

Aldershot Lido - Task and Finish Group

Introduction

- This paper provides an update on the work of the Lido Task and Finish Group and seeks approval to continue to share the risk and return linked to profit with Places for People for 2016 and to carry out soft market testing for the Aldershot Indoor Pools and Lido over the summer.

Task and Finish Group

- The Task and Finish Group have received the consultant's options appraisal report and a summary of the feedback from social media. The latter gives support to retaining the Lido along with a variety of suggestions. They have also considered a wish list and paper from the Friends of Aldershot Lido (FOAL), and a letter in the News and Mail from Sally Wainman who has a national interest in Lido`s.
- The Group, which meets regularly, have co-opted a representative from the Aldershot Civic Society (ACS) and the Friends of Aldershot Lido (FOAL) and there is regular representation from Places for People.
- An application to Historic England to add the Lido to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest had been refused. The independent application was comprehensive and any challenge would be unlikely to succeed. Without listed status, it is unlikely that any significant funds would be available from the Heritage Lottery.
- There was concern that whilst the financial performance of the Indoor Pools could be improved through initiatives such as increasing the size of the fitness gym, if the Lido remained as a separate entity and continued with a high subsidy it would remain vulnerable given the ongoing austerity measures.
- The Lido Task and Finish Group vision is for an integrated leisure facility for all ages including a lido, splash pad, adventure golf, indoor pool and fitness suite, café and shop, changing rooms, slides and flumes. It is recognised that any facilities should not jeopardise existing provision in the area and must be financially viable.

- The aim should be to develop a facility where both the indoor and outdoor provision was interrelated and delivered by one provider to enable cross ticketing and a better experience.
- To future proof these discretionary leisure services it will be important to ensure as low a subsidy as possible both for the indoor and outdoor facilities at the site. It was recognised that the size and depth of the outdoor water area might need to be reduced and heated to remain viable. The facility would be less weather dependent, which would extend the operating season, reduce costs and should increase both usage and income.
- It was agreed that if the area of water was reduced, the heritage link to the pool should be preserved and that this could be achieved through retention and use of the existing pool shape possibly with a combination of the heated water and a smaller splash pad. Either way the facility would benefit from a heritage display.
- Given the additional work from FOAL, the ACS and the Council, the Task and Finish group are proposing that the Council continue the share of any surpluses or deficits equally (50:50) for the Lido, with a maximum risk or return to the Council capped at £20k. This will help ensure that any increased support from local residents has the potential to reduce the Council's subsidy rather than solely improve the profit for the contractor.

Aldershot Civic Society - Survey

- The Aldershot Civic Society carried out an online survey on the Lido. (Summary Appendix 1). Generally, respondents were divided between celebrating the links with the Olympics and making no changes and celebrating the link but altering / redeveloping the lido.
- The majority of respondents (61%) felt that adding a splash pad was a good idea but that this should be somewhere else in the grounds with 31% indicating it could replace all or some of the current pool. The majority of respondents (49%) would like the pool heated, with 23% interested in a smaller heated pool.
- The majority were in favour of maintaining the lido (67%) and adapting the Lido (68%) to offer activities that are more varied. The majority of respondents were not in favour of removing the lido to either build a completely new one or design a replacement in its footprint
- In terms of additional things being added to increase visits, respondents indicated this would be most likely if the pool was; heated (80%), a better quality café (75%), had a longer season (72%) and special events (72%).

- Respondents indicated that if they were considering buying a season ticket for the lido the following would be the most important; a good quality all weather café (78%), a longer season (72%), the pool to be heated (70%), open for longer hours (64%), the lido to stay as it is (63%) and a children's play area (61%).

