



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Briefing Paper

Report of: Kay Higman, Cultural Services Manager

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Open

Provision of Splash Pads and Review of Paddling Pools

1. Summary

1.1 The paddling pools in the District are a popular facility enjoyed by local residents and visitors alike. A review of these facilities became essential due to the problems in recent years with filtration and repairs and maintenance. The Council has allocated £300,000 to the capital programme to deliver this project as part of the budget setting process in February 2012. The key issues of current provision and future splash pad facilities is therefore detailed in this report with options for the future.

2. Background

- 2.1 The District has 4 paddling pools and they are situated in Brinton Park, Kidderminster, Stourport Riverside, Northwood Lane, Bewdley and St Georges Park, Kidderminster. A review was essential due to the problems in previous years with filtration and repairs and maintenance. The paddling pools at Brinton Park and Stourport Riverside are usually open from Whitsun Holidays to the end of August and the pools at Northwood Lane and St Georges are open for the school summer holidays.
- 2.2 The most popular paddling pools are Stourport Riverside and Brinton park. St George's paddling pool has significant numbers of children using the facility who tend to be local residents. Northwood lane is quieter probably due to the location, but local people in Bewdley value the facility.
- 2.3 The revenue costs for the paddling pools pre filtration systems being installed in 3 of the paddling pools was £46,000. This reduced to £34,000 pa after installation.
- 2.4 This season the paddling pools at Northwood Lane and St Georges have been fully operational. Stourport Riverside paddling pool was very delayed in opening due to problems with the surface and the pump. However these problems were eventually resolved and the pool was opened on 10 August 2012. The pool at Brinton Park has substantial problems with the surface of the pool and the estimate for

repair for this pool is around £36,000. This pool was not open at all over the summer period.

- 2.5 In February, the Council allocated a sum of £300,000 into the capital programme to resolve the issues with the paddling pools and for possible provision of a new splash pad/park (please see photos in appendix 1 of splash pad facilities). The review is being carried out with a backdrop of attempting to modernise provision, endeavouring to save revenue wherever possible and to asset transfer where appropriate.
- 2.6 Splash pads are smaller versions of splash parks. Both comprise wet pour surfacing with water supply to various pressure pads on the surface which are activated by young children using the facility. Paddling pools are being replaced nationally with splash parks, and water play is being introduced to play facilities.
- 2.7 The costs for a splash park vary from £75,000 to £225,000 each dependent on site condition, water pressure and the number of stations. All costs are approximate and will be optimised through the procurement process.

3. Key issues

- 3.1 All of the pools, except St George's, have had investment over the last 5 years in pool filtration. The paddling pool at Brinton Park requires investment for repairs and, if the pool were to be open for next financial year, the costs would be approximately £36,000.
- 3.2 The Council needs to reduce its revenue expenditure and therefore the option of maintaining the status quo is not financially viable. While it would be possible to invest in one or two new splash pads and close all the pools, in order to maximise the revenue savings, this option is not proposed because the range of locations is considered to be popular with local residents – although inevitably usage depends on the weather and, in any case, happens only in a small part of the year.
- 3.3 The recommended approach therefore involves a mixture of new provision and steps that would reduce revenue costs by shifting operation costs to other providers in some cases and by redeploying equipment.
- 3.4 The current pool at Brinton Park could not easily be converted into a splash pad or splash park. This location is recognised as the main strategic park in Kidderminster. It is therefore considered better value for money to build a splash pad at this location in preference to St George's Park, which is currently in much better condition than the pool at Brinton Park. The proposal therefore is for the pool at Brinton Park to be demolished and that the splash pad would be more

suitably located next to the current play area at the top of the park, as this would make supervision of young children easier for parents and would bring all the play features together in one area of the park.

