
Meeting	Yearsley Pool Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee
Date	24 March 2015
Present	Councillors Aspden (Chair), McIlveen, Richardson and Watson
Apologies	Councillor Boyce

1. **Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda.

Councillor McIlveen and Councillor Richardson declared personal interests in agenda item 5 as they were members of the Planning Committee which would be considering the planning application for the Community Stadium on 27 March 2015.

2. **Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2015 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3. **Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been four registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Fiona Evans of the Yearsley Pool Action Group raised a number of issues in respect of the finance and usage of Yearsley Pool. She stated that the one year attendance figures did not provide sufficient data to analyse long-term trends and underlying factors. She gave details of the data that had been obtained during the first campaign when archived documentation dating from 1906 had been obtained. Ms Evans stated that, during the first ten years of recorded figures starting from 1994, attendance at Yearsley Pool had ranged from 98,000 to 134,000. She

stated that low attendance had coincided with aspects such as a major price hike in 2000 and mini closures linked to roof problems, as it was before the refurbishment had been undertaken. Ms Evans stated that figures for the next decade had varied widely due to a huge surge in attendance post refurbishment amongst other factors such as the free-swimming initiative. She stated that the figures provided to the committee demonstrated that usage had returned to the old average of the first decade even though this was a time of recession. Ms Evans stated that, in the past, Yearsley Pool had been the cheapest Council run pool to operate. In 1999/2000 the pool had cost £95,000 compared to Edmund Wilson Pool costs of £170,000. After refurbishment, with a more energy efficient building and plant, Yearsley Pool should have been more cost effective however the operational management approach had changed.

Ms Evans stated that the Action Group's preferred option was to significantly reduce the subsidy by reverting back to an arrangement whereby three staff (one duty manager and two lifeguards) largely ran the pool. Cleaning had been carried out between timetabled sessions and during quieter sessions. The manager and his staff had carried out routine maintenance work and small jobs in house and the facility had closed for a week at Easter to enable painting and repairs, which were again carried out by Council staff. Ms Evans urged that a more detailed approach be undertaken to properly assess usage and finance at Yearsley Pool.

Richard Van den Heever stated that he had previously worked at Yearsley Pool and gave details of operational arrangements, budget planning and financial management that had been in place. He expressed concern at the level of expenditure currently recorded as "other expenditure" and stated that a more detailed explanation was required regarding expenditure within this budget heading. Mr Van den Heever stated that it was essential to have full information as to how funding was being spent in order to identify where savings could be made.

Sue Horsfield stated that she had swum at Yearsley Pool for thirty-eight years and gave details of the benefits of swimming as a form of exercise. She stated that it was also an essential skill, especially for children living in a city with two rivers. Ms Horsfield stated that Yearsley Pool was the best pool in York in terms of its size and layout and commented on its use by sports

clubs. She expressed concern at the current managerial arrangements in place at the pool and the associated costs. She also queried whether funding was being spent on non-essential items. She stated that the people of York were incensed by the threat to close Yearsley Pool once again.

Mike Jones stated that he intended to concentrate on issues in respect of swimming pool costs. He stated that the figures provided regarding running costs had been cursory and vague and that little or no explanation had been given for tens of thousands of pounds of spending. Dr Jones stated that like for like comparison between Yearsley Swimming Pool and Energise had been virtually impossible.

Dr Jones stated that there were serious concerns regarding the present pool management structure and subsequent costing and he believed that significant cost reductions could be made. He stressed the importance of ensuring that, as well as running costs, the expected lifespan and cost to build should also be factored into the costs.

Dr Jones stated that repeated requests had been made for information on the cost of previous pool builds (Barbican, Edmund Wilson, Waterworld) but this had not been made available and neither had the costs of the proposed new pool. The only figures provided had been for a standard 25 metre pool with additional learner pool (£6M). The proposed new pool appeared to have an optimistic proposed life expectancy of 50 years and the specification suggested that it would cost more than £6M, resulting in a capital cost depreciation of at least £120,000 per year.