2015 Season Outcome

- The season saw a reduction in attendances from 27,500 in 2014 to 17,500 in 2015. The new senior, family and adult season tickets sold 22 with the junior season tickets down from 49 in 2014 to 9 in 2015. These will be given more promotion on the lead in for 2016.
- Military discounts accounted for 99 tickets but the books of loyalty cards (10 sold) and get your sixth visit free (0) were disappointing.
- The results of collecting 2,000 postcodes from visitors was more encouraging than in previous surveys showing that 60% came from inside the Borough.
- Wi-Fi is now in the grounds, the changing rooms were redecorated (£11k), picnic tables provided (£1k) and new lockers (£2k). These additional costs along with the £14k loss incurred from the risk and reward will see the cost to the Council of operating the Lido increasing to around £180k for 2015.
- The discounted entrance charge moving from 4.30pm to 3.30pm had proved very popular with attendances up from 1,400 to 2,360
- The additional work requested by Cabinet revealed that the financial and usage projections for the Splashpad had been realistic, the retention of the water slides is feasible, the ground conditions indicated there could be further developments and the preferred location for the adventure golf is adjacent the current entrance. An invitation for providers to offer additional complementary facilities was placed in a popular leisure journal with no response.

2016 Season initiatives

- A meeting with FOAL, ACS, the Council and Places for People agreed a number of improvements for this season. Places for People will produce its seasonal promotional material, which this year will include the continued use of social media, opening season posters and banners, photo stories on social media and websites, advertising on its gym television screens, local radio and the use of totems and shop windows in the town centre. The Council will continue to promote the offers in the Arena magazine and on our website.

- The season tickets will be promoted again along with loyalty cards. The 3.30pm discounted rate will be increased to 3.00pm, the 10% military discount will be increased to 20% and included in the Military discount marketing and ensure the promotion that the indoor pool memberships includes free access to the Lido. They will also email all local schools to advise them they will offer group discounts if they want to come to the Lido as a school party.
- FOAL is collecting photographs and information to create a display covering the history of the lido.
- A review of the signage to the Lido is being carried out. As well as the brown tourist directional signs there are currently four "Just like going to the seaside" signs located at key points in the Borough.
- Having followed up on a request from the Task and Finish Group to consider further signage, initial advice is that it is unlikely that Highways England Motorways would consider a sign for the Pools & Lido on the M3. Signing from the A31 (Hogs Back) and A331 (Blackwater Valley Road) would require permission from Surrey County Council and Hampshire County Council and we are following this up.

Soft Market Testing

- Given the wide range of potential service providers for the Lido and its inter-relationship with the Aldershot Indoor Pools it is proposed that in May we invite around 10 experienced organisations to participate in some soft market testing.
- Those interested will be given the background to the Borough and the facility, the results from the consultants, public consultation including the above survey, feedback from social media, the ACS and FOAL. They will be invited to a tour of the facilities and be given an outline of the Councils aspiration around "invest to save" to provide a more attractive and sustainable facility, which would include both an indoor and outdoor heated pool and promote the heritage of the site.
- The feedback will be used to help shape our thoughts on the tendering process, which with a multi-stage dialogue process will begin at the end of this year and take around 2 years from development of documentation to mobilisation in March 2019.

Financial Implications

- The risk and return will involve sharing any surpluses or deficits equally (50:50) from their budgeted profit figure. Based on the 7 year`s average prior to 2015, the proposed revised financial arrangements would have resulted in an increased

subsidy for the Council of around £6k. However, in the years 2012 to 2014 this would have returned a profit, with the years 2008 to 2011 a deficit.

- The worst performing year was in 2008 at minus £29k and the best performing year was in 2013 at plus £89k. In each case with the risk and return capped, the Council would have seen either an increased subsidy (2008) or return (2013) of £20k.
- Last year given the low attendance, the Council incurred an additional payment to Places for People of £14k.

Recommendation

- Cabinet is requested to note the above paper and approve:
 - the continuation of the financial arrangement, where the Council share the risk and return linked to profit with Places for People for 2016, to provide an incentive for the additional work being carried out by FOAL, ACS and the Council, with our maximum risk and return being capped at £20k, and
 - that soft market testing is carried out for the Aldershot Indoor Pools and Lido over the summer.

