



REPORT OF THE CHIEF RECREATION OFFICER

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Date: 4th APRIL 2007

Subject: CITY CENTRE SWIMMING

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In
(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The report outlines proposals that the City Council makes a one off capital contribution to the University of Leeds to secure a minimum of 25 years public access to a brand new swimming pool to be constructed adjoining the existing sports centre site.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 Following a report to the Council's Executive Board on 16th April 2003 officers were instructed to develop a preferred option of entering into a partnership with the Universities to provide a publicly accessible swimming and fitness facility for existing users of the current International Pool.
- 1.2 This report outlines the outcomes of discussions and brings forward a proposal to enter into a partnership with the University of Leeds in order to secure public access to a new swimming facility on the University campus.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Officers have continued to explore options with both Leeds Metropolitan University and the University of Leeds. The options appraisal was jointly commissioned and focused on the viability of a 3 way partnership looking at respective needs of all 3 partners and assessing if there was a suitable site (within the city centre) and whether the building could physically accommodate the different programme requirements.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Executive Board have previously stated their desire to support public swimming in the city centre. As the new 50m pool project has progressed representations continued to be made by both the existing Leeds International Pool Action Group and by many individuals directly and indirectly affected by the closure of the existing International Pool. Whilst the retention of a second 50m pool on the Westgate site is not considered desirable it was accepted from the comments made that a publicly accessible swimming and fitness facility should be provided. This should be for existing users, as well as other people who would benefit from affordable provision in the city centre, given the health-related benefits that would accrue. Rather than be simply focused on existing users only, the scope of access has therefore been extended to reflect the aforementioned factors.
- 3.2 The outcome of the feasibility study commissioned by the University of Leeds concluded that a 3 way partnership was going to be cost prohibitive and unlikely to satisfy all 3 partners' needs. Consequently Leeds Metropolitan University withdrew from discussions leaving the City Council and the University of Leeds to progress proposals.
- 3.3 As discussions progressed it became clear that the provision of a swimming and fitness facility by the University of Leeds for its students had become a priority and that funding for the provision of such a facility was likely to be forthcoming. This ambition has now come to fruition and University of Leeds have developed plans for the provision of a significant sports facility including:
- 8 x lane 25m swimming pool
 - 200 station fitness suite
 - Ancillary areas to adjoin existing sports centre
 - Health suite including sauna and steam room
 - Small café area
- 3.4 At this stage the Council has attempted to arrive at an agreement that will essentially guarantee public access to these facilities for an agreed capital

contribution. This report seeks approval in principle for the provision of a capital sum in return for stated levels of access for the public.

3.5 In summary the Heads of Terms provide guaranteed public access on the basis of:

- 25 years agreement
- 42 hours casual public swimming per week minimum
- Access to the fitness facilities (monthly fee)
- Access to Health Suite/Sauna (monthly fee)

3.6 It is proposed that in order to secure public access the Council pays a one off capital contribution in the region of £1.25m (but not exceeding £1.5m). The level of contribution will reflect;

- Securing public access (the University does not have to provide public access)
- The capital costs that LCC would otherwise have to incur to build a similar facility itself
- In addition to the capital outlay there would be ongoing revenue costs if the Council were to build its own pool

3.7 The level of contribution proposed is based on forecasting the level of public use and then modeling this against a typical revenue cost/subsidy per user of one of the cities' swimming pools and then projecting this cost over a 25 year term. The overall estimated level of public use is estimated at 50,000 visits per annum. The average subsidy level per swim/visits to the cities` leisure centres is approximately £1 per visit. Over the 25 year term this would equate to a contribution in the region of £1.25m.

3.8 Clearly the contribution of a one off capital sum in the region of £1.25m therefore offers good value for money to the Council in order to secure public access for 25 years. The precise amount of contribution should be negotiated and agreed in the development of the legal agreements between UoL and the City Council.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 The proposals support existing policy objectives in terms of increasing participation in Sport and Active Recreation, narrowing the gap and joining up a league. The proposals follow up previous recommendations from Executive Board on the 16th April 2003. It is proposed that a nominated representative from the Council sits on a joint management steering group that oversees the project development and that annual reports are prepared by the University of Leeds to provide details on throughput and impact on the Leeds community.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 It is proposed that in order to secure public access to the new swimming pool and fitness facilities that a one off capital contribution in the region of £1.25m is made in order to guarantee public access for a period of no less than 25 years. A formal Legal Agreement will be drawn up between both the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The opportunity to secure public access to a brand new state of the art swimming pool and fitness facility in partnership with the University of Leeds demonstrates a commitment on the part of both parties to provide top class opportunities for students and the public alike. The capital contribution will secure public access for 25 years and will be a significant asset for the wider Leeds community. Leading up to the expiry of the proposed agreement the Council will also seek to ensure that public access will be maintained beyond the 25 year term.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that:

- i) Executive Board approve in principle a capital contribution towards the capital costs of the new pool and;
- ii) That a Legal Agreement is drawn up between the University of Leeds and the City Council that reflects a financial contribution in the region of £1.25m (but not exceeding £1.5m) and the detailed access arrangements for the general public.
- iii). A further report seeking final authority to spend be brought back to this Board in due course.