

Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 3 August 11	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: (CAB 020/112)
Report of: Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture, Steve Halsey Originating officer(s) Heather Bonfield, Interim Service Head: Culture, Learning and Leisure		Title: St George's Pools Refurbishment Wards Affected: St Katharine's and Wapping / Shadwell	

Lead Member	Cllr Rania Khan
Community Plan Theme	A Great Place to Live
Strategic Priority	Reduce differences in people's health and promote healthy lifestyles

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Council's leisure contractors GLL, together with Council staff, have reviewed the findings of a building condition review that has been recently carried out for the St George's Pools. The review found that many aspects of the building were reaching the end of their useful life. It presented a number of options ranging from short term remediation to total refurbishment of the existing building or re-provision elsewhere.
- 1.2. Arising from the options, officers took the following actions forward:
- To expend £13.5k (incl. fees) from within existing resources to address the most pressing issues
 - To require GLL to put in place risk assessments and a rigorous inspection regime to ensure the ongoing safety of the building, as well as robust contingency plans should it be necessary to close the building at short notice, e.g. if the plant failed
 - To explore the cost of remedial works to Georges Pools that would sustain the building for at least five years
- 1.3. This report sets a proposed way forward to ensure that the Pools remain operational for at least five years pending further work to determine the best long-term option for co-locating wet and dry leisure facilities on a single site in line with the recommendations of the Leisure Facilities Strategy

2. **DECISIONS REQUIRED**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Support a partnership project with GLL to invest in the fabric of the St Georges Pools to secure a minimum of five years life
- 2.2 Note that every effort is being made to programme the work to maintain pool access during the proposed works and keep periods of closure to an absolute minimum to reduce the impact on users
- 2.3 Note that a communications programme for users (including schools) and the local community will be prepared in partnership with GLL
- 2.4 Note that these works will be funded via partnership arrangements with the leisure management contractor (GLL)
- 2.5 Note that Officers will undertake further work to determine the best long-term option for co-locating wet and dry leisure facilities on the existing site in line with the recommendations of the Leisure Facilities Strategy

3. **REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 3.1 Surveys have indicated that the St George's Pools require significant investment in its fabric to remain safely operational. Discussions have taken place with the Council's Leisure contractors, GLL, who operate the pool and funding has been identified within the partnership to secure the safe operation of the pool for at least five years pending a long-term review of the Pools in accordance with the Council's Leisure Strategy.

4. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 An option to provide a temporary replacement pool at John Orwell Leisure Centre was explored in detail, but it was assessed that this would cost in excess of the refurbishment option and present greater risk in terms of controlling costs.
- 4.2 Closure of the pool was considered but cannot be recommended because of the shortage of swimming pools in the Borough as identified by the Leisure Centre Strategy.
- 4.3 "Do nothing" is not an option because of the deteriorating condition of the building and the Health and Safety implications.

5. **BACKGROUND**

- 5.1 Tower Hamlets has a shortfall in swimming provision that is projected to worsen as residential densities and daytime population increase. The Leisure

Facilities Strategy provides the evidence base that supports the LDF policies which seek to address this shortfall. This strategy recognised the condition risks with St. George's Pools, but projected shortfall of one or two pools borough-wide based on the assumption that St. George's would remain open or be reprovided in the area should it need to close.

- 5.2 The condition of St. George's Pools has deteriorated, but the building condition is being managed and systems are in place to ensure safe operation. Condition surveys of the building have indicated that the construction method of the pool is causing the building to deteriorate ahead of its expected design life. Whilst the building condition is manageable, current maintenance investment will no longer adequately compensate for structural deterioration and unless action is taken, this will result in the closure of the building.
- 5.3 A specialist leisure surveyor carried out a review that found that a number of structural problems associated with the method and materials used in the original building construction need to be addressed in order to avoid unplanned sudden closure.
- 5.4 To ensure that St George's Pools could continue to operate safely in the short-term £13.5k (incl. fees) was invested from within existing resources pending a decision on the way forward.
- 5.5 Officers, with GLL, fully investigated options for the way forward and assessed that an investment to sustain the St Georges Pools in the medium term clearly provided the best solution.

