

SCRUTINY ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES/ LEISURE MANAGEMENT	COMMUNITY FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	22 APRIL 2024	4
SWIMMING PROVISION			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to present the agreed Disposal Plan for Kirkham Pool, the outputs of the work commissioned from Active Lancashire to consult with key local stakeholders and existing swimming providers, the feasibility and costs of making the existing Kirkham Pool fit for purpose/building of a new fit for purpose swimming pool on another site and setting out the futures steps over the next few months to secure swimming in line with the resolution of Council. Members are asked to consider this information and make any appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

SOURCE OF REFERRAL

Community Focus Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2024 - Swimming Provision

Following consideration of this matter, it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the work undertaken and commissioned to date and agree to the approach for addressing the resolution as set out in the report.
2. To agree to receiving a further report to consider the options to support public swimming provision.

Executive Committee – 5 December 2023 - YMCA Disposal Plan & Notice of Motion – Kirkham Pool

It was unanimously RESOLVED

1. The council does not approve the Disposal Plan submitted by YMCA as they are dissatisfied with:
 - The length of time allowed to express and work up expressions of interest
 - The provision made for the involvement of the council in deciding whether an expression of interest is acceptable
2. To approve the expenditure of £25,900 fully funded from the UKSPF (£16,601) and unallocated Covid Support Grant (£9,299) held by the council, for Active Lancashire to deliver the works listed under recommendation 3 of their report (Appendix 3), that is to consult with key local stakeholders and existing swimming providers in Fylde to understand the existing position, potential challenges and opportunities for the short, medium and long term.
3. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture to:
 - (i) commission any further work that may be required to address the Notice of Motion regarding swimming provision. Such further work is to be funded from the unallocated Covid Support Grant funding to a maximum of

£30,000 including the expenditure to date from the budget of £9,299, any expenditure to be reported to this committee.

(ii) draft and submit to the YMCA suggested changes to the Disposal Plan that would satisfy the Council.

Council - 2 October 2023 - Notice of Motion – Rural Swim Provision

It was therefore RESOLVED as follows: *"In the corporate and local plan this Council seeks to maintain or encourage public swim provision. I propose that this Council as a matter of urgency, supports that position and in light of the recent announcement by the YMCA to permanently close Kirkham Baths looks at all practicable options to work with partners and stakeholders to support that provision, and such options to be considered by the external Scrutiny Committee."*

SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee;

1. considers the Fylde Borough Council Swimming Pools Public and Stakeholder Consultation Report (April 2024) undertaken by Active Lancashire and comments on the key findings and four considerations designed to support the council in its own next steps.
2. considers the survey, feasibility and costings of making the existing Kirkham Pool fit for purpose/building of a new fit for purpose swimming pool on another site and comments on the options presented.
3. considers the next steps in delivering the council resolution including the seeking of interest from voluntary or community groups to own and operate Kirkham Pool and makes any comments accordingly.
4. to make any recommendations arising from the information in the report to the Executive Committee.

REPORT

PREVIOUS DECISIONS/BACKGROUND

1. Council on 2 October considered a Motion on public swimming provision submitted on notice under council procedure rule 11. After amendment the following resolution was approved:

"In the corporate and local plan this Council seeks to maintain or encourage public swim provision. I propose that this Council as a matter of urgency, supports that position and in light of the recent announcement by the YMCA to permanently close Kirkham Baths looks at all practicable options to work with partners and stakeholders to support that provision, and such options to be considered by the external Scrutiny Committee."

2. A report was considered by Community Focus Scrutiny Committee on 18 January 2024 which provided an update on the practicable options identified to date to support public swimming provision and to set out the role that the Community Focus Scrutiny Committee could play in delivering the resolution approved at Council on 2 October 2023.
3. The scrutiny report included the background to Kirkham Pool including matters associated with the YMCA closure notification on 10 August 2023, the subsequent Disposal Plan submitted by the YMCA and the decision of the Executive Committee on 5 December 2023. The report also provided an overview of the work undertaken and commissioned to date.
4. This report presents members with an update and the outcome of;
 - agreement of the Disposal Plan for Kirkham Pool,
 - the work undertaken on need/demand for swimming facilities in Fylde, Active Lancashire to consult with key local stakeholders and existing swimming providers in Fylde to understand the existing position, potential challenges and opportunities for the short, medium and long term, and
 - the feasibility and costs of making the existing Kirkham Pool fit for purpose, the capital cost of building of a new fit for purpose swimming pool on another site and the likely revenue costs of operating a fit for purpose swimming pool,

- the timeline of future steps to support the resolution.

