

Title; Refurbishment and Improvement to Existing Paddling Pools

Lead Officer: Sally Watts

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Will Roberts

Wards of the District directly affected: Leamington Clarendon Ward (Victoria Park) and Warwick Saltisford Ward (St. Nicholas Park).

<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	16.02.24	Councillor Will Roberts
<b>Finance</b>	16.02.24	Andrew Rollins
<b>Legal Services</b>	16.02.24	Kathryn Tebbey
<b>Chief Executive</b>	16.02.24	Chris Elliott
<b>Director of Climate Change</b>	16.02.24	Dave Barber
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	16.02.24	Marianne Rolfe
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	16.02.24	Andrew Rollins
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	16.02.24	Graham Leach
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>		
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?</b>	Yes Recommendation to: Cabinet	
<b>Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?</b>	Yes, Appendix item 4 and 5	
<b>Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?</b>	Yes, Forward Plan item – scheduled for 08/02/2024	
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>	Yes	

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## Summary

The existing paddling pools in Victoria Park and St Nicholas Park are needing significant annual repair due to problems with the sub-base which has led to unplanned closures and higher than normal costs to maintain. This is projected to continue and likelihood of costs increasing as the pools deteriorate further.

The report outlines a recommended option to members regarding the future of the paddling pools and the impact of this option and its alternatives on the park and park user.

## Recommendation(s)

1. That the Cabinet notes the condition of the existing paddling pools in Victoria Park, and St Nicholas Park and the need for extensive repairs;
  2. The Cabinet agree that Victoria Paddling Pool is closed this summer and St. Nicholas Park will open (subject to the completion of the necessary safety works further health and safety evaluation, should this necessitate the decision to close the paddling pool the decision will be undertaken by the Head of Service in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood and Green Spaces)
  3. That Cabinet agree
    - (a) an additional £10,000 for temporary repair of the paddling pool at St Nicholas Park, funded through the budget core settlement (as set out within the budget report to Cabinet);
    - (b) the reallocation of savings made by the closure of Victoria Park paddling pool for staffing of St Nicholas Park Paddling Pool for 2024; and
    - (c) any underspend from these be reported as part of the quarterly budget updates.
  4. That Cabinet agree for officers to progress a project for the renovations of the existing paddling pool provision in Victoria Park and St Nicholas Park including refurbished and upgraded with improvements to the paddling pool area.
  5. That the Cabinet agree to the renovation of Victoria Park Paddling, starting in September 2024, pool not exceeding the value set out in Confidential Appendix 5, that includes a 15% contingency funded from the Corporate Assets Reserve.
  6. That the Cabinet ask officers to seek external funding to help fund the renovations required at St Nicholas Park Warwick and bring forward a proposal for this to a future meeting.
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## 1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 The paddling pools are located in Victoria Park, Leamington Spa and St. Nicholas Park, Warwick providing water play for toddlers and young children within a fenced area adjacent to the play area at the centre of both parks. The pool area is 79m<sup>2</sup> at Victoria Park and 62m<sup>2</sup> at St. Nicholas Park.
- 1.2 Both pools are maintained by a local firm, Poolcare, who specialise in installation, maintenance and refurbishment of swimming pools and spas nationwide. They undertake twice daily visits and water checks to ensure ongoing water quality. They also check the area has no hazards -including glass, within the pool area.
- 1.3 They are both free to use and are open usually from May half-term, through the summer until mid- September. Poolcare estimate that the level of use is approximately 140,000 visits to the paddling pools per annum over the 17-week opening period, with St Nicholas Park being generally busier than Victoria Park. This figure accounts for lower use during term time and poor weather as well as significantly higher use during good weather.
- 1.4 In Victoria Park, the history of the pool and maintenance is incomplete, but the original pool was installed in 1933 and the re-surfacing of the pool in Victoria Park was undertaken in 2018. The pool in St Nicholas Park was installed around the 1930's and remains a popular attraction. It has not been resurfaced since the changes to make it more accessible were undertaken at least 10 years ago.
- 1.5 The paddling pools are a significant cost to the Council on an annual basis and the cost of the additional repairs on top of the annual maintenance cost is increasingly prohibitive.