6. BODY OF REPORT

- 6.1 GLL has prepared a schedule of repairs that will sustain the building for at least five years at an estimated cost of c£700k, exclusive of VAT (subject to tender). Included in the refurbishment will be decals to the exterior (similar to those at York Hall) and uplighting to make the external of the building more attractive and vibrant at modest cost. In addition some minor works will be undertaken to improve the reception. After the works the building will continue to be monitored carefully and additional maintenance undertaken as necessary from within the contract provision. It may also be possible to refurbish the old laundry room. An Outline Business Case is currently being compiled to consider the income generating possibilities of such a proposal.
- 6.2 All efforts will be made to limit the disruption to activities and services operated on the St George's Pools site by implementing a phased works approach. Whilst a closure of the facility during the works is likely to be

necessary, all efforts will be used to restrict this to a small number of short closures.

- 6.3 The works will be carried out in partnership with GLL and it is anticipated that they will start on site late 2011 / early 2012. The tender period will be determined at tender stage.
- 6.4 A Communications Plan is considered essential and will be implemented in tandem with the works process to ensure that users of the site and local residents are kept informed of developments and can be signposted to alternative facilities if appropriate.
- 6.5 St Georges Pools accommodates 24 schools and delivers 74 school swimming lessons per week to both primary and secondary schools. If a closure of the facility was required to conduct the works all school lessons could be accommodated at other centres across the borough.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 This report seeks the views of Cabinet on the proposal to cease considering the option of a temporary pool and progress a project with GLL to invest in the fabric of the building.
- 7.2 Paragraph 6.1 outlines a solution to sustain the use of St George's for at least four years at a cost of approximately £700k (plus VAT).
- 7.3 The GLL contract allows for some limited provision for investment in facilities improvements and upgrades. The costs for these works would be met from the partnership arrangements that exist within the Leisure Management Contract as stated in paragraph 2.4. The arrangements in place provide for a shared pot from the accrued surpluses to be maintained to fund refurbishment works. There is currently £715k available in the shared pot subject to the audit of GLL accounts. The responsibility for procuring the work will be with GLL, the works will only proceed subject to GLL confirming the availability of the funds.

Alternatives Options Considered:

As indicated above the option to provide a temporary replacement pool at John Orwell Leisure Centre was explored in detail, but it was assessed that this would cost in excess of the refurbishment option and present greater risk in terms of controlling costs. Closure of the pool was considered but cannot be recommended because of the shortage of swimming pools in the Borough as identified by the Leisure Centre Strategy. "Do nothing" is not an option because of the deteriorating condition of the building and the Health and Safety implications.

8. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL SERVICES)

- 8.1 The Council has substantial responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 particularly in buildings open to the public. Even where these buildings are operated by a third party (GLL) the ultimate responsibility for health and safety remains with the Council.

9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 St George's Pools have significant programmes and facilities targeted at underrepresented groups. The refurbishment of the pools will ensure the continuation of these programmes pending investigation of long term solution. St George's Pools provides significant levels of gender-specific swimming sessions to cater for large numbers of Muslim residents and also has a teaching pool for the use of residents with disabilities. Investment in the refurbishment will, when completed, secure the continuation of these services. There will be a short-term problem in relation to Women and Girls' sessions should closure be necessary to facilitate the refurbishment.

10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 10.1 The current pools are not energy efficient; works to improve plant and replace defective windows will improve its efficiency.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Due to the condition of the building and the risks associated with the failure of the plant and fire alarm systems, a comprehensive risk register and risk management plan have been completed which mitigates against all high level risks including failures of the fire alarm and ventilation system, the fire doors, the building's roof structure and the pool plant.
- 11.2 Integral to the management of these risks are daily operational monitoring checks by GLL and monthly health and safety reviews conducted by GLL and officers to ensure that all risks are being monitored and appropriately managed.
- 11.3 Although appropriate measures are being taken to manage the risks associated with the site, due to the age and degraded condition of the plant and parts of the building fabric, building failure, although unlikely, is still a possibility after this investment has been made so an Emergency Decant and Displacement Plan has been produced, which outlines business continuity measures and provision at alternative sites.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Leisure facilities provide diversionary activities, especially for young people who may be at risk of anti-social behaviour

13. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

- 13.1 Tendering and management of the project will be undertaken by the Council's leisure contractors, GLL

**Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)
List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of "background papers"	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.
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None