

Pre-Scrutiny Questions and Answers – Cabinet Agenda 2 November 2023

Report Title: Fees and Charges

Report Author(s): Tony Sidhu and Steven Leathley

Councillor Milton:

I'm sure others will have questions about specific fees but on a broader level I'd like to understand the process that officers go through to assess the potential impact of increased charges on both demand but also resident behaviour. Coupled to this, do we have a view about which fees have the biggest potential to increase (without adversely impacting income) and which fees we need to be most careful about?

Response:

Having worked closely with Service leads, who have the wider knowledge of the service they are delivering, these issues will have been considered when setting the forthcoming year's fees. Benchmarking takes place with other Authorities to ensure we remain competitive. When considering increasing fees, the costs associated with delivering the service are taken into account to ensure discretionary services are not subsidised within the Authority.

Through this Fee setting process, the increases outlined reflect where Services have the biggest potential to increase their financial return. Conversely, some fees have not increased or even been reduced to ensure the services remain competitive and drive increased income through demand.

Councillor R Dickson:

Thanks Tony for this long report and its appendices.

- 1) Equality Impact Assessment - Section 7 states that the impact of fee increases is assessed by Service Area managers and concessions offered if required. Can you please give some examples of the proposed increases for 2024/25 where this procedure is to be applied?

Response:

All Service Area's actively seek to offer concessions where appropriate for Warwick District Residents. An example is, Sports and Leisure Services have rates for juniors/Senior citizen's etc. You will see there is also a section for people who are on benefits. All concession groups are supported in the sports fees and charges. They are also offering free tennis sessions with their new contractor 'We Do Tennis'. The Active Communities team are looking at ways of supporting targeted groups and this will be promoted soon.

- 2) Health and Wellbeing - Section 9 says that this is 'not applicable'. But how has the risk of increasing sports and leisure fees leading to less participation and a deterioration in obesity levels (as identified by the WCC annual public health report) been assessed?

Response:

In terms of sports and leisure fees - All fees and charges are carefully considered when applying the increase. This includes market rate, participation levels, competing factors as well as making sure the facility is financially sustainable and appropriate to residents in the Authority. It has been shown through the 'Active Peoples survey' that Warwick District is the most active in the local area and we are working hard to reach the inactive residents to provide options to become more active.

- 3) How has the strategy to build on the legacy of B2022 be factored into the proposed sports and leisure charges?

Response:

The legacy was around awareness and getting people interested in sport and therefore where we can we have held prices. Fees and charges are carefully evaluated by looking at market rate, participation levels and supporting financial viability of the sites.

The sports team are working in partnership with Bowls England and Royal Leamington Spa Bowls Club to increase the participation at Victoria Park Bowls venue especially with target groups and pay and play customers at no or minimal cost.

- 4) What's the basis for the 50%+ increase in income for hire of football, rugby and hockey pitches?

Response:

There was an error on the forecast on which next year's projected income was based on, and this will be assessed at future budget monitoring. However, through the current year we have seen increased demand for these services, the expectation is this will continue into next year. The Service is going to freeze the cost per hour for 2024/25 so that the cost for community groups will stay the same.

Councillor K Dickson:

I note that the Park Exercise permits charges are being increased, and yet the review of the scheme has not yet been completed.

When will this review occur and what financial gain has been received so far from this scheme?

Response:

The Park Exercise Permit review has been undertaken by the Active Communities Team and the results considered by the Portfolio and Shadow portfolio for SCLE. It is proposed that scheme will be restarting once the changes recommended and discussed with the Portfolio Holder have been implemented. As the scheme was a Cabinet decision previously, a cabinet report outlining the changes made will come forward in the new year. The approx. financial gain for the old scheme was £6,000 per annum.

Councillor Syson:

I note in Appendix B para 5.1.4 that "this still makes the Council the most expensive local authority in the Warwickshire and West Midlands area."

I assume we were the most expensive previously - is this because we wish to maximise our income or because our costs are greater than those in other authorities?

Response:

Bereavement Services fees have gone up by varying amounts and some not at all. The reference in the Fees & Charges document relates purely to standard cremation fees. Last year and this year these fees have been reviewed by the Service and Finance to ensure they are competitive in the market.

To ensure the Service remains financially viable and remain competitive, some fees can be increased whilst others have remained as before. It should be noted the costs associated with delivering these services have increased over the past year due to the current financial climate.

Councillor Tangri:

Fee Structure and Caskets and Memorials

Can I ask the proposed percentage increase in fees for cremation services? How was this percentage determined, and what factors were considered?

Are there specific categories of cremation (e.g., residents vs. non-residents) that are subject to different fee structures, and if so, what is the rationale behind these differences?

What is the reasoning behind the proposed changes in fees for caskets and memorials, and how do these changes compare to the previous year's charges?

Response:

(The Bereavement Services Manager was unavailable, so a detailed financial analysis is not possible, but the Service Manager has provided the responses below which will hopefully explain the rationale used.)

General fee setting considerations:-

The starting point for the increase in fees and charges is set by members and included in the MTFs. This year 10% was asked for, with the caveat that the aim is to maximise the income but remaining competitive.

The crematorium is expected to return a surplus for the Council.

The crematorium operates in a competitive marketplace, with competition from both Local Authority and private operators. Tradition, quality, availability and price are amongst the factors for customers when choosing a venue. Where other services, e.g., caskets and memorials are provided, the cost of supply together with prices being charged at other crematoria and funeral providers is considered.

The fees were bench marked against the published prices being charged by our nearest competitors.

Whilst not having a direct impact, we are mindful of the recent investigations across the whole funeral industry from the Competitions and Marketing Authority.

Fees are "rounded" where possible to the nearest £5 or whole pound.