Dr Jones stated that, other than maintenance and refurbishment (i.e. running costs), current evidence suggested that Yearsley Pool would not present large ongoing capital costs. There had been no problems in a hundred years and a detailed structural survey in the 1990's had given it a clean bill of health. The roof and plant machinery replacement within the last ten years had been the first major investment since the 1960s. Dr Jones stated that this needed to be taken into account if the true cost of each pool was to be established.

Dr Jones stated that he was concerned that the information necessary to make rational decisions had not been made available by City of York Council. He urged that the Scrutiny

Committee ensured that a full and accurate financial assessment was made before a new swimming pool was funded as this would be costly to build and run and would be at the expense of Yearsley Pool which was reliable and well used.

The speakers were thanked for their contributions. The Chair stated that any member of the public who had further suggestions to put forward was welcome to forward these to the scrutiny officer.

4. Yearsley Pool Scrutiny Review Update Report including Feedback from Consultation Event

Members considered a report that presented evidence gathered to date by the Ad Hoc Scrutiny committee as part of its agreed consultation. Feedback from the consultation event held by the committee on 16 March 2015 at the 68 Youth and Community Centre had been included.

Members stated that they believed that the consultation event had been very useful and noted that feedback from the roundtable discussions would also be included in a future report to the committee.

5. Yearsley Pool - Finance and Usage

Members considered Annex A of the report presented under agenda item 4. The annex contained details of the current financial arrangements and usage figures for Yearsley Pool.

Officers gave a presentation on the figures, including information in respect of:

- Trends
- Key users
- User figures
- Outturn figures
- Income and expenditure
- Capital investment
- Operating costs

Officers stated that expenditure had been significantly reduced. Members noted that the pool costs approximately £121 per hour

to operate and currently generates income of approximately £75 per hour. All activities, including use by clubs, were subsidised.

Members questioned officers on the following issues:

(i) Staffing costs

It was noted that staffing ratios were in line with health and safety guidelines. Members asked how the operating costs of Yearsley Pool compared with those of Energise. They were informed that the staffing structure was the same at both pools although Yearsley Pool had additional lifeguards because of its size. There were, however, no receptionists.

Officers were asked if a review of staffing arrangements had been carried out to identify whether savings could be made. Officers stated that consideration had not yet been given to the possibility of using volunteers but that this would have implications in terms of ensuring that they were a qualified lifeguard and had received the relevant training.

Clarification was sought as to whether staffing levels would remain the same when GLL took over the running of the pool. Members were informed that, in accordance with TUPE regulations, the existing staff would transfer under the new contract and that they would be paid a living wage. The situation could, however, be reviewed if a vacancy arose.

Members requested that they be provided with the hourly operating costs for Energise so that this could be compared with the £121 per hour costs at Yearsley Pool.

(ii) Capital Investment/Improvement

Officers were questioned about the arrangements that were in place to plan for general repairs and maintenance improvements. They were informed that a plan for future improvements was in place and, if funding was available, these were implemented. Attention was drawn to improvements that had been carried out, as listed in Annex A.

(iii) “Other Expenditure”

At the request of Members, officers agreed to provide a more detailed breakdown of £69k of expenditure contained within the budget heading of “other expenditure”.

(iv) Usage figures

Members questioned officers regarding the number of people using the pool at particular times of the day. They were informed that the figures varied significantly. It was expected that there would be a minimum of 25 users at all times but that for activities such as the inflatable sessions the number could be as high as 120. It was not possible for usage to be higher for such sessions for safety reasons.

Officers gave possible reasons for a fall in usage of the pool including:

- It reflected a national trend
- There was more competition in the area
- There had been a big development of other sports in York, for example cycling
- ASA was in a review phase and may receive less funding from Sport England

Noting that the totals were incorrect in the user figures statistics provided for 2013/14, Members requested that the figures be checked and the correct version presented to them.

(v) Pricing

Officers confirmed that the cost per session for an adult with a Yorcard was £3.65. This was the same cost as for Energise.

