

Central Bedfordshire Council

11 October 2022

Executive

New Leighton Leisure Centre

Report of: Cllr Tracey Stock, Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities (tracey.stock@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director: Lorna Carver, Director of Place and Communities (lorna.carver@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a decision that is Key

Purpose of this report

1. To provide the results of the public consultation on proposals for the Leighton Leisure Centre, together with updated RIBA Stage 3 plans which respond to consultation feedback.
2. To seek Executive approval to proceed with the proposed scheme; and submit a Planning Application.
3. To seek delegated authority for the Director of Place & Communities to enter into all necessary legal agreements to construct the leisure centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. Acknowledge and consider the public consultation feedback and approve implementation of the New Leighton-Linslade Leisure Centre.
2. Subject to recommendation 1 above, approve delegated authority to the Director of Place and Communities, in consultation with the Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Communities, the Director of Resources and the Executive Member for Corporate Resources, to procure a building contractor, subject to planning permission being granted, and to enter into all appropriate legal documentation to construct the leisure centre within the budgeted figure.

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. The new Leighton-Linslade Leisure Centre is contained within the Leisure Strategy which was considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 19 November 2020 and approved at Executive on 8 June 2021. This report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny on 7 October for consideration.

Executive Summary

2. The Leisure Facilities Strategy (2021) highlights the need to address the current quality and quantity of indoor sports facilities in the Leighton area; to serve current and future residents, and it concluded that a new centre was required to replace the existing Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre.
3. An Executive report presented in December 2021 provided the rationale for delivering a leisure centre within the Clipstone Park area of the East of Leighton development and for the proposed facility mix.
4. The current MTFP has a budget of £25m for the provision of a leisure centre for the Leighton area.
5. A public consultation was conducted between 28th April and 22nd July 2022. The consultation report found that a majority of consultees were in favour of the leisure centre and the proposed facility mix.
6. This report presents the findings of the public consultation and outlines what amendments have been made to the proposals to take account of public feedback. The full consultation report is provided in Appendix B.
7. The proposed site is adjacent to extensive sports pitch provision planned for the Clipstone Park and Stearn land parcels and a leisure centre located on this site would effectively create an indoor and outdoor sports hub for the Leighton area.

Public Consultation

8. To maximise public responses to the consultation the following measures were taken:
 - i. 20,000 newsletters were delivered to every household in Leighton Linslade and the surrounding area.
 - ii. Five consultation events were held as part of the process; one for clubs and block bookers, one via Teams and three drop in events at the Market, Library and Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre.
 - iii. Presentations were given to CBC Councillors in the Leighton area, Leighton Linslade Partnership Committee, Leighton Linslade Town Council and Eggington Parish Council.

- iv. A CBC webpage provided information on the consultation and detailed FAQ's.
- v. Social media was used to promote the consultation.

Consultation Responses

9. 775 responses to the online public consultation found that:

- i. 60% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that 'the proposed centre will improve the leisure and community provision for residents in Leighton Linlade and the surrounding area.'
- ii. 30% of respondents never currently use Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre; the top two reasons (from those that provided one) were the location and old, inadequate or poor facilities.
- iii. Of the facilities proposed for inclusion in the new centre the highest supported facilities (percentage of respondents who ticked strongly agree or agree) were the main pool (87%), changing places facilities (87%), learner pool (85%), café (82%), gym (78%) and multi-purpose studios (78%).
- iv. The least supported facility was the squash courts, however, 60% strongly agreed or agreed they were required.
- v. 25% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that 'the proposed centre will improve the leisure and community provision for residents in Leighton Linlade and the surrounding area.' The primary reasons for this were the perceived need for two leisure centres in the town, the proposed location of the new centre and concerns about accessibility via sustainable transport.
- vi. Additional facilities requested for the centre were varied but included:
 - a. A competition size pool and/ or associated spectator seating and / or timer screens
 - b. Shooting/ rifle range
 - c. Sports hall/ improved provision for badminton or other racquet sports
 - d. Increase in depth of the learner pool from the proposed 1.8m to c.3m specifically for sub-aqua use (as at Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre)
 - e. Spa facilities (sauna/ steam room)

Petitions and Motions Received

- 10. In addition to responses in the consultation requesting a deeper learner pool, CBC has received an e-petition from the Sub Aqua Club via 'change.org' (rather than a CBC e-petition) seeking a 3metre depth in the new learner pool (87 supporters)
- 11. A motion was received from the Leighton Linlade Partnership Committee on the 16 June asking for the Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre to be retained as a leisure facility or a community hub in addition to the provision of the new centre.