Residents v non-residents

Approx 50% of cremation services are provided to non-residents, because the crematorium makes a surplus it is not desired to dissuade non-residents from using the facilities, therefore no difference in fee is applied.

There is a non-residents fee policy in place, this is because burial land is a finite resource, and in the future when the land is used, significant capital outlay will be required if the Council wishes to continue providing this service for its residents. Cemeteries have a permanent maintenance liability even when the land is used and there is no further burial income available.

Memorial Garden and Benches and Comparative Analysis

What are the proposed charges for memorial garden services, including supply and lease costs? How do these changes align with our objectives for this area?

Are there any specific changes in the fees for memorial benches, and what considerations drove these changes? It would be helpful to have a comparative analysis of these proposed fees with those of other similar facilities in neighbouring areas. Do we have any data on this to ensure that our charges are competitive and reasonable?

Response:

In the main customers only want a memorial at Oakley Wood if the cremated remains are scattered there, there are increasing trends for private scattering away from the crematorium. The price of the memorial considers the cost of supply, with a range of different types of memorials at different price points. It is hoped to extend the range of memorials to include those more suitable for ashes being taken away from the crematorium.

Customer Impact, Consultation and Future Projections:

How are these proposed changes expected to impact our customers, including residents and non-residents? Have we considered the potential consequences on the community?

Were any public consultations or feedback processes conducted before finalizing these proposed charges, and what was the response from the community? Can you provide insight into how these fees align with the long-term financial sustainability and development goals of the cemetery and crematorium?

Response:

The provision of bereavement services is discretionary for the Council, both residents and non-residents have the choice of using our facilities or those of other Local Authority or private providers.

For those in receipt of qualifying benefits, the cremation or burial fee is treated as a necessary disbursement and is paid in full as part of the funeral grant to those who are eligible to claim. Please also note for parents who lose a child, the cost of burial or cremation is reclaimed from central gov by WDC irrespective of the income status of the parents.

Fees are benchmarked against other providers, but no public consultation is carried out.

Report Title: Corporate Strategy 2023/2030

Report Author(s): Chris Elliott – Chief Executive Officer

Councillor R Dickson:

It is especially good, because - as often reminded - culture eats strategy for breakfast, to see the focus on the four values of finding a better way, making it happen, showing respect and being collaborative.

How, in annual performance reviews, will council officers' day-to-day behaviour be measured against these values?

Response from the Chief Executive:

Our annual appraisals are used as an opportunity for staff to feel proud of their achievements and be positive about the challenges coming up. The guidance notes supporting the appraisal includes the five competencies staff work towards every day of which there is an explanation of how they link with our values and some examples of how these could be demonstrated for discussion with their managers. The values will be updated for 23/24 appraisal review as part of the overall communications plan.

Also, what practical examples are there of how councillors' behaviour will need to change to comply with these values in order to improve our standard of democratic local governance, deliver a better service to our communities and improve officer-member trust?

Response from the Leader, Councillor Davison:

My view is that values can be discussed and encouraged but not enforced on people. So, I hope that councillors and officers agree these values and many others such as those reflected in the Nolan principles. Where there are issues, for example friction between councillors and officers, we need to find a better way, for example by creating situations where we listen more carefully to each other, engendering greater respect and collaboration.

In terms of being more collaborative, I feel the time is right to revisit ways that non-cabinet councillors can participate more actively in policy formation, so will be consulting various councillors in the next few months.

It is also good to see the sample success measures section with some specific metrics. However, in the low cost, low carbon energy strategic priority there's no reference to encouraging community energy schemes (where the government has recently announced new funding), solar farms and onshore wind farms. Are these initiatives therefore not strategic priorities?

Finally, in terms of creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities, the previous leader of WDC was on record in saying 'it's a question of when not if' there will be changes in local government. Such changes, where appropriate and agreed by all parties, will see more power, budget and other resources devolved to town and parish councils. Devolution will help deliver this priority. But

there appears to be no mention of this document. Can it be concluded therefore that the current administration is not interested in pursuing this vision?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Davison:

I don't think this is the time to delve deeply into the devolution debate or what changes in local government are likely to happen when. We are focussed on delivering the best value for local taxpayers as possible without worrying unduly about possible changes. Two town councils have approached WDC about potentially devolving power, but from what I've seen and heard so far, town and parish councils do not have a strong appetite to take on additional responsibilities.

Report Title: Abbey Fields Swimming Pools Project

Report Author(s): Padraig Herlihy – Programme Manager

Councillors Aizlewood and Williams:

Clearly hindsight is a fine thing, and we make the best decisions we can at the time and with the evidence available. With that in mind, the Council meeting on the 15 November provides an opportunity to reassess whether the current proposal remains the best option for providing a swimming pool in Kenilworth. The issue is contentious, locally and we are concerned that whatever the decision, there is further clarity provided to address the following questions and concerns.

Options

- Why do you consider the current proposed location in Abbey Fields, some distance from car-parking and located on medieval ruins, to be a good location for a new public swimming pool?

Response:

The proposed location was agreed by Cabinet and Council on a number of occasions in the past. The location offers the opportunity to make the most of the Finham Brook alongside the Brook Terrace and the lake alongside the sun terrace. The site is located within the centre of the town, offering excellent opportunities to walk or cycle to the venue for many residents. Most potential alternative sites in the town are identified as housing sites, and to use one of these sites would leave the Council short on housing numbers.

- What other options have been considered in any detail, originally and since the discovery of medieval ruins, before deciding to proceed with replacing the swimming pool on the current Abbey Fields site?
 - Could details of these be shared with the O&S Committee?
 - Why were these alternative site options discounted?

Response:

Previous reports to Council have confirmed this location as the optimum location for the new swimming pools. The decision before the Council at present is whether to proceed at the Abbey Fields site, where over £3m has already been spent. To change location is predicted to add to the cost and timescale of the construction of an alternative pool building.

