



## PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

### INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE LEADER

### TOPIC - RIVER PARK LEISURE CENTRE CONSULTANCY REQUIREMENTS

### PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Corporate Director (Governance), the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

### Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Steve Tilbury, Tel: 01962 848 256, Email [stilbury@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:stilbury@winchester.gov.uk)

Committee Administrator: Nancy Graham, Tel: 01962 848 235, Email: [ngraham@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:ngraham@winchester.gov.uk)

### SUMMARY

- 1.1 In March 2012 Cabinet considered report CAB 2306 which drew attention to the likely scale of investment needed to maintain the River Park Leisure Centre in Winchester which is now nearly 40 years old.
- 1.2 The Report suggested that the Council should consider as an alternative the possibility of building a new centre, more suited to the needs of the community, especially given the likely expansion of the population over the period of the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Report identified the need for such a major decision to be properly informed by evidence and technical advice. This will provide the Council with the information it requires to compare options and make a proper financial evaluation of their impact on the Council's financial outlook.
- 1.4 To move towards a decision, it is suggested that the Council commissions three pieces of consultancy advice:

- a. an update on the condition survey of the River Park Leisure Centre to provide a full picture of the repair and maintenance requirements over the next ten years,
  - b. an analysis and recommendations on the content, scope and operating costs of a replacement leisure centre. A brief for this study is attached as Appendix 1,
  - c. a report from planning consultants on the site options for a replacement facility identifying constraints and abnormal costs.
- 1.5 The condition survey update described in (a) has already been commissioned as part of the requirements for updating the Asset Management Plan and will be to hand when required. Item (c) would be best commissioned with a clearer picture of what facility requirements are to be tested and is, in any case, a less involved piece of work than (b). This will be commissioned once the report on new facility options has begun to take shape. It is the report on the new facility options which is the major piece of work. It requires consideration of local issues, the regional and national issues in sports provision and significant work on business planning to evaluate the affordability of different options. It will take at least three months to complete and should be commissioned as soon as possible following the submissions of competitive bids by suitably qualified consultants. The cost of the two pieces of work (b) and (c) should not exceed £50,000. The cost of this can be covered by a virement of General Fund Revenue Budget from the Asset Management Plan – buildings maintenance budget. Approval for this virement is required at this stage, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 7.4.
- 1.6 The evaluation mechanism proposed for the award of the consultancy contract is to the lowest priced submission which demonstrates that sufficient and suitable resources have been allocated to the work. This is not one of the two mechanisms recognised in the Council's Contract Procedure Rules but is considered appropriate for a contract of this type.
- 1.7 Once received the reports taken together can inform a decision by the Council regarding the future of River Park in Spring 2013.

### **DECISION**

- 1 That approval be given to commission consultancy advice as described in the report to inform a decision on the future of River Park Leisure Centre.
- 2 That the evaluation mechanism proposed in the consultancy brief be approved
- 3 That a virement of £50,000 from the Buildings maintenance budget be approved to meet the estimated cost of this work.

**REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Decisions on the future of major leisure facilities will have significant consequences for the Council whatever course of action is followed. The option not to commission external consultancy was considered and rejected because commissioning the work will inform the decision making process and reduce the risk of an undesirable outcome.

The purpose of the consultancy is not to substitute for the Council's own judgement or the officer advice which is available to the Council, but to undertake work and provide independent evidence on which judgements can be formed.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

The consultancy work described will be commissioned through competitive quotations from a number of suitably qualified consultancies. There is no specific existing budget for the work and a budget virement of £50,000 of General Fund Revenue Budget from the Asset Management Plan – buildings maintenance budget is being requested, in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 7.4.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION**

The Council has previously stated that it intends to consider the options for River Park Leisure Centre and this has precipitated a significant local campaign supporting its replacement, and by implication measures which are needed to investigate that option. A petition was presented at the meeting of Council on 7 November 2012 which urged the Council to consider the option of building a new leisure centre.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

Cllr Collin raised a concern that the brief suggested that access to the leisure centre by was difficult. The brief says that access for local residents (i.e. those on foot and using cycles) is excellent and the wording is intended to make a distinction between those modes and access for those travelling some distance using vehicular means. The final version brief will be modified slightly to clarify this point.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED**