Issues raised by the Public Consultation

Location of the Proposed Leisure Centre

12. The site for the new leisure centre is located 0.7 miles from the centre of Leighton Buzzard and the consultation responses showed that 60% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that 'the proposed centre will improve the leisure and community provision for residents in Leighton Linslade and the surrounding area'.
13. The Leisure Facilities Strategy highlighted that the proposed site offers a similar level of accessibility to Tiddenfoot for the catchment area.
14. The existing leisure site is too constrained to allow for extension/ refurbishment. the age and condition of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre means that provision of facilities is a priority.
15. There will be a bus stop provided in the vicinity of the leisure centre. Once the current review of bus services within Leighton-Linslade has concluded it can be determined which bus routes will stop at the leisure centre.
16. The Clipstone Park development has planning consent for a network of footpaths and cycle paths which the leisure centre will link into and benefit from.
17. The Equality Impact Assessment highlights the need to look at ways to further improve cycle and footpath links between Clipstone Park and Leighton-Linslade to mitigate the impact of the new location on residents adversely impacted by the change.

Future of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre

18. The future of Tiddenfoot Leisure Centre is out of scope for this project and therefore was not addressed as part of the public consultation. The consultation focused primarily on the location and facility mix for a new leisure centre. The future of Tiddenfoot leisure centre will be considered by the corporate landlord once any decision is made about a new leisure centre.

Competition Pool and/ or Increased Spectator Seating:

19. The Leisure Strategy highlights the need for a community pool rather than a competition pool. The new centre will provide an 8-lane 25metre pool with 130 pool-side spectator seats and a 17x10 metre variable-base learner pool plus a confidence pool, which meets the Leisure Strategy recommendations.
20. Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre in Biggleswade has an 8-lane, 25metre pool which also provides competition standard seating. Full-size 50metre competition pools are available in Bedford and Luton. Full-size competition pools are currently available in Bedford and Luton.

Rifle / Target Shooting

21. The Leisure Strategy does not include shooting as one of the sports formally assessed and it is not a facility that Central Bedfordshire has previously provided within indoor leisure centres.

Provision of a Sports Hall

22. The Leisure Facilities Strategy modelled the requirement for sports hall facilities to serve the Leighton area and determined that one 4-court size sports hall is required to meet demand from the current and planned population. The Strategy identified that this could be provided by the current Cedars Upper School sports hall (which is a 6-court sports hall).
23. Cedars School has confirmed they will continue community access to the sports hall and squash courts via a Community Use Agreement and will include these facilities in their existing booking system.

Learner Pool Depth

24. The designs for the leisure centre include a 2 metre-deep learner pool which is the same as the learner pool depth at Dunstable and Flitwick. A 3 metre pool is the preferred depth for sub-aqua activity and the learner pool at Tiddenfoot being 3m is currently used for sub aqua activity once a week.
25. Installing a 3 metre-deep pool has significant financial implications for the construction of the whole pool hall as it will increase the foundations required for the main pool and is not budgeted for. The increased water volume will also increase running costs for the centre.

Spa Facilities

26. The inclusion of spa facilities has been considered at other leisure centres constructed more recently but they are not a core facility within CBC leisure centres and are not budgeted for.

RIBA Stage 3 Designs – Changes as a Result of Consultation

27. Changes to RIBA Stage 3 designs as result of public consultation include:
 - i. Improved access to outdoor changing facilities
 - ii. Serving hatch from the café to the exterior to improve access from pitches
 - iii. Increased seating for the swimming pool

Reason/s for decision

28. To secure a site for provision of a leisure centre without incurring the capital cost of land purchase.

29. To provide modern indoor sports and leisure spaces and facilities to meet the needs of the current and planned population of the Leighton area and address the recommendations in the Leisure Facilities Strategy.
30. To increase the scale and accessibility of facilities in the Leighton area to support increased participation in sport and physical activity, promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

Council priorities

Enhancing Central Bedfordshire

31. The council's ongoing programme of investment in its leisure centres and innovative programming delivers modern, attractive facilities and services that enhance and support their individual environments. This investment will allow Central Bedfordshire Council to both improve built infrastructure needs and provide residents with access to high quality leisure provision that meets modern standards and customer expectations.

Great Resident Services

32. CBC leisure facilities support our residents in participating in formal sports and other forms of physical activity. CBC leisure centres deliver responsive facilities and services. The potential facility mix for Leighton- Linslade including sports facilities, adult social care day space which support the delivery of a range of services and community space.

Improving Education and Skills

33. CBC leisure centres provide a range of opportunities for people to learn new skills, improve their ability to achieve personal goals all of which contribute to improved health and self-esteem. The services provided through leisure centres contribute to local employment including apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities that attract residents throughout the life-course.

Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing

34. CBC leisure centres provide facilities and opportunities to enable services such as Adult Social Care, to deliver services to the community in high quality, accessible surroundings. In addition to the sports and leisure facilities provided, the leisure operator for the leisure centre and the Physical Activity Team run a range of programmes which help deliver against Public Health targets and support residents improve their physical and mental health.