The theoretical alternative site costed within the report is not any specific site, although specific problems are recognised with some identified sites in the report. The purpose of analysing a non-specific theoretical alternative site was to show that there is no obvious alternative to the Abbey Fields site. The purpose was not to carry out a detailed options appraisal of alternative sites.

If it is decided not to go ahead at Abbey Fields, but if Councillors then decide that they do want to go ahead with a swimming pool for the Kenilworth area then a full options appraisal of all potential sites will need to be undertaken.

Archaeological advice

- How satisfied are you that the specialist advice received is reliable in forming a course of action e.g., that the ruins are both remarkable and should be re-covered in soil and (if built over) encased in concrete.
 - Does the Council have the advice from Historic England in writing and can this be made public?

Response:

The decision that the ruins are worthy of protection is made by Historic England in their role as technical advisor to the Secretary of State for DCMS. Historic England have also suggested and now approved the process of recovering the ruins with the native soil and then constructing the building on a suspended slab construction method, rather than a ground-bearing slab. The Council has that advice from Historic England in writing. Historic England have given permission for this advice to be produced in public. It is as shown here. Historic England will need to give final approval to the final design of the foundations and utilities to the building.

KENILWORTH ABBEY

Scheduled Monument No: SM 35115, HA 1021079

Our ref: S00242214

Application on behalf of Warwick District Council

Thank you for your emails of the 27 July 2023 providing revised proposals for the foundation design and safeguarding of the nationally important archaeological remains that has been identified within the footprint of the new swimming pool. Also, for the onsite discussions of the 28 July 2023.

The proposed raising of the foundation design by 500mm to minimise harm to these archaeological remains is welcomed and we consider that these changes have reduced harm to a level consistent with the granting of scheduled monument consent by the Secretary of State as advised by Historic England. We can therefore support the progression of the design on this basis, with ongoing discussion and consideration of minor adjustment, mitigation, enhanced understanding of the archaeological remains, and presentation as appropriate.

We understand that the revised scheme will require a new planning application, which is expected to be applied for in the coming weeks.

Historic England will need to consider whether a variation to the existing scheduled monument consent will be required. This will be dependent on the changes to the overall design and associated landscaping. Once this information is ready, please forward to us and we will review and advise. If variation is required, we would expect this to be delivered within a 4-week period that should parallel the new planning application.

Thank you for your engagement with the archaeological sensitivities of the monument and the creative solutions that the development team have achieved to minimise harm.

Yours sincerely

Neil Rimmington

*Dr Neil Rimmington
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
Development Advice, Midlands Region*

Sustainability and environment

- Why is the new pool to be powered by a gas boiler, when the Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2020 and is encouraging residents and businesses to move away from fossil fuel sources?

Response:

An Energy Report was prepared during the design process which documented a high-level life cycle cost analysis and payback periods for various renewable technologies and other technological solutions. This identified that the gas boiler/CHP/PV option was the most favourable and this was therefore chosen. The Combined Heat and Power unit is included to generate a portion of the building's electrical demand while making use of waste heat to reduce the imported gas load. There are other factors with this site such as the archaeology and site constraints which preclude the use of some forms of technology.

- What is the projected Carbon Footprint of the new pool and how does this compare to best practice?

Response:

The building CO₂ emission rate (BER) kgCO₂/m².annum is 142. The target CO₂ emission rate (TER) kgCO₂/m².annum is 154.7. The design is therefore 8% better than the target rate under Building Regulations Part L2A.

- At the Public Meeting on 27th September 2023, it was stated that the current design included ALL environmental considerations that had a payback of less than 15 years. However, there are 10 leisure centres currently under construction in the UK designed to Passivhaus standards. To pick one of these, St Sidwell's Point Leisure Centre in Exeter, built by Kier to the Passivhaus Standard achieves a 10-year payback. Surely the Passivhaus approach, rather than the current design, is what we should be doing in line with WDC's pledge to become carbon neutral by 2025 and to improve the value for money?

Response:

The comment at the Public Meeting on the environmental considerations related to additional design features that could be added to the design in order to improve the sustainability of that design. It did not relate to such design philosophies as passivhaus. The Project Board had a detailed meeting with the Senior Architect and the Project Manager from the St Sidwell's Point Leisure Centre and, following that meeting, decided not to progress with the passivhaus approach. At this stage in the project development, it would not be possible to adopt a passivhaus approach, because this starts at the very beginning of the design process. To use passivhaus at the Abbey Fields site would require the project team to begin again at the very beginning of the design process, with all the drawbacks associated with this and highlighted in the report. Indeed, a key element of the passivhaus approach is to select the location and orientation of the building, and so if the building is to be located on the Abbey Fields site, then this first key stage of passivhaus cannot be followed. If Councillors decided not to proceed with the current design on the Abbey Fields site, and they subsequently agree to construct a swimming pool building on another site in the area, following an options appraisal, then a decision could be made at that point as to whether to follow the passivhaus design process for the new building.

- What consideration has been given to the implications on future generations, when piling and concreting over the top of the medieval remains e.g., when the new pool in turn needs to be replaced?

Response:

The project team have worked closely with Historic England to ensure that the building design protects the medieval remains as much as possible for future generations. For example, we have produced a catalogue of each of over 200 pile locations to agree with Historic England the best location for each pile to minimise damage to the medieval remains. The construction method is now a suspended slab construction so the remains will be covered with native soil and then by a steel foundation structure, so there is no intention of simply concreting over the top of the medieval remains. When the new pool needs to be replaced in its turn the project team at that time will have extremely detailed plans, diagrams and 3D representations on which to base their future work.

Money

- In considering the options, how has the full life-cycle costs of the pool been considered?

