

# SWIMMING PROVISION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HEREFORD CITY

## PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CABINET

31 JULY 2008

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### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

To establish provision for swimming lessons as part of the curriculum for Herefordshire primary schools. To establish the future of the LEA swimming pool.

### Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising one or more wards.

It was included on the Forward Plan.

1. The issue was deferred from the Cabinet meeting of 10 July, 2008. It was requested that the report was deferred and be rescheduled for consideration at Cabinet on 31 July, 2008 in order to allow appropriate time to digest the outcomes of the consultation, and in order to carry out further work on the business case and clarification provided in the financial tables.

### Recommendations

- THAT (i) the LEA swimming pool not be reopened;**
- (ii) alternative provision from September 2008 be offered at Hereford Leisure Pool and that this provision by HALO be monitored to ensure that the needs of schools and other users continue to be met;**
- (iii) close collaboration and partnership working be undertaken between the Council and HALO with schools, clubs and other users of the LEA pool to ensure that a viable and efficient service is provided; and**
- (iv) a report be brought back to Cabinet by Easter 2009 at the latest outlining the outcome of the process.**

### Reasons

2. The capital requirements of the LEA swimming pool are significant in order to open in September 2008, and to improve its viability for the medium term. The Council has not identified capital to cover the medium term investment requirements. In addition there is not sufficient time to complete the works in time for September 2008. There

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are concerns over the long term viability of the LEA swimming pool in both capital and revenue terms. These should be considered alongside the use of the Hereford Leisure Pool. Further work is required to assess the possibility of income generation if the LEA swimming pool was reopened.

## **Considerations**

3. It is a requirement of the national curriculum that all children are able to swim 25 metres by the time they leave Primary School. In the past, 38 primary schools have used the LEA swimming pool next to St Martin's School, Hereford. The LEA swimming pool's maintenance programme has not kept pace with the condition of the pool and the pool was closed from the end of December 2007. Since that time 38 primary schools have used alternative provision, primarily the Hereford Leisure Pool, run by Halo. Schools have for the most part used the leisure (beach) pool.
4. Capital investment is required if the LEA swimming pool were to reopen and further costs have been identified to keep the pool open in the medium term and to make it more energy efficient. These are set out below, alongside possible revenue costs. Capital and revenue considerations are also set out if the Herefordshire Leisure Pool were to be chosen as the long term solution.

## **The Views of Schools and Pupils**

5. The 38 Primary Schools who have used the LEA swimming pool in the past favour its continued use. It was purposely designed to teach swimming and has dedicated school use. A consultation letter was sent out on 2 June 2008. The views of those that responded and the views of some pupils are contained in Appendix 1, supplemented by the views received prior to and at Cabinet on 10 July 2008. 20 schools have submitted views. 19 head teachers who responded are in favour of reopening the LEA swimming pool. One response was against reopening. There was one submission from Chair of Primary Schools Forum to clarify the Forum's position. One Petition was received to re-open the LEA swimming pool. One portfolio of letters from pupils at St Mary's C of E Primary School, Credenhill, expressing concerns with Leisure Centre provision and asking for LEA Pool to re-open was also received.
6. Over the past month 12 schools have contacted Halo. Five have stated they will not return to the Herefordshire Leisure Pool, four are waiting to hear of the Council's decision, two are making alternative arrangements at other Halo pools and one school is waiting until January 2009, when Halo propose that the main swimming pool and teaching pools are given over to school use. Some of these schools also made submissions detailed in Appendix 1.
7. The majority of the other 43 Primary Schools in Herefordshire use their local swimming pool managed by Halo. The Council already invests in a partnership with Halo to provide leisure services. Halo is moving to a fixed price for swimming across all schools that use their swimming pools from September 2008.

## **Capital Considerations**

8. The LEA swimming pool requires capital investment to return it to use and to continue to maintain it in the longer term. Estimated capital costs are set out below and have been provided by Property Services, based on their experience of undertaking works on pools. Property Services also recommend that the energy efficiency of the building and other maintenance works be considered. This is because the present engineering installation is basic, with no recycling of heat. As energy costs rise the current arrangements will lead to significant increases in energy

bills, which will affect revenue costs.

<b>Estimated Capital Investment Required for the LEA swimming pool</b>		
To enable the pool to reopen	Repairs to sand filters	£20,000
	Repairs to scum channel	£20,000
	Concrete and steel frame repairs	£13,000
	Emergency lighting	£6,000
	Replacement chlorine dosing plant	£6,000
	Reinstate tiles to pool	£2,500
	Replacement heat exchange	£5,000
	<b>Total costs estimated</b>	<b>£72,500</b>
To provide a more sustainable, energy efficient pool	Replacement of heating system	£120,000
	Relining and insulating water gutters	£15,000
	Provision of double glazing to changing room areas	£12,000
	Replacement double glazing to pool area and insulation of doors	£48,000
	DDA improvements	£15,000
	<b>Total costs estimated</b>	<b>£210,000</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£282,500</b>

9. It is important to note that these are estimates and are not guarantees that further capital works will not be required if maintenance issues occur. In addition the Council would have to plan for significant capital costs in eight to ten years, due to the nature of the LEA swimming pool building and the corrosive environment that comes with a swimming pool.
10. Appendix 1 contains the concerns of some schools that have used the Hereford Leisure Pool since the LEA swimming pool closed in December 2007. Halo has worked with Herefordshire Council Property Services to look at what measures can be put in place to address these concerns and those expressed elsewhere by schools. These measures include a revised timetable and change from using the leisure tank, with beach, to using the main pool and teaching pools. The timetable for this use is set out in Appendix 2 which indicates arrangements to December 2008 and then from January 2009. Halo would like to move to the January 2009 timetable as soon as practicable. The capital proposals set out below should therefore be considered alongside the change in practice proposed at the Hereford Leisure Pool.

