

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
12TH NOVEMBER 2012

Provision of Splash Pads and Review of Paddling Pools

| Open | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME: | Stronger Communities |
| CORPORATE PLAN THEME: | Delivering Together With Less |
| CABINET MEMBER: | Councillor I Hardiman |
| DIRECTOR: | Director of Community Well being and Environment |
| CONTACT OFFICER: | Kay Higman, Ext. 2902 Kay.higman@wyreforestdc.gov.uk |
| APPENDICES: | Appendix 1 - Photos of Splash Pad and Splash Park |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide key issues and information for consideration by Cabinet for the future provision of paddling pools/splash pads in the District.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to DECIDE:

- 2.1 To provide a splash pad at Brinton Park adjacent to play area and demolish existing paddling pool.
- 2.2 Following the Overview and Scrutiny recommendation on 8th November 2012, request Stourport Town Council consider the provision and maintenance of the current paddling pool at Stourport Riverside and the potential splash pad at Lickhill Park, the outcome of this consideration be referred to the relevant Cabinet member by the end of December 2012.
- 2.3 To delegate authority to decide on the future provision and maintenance of water play facilities in Stourport to the Cabinet Member for Well Being in consultation with the Directors of Resources and Community Well Being.
- 2.4 To repair current surface at St George's and transfer the pump from Brinton Park to St George's to improve filtration and reduce revenue costs.
- 2.5 To retain the Northwood Lane paddling pool and operate as normal.
- 2.6 The Council continues to pursue an asset transfer or agreement to maintain in the future with any willing partner for the maintenance and operation of any of the District Council's paddling pools.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The District has 4 paddling pools and they are situated in Brinton Park, Kidderminster, Stourport Riverside, Northwood Lane, Bewdley and St George's 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 George's are open for the school summer holidays.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 This season the paddling pools at Northwood Lane and St George's have been fully operational. Stourport Riverside paddling pool was delayed in opening due to problems with the surface and the pump. However these problems were eventually resolved and the pool was opened on 10th 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.
- 3.5 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).
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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 a procurement exercise if this decision was taken. This option would provide the Council with an income from the lease or license 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. However, if it is not possible to secure a private sector operator, this paddling pool would be demolished given the proposal for new, additional provision in Stourport.
- 4.6 A more suitable location for 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.
- 4.7 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 with the addition of Brinton Park. 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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.

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

4.11 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2012 a report was debated on the paddling pools and future provision. It was recommended from this meeting as in section 2 of this report above that Stourport Town Council considers the provision and maintenance of the current paddling pool at Stourport Riverside and the potential splash pad at Lickhill Park.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 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 | |
| Brintons park | £11,800 | |
| St George's Park | £5,300 | |
| Current expenditure | <u>£34,000</u> | <u>£300,000</u> |
| Future running costs Bewdley | £4,800 | |
| Future running costs St George's | £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 | |

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| (Dependent on results of Stourport Town Council discussions). Lease paddling pool, Riverside Stourport to private sector operator (subject to procurement and operational costs) | *(£5,000) | 0 |
| Revenue contingency for start up costs | *£2,000 | |
| Revised expenditure | £18,100 | £295,000 |
| Revenue savings | £15,900 or *£12,900 | Contingency £5,000 |

Reconciliation

Existing costs **£34,000**

Savings on Brinton Park (£300)

Savings on St George's 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 OR

***Revenue Saving £12,900** if Stourport Town Council take on management and maintenance of paddling pool and leasing of the paddling pool by the Council does not happen.

5.2 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.

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

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal and policy implications other than the normal procurement rules which will apply for this project.
- 6.2 The proposals seek to develop new splash pad provision on existing Council owned land. The proposed developments would not include equipment or structure exceeding 4 metres in height, as such no planning permission would be required by virtue of the permitted development rights set out under Schedule 2, Part 12 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Consideration has been given when carrying out this review to the current state of repair of the paddling pools at each of the site. It is not anticipated that there will be any major problems with St George's, Northwood Lane and Stourport into the short and mid term future but there is no guarantee.
- 7.2 There may be an increased risk of vandalism given that the proposed developments are more high profile than the existing provision and therefore there may be potential increased expenditure on replacement parts.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out and no adverse impacts have been identified.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposals in this report involve investment in modern facilities to serve local people and visitors and other steps to reduce revenue expenditure in this service area.

10. CONSULTEES

Cabinet Member for Community Well Being.
Director of Resources.
Director of Assets and Localism.
Affected Ward Members.
Stourport Town Council.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee, November 2012.