Response:

A report was completed on the energy usage of the building during the design process which included a high-level life cycle cost analysis and the payback periods for the various other renewable energy technologies. This is attached for Members' information.



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- How much cheaper would a Pool of equivalent size be to heat, if it was based on environmental best-practice, rather than a traditional design?

Response:

The two pools at Abbey Fields have been designed to include every additional design feature that will improve the sustainability of the design, provided that feature will pay for itself within 15 years and can be accommodated on the restricted site that is being used. The building has also been designed to superior building fabric standards than many other facilities.

The design is targeting an EPC rating of A, although it is acknowledged that much of the energy use in a swimming pool building is not covered by the EPC analysis.

- What are the additional revenue (MTFP) implications of proceeding with the current plan and how does the Council propose to afford these?

Response:

The additional revenue implications of proceeding with the current plan are contained within the confidential Appendix A to the report.

- Has the council taken advice from its Auditors in proceeding (pumping good money after bad) without any serious consideration of an alternative site?

Response:

This question was forwarded to Andrew Rollins and Richard Barr to answer.

Councillor Armstrong:

1. Was there any significant flooding of the site in the recent heavy rains, and if so, would similar flooding impact the planned building?

Response:

The site did flood during the recent rains, although these were an abnormal weather event. Obviously, the site is currently open without any roofing but with a number of trenches. The planned building has been designed to the necessary flooding tolerances and has been approved by the Environment Agency as being appropriately resilient to flooding. This has been further improved by the raising of the foundation of the new building by 500mm, although confirmation from the Environment Agency on the revised plans is still awaited.

2. What would be the difference in running costs for a theoretical Passivhaus standard alternative? I appreciate detail is hard without a full design, but are there any other recent pools where we can get estimated comparison data?

Response:

It would not be possible to implement passivhaus on the current design without beginning the design process from the beginning. If Councillors decide not to continue with the Abbey Fields site, and then subsequently agreed to build elsewhere, it would be possible to select the passivhaus approach at that time. The only completed passivhaus leisure centre in the country, St Sidwell's Point in Exeter, has not yet produced any energy usage figures in operation. This particular leisure centre is also substantially larger than the Abbey Fields site, and so even when figures are available comparisons may be difficult.

3. If the project continues, have Kier agreed to ensure access to the playground at weekends continues?

Response:

Yes, Kier have confirmed that the playground can remain open at weekends during construction.

4. Similarly, it was previously mentioned that the diesel generator could possibly move inside the building site and away from the play area. Is there any update on this/what is Kier's current position?

Response:

The project team are aware of the issues with the existing generator and its impact on the public. It is also proving unreliable in operation. The existing generator is in the process of being replaced. We will keep the Kenilworth Leisure Members' Liaison Group aware of our actions in this regard as decisions are made.

5. At the public meeting mention was made of 'indirectly' showcasing the ruins, with e.g., coloured tiles following their layout etc. Is this being considered?

Response:

It would not be possible to use coloured tiles to show the location of the remains, as they are largely situated underneath the Plant Room, to which the public do not have access. However, the team is looking at other proposals, such as a 3D solid

representation of the remains under a glass topped table in the café, a Virtual Reality representation of the remains and a display cabinet of artefacts in the reception area.

6. What is the implication of not meeting the Sports England required provision? Is this a legal requirement/are there fines involved? Also, for complete clarity, does the provision allow outdoor pools as a partial contribution?

Response:

The Sport England Facility Planning Model provides guidance on the appropriate level of sporting facilities to provide in a location. The biggest implication of failing to meet this level of provision is that local people would not be receiving the level of provision which Sport England considers is appropriate.

It is not a legal requirement to comply with the findings of the Sport England Facilities Planning Model and there is no specific punishment if a Council decides not to follow this guidance. However, Sport England might well take the view that it would look less favourably on any subsequent applications from the Council for grants. The Council is proud of its good reputation with Sport England as the provider of good quality sports facilities. Both Newbold Comyn and St Nicholas Park Leisure Centres are identified by Sport England as being national examples of best practice. This reputation would suffer if the Council failed to meet the required levels of provision.

Sport England do not allow outdoor pools as even a partial contribution to the levels of provision. When they devised the Facility Planning Model they considered this item carefully but decided that outdoor pools would not form part of the provision assessed.

7. On point 2.12, noting that 516 dwellings have been promised by the council. How much land is required for these dwellings and how many would the theoretical alternative pool offset? Can the houses be of any type, i.e., could a higher mix of terraced houses or flats satisfy the numbers using less land area?

Response:

The number of dwellings used in the calculation of the loss of housing revenue in the previous report was 15 open market, 6 social rent, 3 affordable rent and 1 shared ownership properties. The swimming pool facility would require approximately 1 hectare of land.

At the present time the decision is whether to continue with the site at Abbey Fields. If the decision is taken to cease work at Abbey Fields, and if the Council takes a subsequent decision to provide a swimming pool facility in the Kenilworth area, a full options appraisal would need to be undertaken, which would need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed site, and any mitigation strategies to be employed to reduce any identified disadvantages.

Councillor Aizlewood:

I have a request, can you please share some technical information about the abbey Fields scheme, please:

- Floor plan, including overall GIA and NIA m2?
- Elemental cost plan (breakdown of costs and meterage by function – pools, changing, café, deck etc)?

Response:

I have received the following advice from the cost consultants on the project –

You would only do an '*Elemental Cost Plan*' in the pre-construction phase, typically RIBA Stage 2 or 3.

An overall cost per m2 GIA can of course be easily calculated by dividing the perceived total Kier contract cost by the earlier confirmed GIA. To the untrained eye, however, this would not tell you where the '*abnormal costs*' are in this particular scheme including the prolonged time on site to allow for building over the historic monument and revised methodologies in construction.