<b>Estimated Capital Investment Required for the Hereford leisure pool</b>		
To address some of the concerns raised by schools	Relighting of corridor Non-slip flooring to link corridor Decoration and planting of link corridor Lowering of coat pegs and decoration of 2 changing areas Minor works to showers to provide privacy cubicles Minor improvement works to coach parking area to the front of the pool and repairs to steps including handrail provision	
	Total costs estimated	<b>£35,250</b>

11. There has been discussion about the need for further works to take place, including a new footpath at the rear and a new link corridor between the changing area and the main pool. Such works are estimated at approximately £125,000. However, Members should note that other Halo pools do not provide the level of exclusive use to schools that such works would provide. There is concern by some schools about the proximity of the public to school children. Halo suggests that this should be considered in terms of reasonable management arrangements to ensure the transfer of children from buses or the entrance way to the pool.

#### **Sources of Capital Funding**

12. At present there is no guaranteed capital funding secured specifically for the above works at either pool. There may be the possibility of using funding identified to support educational provision under a Section 106 agreement between the Council and Wimpey UK Ltd as part of the development of the Bradbury Lines site. This has been discussed at a variety of meetings, but no formal agreement has been made to use this funding for capital works at either the LEA swimming pool or the Hereford Leisure Pool. £182,000 has been received by the Council to spend on educational provision. The term educational provision is generic and therefore could be used to cover swimming pool costs. Phase two of the development at the Bradbury Lines site could release a further £100,000 for educational provision. However, this money is not secured.
13. There is at present insufficient time and capital identified to make the reopening of the LEA swimming pool a realistic option for September 2008. The total estimated capital bill at present is £282,500 for the LEA swimming pool, compared with £35,250 for the Herefordshire Leisure Pool. Funding improvements of the Herefordshire Leisure Pool would enable Section 106 money to be spent elsewhere, to benefit pupils in different ways. Some of the potential schemes that this money could contribute to are:
- the remodelling of Blackmarston Special School (possible total cost £1m)
  - the extension of Aconbury Centre for an additional teaching area (estimated cost of £30,000)
  - Toilet improvements to St Martin's Primary School (estimated costs of £40,000)

## **Revenue Considerations**

14. Under the School Finance Regulations it is possible to retain a central budget not exceeding 0.1% of the Total Net Schools Budget. This is the total budget comprised of the Dedicated Schools Grant, Learning and Skills Council income and Local Authority contributions. For 2008/09 the amount that can be retained under these regulations is c. £88,000 (£87,666 to be exact. In 2007/08 it was £78,456). School funding regulations permit funding up to this limit to be used on any purpose additional to those education purposes set out in the regulations. Whilst this amount may be used on projects in support of our schools, in recent years this amount has been used solely to support the LEA swimming pool.

## **The LEA swimming pool**

15. In addition to this central budget schools have been charged £66 per hour to use the LEA swimming pool. The LEA swimming pool has also been used by the Hereford Swimming Club who has been charged £32.80 per hour. This is calculated to be significantly less than the true cost of their hourly use.
16. Over many years the revenue costs of the LEA swimming pool have been in excess of the budget. The total cost for 2007/08 was £163,641. £50,673 was generated as income through charges to schools and clubs. £78,456 was covered by the central budget, leaving an overspend of £34,511. The overspend in each of the past four years has been covered by the Directorate budget and from 2006 by the Dedicated Schools Grant.
17. Members should note that energy prices have increased substantially over the past five years and that these price rises are accelerating. £20,000 was spent on gas and electricity in 2003/04, £46,000 in 2007/08 and this was during a financial year when the LEA swimming pool was not open from January 2008. Income has also fallen over a number of years. This may be as a result of the Leominster pool opening and investment in other Halo pools, including the Herefordshire Leisure Pool, thereby creating alternative provision.
18. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee considered the matter of the LEA swimming pool on 21 April 2008, and requested that an independent swimming pool specialist give a view on the potential revenue costs of reopening the pool. The consultant employed for this work was Mr Paul Cluett, Director of Quality Leisure Management Ltd. The consultant's report was prepared on the basis of information provided by Halo and the Council. Staff costs were modelled on Halo's terms and conditions.
19. Full year revenue costs for a reopened LEA swimming pool are estimated by the consultant at approximately £171,000 per annum (excluding capital costs of £122,815 identified in the consultants report). Even allowing for income estimated by the consultant at £58,180 this is considerably in excess of the maximum possible central budget set out in paragraph 17. Actual income in 2007/08 was £50,673 which includes clubs and schools. The consultant report included the full costs of operating the pool to commercial industry standards. These costs are dependent upon capital works being carried out. Income assumes that all 38 primary schools would continue to use this pool.