None

**DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

None

**Approved by: (signature)**

**Date of Decision: 04.12.12**

**Councillor Keith Wood – Leader**

**Appendix 1**

**Project Brief and Invitation to Bid for Consultancy Work  
River Park Leisure Centre, Winchester**

Introduction

Winchester City Council is the district council serving a population of 118,000 people in central Hampshire. Winchester itself is the main population centre with approximately 40,000 residents located in the north east of the district. There are no other large settlements, but a number of market towns and villages are spread throughout the 240 square miles of the council area. The district runs as far south as the M27 corridor where residents look mainly to Portsmouth and Fareham for their major services.

Winchester is a generally prosperous and successful city with high levels of public engagement in community and sporting activities. It is home to a number of major public sector employers and has excellent communication links to Southampton, Basingstoke and London by road and rail.

The River Park Leisure Centre (RPLC) serves the city of Winchester and the surrounding area as its principle multi-purpose public leisure centre. RPLC opened in 1974 (the pool hall was subsequently replaced after a fire in 1987) and is typical of its generation of facilities containing the following elements:

- 6 lane 25m swimming pool
- small learner pool
- 8 court sports hall
- 4 squash courts
- good quality gym and fitness facilities
- appropriate ancillary facilities
- 4 tennis courts, small artificial turf pitch, car parking

RPLC is located at North Walls Recreation Ground in a central Winchester location. Access is excellent for local residents many of whom can cycle or walk to the centre. It is more complex for those who need to travel by car through the town centre. The centre is operated under contract by DC Leisure. It has been well maintained and has benefited from significant investment in upgrading of gym and dry side changing elements as well as pool plant.

### What is the Issue?

The population of Winchester will grow over the next ten years as a result of provision made in the new Local Plan. Permission has been granted for the development of 2000 homes at Barton Farm close to the town centre and the first occupation is likely to take place in the middle of 2014.

This increase in population will place pressure on the infrastructure for sport and recreation currently provided in the town, and especially RPLC. This will be particularly noticeable in relation to swimming facilities given the high current operating load. RPLC is not easily adaptable or extendable.

The Council has determined that it should continue to provide a major public sports and leisure facility in Winchester. It believes that the provision of high quality sports facilities is important in encouraging participation and providing a centrepiece for the community.

The Council is therefore concerned that although still serviceable, having reached nearly 40 years of age, it is inevitable that RPLC is in the latter part of its operational life. Even without major structural issues to be addressed, this means that the cost of routine maintenance, repair and replacement of life expired elements will become a greater burden over time. The Council does not want to reach a position where 'patching up' a life expired facility drains scarce resources which could have more wisely been invested in a new build.

The Council is giving serious consideration to whether it would be prudent to commit to a replacement facility now rather than wait until RPLC enters a more serious period of decline or failure to meet the reasonable expectations of those it serves. It should be stressed that the Council has an open mind about whether that point has yet been reached.

### Work to be Commissioned

To inform its decision on how to proceed the Council has agreed to commission three pieces of work:

1. A full condition survey of the existing building which will provide a benchmark analysis of the likely costs in extending the life of RPLC. This has been commissioned from a specialist consultancy
2. A review of site options for the provision of new build facilities by planning consultants. This will be commissioned shortly.
3. Advice from a specialist sport and leisure consultancy on the nature and extent of the facilities that should be included in a new build facility were one to be provided, and of the financial basis on which such a facility could operate. That is the subject of this brief.

### Requirements of the Brief

The Council requires advice on three specific points and the consultants report should be structured so as to provide clear and specific recommendations on each:

- 1. Identify the nature and extent of the sports and leisure facilities and services that would be provided in a new build leisure centre to meet the reasonable expectations of the catchment communities over the next 15 years. Provide an informed estimate of the annual income and expenditure derived from this scheme projected over a ten year period from completion. This baseline option should be termed the 'community leisure requirement'.**

This evaluation should use demographic information, participation trend data, existing activity data and analysis of other local facilities to suggest a level of provision within a new build facility which will serve recreational, developmental and competitive needs derived from the natural catchment community. The financial analysis of this option sets out the baseline business case. It should not incorporate aspirational or 'nice to have' elements but it should be based on high quality provision which does not artificially constrain the natural development of community sporting achievement, both in quantity and quality. This option should incorporate appropriately sized ancillary facilities including catering.