Councillor Milton:

A couple of points for clarification please:

2.5 says that 'Inflation in the construction industry will continue to rise in that time'. Could you clarify or evidence that statement please? Is it not more accurate to say that 'Prices in the construction industry will continue to rise in that time.'? I hope that doesn't feel like nit-picking but is important in terms of the assumptions that we're making.

Response:

Your version is indeed more accurate. It is an important distinction. I am happy to make this point at Overview and Scrutiny Committee if you wish.

2.13 Is this still correct? It references 'loss of income to the Council from houses that could not be built'. I'm trying to clarify whether this is still the case as a) it's lower (from memory) than the figure previously put into the public domain and b) looking at cost of land (with potentially a short period of income loss) would be a more appropriate way of doing it. I think that's what you've done but it doesn't tally up at the moment.

Response:

The figure has indeed changed from the previous report, but it has been calculated on a different basis. The new figure is correct. The previous figure was calculated on the loss of rental over 60 years that would not be received by the Council. The new figure is calculated on the basis of the value of the land that would be required for the theoretical new site, plus some additional incidental

costs that the Housing team would incur in making this land available. It might be possible to buy the land from another landowner, but there is no certainty that this would be the case in an appropriate location. The report also highlights that the Council has received a substantial grant from Homes England, and if they chose not to maximise the housing on the land they own, Homes England may ask for 'some or all' of their £9m grant to be returned.

Can you share a figure for how much further cost would be incurred if the project were delayed rather than a decision made now? It would be helpful to have a monthly sum for members to bear in mind.

Response:

The monthly prolongation costs would change, depending on the length of the delay. However, a reasonable estimate is that delaying a decision would cost the Council in the region of *£xxxx per month for a period of up to three months.

(*See confidential pre-scrutiny Questions and Answers document.)

Is it also possible to put some of the info on Appendix A into the public domain as I think some of it was shared around the September meeting? I'm expecting a number of members of the public to attend on Tuesday and Thursday, and I'd like to avoid going into public session as much as possible.

Response:

It has been decided by Cabinet that any of the information relating to the proposed ceiling for the total project costs should be in Appendix A because it is an element of our negotiation with Kier and as such is commercially sensitive. Some elements of the figures have been placed in Appendix A as it would be relatively easy to 'reverse calculate' the figure for the ceiling of the project.

Councillor R Dickson:

In Sections 5.2 and 9.1 there is reference to the impact of the pools on the health and wellbeing of both residents AND visitors. When the plans were first considered in the 2015-19 administration and then reconsidered in 2019/20, the financial impact of the new pools on the visitor economy was denied. It was said that the new pools were simply a matter for Warwick District residents. So how is the inclusion of this visitor demographic now reflected in the financial implications of the proposals?

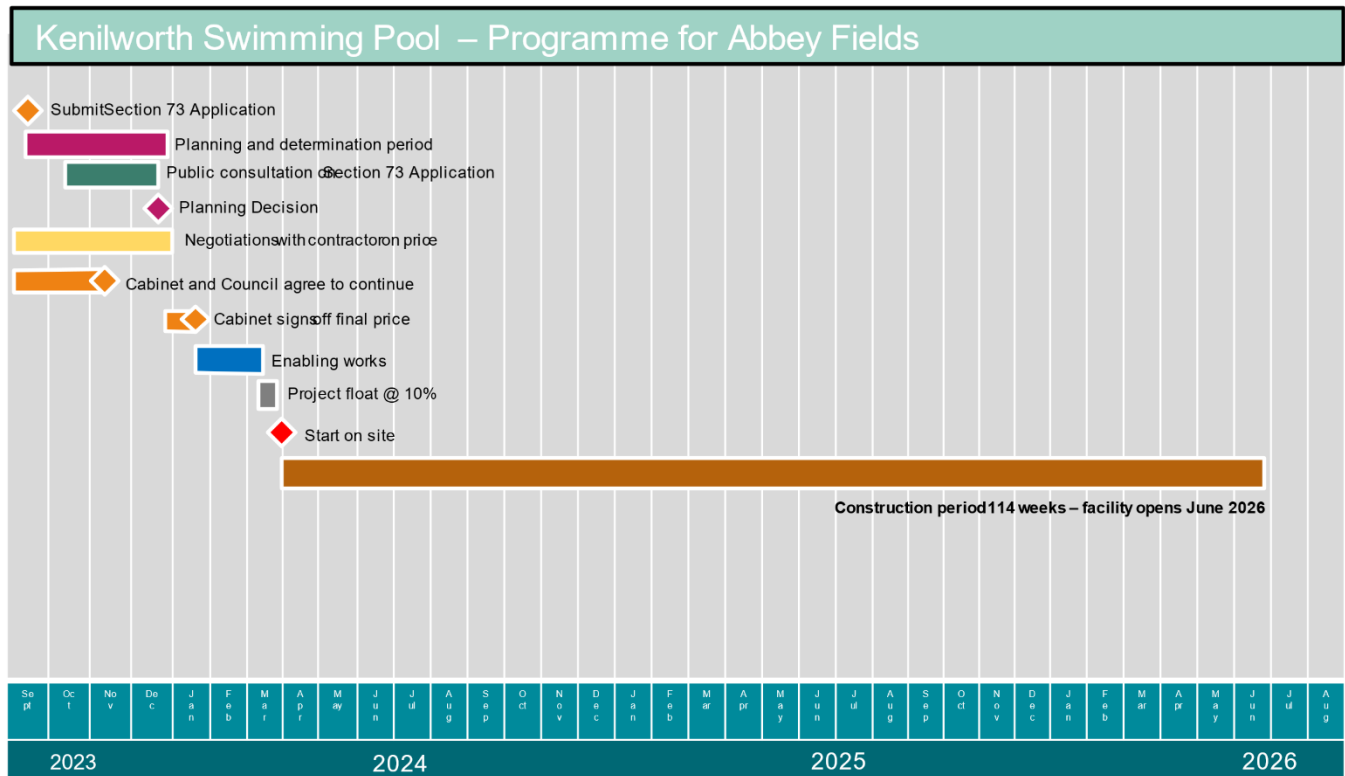
Response:

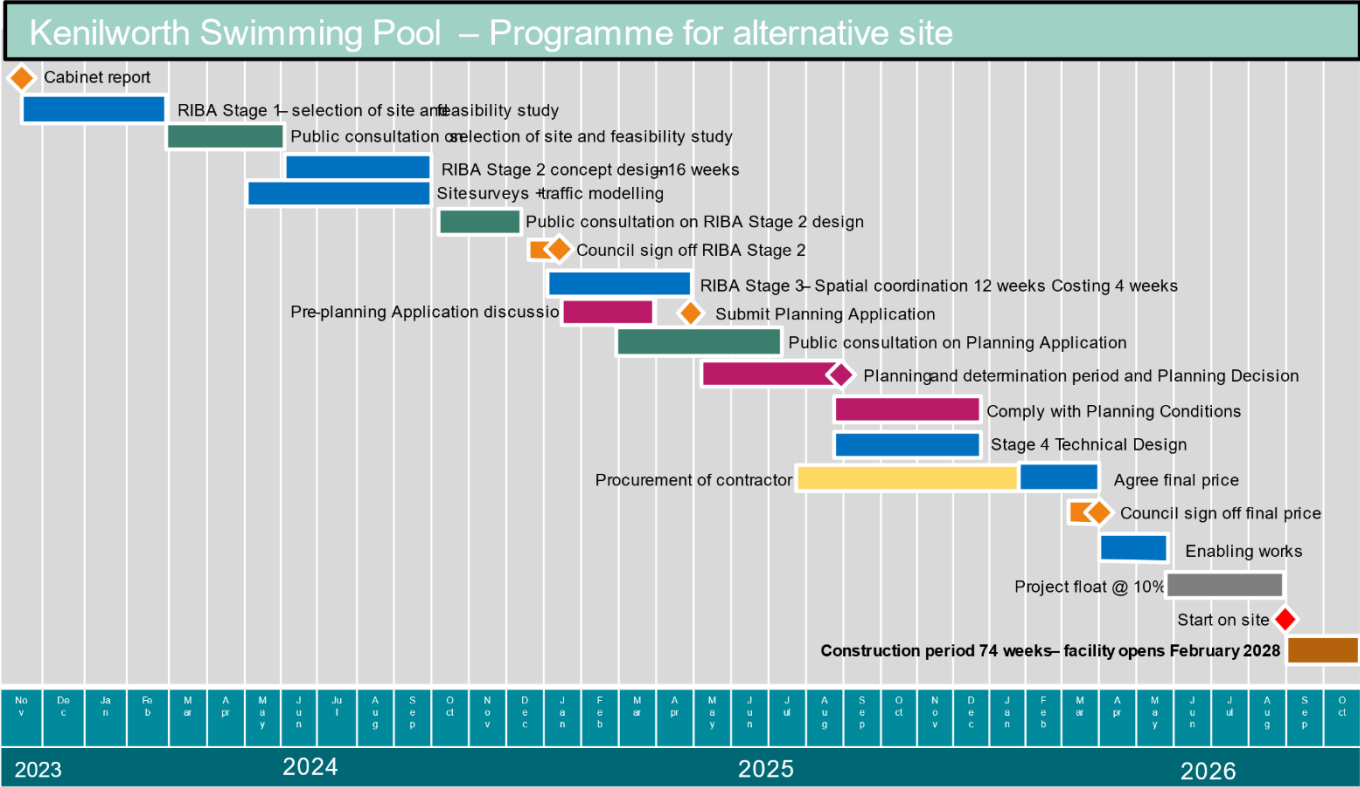
In discussions on the project in previous administrations, the point was made that the facility was not primarily aimed at attracting visitors from outside the District, but rather it aimed to primarily provide a facility for swimming and water activities for local people. However, it was always acknowledged that the family pool with its sun terrace and bi-fold doors would prove an attraction on hot, sunny days for people from further afield. This visitor demographic has always been included within the revenue calculations with Everyone Active, and in the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan for the new facility.

In consideration of alternative options, it is said (paragraph 2.14) it would take almost 1.5 years longer to open new pools to the public. What is the basis of this figure, and can a more detailed breakdown of the time and costs be provided of the risks identified in this section?

Response:

This figure was based on an assessment of the programme for the Abbey Fields project in comparison with a draft programme from a theoretical alternative location, which was based on the Project Team’s combined experience of the time taken for each stage of a typical programme for a facility of this type. These were both included in the Confidential Options Report on Abbey Fields provided in September 2023, but are repeated here for information.





Thirdly, and forgive me if I've missed this, but is one of major risks a loss of key project personnel at WDC, HE, Kier and EA? What countermeasures are in place to mitigate this risk?

Response:

You are correct that this is a risk and one that is not yet on the Risk Register. We will ensure that it is added at the next revision in a month's time. There are more opportunities for mitigating this risk with WDC staff. It is important to provide good working conditions in order to retain staff. It is important to undertake succession planning and to ensure that accurate records are kept of all actions taken in order to ensure that a transfer would be as painless as possible. With external organisations the options for mitigation are more limited. The main priority is to ensure excellent recording of all decisions made and all actions taken by such external bodies, so that the transfer to new personnel in such organisations is also as painless as possible.

Finally, in terms of council governance and ensuring maximising resident trust, does the Cabinet have any appetite for separate cross-party oversight of this major project in addition to existing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Council procedures?

