

Subject: Great Yarmouth Health and Fitness Centre

Report to: Executive Leadership Team, Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019  
Council, Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Report by: Kate Watts, Strategic Director

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In December 2018 Council agreed to allocate capital funding to progress the redevelopment of the Marina Centre to RIBA stage 3 and to authorise officers to further explore funding opportunities to support this project.

As part of this stage of work an extensive public engagement exercise has been undertaken. This report updates Members with the results of this public engagement exercise and asks Members to review and note the following:

- 1) To review the feedback from the public engagement exercise and to note the direct changes made to the project as a result of feedback gained during this period
- 2) To note that Members will receive a further report at the next Council meeting regarding the funding of the overall project and interim arrangements for displaced users

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In August 2015 Members approved a sport, play and leisure strategy for the Borough. In response, a report was developed highlighting what future capital investment was required by the Council to help deliver this sport, play and leisure strategy. This report was considered on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 by Cabinet

and subsequently funding of £7.4 million was built into the Council's four-year capital programme.

- 1.2 On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 Cabinet released £1.8 million of this capital funding to redevelop the Phoenix Pool, subject to the transfer of the ownership of this site by Norfolk County Council to the Borough Council.
- 1.3 In September 2016 the works to the Phoenix Pool were completed and the site reopened to the public. Whilst these works were being undertaken a Members working group on leisure was formalised and started to investigate the options for future investment in the Marina Centre. As part of this work several proposals were put forward by the current operators of the Marina Centre.
- 1.4 In August 2016 it was agreed that The Sports Consultancy in partnership with Sports England would be commissioned to review refurbishment and new development options. This work concluded that although the cost per metre squared of development is lower for refurbishment; this comes with a higher risk, through the combination of several factors which lead to marginal capital savings when compared to a new build. A refurbished centre is not likely to achieve the same level of revenue as a new build and is likely to involve some compromise on the quality and layout of the facilities.
- 1.5 A new build option offers the opportunity for the Council to provide a high quality efficient leisure centre for the community and visitors to the Borough. It will provide a longer-term solution with a designed life of up to forty years. A new build will also mean that the programme and costs risks will be more easily managed than for a redevelopment, where structural risks such as plant, mechanical and electrical will need to be mitigated against.
- 1.6 In February 2017 Policy and Resources Committee agreed to further investigations into a new build option to replace the existing Marina Centre leisure facility, alongside the preparation of a development brief for the wider site and the exploration of potential private sector investment into this site.

- 1.7 In November 2017 Members approved a new build option to replace the existing Marina Centre and to move the project into its next phase of development, which was a detailed feasibility study, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2. This stage of work included looking at potential development sites for the Centre both on the Golden mile and elsewhere in the Borough, and as a result it was agreed that to maximise the economic benefits of building a new Centre that it should remain on the Golden Mile to further boost the seafront economy which brings direct benefits to the residents of the Borough.
- 1.8 In December 2018 Members approved the progression of this project to RIBA stage 3 and authorised officers to further explore funding opportunities for this project.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This ambitious project is based on delivering three major outcomes for the Borough, which are:
- A new state-of-the-art centre located on the Golden Mile that would enhance the existing tourism offer for the resort, boosting our thriving tourism economy
  - The new centre would bring an opportunity for Borough-wide regeneration in providing more jobs for local residents, both during the construction phase and also once the new centre is fully operational
  - The new centre would be a hub to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for both indoor and outdoor activities, providing an opportunity for our residents to increase their participation in physical activity and thereby prevent ill health
- 2.2 In summary the provision of a new Centre will provide a much-needed anchor destination for health and well-being activity both for residents of the Borough of Great Yarmouth and its visitors. It is clear this project will be a catalyst for change; both in terms of generating further investment on the seafront as well as promoting healthy lifestyles, positive mental health and well-being.