THE DISPOSAL PLAN

5. In accordance with the 2009 agreement the YMCA announced a Closure Event on 10 August 2023, and submitted a Disposal Plan to Fylde Council within the required 3 months (10 November 2023). The Closure Event notification stated that YMCA was unable to continue operating the pool and has no use for the asset in delivering the objects of the trust.
6. A report was presented to the Executive Committee on 5 December 2023 seeking consideration and approval of a response to the YMCA disposal plan for Kirkham pool and requesting approval of expenditure to commission work to address the council resolution.
7. After consideration the Executive Committee resolved; that the council did not approve the Disposal Plan for Kirkham pool submitted by YMCA, as they are dissatisfied with the length of time allowed to express and work up expressions of interest and the provision made for the involvement of the council in deciding whether an expression of interest is acceptable.
8. The Executive Committee resolved to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture to draft and submit to the YMCA suggested changes to the Disposal Plan that would satisfy the council.
9. Suggested changes have been proposed to the YMCA in relation to the disposal plan for Kirkham pool and following further dialogue agreement has been reached. A copy of the agreed Disposal Plan is attached at appendix 1.
10. The Disposal Plan gives community or voluntary groups the opportunity to submit expressions of interest in acquiring and operating Kirkham Pool, before consideration is given to selling the premises on the open market.

SWIMMING POOLS PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

11. Active Lancashire were commissioned in December 2023 to undertake a public consultation to ascertain stakeholder perceptions of swimming provision in the Fylde area. This follows on from [an initial report published in October 2023](#) that provided the council with an indicative understanding of facilities across the borough and a series of recommendations to consider. The consultation took place between January and March 2024 and involved a public survey, key stakeholder discussions with schools, swimming pool providers and a series of public consultation events based on responses to the survey.
12. The consultation's purpose was to bring together different voices from the public and key stakeholders across the borough. This would enable the council to better understand key challenges being experienced across communities and allow space for the council to respond accordingly.
13. The public survey attracted 2,556 responses over a 3-week period in January 2024. Alongside the survey, comments from social media posts were captured, which gave the consultation an additional perspective on the views of local communities.
14. The stakeholder consultation involved swimming pool operators and groups of schools from across the borough. The purpose of these conversations was to develop an understanding of the current challenges being faced by the stakeholders, their experiences to date, any future aspirations they may have and how the council may be able to help them. These were carried out throughout February and early March with the support of Fylde Borough Council.
15. In total, 4 swimming pool operators were spoken with from both the third sector and private sector including hotels and holiday parks. During the full consultation period, 25 of the 36 schools located in Fylde (including primary, secondary and private schools) and 1 in Blackpool provided their views via the survey, group conversations, and/or email communications.
16. Key findings from the public survey of 2,556 respondents are (* multiple answers allowed):
 - 91% live in Fylde
 - 41% swim daily or weekly