Response from the Programme Manager:

The project is managed by Officers in conjunction with the Project Board. A re-constituted Kenilworth Leisure Councillors' Liaison Group is being set up. This will receive project updates, ask questions and receive answers about the progress of the project. Any other arrangements would be the responsibility of the Leader of the Council.

Additional Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Davison:

The arrangements described above are appropriate if a new contract has been agreed with Kier. Prior to that, if the decision is to proceed on Abbey Fields, it may be simply dependent on agreeing a price with Kier below the proposed (confidential) maximum. However, there may be other issues that cabinet decides must also be signed off by councillors. If this is the case, then group leaders would be fully involved in the final decision, as to whether these issues had been sufficiently resolved for us to agree the contract.

Councillor Payne:

Sections 5 (Business Strategy) and 9 (Health & Wellbeing) refer to the completed pool drawing in visitors to Abbey Fields from elsewhere in the District.

Has any forecasting been carried out to ascertain how many customers from outside Kenilworth will travel to use the pool? Further, if the numbers are high, are there draft plans to expand car parking at Abbey Fields and/or provide parking discounts?

Response:

Yes, a full Transport Assessment and Travel Plan were both completed for the project. This assessed the likely demand for the facility from people from a range of distances to the facility, including those coming from outside the District. This report indicated that the existing road and parking infrastructure would be sufficient to deal with the demand generated by the facility.

The Travel Plan in particular provided various ways of encouraging people to access the facility using sustainable means, but it made a realistic assessment of the number of people arriving by car.

As far as I am aware there are no plans to provide parking discounts for visitors to the Abbey Fields facility, but I will verify this and confirm to you at a later date.

Response from Councillor Will Roberts, Portfolio Holder:

On your last point about parking discounts. Abbey Fields offers two hours free parking for all users. The current parking tariffs for the car park are:

2 Hrs Free – Free

3 Hrs £3.00

4 Hrs £3.90

All Day £6.30

Night 6pm – 8pm £2.00

Under the new fees and charges proposals, these are due to go up but the 2hr free parking will not change.

Report Title: Local Government Association Corporate Challenge Report and Action Plan

Report Author(s): Chris Elliott – Chief Executive Officer

Councillor Syson:

Appendix B section 3: "Build on the existing processes to further strengthen and ensure transparent and robust governance." and Section 4 ". Consider how to establish a clearer narrative in reports and briefings regarding the Council's financial position which aids understanding and decision making across the organisation."

These concerns have been voiced for some time now and especially during the last Financial Year. I see that in respect of Section 3 it is anticipated that the review and outcomes are scheduled to be completed by March 2024 - will this enable changes which might be recommended to be implemented for the next financial year?

My concerns are principally financial scrutiny and the scrutiny of the implementation of the 3 R's in the employment field and their relative success in improving levels of staffing in those service teams which are struggling .

Response:

There is a project plan in place to address the issues linked to RRR of which I'm aware there was a presentation to Cllrs in August which highlighted these. Regular updates are received at SLT, and specific areas of the project are updated through relevant committees. For example, there is an Apprenticeship update report on the agenda for Employment Committee in November. Equally where there are challenges recognised for service teams which may be struggling there are processes and policies in place to review and consider options, for example our Market Forces Supplement Policy or use of Agency staffing for short term resourcing.

In reference to Section 4, we are working to implement some of these changes as soon as at the Q2 Budget Review Report in December. The report structure is being reviewed to ensure that we can provide greater clarity to readers on what is happening, why it is happening and what we are doing as a result of this, and therefore provide a clear narrative to the key issues affecting the Councils finances within service areas. We appreciate that finance can be quite complex, and therefore it is necessary for us to ensure that this is as easily understandable as practically possible. This should enable improved scrutiny of the financial reports, and therefore offer increased assurance to members when they are making key decisions, particularly in light of the current financial position last presented in August with the Q1 Budget Review Report.

Appendix B section 8 - I am not clear as to what the 'induction review project is referred to in "Progress the 'Induction' review project to include considerations from the Peer Review."

Response:

As part of RRR the 'Refining & Reconfiguring the Induction & Onboarding Process', was initiated in July 2023 with the objective "To create a refreshed and revived induction and onboarding experience for colleagues starting their career at Warwick District Council that truly welcomes them to the organisation". This is particularly significant in the aftermath of Covid 19 and the agile working model the organisation has adopted.

Phase 1 – Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis (Focus groups from both Managers and Staff)

