

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LEISURE FACILITIES, CULTURE and YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

18 July 2006

**Report of the Director of Leisure and Cabinet Members for Leisure Facilities,
Culture & Youth and Resources & Capital Projects**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 LARKFIELD LEISURE CENTRE – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Summary

This report brings forward a proposed timescale and estimated loss of income for the approved capital development works to the dry side and health / fitness changing room areas at Larkfield Leisure Centre (LLC). The report also provides further detail on the proposal to lower the internal walkway, including costs and timescale implications.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will recall that at the last meeting of this Board, consideration was given to the agreed capital development schemes at Larkfield Leisure Centre (LLC), and attention was drawn to the potential of lowering the internal walkway within the centre, to improve access for people with disabilities.
- 1.1.2 Following discussion at the meeting, the design proposals for the capital works were approved, and it was agreed that the works to the car park and the wet change area would be undertaken during November / December 2006. Both these schemes are now being progressed to achieve this timescale.
- 1.1.3 With regard to the approved works to the dry side and health / fitness changing room areas, it was agreed that detailed consideration be given to the timing of the works, and a report be submitted to this Board meeting. It was also agreed that this report would identify an estimate of the loss of income to the LSBU associated with the works, and bring forward further details on the proposal to lower the internal walkway.

1.2 Access for People with Disabilities- Internal Walkway

- 1.2.1 Members may be aware that at the present time a separate entrance is available at the rear of LLC for disabled access, and also for Lifestyle referral patients. A separate entrance for disabled persons is not ideal either in principle or on operational grounds, and improvements are needed to the existing rear entrance

to meet DDA requirements. These improvements to the rear entrance have been considered by consultant architects, FDKC, and costed in the region of £40,000 - £50,000.

- 1.2.2 The fundamental problem with all customers using the front entrance to the centre, is the design of the raised walkway between the leisure pool and the sports hall, which links the front and rear of the centre. The walkway is ramped at one end, but with stairs at the other, and is not DDA compliant.
- 1.2.3 At the last meeting of this Board, Members were advised that, following initial consideration by FDKC, it would be feasible to lower the walkway and make the centre accessible for all users, with a budget cost estimate in the region of £220,000. At the present time these works are neither funded nor identified within the Capital Plan, although improvements to the rear entrance for disabled access were identified in the Year 1 DDA Improvement Plan. However, following previous consideration of the walkway proposal, Management Team supported the proposal in principle, and agreed that it should be submitted to this Board and that funding opportunities should be investigated.
- 1.2.4 Since the last meeting of this Board, FDKC has given the proposal more detailed consideration, in liaison with a structural engineer and quantity surveyor. The proposal to lower the walkway has been developed and a plan is attached at **[Annex 1]**. The proposal would involve the following:
- Removal of existing walkway including brick walls, access ramp and staircases;
 - Construction of replacement walkway with ramps at lower level;
 - Replacement of steel columns supporting flumes;
 - Provision of a replacement sports hall store area (the current store is located beneath the existing raised walkway);
 - Provision of new meeting room in redundant space (there are currently no meeting room facilities at LLC). The provision of a meeting room at LLC has been an aspiration for some time and is included in the current List C scheme for Extension / Improvements to Reception / Office Area. The lowering of the walkway and the removal of the existing ramp provides an opportunity to construct a meeting room in the area occupied by the ramp at the relatively low cost of £7,500, which is included in the overall estimated cost of the project.
- 1.2.5 The quantity surveyor has identified that the total cost of the proposal is now estimated to be £260,000, inclusive of contingencies, fees and equipment. The proposed lowering of the walkway would enable LLC to conform to DDA legislation; would benefit both disabled and able-bodied users, including parents with pushchairs; and would remove the need for staff to operate the existing rear entrance to the health and fitness area.

- 1.2.6 Members will appreciate that, if progressed, the works will have a significant impact on the operation of the facility, both in terms of routing customers through the building, noise, and the usage of the sports hall, leisure and teaching pools. It is, therefore, appropriate that the works should take place at the quietest time of the year. The Leisure Contracts Manager (LCM) has advised that this would be during the November / December period. Irrespective of whether funding was identified for the project, it would not be feasible for the works to be procured and organised before November 2006, and, therefore, the first opportunity to undertake the works would be November / December 2007.
- 1.2.7 In considering this matter FDKC has also highlighted that the Council may wish to consider the works to replace the sports hall store area (£95,000) being undertaken in advance of the works to lower the walkway. This would enable the sports hall to be kept in operation for the majority of the time the works to lower the walkway are being progressed, reducing the impact on customers and the resultant loss of income to the Council.

1.3 Dry side and health / fitness changing rooms

- 1.3.1 The scheme approved at the last meeting of this Board [**see Annex 2**], seeks to enlarge the health & fitness changing accommodation by encompassing the under-utilised health suite lounge and creating a separate disabled and WC in this area. The reconfiguration will also enable the health and fitness reception area to be relocated, offering a more customer focussed service to all users of the facilities at the rear of the building. Two new consulting rooms will be created to enable customers and Lifestyle referral patients to meet staff in a more appropriate environment.
- 1.3.2 Detailed consideration has been given to the timing of the works in liaison with the LCM, FDKC, and the Council's Buildings & Facilities Manager. FDKC has advised that the contract period for the building works would be 20 weeks, and a copy of an outline programme is attached at [**Annex 3**].
- 1.3.3 Members will note that it is proposed that the works should commence in mid-April 2007, and be completed by 1 September 2007. This would then provide a period of approximately 2 months before the works to lower the internal walkway commenced, if this project was approved. Key dates within the outline works programme are as follows:
- Detailed design – 31 July – 8 September 2006
 - Submit planning application – w/c 11 September 2006
 - Tender period – 15 January – 16 February 2007
 - Works on site – 16 April – 1 September 2007

- 1.3.4 FDKC has advised that the works to replace the sports hall store highlighted earlier in this report, could be incorporated within the project, and delivered within the outline programme. Taking this into account, it is suggested that the planning application for the project incorporates not only the dry side and health and fitness changing rooms, but also the addition of the store.