Creating stronger communities

35. The design and composition of CBC leisure centres enable programmes which promote social inclusion, independence and engagement in healthy behaviours that support both physical and mental wellbeing.

Legal Implications

36. Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provides (amongst other things) for a local authority to provide such recreational facilities as it thinks fit. These powers include the power to provide indoor and outdoor facilities.
37. This report provides the Executive with details of the public consultation regarding the proposed procurement of a new Leighton Leisure Centre. Subject to consideration of the public response to the consultation, the report seeks Executive approval to procure a new Leighton Leisure Centre. Appended to this report is the Consultation Report detailing the responses to the public consultation. The consultation should be undertaken with the principles known as the set out in the "Gunning Principles" (i) Consultation must be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage; (ii) the proper must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response; (iii) Adequate time must be given for consideration and response; (iv) the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalizing any statutory proposals.
38. The Executive will note the Equality Impact Assessment attached to this report. The Public Sector Equality Duty are contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Under the duty, local authorities must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
39. To secure the delivery of the new Leighton leisure centre, and its future management and operation, appropriate legal arrangements are required between CBC and the development consortium. The report informs the Executive that securing the land identified for the proposed new Leighton Leisure and a contractor is subject to planning permission being granted.

Financial and Risk Implications

40. The MTFP includes a budget of £25m for the provision of a leisure centre to serve the Leighton area. The latest cost estimate indicates that the cost is likely to exceed the budgeted figure due to the national increases in construction costs and the cost to provide utility services. The exact cost of the facility will be determined by the procurement of a building contractor.
41. The design includes accommodation which will be suitable for Adult Social Care use to enable community-based activities and provide space for community groups. This element of the centre is costed at c.£2.3 million and remains subject to any required statutory consultation and budgetary approval.
42. Securing the land identified for the leisure centre is dependent upon the grant of planning permission; the planning application and deed of variation are to be submitted in November 2022.

43. The procurement of a building contractor will commence subject to planning permission being granted.

Equalities and Fairness Implications

44. The PSED (Public Sector Equality Duty) requires public bodies to consider all individuals when conducting their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between in respect of nine protected characteristics: age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
45. The Leisure Facilities Strategy 2021 confirms the ongoing development and enhancement of CBC's leisure centres which will help ensure there is appropriate and accessible provision across the council's leisure estate. The provision of facilities and services to cater for a wider range of users and needs is considered at the design stage of each project to ensure facilities are accessible and flexible for various uses.
46. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted in conjunction with the public consultation (attached Appendix C). This finds that the new centre will provide improved access to facilities for people with disabilities or mobility issues. Steps into the pool, an Oxford Dipper and Pool Hoist and wet side changing for people with disabilities will improve pool access and there will be two Changing Places facilities and an increased number of accessible toilets. The EIA shows that the only adverse impact is on some individuals who may have to travel further to access the leisure centre. This will be mitigated through working with other CBC departments to look at opportunities to improve access by foot and cycle and to ensure the leisure centre is accessible by bus.

Sustainability Implications

47. The definition of sustainability that underpins the council's Sustainability Plan is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As well as covering issues such as climate change, it also includes aspects that target ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages, and, making our settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The proposed new leisure centre will support our residents to live active, healthy lives by providing access to modern, high-quality facilities which will serve the community for decades to come.
48. Investing in new facilities that are fit for purpose, adaptable and suitable for co-location with other services such as leisure, libraries, health and or education provide an opportunity to rationalise the number of buildings the Council manages. They also provide an opportunity to maximise use of available space, modern technology and energy efficiency to reduce and reuse heat and power within the building. The new centre will also comply with Sport England design guidance relating to sustainability and architects will consider options to increase the efficiency, sustainability and eco credentials of the building within budgetary confines.

49. The proposed leisure centre would sit within the Clipstone Park development's planned provision of informal open space, landscaping and would link to the planned cycleways and footpath network which will support and promote access on foot and by bicycle.

Conclusion and Next Steps

50. Subject to Executive approval, the agreed facility mix will include an 8-lane pool, large gym, two exercise studios, spin studio, flexible studio/community space, two squash courts, flexible community spaces and a café.

51. The next steps are:

- i. Submission of a planning application in November 2022, including a Statement of Community Involvement.
- ii. Procurement of a construction contractor.
- iii. Subject to the above, completion of the leisure centre is estimated to be Summer 2025.

Appendices

The following Appendices are attached/provided through an electronic link:

Appendix A: Site Plan
Appendix B: Consultation Report
Appendix C: Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

The following background papers, not previously available to the public, were taken into account and are available on the Council's website:

None

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