Phase 2 – Design and Create the WDC Colleagues Induction

Phase 3 – Review and Redefine Roles and Responsibilities

Phase 4 – New Induction Launch

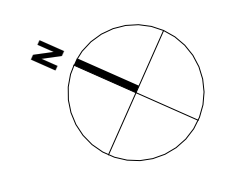
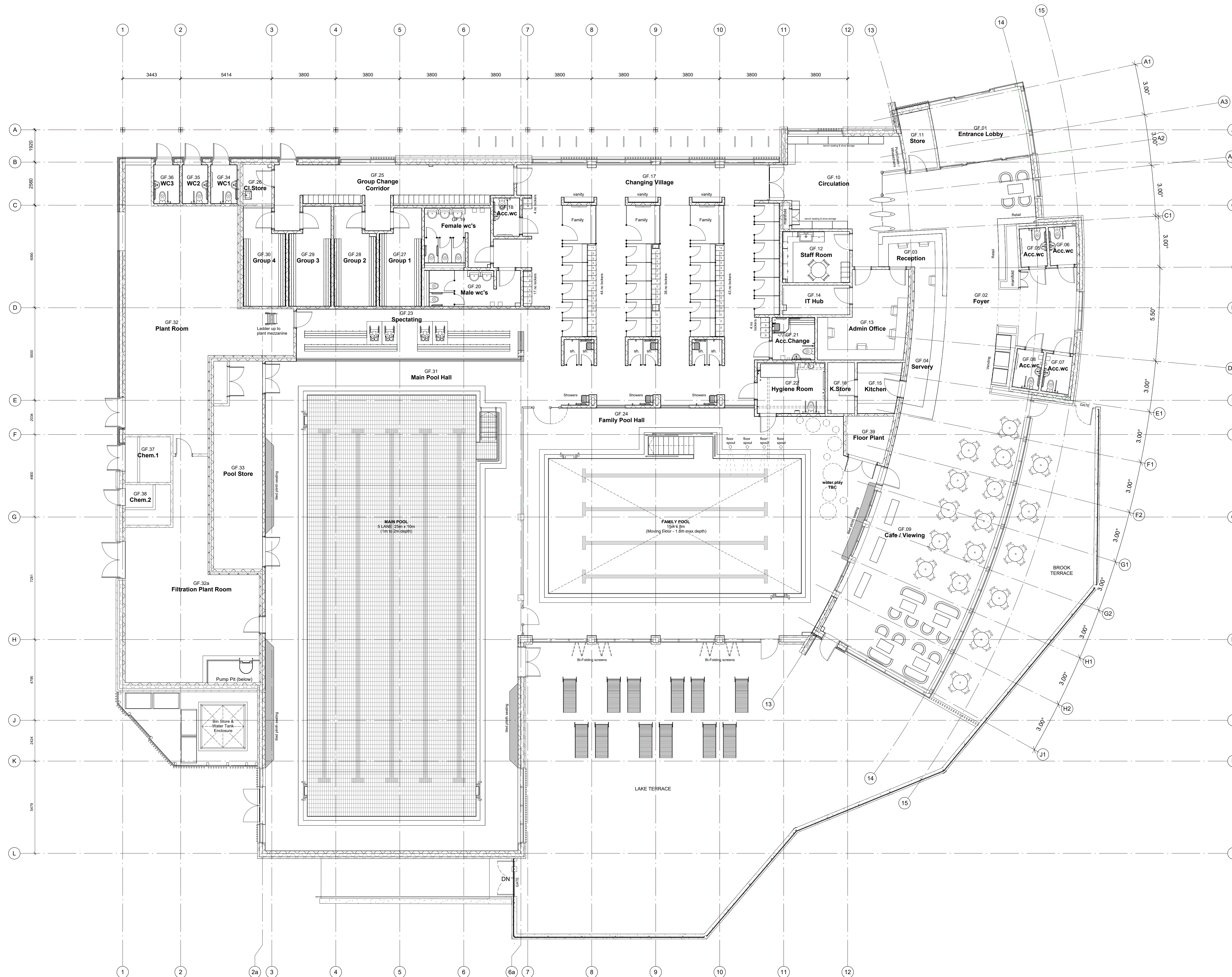
Phase 5 – Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis (Evaluation and impact of changes and feedback from new inductees, comparison data from Phase 1)

Is this induction to the organisation in general or to Saltisford? Is there an active programme to help ensure that staff arriving in Saltisford have a good initial experience and that staff working there have a better overall experience than those currently working at Riverside House and will it help meet the peer review comment "Use the move to the new offices to redefine the identity of the Council, 'the Warwick Way' to reinvigorate the corporate 'heart' of the organisation".

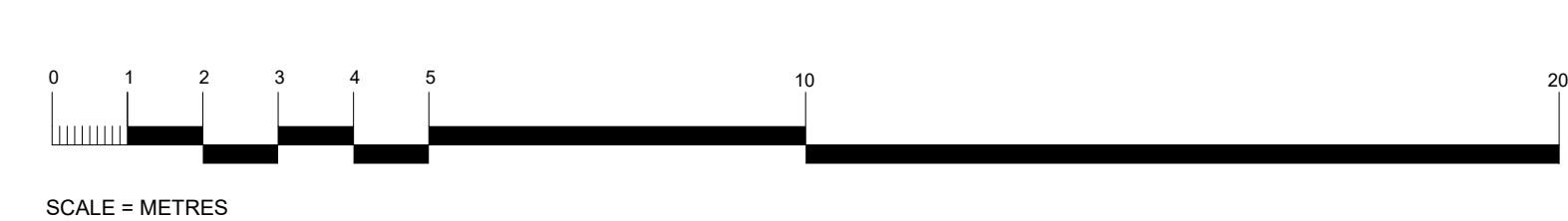
Response:

The phases of the project above which are for all staff not just Saltisford (of which we are presently at phase 3 working with staff and Managers as part of a working group) will partly address the peer review comment, there are other initiatives as part of our Ways of Working Group to also consider our identity and the 'Warwick Way' which will link to the launch of the new Corporate Strategy.

There is also an active programme for those moving to Saltisford with planned tours and induction.

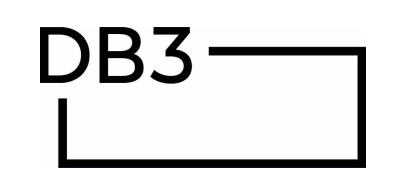


Proposed GF Plan GF GIFA = 1775m2



P03 24/02/23	PLANNING STATUTORY AMENDED	PW TH
P02 23/02/23	PLANNING NOTATION REVISION	
P01 20/02/23	PLANNING ISSUE	PW DH
Rev	Date	Description

PLANNING



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CLIENT	WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL
PROJECT	ABBOT FIELDS SWIMMING POOL
TITLE	PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
DATE	24/02/23
SCALE	1:100
DATE	24/02/23
BY	TH
CHECKED	DH
DATE	24/02/23
PROJECT NO.	12943 - DB3 - B01 - GF - DR - A - 20001
SHEET NO.	P03
TOTAL SHEETS	03
PROJECT NO.	12943 - DB3 - SP - G - D - A - 1001 - 53
SHEET NO.	P03
TOTAL SHEETS	03