1.4 Loss of Income to LSBU

- 1.4.1 The Leisure Contracts Manager has undertaken a preliminary exercise to assess the loss of income to the LSBU whilst the proposed capital projects are progressed. The LCM has estimated that the loss associated with the wet change refurbishment will be £19,000 and the health and fitness development will result in lost income of £88,000.
- 1.4.2 The loss against the wet changing room refurbishment will impact on the LSBU in 2006/07 with the health and fitness loss affecting the following year, 2007/08.
- 1.4.3 A number of assumptions have been made to arrive at these figures and a more accurate assessment will be made as detailed plans and phasing is progressed. It is the advice, therefore, of the LCM that an allowance of +/-25% should be made against these estimates. The Director of Finance has been consulted in respect of this exercise and concurs with the estimates which have been brought forward at this stage.

1.5 Procurement

- 1.5.1 The works to the dry side and health / fitness changing rooms will be tendered in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules, and authority is sought to advertise for a Select List of tenderers.
- 1.5.2 Following liaison with FDKC, the consultant Quantity Surveyor, and the Council's Building and Estates Manager, it is suggested that tenders be requested separately for the dry side and health / fitness changing rooms, and the option of lowering the internal walkway. If Members decide to proceed with the walkway proposal it is considered that a more cost-effective price will be achieved, if the building contractor for the other works remains on site to complete this further phase.
- 1.5.3 Members will note from **[Annex 3]** that contractors / suppliers are currently being sought for the building works and supply of cubicles for the wet change area. Due to the timescale for the works it will not be possible for this Board to approve the Select List for both aspects of work, and delegated authority is therefore sought for the Director of Leisure to approve the Select Lists in liaison with the Cabinet Members.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 the Council has a duty to take 'reasonable steps' to facilitate access for disabled users.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 Improvements to the dry side and health and fitness changing rooms, are fully funded within the Capital Plan, and opportunities are being taken to secure developer contributions, where properly justified and appropriate, in liaison with the DPT. A contribution of £15,000 has been confirmed from the developer of the New Road site in Ditton, reflecting the wide catchment area of LLC, and a substantial contribution is expected from the developer of the former Frantschach site in New Hythe Lane, Larkfield, following the grant of planning permission by the Secretary of State.
- 1.7.2 The Capital Plan provision of £435,000 for the health and fitness area, including improvements to the wet change accommodation, was brought forward previously on the basis of all the works being undertaken concurrently. Undertaking the works to the wet change area in advance of the remaining works will result in an additional cost of £30,000. Taking into account the developer contributions secured to date, an additional provision of £15,000 needs to be reflected in the Capital Plan.
- 1.7.3 Members will be aware that at the present time no funding exists within the Capital Plan for the works to lower the internal walkway, costed by the consultant Quantity Surveyor at £260,000. Following liaison with the Director of Finance it is suggested that the proposal be identified as a List C Capital Plan scheme for evaluation within the current financial year, and be taken forward within the forthcoming review of the Capital Plan. Within this evaluation opportunities for funding will be identified.

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 The delivery of projects within the Capital Plan is identified within relevant operational risk registers. A number of existing controls are in place to help deliver projects in accordance with the design brief, on timescale and within budget. These controls include the preparation of design briefs, use of consultant teams where applicable, compliance with Financial Rules, an officer study team approach, and regular reports to Management Team and Members.
- 1.8.2 Bearing in mind the cost and complexity of the capital development works at LLC, it is proposed that a cross Service Officer Study Group be established, chaired by the Chief Leisure Officer.
- 1.8.3 Due to the extent of the building works and the potential disruption to existing and new customers, it is felt essential that users of LLC are kept fully informed of the works programme. A marketing plan will be implemented by the LCM, which will incorporate a number of display boards around the Centre providing updated information.

1.9 The Way Forward

- 1.9.1 The capital development works at LLC outlined in this report are deemed to be essential to maintain existing levels of business, given the market conditions currently being experienced at the facility. It is important, however, that the timing of the works is planned carefully to minimise disruption to existing users, and not deter new business to the Centre. The outline programme of works for the dry change and health / fitness changing areas has been brought forward following close liaison with the consultant architect and the LCM, and will follow on from the works to the car park and wet change.
- 1.9.2 The lowering of the internal walkway offers an excellent opportunity to address the Centre's fundamental problem for access by people with disabilities and others. It is hoped that funding for the works can be secured from developer contributions and virements from within the Capital Plan, which will be identified within the Capital Plan evaluation of the scheme.

1.10 Recommendations

- 1.10.1 It is therefore **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that:
- 1) the programme for the dry side and health / fitness changing room areas as outlined in the report be approved;
 - 2) a planning application for the works, including the provision of a replacement sports hall store be submitted;
 - 3) the estimated loss of income to the LSBU associated with the works, as outlined in the report be noted, and be reflected in the Council's 06/07 and 07/08 revenue budgets;
 - 4) the works to the dry side and health / fitness changing rooms be tendered in accordance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules, including an option for the lowering of the internal walkway;
 - 5) authority be granted to advertise for a Select List of building contractors;
 - 6) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Leisure in liaison with the Cabinet Members to approve the Select Lists of building contractors and cubicle suppliers for the wet change works;
 - 7) the proposed lowering of the internal walkway be identified as a List C Capital Plan scheme for evaluation in the current financial year; and
 - 8) a marketing plan be implemented to advise and update users of LLC on the programme of capital works.

The Director of Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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