

**ITEM**

**ITEM**

**EXECUTIVE – 10 APRIL 2008**

**SOUTH HAMS STRATEGIC SWIM STUDY**

**Report by Head of Landscape and Leisure**

**Statutory Powers:** Various

**Financial Implications:**

By accepting the proposed strategic actions set out in the Swim Study, then future financial implications are inevitable in relation to both capital and revenue funding. The scale of the financial implications requires further investigation;

Capital – possible financial contribution required to enable build of new swimming pool at Ivybridge. This would be as a partnership contribution alongside lottery, governing body, other public funds and any Section 106 monies which may become available.

Revenue - effects the leisure contract with Tone Leisure if changes to swimming facilities are made requiring an assessment of those changes upon the level of subsidy for the contract to operate.

**Purpose**

A strategic swimming study for this Council was undertaken to enable existing and proposed swimming pool provision to be considered. The scale of SHDC commitment to the strategic actions outlined in the study need careful consideration as the provision of enhanced leisure facilities is not a council priority but there are existing and future asset management considerations. Improved swimming provision could have a significant link with the corporate cross cutting theme of young people.

**Recommendations**

**It is recommended that Executive RESOLVES:-**

- i. To accept in principle the Key Strategic Actions, listed in the report, identified by the South Hams Swim Strategy.**
- ii. To consider the funding of further detailed feasibility work up to a maximum of £5,000 from the Strategic Initiatives Reserve on the provision of an enhanced pool provision at Ivybridge.**
- iii. To support the investigation by the Town Council of potential improvements to the outdoor pool at Dartmouth, to enhance its use and to extend its season, in partnership with the County Council.**

**Background**

1. The reason for undertaking the study is that the Council was being presented with various swimming proposals. The study provides a basis for future actions to be considered and raises a number of key issues;

- Corporate capital and revenue implications, and service based issues on the priority between spend on formal leisure facilities (such as swimming pools) compared to investment in public space.
  - Political considerations in relation to the 'fair' provision of facilities across the district
  - Public expectations, particularly in the light of a future review of corporate priorities, specifically the provision for children and young people.
2. The challenges the Council face includes:
- a. Community pressure for the provision of a new swimming pool at Dartmouth as part of a local aspiration following initial feasibility work undertaken as part of the Market and Coastal Town Initiative. More recently the commissioning of a further feasibility report by the Town Council to consider the capital and revenue business plan for a new pool.
  - b. The provision of a swimming pool at the Sherford new community, as part of an overall sports complex.
  - c. The financial implications of continuing to provide an outdoor pool at Ivybridge and a small indoor leisure pool, in the context of existing demand for enhanced public swimming provision from a local club and wider public.
  - d. The partnership with Tadpool in provision of a community pool in Totnes.
  - e. Consideration of how to access other swimming facilities in private ownership.

### **Key Strategic Actions identified by the Swim Study;**

3. In summary the study identifies the following key strategic actions;

**District** – to maintain and improve existing pool provision across the district, ensuring budgets and plans are in place. Timescale: immediate. (SHDC / Tone directly responsible for 2 pools at Kingsbridge and Ivybridge. The third pool at Totnes although managed by SHDC / Tone, it is actually owned by Tadpool).

**Ivybridge** – the study highlights the need for enhanced indoor provision of a new 25m x 6 lane pool to serve the centre / west of the district, preferably within Ivybridge at the existing leisure centre. Timescale: within 4/ 5 years. A sub action of this is to carry out further investigation into the financial implications for retaining the existing provision. There are increasing maintenance costs, health and safety concerns for the outdoor pool and the small indoor pool is not considered adequate.

**Sherford** – provision of a new 25m x 4 lane pool to serve proposed new development at Sherford in the south west of the district and adjoining population of Elburton and Plymstock. No direct financial implications for SHDC in relation to the provision and management of the facility but an impact on section 106 funding for other community needs which may be a higher priority for this Council. The proposed pool will be sited in Plymouth City Council area. Timescale; within 5 years.

**Dartmouth** – to increase access to swimming opportunities by exploring in the short term improvements to the existing community managed outdoor pool. Also investigating the possibility of access to the existing BRNC pool, with the option retained for providing a new pool if need and viability is suitably demonstrated. For information a separate study commissioned by the Town Council has recently been completed and has indicated a similar concern in relation to viability of a 25m pool for Dartmouth.