17. When asked, what prevented you from swimming or swimming more often the highest answers were *,
- Local facilities are too difficult to access – 31%
 - It's too expensive – 24%
 - I don't have the time – 19%
 - The facilities are not appealing – 18%.
18. When asked, why did you use Kirkham Pool the top answers were *:
- It's my closest swimming pool – 76%
 - It was affordable – 52%
 - It was the most appropriate pool for my swimming needs – 37%
19. When previous users of Kirkham Pool were asked where they now access swimming the top answers were *:
- Ribby Hall Village – 40%
 - St Annes YMCA pool and gym – 29%
20. When asked, what is personally important to members of the public when it comes to swimming? the top answers were *:
- Convenient swimming opportunities local to me – 84%
 - Affordable flexible payment options – 60%
 - Adequate parking provision – 52%
21. When asked, what Fylde Borough Council could do to help support individuals to take up more swimming? the top answers were *:
- seek investment to improve facilities – 66%
 - promote local swimming pools – 44%
 - make swimming more affordable – 41%
22. Do the public feel there is a need for a new sports facility within rural Fylde?
- Yes – 77%
 - Unsure – 19%
 - No – 4%
23. The stakeholder consultation included contact with a number of venues in the Fylde area who have swimming facilities to understand how they operate and what provision they provide to local residents. There were responses from one hotel, two holiday park operators and a leisure facility, which are set out in the report.
24. In addition to the survey questions targeted specifically at schools, Active Lancashire also contacted schools directly to discuss their experiences of accessing swimming provision in the area.
25. Three key themes emerged as being important to the public including:
- Ensuring swimming opportunities are local.
 - Ensuring swimming and leisure opportunities are affordable with flexible payment options (e.g. pay and play, memberships, tiered support).
 - Ensuring there is accessibility for all, including those with disabilities and the elderly.
26. Potential council support was also explored initially through the survey and in more detail through the public consultation events. Three broad themes emerged:
- Refurbishing the existing Kirkham site to secure swimming opportunities for rural Fylde in the short term.

- Identifying a site and developing a new purpose-built facility to cater for rural Fylde and surrounding areas. This was identified as a long-term option if Fylde Borough Council could secure appropriate investment.
 - Additional support includes subsidising school swimming for increased costs, converting Kirkham site to another community or commercial asset, exploring refurbishment or new site development costs, clear communication of council's approach to sport, leisure, and health alongside broader public communication on related topics.
27. As a result of undertaking this consultation exercise Active Lancashire have developed the following four considerations designed to support the council in its own next steps.
28. Communication - It is clear that in these consultations, action must be communicated to local stakeholders for realistic perceptions and expectations. Future activities involving stakeholders need a clear communication plan pre, during, and post-activity for efficient resource utilisation. Rebuilding trust between the community and Fylde Council, in collaboration with relevant leisure providers, is essential due to uncertainties surrounding issues like Kirkham Pool closure.
29. Being clear on role and responsibilities. - The consultation reveals a lack of clarity among stakeholders. For instance, what are the roles of the local council, leisure providers, operators, and schools? Establishing clarity could prioritise actions with resident support.
30. Aspirations and plans. - Fylde Council's recent Local Plan, adopted in December 2021, covers various priorities like economic prosperity, transport, environment, housing, education, health, and community. Physical activity is integrated across these themes, but Active Lancashire stresses its importance for achieving council objectives through better resident health. Plans for local swimming provision changes, including Kirkham Pool, should be shared with stakeholders for community involvement and co-creation.
31. Provision and facility sustainability. - Concerns arose in the consultation regarding future provision disruption, especially for schools struggling to meet curriculum needs. Many schools and individuals rely heavily on YMCA St. Annes post-Kirkham Pool closure currently suffering from operational and maintenance issues which is now requiring investment to update the facility. Fylde Council secured Swimming Pool Support Funding totalling £220,000 to support the facility, ensuring it remains open for at least 10 years. With proper planning and investment, this funding can enhance swimming provision across Fylde, meeting current and future resident needs.
32. The full report, Fylde Borough Council Swimming Pools Public and Stakeholder Consultation Report – April 2024, produced by Active Lancashire is attached at appendix 2.

FEASIBILITY AND COSTS OF MAKING THE EXISTING KIRKHAM POOL FIT FOR PURPOSE

33. Consultants were appointed in January to assess the feasibility and costings of recommissioning/ enhancing the existing Kirkham Pool or constructing a new build facility. The cost of three specialist works are set out below and were funded from the Covid Support Grant following a virement approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.

Element	Cost (Excl. VAT)
Architectural Fee Proposal to RIBA Work Stage 2 ¹ – Strategic Definition, Preparation and Briefing, Concept Design	£22,680
Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) design services	£11,400
Quantity Surveyor feasibility costings	£9,000
Total	£43,080

34. The feasibility and costings looked at four options:

- Option 1 – Minimum Level Proposal to re-commission existing facilities at Kirkham Pool.