2.3 Following the Council's decision in December 2018 RIBA stage three has been commenced, works completed so far include:

- Detailed design work which has included the development of floor and roof plans, site plans, room area schedules and room data sheets
- External and internal visuals of the proposed new building
- A detailed demolition plan and the commencement of asbestos survey work in preparation for the demolition
- Review of pool access to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (ongoing)
- A detailed public engagement exercise (see section X of this report) to include direct liaison with a number of clubs which currently use the Marina Centre
- Landscape design and design methodology
- Fire escape strategy review
- Initial engagement with planning and conservation
- Review of traffic study and environmental study
- Engagement with Sport England and the addition of Sport England requirements into the design development of the project
- Ongoing engagement with user groups to identify both interim and permanent relocation solutions

2.2 RIBA stage 3 is due to be fully completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. Work still to be completed includes:

- Building elevation design – this is a critical piece of work to ensure the new Centre's design is in keeping with the wider seafront but also provides the opportunity for what we hope to become an iconic building
- Planning engagement – in order for the design team to be in a position to submit the planning permission at the end of May work is underway to ensure full engagement with the planning department to understand and mitigate against any issues that may arise through the planning process

- Procurement development – to develop the relevant tenders and procurement processes in relation to the demolition and build contracts of the new Centre including the development of and issuing of the pre-qualification questionnaires in relation to these tenders
- Finalisation of overall designs – to enable RIBA stage three to be completed and fully costed the building design needs to be finalised over the coming weeks

### **3. ASSUMPTIONS**

3.1 Whilst progressing this project through to RIBA stage 3 several assumptions have been made and tested with the Members Working Group, these are:

- That the new facility would be located on the footprint of the existing leisure facility. This decision was made in December 2018 after a detailed options appraisal of seafront site locations for the new Centre and was made as rebuilding on the existing footprint would prevent the need to relocate other seafront businesses, and whilst it was accepted that this would mean that existing users would be impacted on during the duration of the build, the Council committed to working with these users to find interim solutions. In addition to this, by rebuilding on the existing site the project remained affordable.
- By building on the existing site it would also mean that additional car parking of 100 extra spaces could be created to support the new facility
- That the new facility will create additional footfall along the seafront to enhance the visitor experience and as such will have a direct positive impact on the tourism economy which is worth £600 million annually to the Borough
- That the new facility would welcome the general public through a central thoroughfare to link the town and seafront, showcasing activities and encouraging public involvement with the centre
- That the new facility would be designed to maximise the attraction of the beach and provide better access

- The financial workings of this project have assumed a good quality finish and fit out, as well as ensuring longevity and efficiency of the new build.
- That the first floor external terrace will have a dedicated access from the café area below

#### **4. FACILITY MIX**

4.1 The facility mix for the new Centre will consist of;

- Learner pool 15m x 8.5m with moveable floor
- 6 lane x25m pool
- Poolside seating
- Sauna/steam/spa
- Clip and climb facility
- Sports hall
- Health and fitness gym
- Fitness and spin studios
- Multi purpose room
- Soft play area
- Café
- Car parking (100 extra spaces)
- 2 water flumes – to be externally fixed to the new facility
- Indoor confidence water area
- Fun splash pad, such as the type the Council installed on Gorleston seafront
- Meeting rooms and 1-2-1 consultation space

4.2 It is this mix of facilities that was launched as part of the public engagement events held in February 2019

#### **5. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

5.1 As part of RIBA stage 3 an extensive two-week public engagement exercise was undertaken. This centred around exhibition boards on public display both at the

Marina Centre and Gorleston Library, with scheduled drop in sessions for the public during the two-week period, and the ability for people to feedback their comments both online and with a paper survey.

5.2 The level of responses and turn-out at the drop-in sessions was positive. A total of 294 surveys were completed.

5.3 From these responses several design elements already incorporated into the design of the building were defined as being very important to the majority of responders which included:

- Sustainability within the design of the building to include low energy and the use of natural lighting
- Parking and outdoor frontage areas
- Internal community space
- Café views to the beach
- The multi use sports hall
- The fitness studio
- Wet play structures
- Childs play within the lesiure water

5.4 There were also design elements that were defined as not being important to the majority of responders which included:

- Visibility of the first floor exercise area
- First floor terrace for exercise class use
- Free access to the café
- The party room
- The climbing zone
- Water flumes
- More adventurous rides

5.5 This feedback is useful when finalising the detailed design of the building as part

of the work required to complete RIBA stage 3.