Year	Description	Cost (£)	Total
2021	Annual Maintenance	£48,016	
	Additional repairs/ equipment	<b>£5,241</b>	£53,257
2022	Annual Maintenance	£49,860	
	Additional repairs/ equipment	<b>£4,061</b>	£53,921
2023	Annual Maintenance	£55,993	
	Additional repairs/ equipment	£34,824	£90,817

- 1.6 Every year since 2021, surface repairs have been needed to the pool in Victoria Park. These are caused by a failure in the substructure of the pool plus cracks and leaks due to the age of the pool, as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.7 This year, St. Nicholas Park paddling pool was closed at the start of the year due to pipes bursting the day before it was due to open. Victoria Park Paddling Pool had to close part way through the year as the original surface repairs failed and it had to be repaired.
- 1.8 Inspection of the facility and a report providing feedback from the pool maintenance service provider (Poolcare) leads officers to conclude that the pools can no longer be sustained with short term repair but requires wholesale replacement including a new subbase, pump, and filtration equipment replacement. This is provided in Appendix 2.
- 1.9 To run the paddling pool in spring/summer 2024, the contractors have advised that there is a high likelihood of closures during the season and that frosts from

the winter could cause cracking in the concrete of the pool, to the point the pools are unable to open unless significant repairs are undertaken delaying opening.

- 1.10 For the opening of the pool an extra estimated £10,000 is needed, in addition to the increasing annual maintenance costs to undertake preventative repair works to the cracks and failures in the pool surfacing before the pools can open. Whilst this repair work will allow the operation of the pools for the summer season, users will need to wear shoes in the pool to prevent scrapes and cuts from the surfacing.
- 1.11 To enable an assessment of the anticipated costs and an understanding of the implications of the recommendations, the existing provider Poolcare were approached to provide indicative figures for various options for the paddling pools. The costs for the recommended option are in confidential Appendix 4, they include a contingency of 15% added to allow for variation and unexpected additions during the planning and procurement process.
- 1.12 The current level of usage off water and electricity is unclear due to single billing of both water and electricity for the whole park. However, one of the criteria of assessment will be the energy efficiency and water in the procurement process to ensure it meets the goals of the Council's corporate strategy.
- 1.13 It is proposed for both parks that the area of the paddling pools are refurbished and upgraded to continue to provide a free family activity in the parks. The timing of the refurbishment is discussed within the report.
- 1.14 All prices quoted within this report are based on works being completed in Spring 2024, however given that the repairs would take several months to complete and there would be a need to go through procurement processes and gain planning permission, it is likely that the earliest the works would be undertaken in late September 2024.
- 1.15 Following an evaluation of the risks, usage and condition Victoria Park Paddling pool renovation has been prioritised over St Nicholas Park due to concerns of water loss and further closures from surfaces failures. The water loss cannot be mitigated by remedial works as the failure is inherent to the pool structure. Alongside the media team, this will be conveyed to the public by a communications plan to support the recommendations and improvement work as it progresses and mitigate negative public relations.

#### Timescales

- 1.16 The contractual timescales require a significant lead time to book in the services of companies that undertake this type of specialist work. In addition to our procurement processes and the need for planning permission, it is unlikely that this would be able to be accommodated prior to Autumn 2024.
- 1.17 Accordingly, for Summer 2024 it would be necessary to do the additional limited repairs (estimated £10,000 above the existing maintenance budget) or remain closed until after the renovations (Spring 2025).
- 1.18 There is an option of not undertaking any further repairs to either of the pools, leaving them inactive until they are fully repaired. This would mean no paddling pool provision for 2024/25. This would result in saving of the cost of the maintenance contract for both pools plus the additional maintenance and required staffing costs for the year of 2024/5. There is the risk of reputational

harm if the paddling pools are not operational in 2024 however there could be increased Health, Safety and Insurance risks if the pools are opened.

- 1.19 Once the procurement exercise has been undertaken, officers will seek a contract or who can undertake the work over two financial years. The costs for St. Nicholas Park are currently unfunded and at this time procurement exercise for the works cannot be procured.
- 1.20 Officers have explored four alternative options for the future of the paddling pools (which are set out in Appendix 3) to the preferred recommended option to refurbish and upgrade the existing paddling pools. These are:
  - Refurbishment of the existing paddling pool provision only
  - Removal of the existing paddling pool and replacement with water play only.
  - No paddling pool provision within the park setting and change the area into different features for the park. I.e., a sensory garden in Victoria Park and a toddler play area in St. Nicholas Park
  - Ongoing repair of the existing pools (costs unknown)

Information relating to the costings and a cost comparison with the recommendation option of repair and improvement are set out in confidential Appendix item 4.