¹ The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) [Plan of Work](#) is the definitive model for the design and construction process of buildings.

- Option 2 – Enhanced Proposal for Part Refurbishment (of the historic elements of the existing pool buildings) and replacement & remodelling of reception and dry facilities to include for gymnasium and café and enhancements to external works all following inclusive, access-for-all principles.
 - Option 3 – Proposals to maximise opportunities for new wet and dry leisure facilities at the existing site.
 - Option 4 - A new facility (of a nominal size) on a site to be determined based on price per square foot/metre within a range and with relevant exclusions and caveats relating variables and unknowns.
35. A survey of Kirkham Pool was undertaken in February 2024. This identified that the mechanical and electrical (M&E) installations at Kirkham Pool were generally in a very poor condition and beyond their serviceable lifespan. Previously a report was published in 2009 when YMCA Fylde Coast began to operate the facility, where it was deemed that the estimated operational life of the facility was approximately 10 years.
36. During the winter of 2021 the building was hit by Storm Arwen a powerful cyclone that with intense winds lifted the domed roof off the facility leaving an area 25-30 meters by 10meters completely exposed to the elements, of which is still exposed. In addition to the storm damage there have been numerous break-ins where bouts of vandalism are evident throughout.
37. It is therefore recommended that a full brick refurbishment and a full replacement of M&E services is required to bring life back to the facility.
38. The document attached at appendix 3c includes a mechanical and electrical condition report and options appraisal along with sketches/plans at appendix 3a and estimated costs of each option at appendix 3b. A summary and cost of each option is below.
39. Option 1 – Minimum Level Proposal to re-commission existing facilities at Kirkham Pool. This includes a new slate roof, suspended ceiling over the swimming pool area, refurbishing and upgrading the boiler and heating installations, pool management installations, lighting and power installations, air handling installations, etc., and finishes and decoration repairs. Estimated cost £1,853,163, around 65% of which is for M&E installations, with the works taking around 8 months to complete.
40. Option 2 – This proposal is refurbishment of existing pool hall area with a new adjoining two storey building to provide modern facilities for the pool with complimentary multifunctional spaces including gym, café and viewing gallery. Estimated cost £4,450,060 with the works taking around 12 months to complete. The benefit of this scheme is that it provides a new modern reception and changing facilities along with a café an increased dry side activity space. The budget costs so far indicated include for the Viewing Gallery which includes for flush glazing viewing panels. The other viewing options which are set out in appendix 3 would incur the following additional costs:
- Spectator balcony cantilevered into the pool area – £175,000.
 - Viewing gallery with glazed side panels projecting into the pool area - £20,000.
41. Option 3 – This proposal is to re-develop the Station Road site to provide a new 4 lane 25m pool with complementary modern facilities including reception area, changing village, multifunctional activity spaces, spectator areas, gymnasium, and café together with enhancements to external works including disabled access provision. The existing large gable to the old pool hall is to be retained and incorporated within the new building design. Estimated cost £6,627,696, with the works taking around 14 months to complete.
42. Option 4 – This proposal is for a new 4 lane, 25m pool with multifunctional use based upon Sport England’s design guidance notes on a notional site to be determined. Estimated cost £8,531,075 with the works taking around 16 months to complete.
43. All above estimates are based on a tender return for 1st quarter 2025 and include consultants’ fees and contingency. VAT is excluded. The table below shows the estimates for each option.