5.6 The Council is now evaluating these detailed responses, but in terms of the general comments and feedback it should be noted that overall, respondents welcome this major investment in the borough, with the architectural designs and visual appearance being well received.

5.7 In terms of concerns that were raised these include:

- A need for parking to be affordable and fit for purpose all year round  
*The Council is able to confirm that the cost of parking for users of the new Centre on opening will be no more than the £1.00 it costs currently*
- Ensuring the facility is affordable for local people  
*The Council is currently working with its leisure provider to ensure that the fees for the new Centre will be affordable to all*
- Concerns about losing the public toilet to the north were raised  
*The building designs have been reviewed and four outward facing public toilets have been added to the new Centre*
- Concerns about the disruption to the seafront during the works were raised  
*The design team are currently undertaking detailed project timeline planning for the construction element of the project with the overall aim of minimising any disruptions to the seafront*
- Concerns about the displacement of Centre users to the works were raised  
*The Council has been working hard with its leisure provider and various clubs and user groups to try and identify alternative provisions for the users during the closure of the Centre*
- Concerns were raised about the loss of a dedicated skating facility and the impact this will have on the younger generation  
*The Council has been working with both Retroskate and the Artistic Roller Skating Club to find an alternative venue. The sports hall in the new facility will be able to be used for rollerskating. In addition to this the Council has undertaken a detailed equalities impact assessment to ensure that the new Centre will*



- provide good opportunities for younger people to take part in physical activity across all the facilities which will be provided in the new Centre.*
- Concerns were raised about the loss of the current indoor bowling facility and the impact this will have on elderly and disabled persons that currently use this facility  
*The Council has been working with the Bowls club, including its chairperson and Members to find an alternative venue. The sports hall in the new facility will provide a facility for the playing of short mat bowls once built, although this would not allow for the club to compete in league competitions. In addition to this the Council has undertaken a detailed equalities impact assessment to ensure that the new Centre will provide good opportunities for older people to take part in physical activity across all the facilities that will be provided in the new Centre*
  - A desire to make the pool a 50 metre competition standard pool was raised  
*This was considered as part of the early feasibility work of the project where it was identified that a community based pool was required to support the needs of the residents in the Borough rather than a competition standard pool*
  - Concerns were raised in making sure that the new complex is fully accessible for disabled users  
*This is a key consideration for the Council, and already the design proposals include a changing places facility. In addition to this specific work is ongoing to ensure the main pool access is fully accessible to all. A detailed equalities impact assessment has also been completed to ensure that this is fully considered as the project is further developed*
  - Concerns were raised by existing Club 88 users who enjoy the ability to use the sports hall and play table tennis within the same area.  
*As a result the building design has been changed to allow for a meeting room to be accessed from the sports hall, which will then be used for table tennis as required.*

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 RIBA stage 3 is fully funded through the Council decision made in December 2018 and therefore at this time there are not additional financial considerations to be made in terms of agreeing the recommendations outlined within this report.

## **7. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 As part of RIBA stage 2 a detailed risk register has been developed and is reviewed by the design team on a regular basis.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 As the project completes RIBA stage 3 formal planning permission for the project will need to be obtained.

- 8.2 Members should note the current contractual arrangements in place with the operator of the existing Marina Centre:

- A fifteen year contract with Sentinel Leisure Trust for the management of both the Phoenix Pool and the Marina Centre, with the option to extend for a further 15 years
- A 30 year lease between GYBC and Sentinel LT for the Marina Centre. If the Funding and Management Agreement is terminated then the Lease terminates automatically.
- There is a Tenancy At Will in respect of the Phoenix Pool.

