



Media Release

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STARBECK BATHS

ON Tuesday, 30 November the Consultants appointed to look at the long-term future of Starbeck Baths will present their final report to the Starbeck Baths' Advisory Group. The Group will consider this report before making comments to the council's Cabinet, which will meet in January to discuss the issue of future investment in the Baths.

Previous consultants had already identified that Starbeck Baths need £1.7m to bring them up to modern day standards. The council then appointed Strategic Leisure Limited to advise on the options available.

In looking at swimming provision in the district, the Consultants have concluded that, against the national requirements for swimming space, the district has above average provision. They have ruled out the possibility of a new facility, either on the existing site or on a new site as it would not provide value for money and is not something that the community wants following their consultation with local residents and users of the existing pool.

The Consultants have confirmed that the council has to consider refurbishment or closure, alongside the possibility of keeping the baths open by forming a Community Trust. The Consultants have indicated that to establish a Trust would take some time and a short-term investment would be needed to keep the baths open for a minimum of three years.

Councillor Pat Jones, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Amenity Services, said: The Consultants' report is a valuable piece of work and provides an external assessment of a range of options. This includes value for money for any future investment and the potential option for the long-term management of the facility. We will look forward to hearing from the Advisory Group following their consideration of its contents.

The Consultants will be attending the meeting of the Advisory Group to be held on Tuesday, 30 November, Starbeck Primary School at 7.00 pm. This meeting is open to members of the public and the Consultants' report is being circulated tonight to members the Advisory Group. ENDS

NOTE TO EDITORS: This is report is available but it is 35 pages long. For your ease set out below are the Consultants' conclusions:

- The council should not look to replace the existing baths with a new facility on either the same or alternative location. The community does not want either of these two options and furthermore, it would not be cost-effective to do so. There are no suitable and available sites.
- This leaves two main options to consider, the refurbishment of the existing facility and closure.
- If the council chooses to go down the refurbishment route then we would not recommend a phasing of the programme. Economies of scale would result from a single one-off refurbishment and would cause less disruption to users.
- This is a difficult issue for the council and there are number of factors that warrant more detailed consideration such as whether a procurement process and alternative management arrangements would address taxation and capital investment issues
- Such further consideration could include more detailed assessment of the formation of a local community trust.

On the basis of our work we would suggest that:

- The council rejects new build options 3 and 4
- Agrees in the short-term (three years' minimal capital outlay) to retain the Starbeck Baths and defers a final decision pending further more detailed consideration of
 - the overall strategic sport and leisure needs of the Borough
 - the possibility of the local community forming a charitable trust to operate the facility.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Councillor Pat Jones is available for comment on 01423 872466. Further technical information is available from Mr Kevin Douglas, Director of Leisure and Amenity Services on 01423 556717.