Head of Community and Environmental Services

Aldershot Civic Society Survey

- The Aldershot Civic Society carried out an online survey on the Lido with 489 responses (summary below) of which 95% had used the facility at some time. A third had used it in the last 6 years and over half had used it 10 or more years ago. Of the respondents 6% were under 18 years, 17% over 60 years with the majority (64%) aged 30 to 59. Around half the respondents had children less than 18 years.
- Generally, respondents were divided between celebrating the links with the Olympics and making no changes (44%) and celebrating the link but altering / redeveloping the lido (49%).
- The majority of respondents (61%) felt that adding a splash pad was a good idea but that this should be somewhere else in the grounds with 31% indicating it could replace all or some of the current pool with around 8% indicating it was a bad idea.
- The majority of respondents (49%) would like the pool heated, 26% felt it was not important and 23% were interested in a smaller heated pool.
- When asked how important it was to maintain the lido as it is, 9% felt it was not important, 23% were indifferent and 67% were in favour. When asked if the lido should be adapted to offer more varied activities 12% objected, 20% were indifferent and 68% were in favour. The majority of respondents (63%) were not in favour of removing the lido to either build a completely new one or design a replacement in its footprint.
- In terms of additional things being added to increase visits, respondents indicated this would be likely if the pool was; heated 80%, a better quality café 75%, could buy hot food 54%, provision of a children's play area 56%, open longer 60%, had a longer season 72%, had special events 72%, other attractions included in the price 66% and other attractions at an additional cost 33%..
- Respondents indicated that if they were considering buying a season ticket for the lido the following would be important; the lido to stay as it is 63%, the pool to be heated 70%, a good quality all weather café 78%, children's play area 61%, open for longer hours 64%, a longer season 72% and special events such as a craft market 44%.

(The findings have been amalgamated and rounded for ease of reading)

Respondents (489)

Male 29% Female 71%

Have used the Lido - 95%

Children under 18 years - 47%

Over how many years used the Lido

1 to 3 years - 20%

4 to 6 years - 14%

7 to 9 years – 10%

10 or more years – 56%

Age Group

Under 18 - 6%

18 to 29 - 14%

30 to 44 - 32%

45 to 59 - 32%

60 and over - 17%

	Not celebrated	Celebrated and altered	Celebrated and unchanged
How should the 1948 Olympics effect changes at the Lido	6%	50%	45%
	Bad idea	neutral	Good idea
Add a Splash Pad	22%	17%	61%
	Smaller pool	Current pool	Not important
Views on heating the pool	24%	50%	26%

Object to splash pad	A full size splash pad on pool area	Splash pad with pool removed	Splash pad and some pool	Splash pad with pool unchanged
8%	7%	1%	23%	61%

	Object	indifferent	favour
Maintain Lido as it is	9%	23%	67%
Adapt Lido for more activities	12%	20%	68%
Remove Lido & put replacement in footprint	63%	20%	16%
Remove Lido and build new facility	73%	14%	13%
	likely	neutral	unlikely
Increase visit if pool heated	80%	14%	6%
Increase visit if better cafe	75%	20%	4%
Increase visit if hot food	54%	37%	9%
Increase visit if play area	56%	31%	13%
Increase visit if longer hours	60%	32%	8%
Increase visit if longer season	72%	22%	5%
Increase visits if special events	72%	22%	5%
Increase visit if other attractions in price	66%	25%	8%
Increase visit if other attractions extra price	33%	45%	21%

How important are the following when considering buying a season ticket	important	neither	Not important
Lido stays as it is	64%	23%	13%
A heated pool	70%	17%	13%
All weather cafe	78%	16%	6%
Children's play area	62%	26%	12%
Open longer hours	64%	27%	8%
Open longer season	72%	20%	7%
Special events	44%	33%	22%