- 8.3 Members also need to note that the current leisure provider will require formal notification of the termination of its lease on the Marina Centre, along with a number of tenant and hire arrangements with other tenants and service users within the Marina Centre site.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 When making decisions the Council must give due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination. Equality impact assessments have been carried out for the two phases of the project – demolition of the existing Marina Centre and building of the new Great Yarmouth Borough Health and Leisure Centre. These seek to identify whether

there may be any disproportionate or detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics.

### **Key issues because of the demolition of the existing Marina Centre:**

- In the short term this phase will cause disruption to individuals with protected characteristics, most significantly, two disabled swimming groups, individuals with protected characteristics who use the gym facilities, the bowls group and a skating group
- Groups representing those with protected characteristics will be unable to hire facilities at the Centre for specific events
- The Changing Places Toilet which is accessible not only to Marina Centre visitors, but members of the public generally will be unavailable during this phase of the project.

### **Mitigating measures**

- Impact from the demolition of the Marina Centre will be reduced for members by providing access to facilities run by the same leisure group. However, it is likely that some disruption will be experienced for example by individuals who are neurotypical who may find the change difficult and due to alternative options not providing the same facilities as the Marina Centre. It is therefore important that the new build is carried out as quickly as possible.
- Alternative Changing Places facilities are available in the Town at Pier Head, the Conge and the Troll Cart pub.
- The Council have been in discussions with several of the user groups with protected characteristics which include the disabled swimming groups, Bowls club, and the Artistic Roller skating to try and find temporary accommodation or find suitable alternative solutions in the long term.
- The Council have on board the design team an equalities adviser who will be supporting the team to ensure that equalities and accessibility have been woven into the project from the outset.

- The Council along with the operator (Sentinel) have taken a tour of alternative leisure facilities with a variety of accessible options to ensure that the Great Yarmouth offer includes the right solutions for the local user's needs.

### **Key issues to be aware of during the design phase of the new facility:**

- A major part of the re-design of the Centre will replace the swimming pool which is currently used by two disabled swimming groups. It is likely that the change to facilities will cause some anxiety, particularly for disabled users that may be concerned about future provision.
- The new Health and Leisure Centre presents an important resource for the whole community, including those with protected characteristics. Ensuring that the design phase is comprehensive but timely is important to all individuals but particularly disabled and those with age related health/mobility issues as the centre may represent their only access to health and fitness in a safe and trusted environment. Should the new facility not be available for a prolonged period this may cause some individuals to turn away from exercise which may be detrimental to their long-term health outcomes.

### **Mitigating measures**

- The design phase presents an opportunity to explore options to provide a facility which encompasses best practice in accessibility and inclusion for all protected characteristics.
- Key stakeholders such as representatives from the disabled swimming groups are being included within scoping work to ensure that not only best practice is met but also the thoughts of users are considered. In-direct input has also been sought via an extensive media campaign and public engagement exercise.
- Work is underway to provide a temporary solution for these users at the Phoenix pool where it is likely that current access solutions at the pool will need to be enhanced to support the increased number of disabled users during this period.

- 9.2 The full assessment findings are available upon request. Clear reasons are provided for each proposal to show why detrimental impact is not predicted, and the nature of this impact, recognising that both projects are at an early stage. Both EQiA's are 'living documents' which will be updated as the projects progress.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS**

- 10.1 This new health and fitness centre project is an exciting project which will bring a state of the art facility to the residents of the Borough alongside supporting the wider tourism offer, and in doing so will also bring economic benefit to the Borough.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 Members are asked:

- 1) To review the feedback from the public engagement exercise and to note the direct changes made to the project as a result of feedback gained during this period
- 2) To note that Members will receive a further report at the next Council meeting regarding the funding of the overall project and interim arrangements for displaced users

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Yes - Legal commentary is detailed within the report
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Yes
Existing Council Policies:	Sports, Play and Leisure Strategy
Financial Implications:	Not in relation to this report
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Yes - Legal commentary is detailed within the report
Risk Implications:	Yes – Detailed within the report & held within the project risk register
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Yes – Completed with summary detailed

	within the report
Crime & Disorder:	Considered as part of the design considerations
Every Child Matters:	Will be considered by the operator in readiness for the opening of the new Centre