term direction of the service to a third party with very little influence on how the centres are run retained. Members wanted to maintain control of how the service operates.
- 2.7 Discussions have taken place with the co-chairs of Faversham Pools. They have agreed to take the principle of the Pools being included in the chosen operating model to a Trustee Board meeting on the 8th January 2024, and will write updating the Council shortly afterwards.
- 2.8 Members also discussed whether a short-term option (1–2 year extension) would enable a wider, full procurement process to be undertaken by officers, given the need to fully analyse the recovery from the pandemic closures and facility investment requirements.
- 2.9 A decision is then required on which long term option(s) should be worked up by officers, with support of the consultants. This will be debated by the Committee in March 2024.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Members are asked to agree the Vision, Aims and Outcomes in appendix I.
- 3.2 Members are asked to agree the continued work programme and timescales in appendix II.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 To not continue with a Leisure Options working group. This is not recommended as it is a key service for the community and there needs to be time to work through the options before the contract expiry date. Failure to do so would leave us without a leisure centre service.
- 4.2 To reject or amend the draft vision, aims and outcomes – this is not recommended as the Member working group is cross party and all groups therefore had an input in them.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with a range of key leisure stakeholders, including Swale Community Leisure, Serco Leisure Ltd & Faversham Pools Trust.

- 5.2 In addition, Strategic Leisure has undertaken a soft market testing consultation with the main operators in the industry to help inform current thinking about any future opportunities in Swale.
- 5.3 Once Members confirm the options that we will look at, public consultation will be required to help understand what residents want provided within the leisure service.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The new Corporate Plan is currently being developed. The existing Corporate Plan identifies the importance of health and wellbeing on our communities. Under Priority 3 objective 5 states ‘Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities appropriate and accessible to each age group.’
Financial, Resource and Property	The leisure service is a considerable cost to overall Council budget (circa £580,000 in 2022-23). The working group need to consider which options can contribute to reducing the cost of the service. The estimated cost for the current financial year is £630,672 . As well as annual running costs, the future investment requirements are a key consideration as the buildings are all circa 30 years old. Initial discussions have been held with Active Kent and Medway and Sport England on potential funding routes.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The route to deliver the Leisure Service is dependent upon the decisions of the working group but will require procurement/legal intervention throughout 2024.
Crime and Disorder	None identified.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Any investment in the buildings need to consider reducing the carbon footprint of the service, due to their high energy usage.
Health and Wellbeing	Healthy & Wellbeing is a key output of any Leisure contract. Social impact outcomes are directly linked to the Borough’s ability to offer a suitable and easily assessable leisure offering
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified.
Equality and Diversity	Links with disability and mental health provision in the borough and a community impact assessment
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix I - Draft vision, ambitions, and outcomes.
- 7.2 Appendix II - Working Group Meetings Agenda Items.
- 7.3 Appendix III - High-Level long-term options.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [Leisure Options Working Group - Community Committee 31 October 2023](#)
- 8.2 [Leisure Options Working Group - Terms of Reference](#)