

CABINET

13 JULY 2021

SPLASHES SPORTS CENTRE REPLACEMENT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

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Summary

This report seeks Cabinet approval to build a new family-friendly sports centre in Rainham, on the site of the existing Splashes sports centre.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. The provision of leisure services is a matter for Cabinet. Additions to the Capital programme are a decision for Full Council. This report is asking Cabinet to recommend that a new sports centre is built to replace the existing Splashes sports centre in Rainham. A report will be brought to Council at a future date seeking an addition to the Capital programme, as the detailed scheme is developed.
- 1.2. Development of a new facility on the site of the existing Splashes sports centre, aligns with the objectives in the Medway Council Plan – supporting Medway people to realise their potential – by supporting healthy and active communities. It is also a clear demonstration of commitment to our strategic priority to ensure that Medway is a Child-Friendly City.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Leader and Deputy Leader (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services) have publicly expressed their commitment to developing Splashes into a modern, fun, family-friendly sports centre, so that it can continue to be an important facility for the community, appealing to residents in east Medway and further afield, while also complementing what is on offer at our other centres.

- 2.2. It has always been the authority's intention to maintain a sports centre at this site, which is why the Council added £5m to the capital budget to proceed with the refurbishment of Splashes sports centre last year. This was to allow for the modernisation of the facility within the existing framework of the 30-year-old centre.
- 2.3. Prior to commencing works, the Council commissioned a number of surveys, including a full structural survey. This highlighted a range of problems which meant that the current structure would be unable to facilitate the development of the high-quality centre, which the Council is determined to deliver for residents.
- 2.4. On 8 June 2021, to enable the demolition of Splashes Leisure Centre and remove the risks of building collapse, vandalism / anti-social behaviour and ongoing maintenance costs, the Cabinet approved the demolition of the existing Splashes Leisure Centre building to allow for a future Leisure facility on that site (decision number 56/2021).
- 2.5. The decision was therefore taken to review the scheme in detail in order to assess the alternative options available to the Council. It is the authority's explicit intention to develop a brand new, state-of-the-art facility on this site.
- 2.6. The next stage of the project will focus on the new development at the site and bring greater cost certainty for the Council, enabling the procurement of the main building works. Once this greater cost certainty has been achieved a report will be taken to Cabinet and then to Full Council seeking an addition to the capital budget for development of the new Splashes facility. At the same time a more detailed timeline and provisional opening date for the new facility will be shared.

3. Options

- 3.1. There are a number of options for the new development at Splashes sports centre. These include:
- 3.2. A) Not to replace the existing Splashes sports centre. This option would have negated the need for Capital funding. However, it would seriously diminish sports and physical activities in Medway, particularly affecting the eastern side. It would also significantly reduce swimming pool provision and limit opportunities for young people to learn a valuable life skill.
- 3.3. B) Replace the existing Splashes sports centre with a larger multi-sports centre. This option would be the most expensive option and would provide an enlarged gym facility, increased water provision, multi-sport spaces and a sports hall. However, it would significantly increase the footprint of the existing Splashes sports centre which would impact on Cozenton Park and the neighbouring skate park. It would also likely need increased car parking spaces, further encroaching on the green space. This option would also be more akin to creating a version of Medway Park rather than the stated family-

friendly centre designed to complement rather than compete with other Council sports centres.

- 3.4. C) Replace the existing Splashes sports centre with a modern centre which matches the Council's stated commitment to provide a family-friendly centre which complements facilities on offer at other Medway Council sports centres. This option would provide a fun, leisure pool with a range of water features suitable for children and families of all ages. The pool would also be large enough to allow more formal swimming and to hold swimming lessons. A gym and exercise studio/party room would be included, as well as improved changing facilities and a café serving both the sports centre and the adjoining park. Being of comparable scale to the existing Splashes sports centre would mean this centre would not encroach on Cozenton Park and would not require additional parking spaces. This option would not be financially achievable within the £5m capital funding previously set aside for refurbishment of the existing centre and would therefore require an addition to be made to the capital budget.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. Members have tasked officers with developing a business case for the replacement of Splashes that provides a family friendly facility, complementing other Council sport facilities and that attracts visitors from across Medway and out of the area. There is also a recognised need to ensure all parts of Medway are well served by sports and physical activity facilities both now and in future years.
- 4.2. Development of a new centre will ensure the most sustainable method for providing such facilities in the east of Medway.
- 4.3. Taking these aspects into account, it is considered Option C represents the most appropriate development for a new Splashes sports centre, meeting the needs of the community and complementing other aspects of Medway's sporting offer. The scale of development will minimise the impact on other important areas such as Cozenton Park and the neighbouring skate park; and while detailed capital costs are not yet known it is recognised that Option C would be several million pounds cheaper than Option B.
- 4.4. At this stage Cabinet is being asked for approval to proceed with the development of a new Splashes sports centre by instructing officers to appoint architects and a project team to develop detailed proposals for a new family-friendly Splashes sports centre in Rainham, on the site of, and of similar scale, to the existing centre. If Members approve the recommendation the project will be developed in detail and a further report will come to Cabinet at a later stage, which will include a Diversity Impact Assessment.

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Insufficient Capital funds	The development cost of a new Splashes sports centre cannot be met by the Council	Subject to Cabinet approval to proceed with developing a new Splashes sports centre, a formal procurement process will be undertaken to appoint an architect and project team. They will produce detailed, costed proposals which will be brought back to Cabinet at the relevant time for agreement before capital funding for the development is committed.	D1

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The number of visitors to the existing Splashes sport centre prior to closure, and the feedback from customers since closure, demonstrate the importance of sports and physical activity facilities to the local community.
- 6.2. Once detailed proposals have been developed it is intended that a public exhibition will be held in the Rainham area to provide Medway residents with an opportunity to see what is envisaged for the new Splashes sports centre.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The development of a new Splashes sports centre aims to be carbon neutral, within realistic budgetary parameters. Achieving carbon neutrality will be the stated objective within the procurement tender for the architect and project team. Details of how this will be achieved will be brought to Cabinet when the detailed proposals come forward.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. If Members agree to the recommended option (C) the works required to prepare a proposal and enable the procurement of the main building works will be funded from the balance of the Splashes replacement scheme in the Capital Programme.
- 8.2. A further report to Cabinet and Full Council will seek approval for the capital addition required to deliver the new facility and will detail the proposed

revenue budget, including the level of subsidy required which will then be built into the normal budget setting process.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. If this project is approved the Capital Projects team will follow the Council's financial procedure rules supported by the Category Management team in undertaking a formal procurement process to approve an architect and project team to produce detailed, costed proposals which will be brought back to Cabinet.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. Cabinet is asked to instruct officers to proceed with the appointment of architects and a project team to develop detailed proposals for a new family-friendly Splashes sports centre in Rainham, on the site of, and of similar scale, to the existing centre using the Splashes Replacement funding available within the Capital Programme.

11. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 11.1. The new centre will provide important modern, family-friendly sports and physical activity facilities in the east of Medway, complementing other Council sports facilities.
- 11.2. Approval of the recommendation will enable procurement to proceed with the appointment of an architect and project team to develop detailed proposals and to bring the Council greater cost-certainty prior to the start of development.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None