

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE**  
**CABINET**

**Date 21 March 2018**

1. **REPORT TITLE** Leisure Provision in Kidsgrove
- Submitted by:** Executive Director, Operational Services – Dave Adams
- Portfolio:** Corporate and Service Improvement, People and Partnerships
- Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

To update members on progress in the re-provision of leisure facilities in Kidsgrove.

**Recommendations**

**It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- (a) Endorses the approach outlined in recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Leaders of Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council for providing leisure facilities in Kidsgrove and recognises this as a significant development in addressing the sporting aspirations of the town.**
- (b) Notes the current progress against what was agreed at Cabinet and Full Council in July 2017 regarding opportunities for sports facilities in Kidsgrove.**
- (c) That Cabinet considers the final Business Plan from the community group at a future meeting prior to instructing any formal agreement.**

**Reasons**

To ensure that a community led quality sports offer in Kidsgrove forms part of a comprehensive plan for the area.

1. **Background**

1.1 Since the Kidsgrove Sports Centre was closed the Council has been working to secure replacement sports facilities for Kidsgrove. Among other things:

- In terms of potential alternative provision if the Sports Centre cannot be reopened, agreement in principle has been secured with the Governors of the University Academy Kidsgrove for community use of their sports facilities by the Borough Council's Sport and Active Lifestyles Service.

- In terms of replacement swimming provision, arrangements have been made with Alsager Pool and Horizons for the provision of additional swimming lessons and welcoming Kidsgrove residents to public swimming or activities they previously attended at Kidsgrove. For example both the Seawolf and the Sub Aqua group have relocated to Horizons. Around 50 members transferred to Jubilee2 and a sizeable number chose to complete their swimming lessons at J2 and have re-enrolled.
- 1.2 However, the Council's ultimate aim has always been to secure like-for-like provision of what was available at the Sports Centre, either at that site or at another facility in the town. Significant progress towards that goal has now been made in two important respects.
- 1.3 Firstly, a local community group has come forward with a business plan to bring the Kidsgrove Sports Centre back into use and to operate it as a community-run leisure facility, initially reopening the dry-side facilities with a view to reopening the pool when resources permit.
- 1.4 Secondly, and in light of the community group's interest, the Leaders of the Borough Council and the County Council have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (see attached) which commits to the following aims:
- Reopening a leisure facility in Kidsgrove within six months which as a minimum comprises a fitness room and other dry-side leisure facilities followed by a pool if, and when, resources permit.
  - Working together within a 5-10 year timeframe to provide a new leisure centre designed and funded by the Borough Council and other partners that includes a pool, fitness centre and space for fitness classes.
  - Co-operating over the implementation of a community-run leisure model which would be owned, managed and run by a Community Interest Organisation (CIO).
  - Ensuring a CIO facility can operate without the need of revenue subsidy from either council.
  - Working with the CIO to identify and secure external sources of revenue and capital funding.
  - Bringing together a working group to deliver the outcomes above which will involve the two councils, the CIO, the King's CE School. This group will also look to bring in external expert advisors to support the CIO in developing its business plan.
- 1.5 Although there are significant challenges still to overcome, this means that for the first time we now have the two local authorities and the community group working hand in hand to achieve the same goals. By the two councils embracing the idea of the sports centre being community managed and operated, this opens up the possibility of the facility being run without ongoing revenue support, which significantly improves the financial challenges for the two councils. The new community model could be the real game-changer.

1.6 The Leader and Chief Executive of the Borough Council are therefore bringing the working group together to drive forward progress on this issue, with a view to having at least part of the existing sports centre reopened as a community run sports centre by September at the latest.

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 There are a number of issues for the parties to the Memorandum of Understanding to resolve.

2.2 Discussions with University Academy Kidsgrove will need to be paused to give proper consideration to the community group's interest in the former sports centre.

2.3 It should be noted that there is both a capital and revenue requirement if an interim solution is to be provided at University Academy Kidsgrove and the majority cost would fall on the Borough Council as service provider. Under current legislation schools are provided for educational purposes and cannot be used to subsidise community use.

2.4 The former sports centre shares a campus with the King's School, which itself has aspirations to enhance its sports facilities and enter into a community use arrangement for the local community.

2.5 A strategic funding case is being developed to support the re-provision of a swimming pool in the town. To deliver on plans for a new swimming pool there is need for a programme of on-going capital investment, and a robust sinking fund, to ensure quality of facility provision is maintained in the future.

## 3. **Options Considered**

3.1 As detailed above

## 4. **Proposal**

4.1 Approval is given for officers to work to achieve the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding.

4.2 The Financial implications of supporting the community groups efforts to reopen the sports centre will be considered. at the appropriate time, on the strength of the final Business Case received.

4.3 The discussions with University Academy Kidsgrove are paused pending the outcomes of 4.1 above.

4.4 The report on the strategic funding case to support the longer term re-provision of a swimming pool in the town be received in due course.

## 5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 To ensure that quality sports facilities are provided in the Kidsgrove area.

## 6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 The recommendations contained in this report seek to achieve positive and sustainable health and wellbeing outcomes for the local community.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 There is no statutory duty on the Council to provide sport and leisure facilities; however it has the power to and also the power of community leadership, introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, to lead, influence and support partner organisations to work to common goals to meet the needs and aspirations of their communities. The Council has the power to provide sport and recreation facilities.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 The current facilities do not comply with current access regulations. These issues would be fully addressed in the approval of any redevelopment work.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 None at this point. The strength of the final Business Case received from the community group will be considered in determination of whether the plans can be supported by the Council. Within the Council's revenue budget for 2018/19, approved by Full Council on 21 February, is the residue budget in respect of the Kidsgrove Sports Centre. This could be utilised for sports provision in Kidsgrove.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 There is currently a lack of sports and leisure provision in the Kidsgrove area and there is a risk that this will continue until suitable replacement facilities are made available.

11. **Key Decision Information**

11. 1 This is a key decision and appears on the Council's Forward Plan

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Cabinet July 2017  
Council July 2017  
Active and Cohesive Scrutiny Committee October 2017

13.0 **Appendix**

13.1 Memorandum of Understanding between the Leaders of Newcastle Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council