Option	Estimated cost
Option 1 – Minimum Level Proposal to re-commission existing facilities at Kirkham Pool.	£1,853,163
Option 2 – Refurbishment of existing pool hall area with a new adjoining two storey building to provide modern facilities for the pool with complimentary multifunctional spaces including gym, café and viewing gallery.	£4,450,060
Option 3 – Re-develop the Station Road site to provide a new 4 lane 25m pool with complementary modern facilities including reception area, changing village, multifunctional activity spaces, spectator areas, gymnasium, and café.	£6,627,696
Option 4 - A new 4 lane, 25m pool with multifunctional use based upon Sport England’s design guidance notes on a notional site to be determined/acquired.	£8,531,075

44. Subject to funding being available, each of the four options will have differing lead in times to consult, design and specify the works prior to tendering. Options 2 and 3 involve the demolition of at least part of the existing building which has been locally listed as a heritage asset. Any application that proposes alterations to a locally listed heritage building would be considered against the criteria set out in policy ENV5 of the local plan. Option 4 would potentially have the longest of lead in time as it needs to include site selection and acquisition along with planning permission.
45. The purpose of the feasibility study and costings is to set out the broad options for securing swimming for rural Fylde in the short and medium term. If any of these options was considered of merit it is suggested that further work be then undertaken to define in more detail the selected option for possible delivery.

THE TIMELINE OF FUTURE STEPS TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION

46. Following agreement of the Disposal Plan a dedicated webpage entitled [Swimming in Fylde](#) has been launched to provide information on the steps being taken to support the council resolution on swimming. Additionally, and with the permission of the YMCA, it sets out how a voluntary or community body can submit an expression of interest in owning and operating Kirkham Pool. The webpage incorporates an in-depth timeline with details of all actions taken to date and will be regularly updated to reflect progress.
47. The Fylde Swimming Pools Public and Stakeholder Consultation Report and the report into the feasibility and costings of recommissioning/ enhancing the existing Kirkham Pool or constructing a new build facility will be available on the webpage meaning it will also provide a comprehensive source of information for residents and interested parties. Key stages in the next few months are set out below.
48. As of Friday 12 April 2024, voluntary and community bodies can submit an Expression of Interest in acquiring and operating the Kirkham swimming facility using the dedicated online form. This submission period will run for six weeks, until Friday 24 May 2024. A voluntary and community body is defined in the [Assets of Community Value \(England\) Regulations 2012](#).
49. From 25 May 2024 it is the start of ten-week period for any voluntary or community group that have expressed an interest to work up business plans.
50. The deadline for submission of business plans if expressions of interest are received is 2 August 2024.
51. If business plans are received, then a period of up to 8 weeks is allowed to evaluate the proposals submitted. Finally, once any business plans have been evaluated, recommendations will be made by Fylde Council to YMCA by 27 September 2024.
52. If at any of the stages, there are no expressions of interest or business plans submitted then a report will be prepared to Scrutiny and the Executive Committee to report the outcome.

53. A report detailing the capital work required at St Annes pool including the use of the grant of £220,000 capital funding from the Swimming Pool Support Fund will be presented at Executive Committee on 25th April. The report will provide the latest position regarding surveys and investigations on the building and infrastructure at St Annes pool identified from a condition survey currently being undertaken. It is anticipated that a further report will be presented later once a cost has been established for all the works involved.

THE ROLE THAT SCRUTINY COULD PLAY IN CONSIDERING THE REPORT

54. The Council resolution asks that Scrutiny considers the consultation report from Active Lancashire to ascertain stakeholder perceptions of swimming provision in the Fylde area along with the feasibility and costings to recommission Kirkham Pool/provide a new facility. Members are also asked to consider the proposed steps to generate interest from voluntary and community groups to acquire and operate the pool. The Lead Member for Tourism and Leisure will be in attendance as part of consideration of the report and to respond to any questions from members.

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Council report and minutes – Notice of Motion rural swim provision	2 October 2023	CMIS > Meetings Calendar
Executive Committee report and minutes - YMCA Disposal Plan & Notice of Motion – Kirkham Pool	5 December 2023	CMIS > Meetings Calendar
Community Focus Scrutiny Committee report and minutes – Swimming Provision	18 January 2024	CMIS Meetings Calendar

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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Attached documents

Appendix 1 – The Disposal Plan

Appendix 2 - Fylde Borough Council Swimming Pools Public and Stakeholder Consultation Report – April 2024 - Active Lancashire

Appendix 3a – Kirkham Baths Options Appraisal

Appendix 3b – Kirkham Baths Feasibility and Option Cost Summary

Appendix 3c – M&E Services Report