- 3.5 The paddling pool at Stourport Riverside is heavily used by tourists and visitors to the District whereas the other facilities predominantly serve local people. Initial discussions have taken place with traders to see if there was any demand to take on the management of the paddling pool and to potentially charge for entry to the facility. There is interest from the traders and potential interest from others and the Council would need to go through procurement exercise if this decision was taken. This option would provide the Council with an income from the lease or licence and would also provide a saving. Charging for the paddling pool by a third party operator would be in keeping with the other visitor attractions on the site.
- 3.6 A more suitable location or a splash pad for Stourport would potentially be at Lickhill Memorial park in Stourport which is a main park for Stourport and has good access by residents of the area. This would be a free facility to the public and would complement the facility at Stourport Riverside. Initial discussions have taken place with Stourport Town Council and in principle they would agree to the asset being situated in the park and they would carry out the maintenance of the facility. It is recommended that we should proceed with investment in a splash pad at this location only if the asset would be transferred to the Town Council.
- 3.7 Other potential partners have been approached to investigate whether they would be interested in managing the facilities at Bewdley and St George's but they are not interested at the current time. The Council will continue to pursue an asset transfer or agreement to maintain in the future with any willing partner. A financial appraisal suggests that by closing St George's Park and Northwood Lane paddling pools completely it would save the Council approximately £10,000: £8,000 of this is staff, materials and contractor costs. Demolition costs would be necessary in addition. Demolition and closure would save the Council money over a three year period. However it is not considered that this would meet the needs of local residents and therefore this option is not proposed.
- 3.8 In order to make St George's park more sustainable in the future, it would be necessary to repair the current surface and transfer the pump from the paddling pool at Brinton Park. At a cost of approximately £20,000, to improve filtration and reduce revenue costs.
- 3.9 The paddling pool at Northwood Lane is less used than the other pools in the District which is probably due to its location but the facility is valued locally. It is in a reasonable state of repair and has also had

installed in recent years a new filtration system. No investment is proposed.

- 3.10 It is estimated that the project could be completed by June 2013, given a Cabinet decision in November 2012.

4. Options

- 4.1 In order to achieve the best outcome for water play provision in the District and to resolve the existing issues with the current paddling pools, the following options are recommended. These options would also achieve the objective of provision in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley which is freely accessible but would also achieve a saving for the Council.

1. Provide a splash pad at Brinton Park adjacent to play area and demolish existing paddling pool
2. Provide a splash pad at Lickhill Memorial Park, Stourport which will be transferred to and maintained by Stourport on Severn Town Council
3. Retain the current paddling pool at Stourport Riverside with a lease/license to a commercial operator/trader which will realise a net saving to the Council
4. If it is not possible to secure a private sector operator the paddling pool at Stourport could be demolished
5. Repair current surface at St George's and transfer pump from Brinton Park to St Georges to improve filtration and reduce revenue costs
6. Retain Northwood Lane as it is in a good state of repair and filtration system is in place
7. The Council continues to pursue an asset transfer or agreement to maintain in the future with any willing partner for St Georges and Northwood Lane pools.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with Stourport on Severn Town Council and the affected ward members.

6. Related Decisions

- 6.1 The Council has allocated £300,000 to the capital programme to deliver this project as part of the budget setting process in February 2012.

7. Relevant Council Policies/Strategies

- 7.1 Corporate Plan, value for money.

8. Implications

8.1 Resources.

8.2 The estimated financial implications of the proposals in this report are as follows:

	Revenue	Budget available for capital investment
Stourport	£12,100	
Bewdley	£4,800	
Brinton park	£11,800	
St Georges Park	£5,300	
Current expenditure	<u>£34,000</u>	<u>£300,000</u>
Future running costs Bewdley	£4,800	
Future running costs St Georges	£4,800	
Demolish pool at Brinton Park and landscape	Zero	(£15,000)
Move the pump to St George's and repair pool	Zero	(£20,000)
Splash pad at Brinton Park	£11,500	Provision for both up to (£260,000)
Splash pad at Lickhill Memorial Park; running costs to be met by Stourport Town Council	Zero	
Lease paddling pool, Riverside Stourport to private sector operator (subject to procurement and	(£5,000)	0

operational costs)		
Revenue contingency for start up costs	£2,000	
Revised expenditure	£18,100	£295,000
Revenue savings	£15,900	Contingency £5,000

Reconciliation

Existing costs **£34,000**

Savings on Brinton Park (£300)

Savings on St Georges Park (£500)

Savings on SOS Running costs (£12,100)

Income from SOS lease (£5,000)

Contingency cost on start up £2,000

Net Revised Operating Costs **£18,100**

Revenue Saving £15,900

8.2 The financial projections assume that Stourport Town Council takes on the maintenance costs for the new splash pad provision in Lickhill Memorial Park. The Town Council would be assisted in the start up and close down costs for the new provision by undertaking training from parks staff or the successful tenderer to enable them to reduce costs.

8.3 The £300,000 capital is funded through prudential borrowing.

9. Wards affected

9.1 All wards are affected

10. Appendices

10.1 Photos of splash pad/splash park.

11. Background Papers

11.1 There are no background papers.

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