

Report from the Assistant Director Governance and ICT

**Feasibility Report into Proposed Scrutiny Review of
Yearsley Swimming Pool**

Summary

1. This report provides the Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) with details of a proposed scrutiny review, submitted by Cllr Aspden, into ways to reduce the subsidy given to Yearsley Swimming Pool while securing the long-term future of the pool
2. This proposal was initially put to the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee but because of the busy workload of the Committee Learning & Culture OSC Members agreed that the topic submission be presented to CSMC with a request that an ad hoc scrutiny committee be formed to carry out the review.
3. Members need to be aware that if CSMC decide to proceed with the review it ought, under normal practices, to be completed before its final meeting of this municipal year on 7 April 2015, and indeed the last meeting of this formation of Council prior to the local elections in May 2015.

Background

4. Following the 9 September 2014 Cabinet meeting which considered the Community Stadium and Leisure Update report, it was agreed that the Council should undertake a review on the future of Yearsley Pool to be completed by January 2016 (6 months prior to the opening of the New Stadium Leisure Centre (NSLC)).
5. Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) were confirmed as preferred bidder to operate the new Community Stadium, NSLC and Energise for the next 18 years. Yearsley Pool would be operated by GLL under the contract up to the opening of the NSLC (estimated September 2016).

6. The Cabinet paper noted that during the procurement process options for investment into Yearsley Pool were considered by bidders. However, bidders concluded that it would require considerable investment and better car parking facilities, which to date have not been secured, making it too expensive with a limited leisure offer compared with other options.
7. The cost to the Council of operating Yearsley has been consistently over £250k per annum over the last 5 years and this made it a commercially unattractive option as part of the future leisure management contract for the City.
8. The future operation of Yearsley needs to be considered 6 months prior to the opening of the NSLC, providing the option for the operator to continue with the management, if it can be operated at no additional cost, or the option of exploring other operational structures with the community and stakeholders if the operator does not wish to take up this option. This will be linked to decisions and options that may arise regarding potential investment into the wider Yearsley site.
9. There is a long lead-in time to the review date, providing a good opportunity to consider all potential options with the community and relevant stakeholders regarding future operational models.
10. Campaigners against the plan have claimed that the loss of funding puts the pool under threat and set up the Yearsley Pool Action Group (YPAG). A petition to safeguard the pool has been signed by more than 4,500 people and this appears as a separate item on the agenda of this meeting.

How will the work be carried out?

11. The already agreed 'review' will look to:
 - Establish a working group to meet in January consisting of community representatives, interested stakeholders (Nestle, Active York, Aquatics forum, user groups such as swimming/canoe polo groups, and York St John University), Council officers and Greenwich Leisure Limited, as well as staff and managers from Yearsley Pool.
 - Set the scene at the first session and give the facts about the current operating model of Yearsley Pool, including discussing the income and expenditure openly with the group.

- Hold a series of meetings until November / December 15 2015 to enable the working group to explore all options.
- Draft a report by 15 December 2015 which will be signed off by the group in terms of setting out the options for the future operation of Yearsley Pool.
- Present regular progress reports to the Community Stadium Project Board.

12. The final report will be considered by Cabinet/Full Council in January 2016, as a decision will need to allow time to consult with staff.

13. Cllr Aspden's **scrutiny** topic assessment submitted to Learning and Culture OSC was as follows:

“What is the broad topic area?”

To investigate ways to reduce the subsidy given to Yearsley Swimming Pool while securing its long-term future.

What is the specific topic area?

Cabinet and Full Council has taken the decision to remove the subsidy given to Yearsley Pool (250k per year) from 2016. The Yearsley Pool Action Group fear that this funding cut will lead to the closure of the pool. This topic will seek to work with council officers, pool staff, the YPAG and other organisations to investigate ways to reduce the subsidy (through savings/income generation) while ensuring that the long-term future of the pool is secured.

Ambitions for the review:

To look at changing arrangements, including working with potential new partners, to significantly reduce the council subsidy and therefore ensure the long-term future to Yearsley Pool beyond 2016.”

14. CSMC will need to consider how Cllr Aspden's proposed ambitions for the review differ from the agreed planned work set out in paragraphs 11 and 12 above and how the suggested scrutiny review will ensure it adds value to the ongoing/ planned work being undertaken by others.

15. Cllr Aspden takes the view that a scrutiny review would differ from the agreed review because of the following factors:
- The aim of the scrutiny review is to keep Yearsley Pool open while finding ways to reduce the subsidy. It will do more than “explore all options”, one of which is closure. The wording and scope of the review is explicitly about keeping the pool open.
 - The proposed scrutiny review will work on a shorter timetable to ensure that recommendations are in place - ideally by autumn 2015 and certainly before January 2016. This will allow the pool a longer period of adjustment before the council subsidy is withdrawn in 2016.
 - The review meetings will take place in public allowing an open and transparent process with opportunities for user/resident engagement. Although, the Community Stadium Project Board itself does not meet in public, it does not make actual decisions in relation to the project. These are formally made either by Council, Cabinet or Officers depending upon the nature of the decisions required.
 - The proposed scrutiny topic has the support of and will involve the Yearsley Pool Action Group as the key ‘community/user representative’. YPAG has a 15 year involvement in the pool and has recently consulted with thousands of users – the YPAG petition was signed by 6,500. ‘Buy-in’ from the YPAG adds significant credence to the process.
16. CSMC needs to be mindful the suggestion is that the proposed scrutiny review would not be completed within the current municipal year and would run into a second year when the composition of the Council is likely to have changed following the local government elections in May.

Options

17. Members can decide to:
- i. Agree to carry out a scrutiny review of Yearsley Pool in addition to the agreed Council review and set up an ad hoc committee to carry out this work;

- ii. Agree not to carry out a separate scrutiny review into Yearsley Pool in light of the work already agreed and taking place.

Council Plan

- 18. Any scrutiny review of Yearsley Swimming Pool would be linked to the Build Strong Communities and Protect Vulnerable People elements of the Council Plan 2011-15.

Risk Management

- 19. There are no known risks associated with this feasibility report, other than the potential for duplication of work and resources if any agreed scrutiny review is not clearly defined and scoped so as to dovetail with the existing officer review already commissioned.

Implications

- 20. There are no financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, IT or Property implications associated with this feasibility report.

Recommendations

- 21. Members are asked to note the contents of the report and consider whether to carry out a scrutiny review into Yearsley Swimming Pool and appoint an ad hoc committee to undertake this work, or not.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures and protocols

Contact Details

Author:

Steve Entwistle
Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01904 554279
steven.entwistle@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

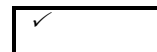
Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director Governance and ICT
Tel: 01904 551004

**Report
Approved**



Date 02/01/2015

Wards Affected:



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes – None

Glossary of abbreviations used in the report:

CSMC - Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee

GLL - Greenwich Leisure Limited

NSLC - New Stadium Leisure Centre

OSC – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

YPAG - Yearsley Pool Action Group