



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – Wednesday 26th May 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item 9
Subject	Opening Woodstock Outdoor Pool
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	CLlr Suzi Coul, Cabinet Member for Health and Leisure Email: suzi.coul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager - Contracts Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To approve a revised outdoor pool opening programme for the 2021 season, allowing the pool to open as an addition to the GLL planned Covid 19 recovery programme.
Annexes	ANNEX A - Opening Programme and Prices 2021
Recommendation/s	<p>a) <i>That the Cabinet approve the proposed school summer holiday opening programme for Woodstock Outdoor Pool for the 2021 season.</i></p> <p>b) <i>And, that the Cabinet acknowledge the forecast additional cost of this addition to the Recovery programme of the Leisure Contract.</i></p> <p>c) <i>And that the Cabinet either;</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>i.) approve delegated authority for the Head of Paid Services, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet member, to allow an amendment to the minimum opening hours of the leisure contract via an exchange of letters for 2021</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>or;</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>ii.) approve delegated authority for the Head of Paid Services, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member, to allow amendments to the minimum opening hours of the leisure contract via an exchange of letters for the remaining contract term.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	Healthy Towns and Villages; Strong Local Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	GLL Better (Leisure Contractor) and Senior Council and Publica officers

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Following the announcement of the Government Roadmap (the Roadmap) GLL were asked to provide a schedule of the re-opening of facilities in accordance with the relaxation of lockdown restrictions. This resulted in GLL establishing the minimum viable offer (MVO) which was a forecast of the allowed activities in accordance with the roadmap, and the order in which the services could be opened whilst minimising the risk that the business could become insolvent through lack of income.
- 1.2. GLL's business model as a social enterprise is based on using income to support the provision of leisure services for their partner Authorities. This business model allows the Authority to operate some services at a subsidy (i.e services which operate at a financial loss) by balancing these losses with services which operate at a financial gain. This holistic approach to the services across the District allows the provision of inclusive, accessible, and unique services which a purely commercial operator would not provide.
- 1.3. As part of establishing the MVO, GLL has identified that the Woodstock Outdoor Pool, due to its long season of 21 weeks which can be influenced largely by the weather, operates at a financial loss. Typically the pool makes an overall loss of circa £57,000 each year, however the benefits of this service can still be delivered in normal circumstances as the deficit is covered by GLL as part of the contracts overall financial arrangement.
- 1.4. GLL have analysed the income from the 3 years prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, and have established that the financial impact of opening for only the six week school summer holiday period would be approximately £19,000.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. There are two options to be considered for the operation of the outdoor pool for the summer of 2021.
 - a. Remain closed - zero subsidy required but likely costs associated with dilapidation
 - b. Open for school summer holidays - potential £19k subsidy
- 2.2. A programme of opening based on family swimming and access for young people has been developed (ANNEX A). There is also a provision for adult swimming at the beginning and end of each day. Officers have also worked with GLL to incorporate some financial offers (6 week membership, swim for £1 etc) and agreed to implement the 2019 pricing structure as a further financial help for users.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Using financial information from previous years GLL have advised that the forecast cost of opening for the summer holiday period would be approximately £19,000. There is a risk that this amount could increase if attendance is lower than estimated. Similarly this amount could decrease if attendance is higher than estimated.
- 3.2. Any financial losses that arise from opening the outdoor pool will be borne by the Council through the open book accounting process.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Under the leisure contract there is a provision for the Authority to agree any changes being implemented to the minimum opening hours. The Authority must agree this in

writing and GLL must advertise this change to the users for a period of 30 days prior to the change taking place.

- 4.2. Following a legal review it has been determined that this notification should take the form of a letter of agreement between the parties, which would need to be signed by the Head of Paid Service at the Council. The letter should set out clearly what has been agreed between the parties in terms of costs and the changes to the minimum opening hours.
- 4.3. This change will only be implemented for the current year (2021) although members could choose to extend the delegated Authority to cover future years of the contract to enable any changes that may be necessary for 2022 and onwards.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There is a risk that the services could be forced to close as a result of further Covid 19 (or similar variant) restrictions, in a deviation from the current roadmap. In this circumstance there will be some unrecoverable financial losses associated with the pre-season preparation and water treatment of the swimming pool. Staffing and Utility costs could be quickly reduced if another closure were implemented through redeployment, furlough scheme, turning off pool heating etc.
- 5.2. In 2020 it was envisaged that the pool would open for its usual season, and consequently the pre-season works took place prior to the first lockdown being announced. To this end the pool had received its annual maintenance and servicing regime. If the pool remains closed for the entirety of 2021 there is a risk that elements of the building or plant will require an increased investment to return them to service in 2022 after being out of service for a prolonged period of time.
- 5.3. If the public appetite for the pool is low, usually attributed to the weather, there could be a lower income stream than forecast. The forecast losses have been assessed by GLL and are not the 'Best Case' scenario. Whilst this could mean that with a very good season losses could be significantly less there is a risk that a very poor season could produce losses in excess of £19k. Previous years of operation at the site have shown though that a large number of people use the pool and it is popular with local residents and visitors alike.
- 5.4.

Benefits/Weaknesses Table	
Benefits	Weaknesses
Provision of local access to fitness and family swimming	Reputational risk to Council/GLL for opening a facility at a cost, particularly if poor weather leads to under use
Conservation of facility / prevention of facility deterioration and vandalism whilst closed	
Provision of an outdoor exercise venue, 1 of only 2 public outdoor pools in West Oxfordshire	

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1. There is an associated Carbon footprint with the operation of the outdoor pool, however the shorter season and operation in what should be the warmest part of the year will significantly reduce this carbon footprint in comparison to previous years where the pool is open for circa 21 weeks.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1. The Council could choose to explore different timeframes for the re-opening, although each will have a different effect on the modelling, a shorter than 6 week opening for example will still incur the same pre-start costs but won't allow as long to recoup some of that investment. In comparison opening for longer will mean days/weeks of operation whilst children are still at school and much lower income is made during the daytimes.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1. Annex A - 'Woodstock Outdoor Pool Season 2021.doc'