- 2. Identify and critically evaluate any opportunity to provide additional or modified facilities to those in the 'community leisure requirement' which would provide sub-regional or regional facilities for sport and leisure and explain what the business case for such provision would be by reference to its impact on the baseline business case.**

The purpose of this output is to test whether there is any economic or sporting justification for the inclusion of sports and leisure facilities which go beyond those needed to serve local requirements. These might be derived from the aspirations of a third party – educational institution, health body, sports governing body or commercial operator – or from the aspirations of an existing facility user. In particular they should be evaluated on the basis of their financial impact on the baseline business case and the operation of primary community use elements. Particular attention should be paid to the deliverability and financial durability of any proposals and their reliance on continuing assumptions.

- 3. Identify and critically evaluate any option for the inclusion in the facility of compatible elements over and above the community leisure requirement provided mainly for the purpose of income generation.**

This element of work should consider whether there is a business case for the inclusion of elements which are primarily designed to produce income and therefore reduce the annual cost of the operation of the facility. The nature of

these should be within the acceptable scope of a public leisure facility but need not themselves be limited to sport and active recreation.

In reaching their conclusions and producing their report the consultants must undertake (at least) the work specified below.

1. Obtain and analyse all the relevant demographic and participation data required to understand and predict local facility requirements over relevant periods;
2. Obtain and analyse all the spatial planning information relevant to the understanding and prediction of local facility requirements;
3. Undertake face to face meetings with key local sports clubs, facility operators and local stakeholders sufficient to provide reliable information to support the advice given;
4. Obtain and analyse information and advice from all relevant sports governing bodies, regional or national organisations regarding facility requirements which are relevant to new facility provision in Winchester;
5. Obtain and evaluate data relating to the existing leisure centre operation as required for evaluation and business planning;
6. Obtain and utilise operating data from comparative facilities, industry benchmarks and professional experience as required to illustrate and validate conclusions;
7. Derive business case advice from a prudent analysis of income generation potential and operating cost data from reliable sources.

The consultant will be required to:

- Attend a reasonable number of meetings with the client project manager to monitor and check progress;
- Produce 12 printed copies of final report and a pdf version
- Attend and present interim findings and final report at two meetings with elected Members

It should be noted that the study does not require detailed facility design work or analysis of site issues. However it should draw attention to design or site issues which are critical to the achievement of any recommendations.

To clarify further; consultants are not required directly to advise on whether the Council should pursue the new build option or retain and refurbish the existing



facilities. Nor are the consultants required to undertake any public consultation or test public opinion relating to alternatives. The purpose of this study is to provide the Council with a detailed appraisal of the business case for a new facility which it can use to make its own judgement of the options.

The report is required by 29<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

#### Submission of Bids

Bids should submit the following information in their tender document:

1. A short restatement, in their own words, of the requirements of the brief to demonstrate that they have understood the Council's requirements.
2. Details of the professional credentials of team members who will actually work on the project and their role.
3. Details of at least two reference projects with details of clients to whom the Council could make enquiries regarding the tenderers capabilities.
4. A fee proposal stating an all inclusive sum (excluding VAT) to undertake and complete the requirements of the brief, supported by a statement setting out the basis on which this has been derived, including hourly rates and hours assigned to each team member.
5. Confirmation that the Council's timescales can be met.

Bids should be sent in sealed envelopes without identifying marks to:

Mr Steve Tilbury  
Corporate Director  
Winchester City Council  
Colebrook Street  
Winchester  
SO23 9LJ

The closing date for bids is January 4<sup>th</sup> 2013

#### Evaluation of Bids

The Council reserves the right not to award the contract to any bidder.

If it does make the award it will do so on the basis of the lowest price tender submitted which satisfies the Council that it is based on a proper understanding of the Council's requirements, has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced resources assigned to the project and has organisational expertise to complete the work successfully.