## Key Issues

4. In order to maintain the provision of existing public indoor swimming pools across the district at Quayside Leisure Centre - Kingsbridge, South Dartmoor Leisure Centre - Ivybridge, Totnes Pavilion with Tadpool and the community run outdoor pool at Dartmouth attention will need to be given to the provision of asset management plans, on going capital maintenance and energy usage audits. It is important to provide modern facilities to sustain and increase customer usage. Such need will require discussions with partner organisations such as Tadpool to consider long term viability of swimming pool provision.
5. The consultants recommend that a new 25m x 6 lane pool, with learner pool and spectator facilities should be provided to serve the large Ivybridge catchment area and relatively young population profile, preferably on the existing leisure centre site.
6. The existing swimming club in Ivybridge is situated at the private leisure facility – Dinnaton Golf and Country Club and has significant junior membership. Although this facility has a 25m x 4 lane pool it has physical and management limitations, has poor public transport access and cannot offer long term security of tenure.
7. The existing indoor leisure pool provision at South Dartmoor Leisure Centre has a limited market and summer usage and does not meet the need for lane swimming, club swimming, training and gala competitions. Also the outdoor lido is nearing the end of its useful life and is becoming more expensive to maintain and supervise.
8. The new pool provision at Sherford will be provided as part of the new community development and is being worked on in partnership with Plymouth City Council and the Developer. It will be sited within the City Council boundary. Currently there are no financial implications for this Council to build and manage this new facility. However the scale of contribution to the facility will affect the funding available for other community priorities. This Council will also be aware of the commitment to the facility which has been expressed by City Council Members.
9. There is strong local support for all year swimming provision to serve the community of Dartmouth. The consultants conclude that from a strategic perspective, the current resident catchment population of Dartmouth may not be sufficient to sustain an indoor pool, given the cross usage / overlap with Totnes, Kingsbridge and Torbay Leisure Centre pools. It is suggested that further investigation should be undertaken in Dartmouth in the short term to explore additional opportunities for swimming, such as the provision of a moveable roof for the outdoor pool and/or securing access to the BRNC pool. The provision of a 20m neighbourhood pool at the existing sports centre is an option, subject to proof of sufficient need and the development of a robust business plan indicating its viability. It is suggested that any further feasibility study to enhance the use of the existing pool is funded on a partnership basis with the Town Council as well as the County Council as the pool is located within the school grounds.

## Other General Findings from the Study;

10. Swimming is the nation's most popular participatory physical activity and for South Hams up to 15% of local adult residents swim regularly. This is the highest rate in Devon and compares favourably in a regional / national context. Participation rates for older people are the highest in Devon and a higher proportion of women than men swim.
11. Using the Sport England Facility Calculator for new development indicates one 4 lane pool per 22,380 people is required. So for South Hams with a population of nearly 87,000 this would require 3.88 pools, 825 sq.m of water and 15.5 lanes.
12. In terms of public swimming provision, South Hams has just over 1000 sq.m of water space, but only 10 swim lanes available (5 at QLC and 5 at Totnes Pavilion). This represents an over provision of water area but significant under provision of lanes.
13. Highest wetside usage takes place at Quayside LC, with nearly 90,000 visits, representing a large local take up. Whereas South Dartmoor LC has the largest catchment area, extending to the far side of Plymouth and up to Buckfastleigh. Dartmouth has a significantly lower catchment area.
14. Detailed catchment area analysis highlights that only a very small proportion of households currently lie outside the recognised 20 minute drive time pool catchments in South Hams. The parishes of Dartmouth, parts of Dittisham and Stoke Fleming lie outside the catchments.
15. Plymouth City Council has produced its own swimming facility strategy. Proposals include the new Life Centre (50m pool), a replacement pool at Marjons and a new pool serving the Elburton and Sherford area. Such provision would impact on the usage and demand for existing pools within the South Hams.

## Strategic Risk Assessment

Opportunity	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
To adopt a strategy to allow long term strategic planning and provision of indoor public swimming across the district.	Management of local community and political expectations / aspirations in pool provision across the district.	Potential to secure external funding opportunities.
To provide a current audit of existing provision.		To engage with communities and clubs across the district to promote swimming.

## **Human Rights**

16. There are no human rights issues in this report.

## **Conclusion**

17. This report sets out the key recommendations from the South Hams Strategic Swimming Study and proposed actions to maintain and develop swimming provision across the district.

Ken Carter  
Head of Landscape & Leisure

Executive  
10 April 2008

Jon Parkinson  
Leisure and Recreation Officer

## **Background Papers:**

Leisure and Recreation Strategy  
Strategic Swim Study