(vi) Clubs

Officers were asked how many clubs used Energise Pool. They stated that although there was some usage by clubs, the figures were not as high as Yearsley Pool. Clubs provided a guaranteed income whereas usage of the pool

by casual swimmers tended to reduce at particular times of the year.

Officers were asked if clubs had been consulted regarding the design and facilities of the new pool. Officers stated that this had not been the case but that the experience of the bidders and the lessons learned from Energise had been taken into account.

(vii) Historic Operating Costs

Noting that the statistics that had been provided related to 2009-10 onwards, Members asked if earlier figures could be provided. Officers explained that, under the previous arrangements, a compulsory competitive tendering process had been in place and hence a price had been provided for delivering the service and there had not been transparency regarding costings. Officers stated that, over the last five years, costs had been decreasing and savings had been made, including a reduction in management costs.

(viii) Increasing Revenue Streams

Members queried whether an Annual Development Plan was in place and asked to receive information regarding the strategies that had been implemented over the last two years to increase revenue streams and how the effectiveness of these had been tracked.

Members asked if a review of income from vending machines had taken place. Officers explained that the contract was at its end and it was anticipated that GLL may be able to negotiate a better deal. However ancillary spend was not likely to provide a significant area of growth.

Members asked if consideration had been given to the generating of power through solar or wind. Officers confirmed that consideration had been given to the installation of solar panels but that the costs of installation had been an issue.

(ix) Energise

At the request of Members, officers gave details of the service level agreement that was currently in place with York High School regarding the running of Energise. It was noted that these arrangements would change and that Energise would be included as part of the overall leisure contract with GLL.

(x) Economies of Scale

Members queried whether savings were likely to be achieved because of GLL's purchasing powers as a large organisation. Officers confirmed that, although overhead costs were fixed, GLL was likely to be able to achieve economies of scale in respect of the purchasing of fuel and chemicals.

(xi) GLL Contract

Members noted the current situation in respect of the GLL contract:

- At the consultation event clarification had been sought as to whether a competition clause had been included in the contract with GLL. It had been confirmed that there was no competition clause in the contract as it currently stood.
- The GLL proposals were due to be considered at a forthcoming Planning Committee meeting.
- The leisure contract would not be signed until after the election. Members requested that any amendments to the leisure contract that would impact on Yearsley Pool be presented to the committee.

Members requested that a timeline of the decision making be made available.

Next Steps

Consideration was given to the committee's work plan, as detailed in Annex B of the report.

Members agreed that it would be useful to make the following visits to progress the scrutiny review:

- Nestle and York St John (April 2015)
- New Earswick Swimming Pool (May/June)
- York Sports Village (May/June)
- Tadcaster Swimming Pool (May/June)

Members clarified that the informal meeting schedule to take place in May 2015 would be open to the public.

Members requested that the latest contractual information be included on the agenda for the meeting scheduled to take place on 5 June 2015.

- Resolved: (i) That the information provided regarding funding arrangements and user figures, as detailed in Annex A of the report, be noted.
- (ii) That the following additional information be provided to the committee:
- A breakdown of expenditure contained within the budget heading “other expenditure”
 - Operating costs for Energise (to enable comparisons to be made)
 - Corrected statistics on user figures
 - Capacity limits for other pools in York
 - Further information on club usage at Yearsley Pool and usage by clubs of other pools in York
 - Examples of the marketing strategies that have been implemented, the costs involved and the effectiveness of these initiatives (including the Development Plan if applicable)
 - Financial figures prior to 2009 and an explanation of the situation prior to 2005
 - A timetable of the decision-making process in respect of the GLL contract and the latest contractual information. The Committee would also wish to see any future amendments to the leisure contract that would impact on Yearsley Pool¹

(iii) That the committee's work plan be as detailed in Annex B subject to the agreed additions.

Reason: To support the Ad Hoc Committee's consideration of the possible future options for Yearsley Pool and to progress the work of the committee.

Action Required

1. Provide information for next report to Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee

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Councillor Aspden, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.30 pm].