

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting15th June 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Splash/Stockton Sports Centre Facilities Review

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to proposals to extend the Splash leisure facility thereby concentrating the major leisure public sector provision in Stockton in one, central location.

The rationale for a 'one site' solution was to address the major difficulties presented by Stockton Sports Centre and the opportunities presented by the Splash site, which were set within the context of the changing profile of publicly accessible leisure facilities in Stockton Borough and the need to develop a sustainable, strategic approach to the provision of major leisure facilities.

In February 2001 an Asset Management Condition Survey of Stockton Sports Centre indicated extensive and significant issues affecting all aspects of the facility, estimated at least £900k to rectify. At current prices this work would cost around £1million with at least further £1million being required to bring the facilities up to a standard of design consistent with modern customer demands. However, despite, funding restrictions and competing demands on the limited capital programme, it had been possible to maintain the facility and develop the service through short-term maintenance and a positive approach to the promotion of activities at the centre. In recent months however there has been increasing pressure on the service through the failure of specific elements of the facility. The floodlit, artificial pitch was now closed for health and safety reasons and would only be useable in the most favourable, dry conditions in the summer. All users had been successfully relocated at alternative facilities. It was well past its natural lifespan and must be completely re-laid and refurbished if it is to come back into regular use. Depending on the type of surface and additional works to fences and lights, this work would cost £200-300k. In addition, problems with the squash courts, roof, drainage and main sports hall would require at least £50k this year in order to remain fully operational in the short-term.

In short, the facility had reached the point of being unviable without

urgent investment. However, as operators, Tees Active could not be expected to invest in a failing building with an uncertain future and the Council would only wish to invest in a facility with a sustainable future.

Splash, on the other hand, continued to attract greater numbers of visitors and enjoyed an excellent central location with good car parking and access through public transport. Its proximity to the town's retail centre also marked Splash as an ideal location allowing visitors to combine easily leisure and shopping, thereby increasing the economic vitality of the town centre. The Splash site also offered opportunities to expand an already successful facility and build on a growing customer base.

The provision of public leisure facilities must also be considered in the context of the other leisure opportunities that have emerged in the past five years, notably in the private sector and in association with schools. In addition, affordability and financial sustainability were key factors. In the past five years there had been developments at several secondary schools within the Borough increasing public access to sports halls and artificial, floodlit sports areas. Even with the removal of Stockton Sports Centre, there would still be significantly more publicly accessible sports halls and artificial pitches available in the borough than there were five years ago. Taken in a long-term strategic context, the development of a one-site operation at Splash, the removal of Stockton Sports Centre and the development of school sites will lead to an improved and sustainable stock of facilities and an improved leisure offer to the people of Stockton Borough. Crucially, it would also maintain the strategy of ensuring there were wet and dry facilities in each of the three major townships. The implications for the future delivery of the current services provided at Stockton Sports Centre were summarised.

The key proposed changes to the Splash building included:

- Extended Activ8 fitness facility on the first floor approximately doubling the current capacity and changing rooms.
- Including specialist treatment area for health service activities currently provided at Stockton Sports Centre. This includes the back care clinic, outpatients physiotherapy services, and all other health services currently operating from the Stockton Sports Centre health suite.
- Extended foyer and relocated reception desk.
- Expanded café/catering area
- Specialist children's play barn
- Two new multi-activity spaces and changing facilities approximately replacing two activity spaces at Stockton Sports Centre
- Relocated staff/management accommodation and meeting room
- Extended changing facilities for swimming pool to accommodate the increased demand

- Re-alignment of car parking bays
- Addition of a four court sports hall to accommodate activities currently hosted in the Stockton Sports Centre sports hall
- Ability to utilise sports hall as central civic function venue

The financial implications of the proposals fell into two categories. Firstly, regarding the funding the capital development and secondly the revenue implications for Tees Active. The extended Splash had been costed at approximately £4.2m which could be funded through prudential borrowing at an annual cost of £324k over a 25-year period. This would be recovered directly from Tees Active Ltd management fee. The implications of this on the Council's VAT position were summarised which would require future capital bids to be monitored and vetted and the potential risks identified early enough, so that the position could be managed.

The revenue position for Tees Active would result in savings from the closure of Stockton Sports Centre even assuming that all staff were redeployed. The new expanded cost centre at Splash was likely to result in more revenue with additional staff and premises costs being covered by the additional income generated.

The great advantage of adopting proposals based on the principle of extending Splash as a one-site operation for leisure in Stockton was that it released the revenue associated with the current Stockton Sports Centre to help repayment of borrowing costs. Any proposals based on re-developing Stockton Sports Centre would not release any revenue funding and would consequently impose a significantly greater financial burden on the authority. It was clear, therefore, that with the full savings from the closure of Stockton Sports Centre, Stockton Borough Council and Tees Active would be able to develop a new, sustainable facility with minimal or no additional revenue burden.

RESOLVED that :-

1. That Cabinet accept the principle of a 'one-site' leisure solution for central Stockton with an emphasis on health and fitness and family based activity.
2. That the proposed content of the extended Splash be approved as detailed at paragraphs 18-19 of the report.
3. That the proposed timetable and project plan for the closure be approved.
4. Cabinet authorise officers of the Council to work with Tees Active to ensure customers and user groups are kept fully informed of proposals and are assisted to find bespoke alternative provision where appropriate.

5. Cabinet approve the financial plan proposed in paragraphs 23-28 of the report.

6. Officers of the council be authorised to complete detailed plans, apply for appropriate consents and prepare to submit the work for tender.

7. Plans and designs for the new facility be displayed in the Members Library and Splash when they are available with invitation for comments.

8. Officers report back to members at a later date with the proposed solution, at a cost-neutral effect to the Council, to the car parking issue as highlighted in consultation with users.

9. Following consultation, final plans and designs agreement be delegated to Director of Development & Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To determine the option of extending Splash facilities.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Mrs Beaumont and Mrs O'Donnell each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a result of their role as Council representatives on Tees Active.

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in respect of this item as she was a governor of one of the schools referred to in the report as providing leisure opportunities.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 23rd June 2006

Proper Officer
06 July 2006