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STARBECK GROUP MAKES A START

The first meeting of the Starbeck Baths' Advisory Group, the Group set up to consider the future of the facility, met on Monday night in public at St Andrew's Church Hall, Starbeck.

The Group made up of five councillors, three cabinet members and the two local ward councillors, heard presentations from the two local groups who had been working to save Starbeck Baths.

The Starbeck Baths' Action Group and the Starbeck Residents' Association both made presentations in front of over 50 local residents who had turned up to hear the debate at the meeting.

They also heard the programme for completion of the work to bring back recommendations to the council's cabinet, which is now targeted for November this year to allow further time for a full investigation of the situation.

The Advisory Group was informed that the Cabinet has agreed the detailed dilapidation and condition report, which is to be undertaken on Starbeck Baths at a cost of £18,000. Members heard from the officers that this will be one of the most detailed condition reports to be undertaken on any building in the council's ownership.

This means that the pool could be closed for at least two weeks while detailed tests are taken from the pool tank and also a structural survey and condition report is undertaken.

Councillor Jim Clark, the Cabinet Member for Resources, who is chairing the Advisory Group said: "Whilst this unfortunately means we will have to close the pool to do this work, it is essential because we have to have a complete picture of the extent of the work so that Members can make an informed decision. We need to know the full extent of the problems with the building so that we can look at how we tackle them and what the costs will be."

Members also heard that work will be undertaken to look at alternative management options including a possible trust and the information that has been researched by the residents' groups and the baths' action group will be taken into account.

Councillor Pat Jones, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Amenity Services, who is also a member of the group said: "It has been a very positive first meeting for the group and we were delighted to listen to the points made by the two local groups which we will take into account in deciding on the future of Starbeck Baths. Our aim is to make this exercise as open as possible and we have agreed that if anyone has any questions then we will seek to make sure they are addressed at the meetings over the next few months".

The Advisory Group will meet again in May to review progress on other areas of work. Ends

FURTHER INFORMATION: Councillor Pat Jones is available for comment on 01423 872466 and Councillor Jim Clark on 01423 872822.