

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**LEISURE and ARTS ADVISORY BOARD**

**14 May 2012**

**Report of the Chief Leisure Officer and the  
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts**

**Part 1- Public**

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

**1 CAPITAL PLAN SCHEMES**

**Summary**

**This report advises Members of progress with schemes contained in the Leisure Services section of the Capital Plan. The report provides an update on consultation undertaken with regard to the provision of a new dance/exercise studio at Larkfield Leisure Centre, improvements on land adjoining St Philips Church in north Tonbridge, and the renewal of play equipment at Brindles Field, Tonbridge.**

**1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 There are a number of Leisure schemes included in the Council's Capital Plan, and it is important that progress is kept under regular review. An update reflecting the current List A position is attached at **[Annex 1]**. Members will be pleased to note that since the last meeting of this Board, the new disinfection system serving Tonbridge Pool has been successfully completed.

**1.2 Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Improvements**

- 1.2.1 At the last meeting of this Board Members were advised of a number of requests from young people, the Police and local Members to floodlight the teenage facilities at the Sportsground, extending usage in the winter months. Lighting of this area (including the tennis courts) was identified in the Masterplan for the site agreed by this Board at its meeting in May 2010. I am pleased to advise that since the last meeting of this Board funding for the scheme has been secured from external sources, and a Capital Plan evaluation report is being considered by the Finance & Property Advisory Board on 15 May 2012. Subject to Council approval, the works will take place in late summer.

**1.3 Larkfield Leisure Centre – New Dance/Exercise Studio**

- 1.3.1 Members will be aware that a proposal to convert the existing squash courts at Larkfield Leisure Centre is approved within the Capital Plan with funding of

£100,000. The scheme will provide studio facilities to meet the expressed demand for dance/exercise classes.

- 1.3.2 The scheme will result in the loss of squash facilities at Larkfield and at the time of the evaluation it was acknowledged that public consultation should take place and liaison with other providers may provide an opportunity for squash players at Larkfield Leisure Centre to transfer to another facility.
- 1.3.3 An open meeting with customers was held on 19 March 2012 to explain the proposal and outline liaison with Cobdown Sports and Social Club. Cobdown is situated approximately one mile from Larkfield and has two squash courts.
- 1.3.4 The minutes of the meeting are shown at **[Annex 2]** and Members will note that, unsurprisingly, those who attended were disappointed at the proposal. In total, (including those who attended the meeting and in response to a subsequent article in the Kent Messenger). 20 customers have registered an objection to the scheme.
- 1.3.5 Within **[Annex 2]** Members will note that the Leisure Contracts Manager pledged to investigate an alternative proposal generated at the open meeting to convert a section of the Sports Hall to provide the required facilities. In liaison with the consultant architect a budget cost for this proposal has been determined to be £141,000. This would provide a smaller studio space for dance/exercise classes and would, inevitably, reduce the flexibility and capacity of the Sports Hall. Whilst the conversion of the sports hall is feasible it is clearly a more expensive option and, in the opinion of the Leisure Contracts Manager, is an inferior scheme for a number of reasons. These reasons include access, proximity to other health and fitness facilities, capacity and potential noise/disruption to other Sports Hall users.
- 1.3.6 It is clear that a number of those who have objected recognise the potential ease of transfer to a dedicated facility at Cobdown Sports and Social Club. The facilities at Cobdown Sports and Social Club are in good condition, cheaper, underutilised and offer a league and competition structure that is superior to that at Larkfield Leisure Centre as well as the opportunity for recreational play. In liaison with the Management at Cobdown Sports and Social Club it is apparent that the Club would welcome an influx of new members and the Leisure Contracts Manager is discussing an arrangement that would ensure the continuation of squash facilities to local residents at an affordable price.
- 1.3.7 Taking into account the above it is felt that the original proposal to convert the squash courts at the Centre be progressed, with arrangements put in place to enable the transfer of existing squash users to Cobdown Sports and Social Club.

#### **1.4 St Philips Church, Tonbridge**

- 1.4.1 Members will recall from previous reports to the Board that it is proposed to create a community garden on land adjacent to St Philips Church, together with some low level children's play equipment. The project is being developed in partnership

with the Church, as the proposed new facilities will be located on land owned by both the Council and Church. An allocation of £26,000 has been approved for the project in the Council's Capital Plan, funded in full from developer contributions.

- 1.4.2 Initial consultation has been undertaken with local residents and church members/groups on an outline proposal with 690 leaflets distributed to local residents and an open consultation day being held at the Church on 24 March 2012. Of those attending the open day the majority were supportive of the project.
- 1.4.3 Some concerns have been expressed regarding the project, including the potential of antisocial behaviour and safety of the site due to its proposed location next to a sharp bend on Royal West Kent Avenue. In regard to both these issues comment/advice is now being sought from the Police and Kent County Council Highways Services, following which a final design will be developed and implemented in liaison with local Members.

## **1.5 Brindles Field, Tonbridge**

- 1.5.1 Brindles Field Play Area, Tonbridge currently provides two areas of play for toddlers and juniors. £34,000 is currently allocated in the Council's Capital Renewals programme for its renewal/replacement in the current financial year. Consultation on the replacement of the play equipment has been undertaken and detailed schemes have subsequently been sought from specialist play providers.
- 1.5.2 In general the equipment will be replaced on a like-for-like basis with the play area remaining on the same scale, aimed at a similar age range. Equipment will, however, be updated with more modern and dynamic pieces where possible. Local Members have been updated on the development of the project and it is proposed that the works take place prior to the summer school holidays.

## **1.6 Legal Implications**

- 1.6.1 None.

## **1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.7.1 A number of schemes within the Capital Plan represent significant levels of investment. The Council's Financial Procedure and Contract Procedure Rules are adhered to in all cases, and projects are delivered and monitored in close liaison with the Director of Finance and the Central Services Director. Post Implementation Reviews are undertaken on all completed schemes. A number of the schemes are funded by financial contributions from developers.

## **1.8 Risk Assessment**

- 1.8.1 The delivery of projects within the Capital Plan is identified in relevant Operational Risk Registers within the Service. 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 Contract and Financial Procedure Rules, an Officer Study Team approach, and regular reports to Management Team and Members.

## 1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

1.9.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

## 1.10 Policy Considerations

1.10.1 Healthy Lifestyles, Asset Management, Young People, Procurement, Community, Crime & Disorder Reduction.

## 1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that the capital schemes relating to a new dance/exercise studio at Larkfield Leisure Centre, a new community garden and play area adjacent to St Philips Church in Tonbridge and the replacement of the play equipment at Brindles Field, Tonbridge be progressed as outlined in the report.

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

Background papers:

Nil

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Cabinet Member for Leisure, Youth and Arts

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	Yes	Whilst a number of squash players at Larkfield Leisure Centre will be affected, suitable alternative facilities are available in the local area.

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*