LEA swimming pool	Consultant's Report Covering Commercial Industrial Standards Costs
	£'000
Operating Costs	171
Less Income	-58
Net Cost	113
Maximum centrally retained budget (2008/09)	88
Loss of	25

Previous information to Members and the consultation letter contained in Appendix 1 assumed a centrally retained budget of £78,456 (for 2007/08). The above assumes the maximum centrally retained budget available for 2008/09, detailed in paragraph 17. £68 per hour is the sum that Halo would charge from September if the arrangements from January 2008 were to continue.

20. The table illustrates that without an increase in income the LEA swimming pool would operate at a loss. This is unsustainable and if the LEA swimming pool were to reopen a clear business case, including guaranteed income from schools and clubs, would need to be in place. If fewer schools were to use the LEA swimming pool, and/or clubs did not generate the necessary income, the burden of risk would fall on the Council. As paragraph 17 indicates the centrally retained budget within Children and Young People's Directorate is limited through School Finance Regulations. Moreover, this sum will reduce as the fall in pupil numbers reduces the overall Total Net Schools Budget.

#### **Halo Hereford Leisure Pool**

21. In 2007/08 Halo charged primary schools £66 per hour for the use of the Hereford Leisure Pool. This compared with £66 per hour charged at all the other leisure pools run by Halo, apart from Ledbury Pool at £63 per hour. Halo will implement a standard charge of £68 for every pool from September 2008, including the Hereford Leisure Pool. Halo are prepared to become the permanent alternative to the LEA swimming pool.

#### **Additional Considerations**

22. Cabinet should note that in addition to requesting a wider review of the financing of the LEA swimming pool, on 21 April 2008 Children's Services Scrutiny Committee resolved that the Cabinet Member (Children's Services) be recommended to consider:

That works within the budget of £72,500 to reopen the St Martin's Pool be undertaken, once sufficient schools had committed themselves for a 3 year period at a level of charge which would cover the net costs;

It should be noted that there is no budget of £72, 500. These were the costs as identified in paragraph 11.

23. The South Wye Partnership has considered the possibility of a 'Quirk Transfer' but does not want to pursue this option. Hereford Swimming Club has also felt that they could not take any responsibility for the Pool even though they would like to see it continue to operate.
24. Schools Forum budget working group have been consulted on their willingness to support the retention of the c.£88,000 centrally retained element of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. They recommended that the budget and subsidy be delegated to schools and on financial grounds that the LEA (St Martin's) swimming pool be closed.
25. Falling pupil numbers require on-going budget reductions in the central services provided to schools, in addition to the automatic budget reductions in schools resulting from fewer pupils. If budget reductions are not achieved in the central budgets, including the LEA swimming pool, equivalent reductions will need to be found in school budgets

## **Overall Financial Implications**

26. The report had indicated the possible financial implications of reopening the LEA swimming pool and the interim arrangements for using the Hereford Leisure Pool.
27. The estimated capital requirements for the LEA pool is £282,500 over two years compared with £32,500 for Hereford Leisure Pool. There is no identified capital finance for either specific requirement. There is £182,000 of capital funding available from Section 106 monies for education provision. Given the national curriculum requirement around swimming its use seems reasonable to support capital expenditure at either site (both of which are owned by the Council). However, this would not prove sufficient to cover the costs identified for the LEA swimming pool. Using all of it for the LEA swimming pool would not enable other possible projects for educational purposes to benefit from the Section 106 monies.
28. The revenue position indicates that the LEA swimming pool has not met its costs over a number of years. The recommended review period will enable Members to evaluate the effectiveness of interim arrangements. Detailed information on potential costs and income will also be explored. It will enable potential capital funding to be clarified.

## **Risk Management**

29. From a service viewpoint, it is important to ensure children can access water facilities which allow them to learn to swim and meet National Curriculum requirements.
30. Halo is willing to consider rescheduling the use of the various swimming tanks as detailed in Appendix 2 in time for schools to feel the full benefit, but is considering this alongside potential disruption to existing customers. Halo are concerned that if they are unable to reschedule to the extent set out in Appendix 2 prior to January 2009, some schools may express dissatisfaction which may affect the reputation of the pool.

31. Options of either investing in the Hereford Leisure Pool or the LEA swimming pool are set out in the report. A further variation which has been raised is the transfer of the LEA swimming pool to another body by Quirk agreement but this would be unlikely to be successful until after the Council has made significant capital investment to return it to a suitable state for use. Capital has not been identified to meet such costs. This option would also not overcome the inherent high cost in operating that pool and the consequent costs to schools.

## **Consultees**

Schools

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Letter and Consultation responses.

Appendix 2 – School Use of Hereford Leisure Pool Complex (Term time only)

## **Background Papers**

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee paper April 2008