#### Information on the existing pools

- 1.21 Appendix 2 provides a report from Poolcare on the current issues at each location and advice on the action needed for the pools to remain active.

#### Victoria Park

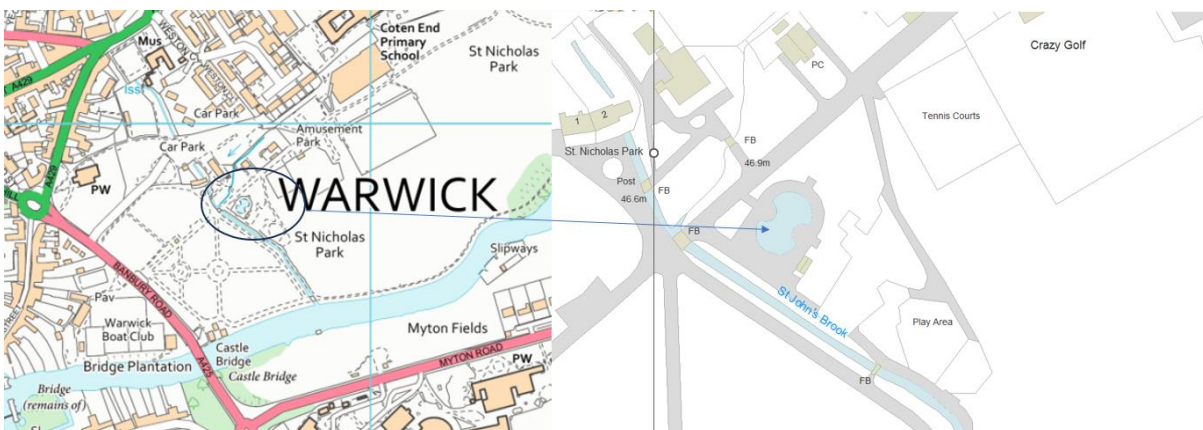
- 1.22 The paddling pool is a stark area which is visually discordant with the surrounding park setting. The irregularly shaped paddling pool is inset and surrounded by hardstanding around the pool area which is enclosed by fencing with access from the park side (not the riverside path). There is no access from the adjacent play area directly to the pool area.
- 1.23 The pool has a large filtration system and pump, however, the sandy subbase beneath the pool is failing. Each year the pool loses more water and requires it to be constantly topped up throughout the season. The pool requires additional large volumes of water to be added beyond this, which the contractor's action on their daily visits.
- 1.24 In 2022, repairs were required before the pool opened in the spring, but movement from the substructure meant there was a repeated failure within 1-2 weeks. In 2023, a problem was identified with the pipework, which during pressure treatment was shown to be leaking.





### St Nicholas Park

- 1.25 The paddling pool in St Nicholas Park has been regraded to be more accessible using a fibre glass base. The edges are sloped, and the surfacing uses a slip resistant paint. This surface has caused cuts and scratches especially when slips happen due to the sloped edges.
- 1.26 It has previously had two fountains added for additional play value and they are how treated water is added to the pool area. There are no other means of adding water to the water body. The pool area is surrounded by hardstanding, and the pump equipment room is located between the adjacent play area and the paddling pool.
- 1.27 The body of water in the pool is small for the level of use it receives. This impacts on the water quality. The contractor must maintain a careful balance between water cleanliness and chemical concentration added to the water. Currently the maintenance of water quality is a significant concern.
- 1.28 The pump and filter are domestic sized and are not considered to be fit for commercial purpose. The pump fails repeatedly on busy days, and this has significant impact on water quality. Failures of water quality leads to paddling pool closures at peak usage and when demand is highest.







Park users view of the paddling pools.

- 1.29 The park user survey in Victoria Park was undertaken in Summer 2023 as part of the ongoing management of the parks, as well as to understand the impact of the Commonwealth Games and the associated investment which had occurred. This has allowed a clear understanding of the value given to all the facilities in the park and where further improvements could be made.
- 1.30 There has been no equivalent park user survey undertaken in St. Nicholas Park to date.
- 1.31 Visiting the play area/paddling pool was the highest reason for visiting the park along with going for a walk/stroll and getting fresh air. 59% of people rated the paddling pool as good or excellent which give the condition of the pool and the recent closures indicates how favourably the facility is considered by the park user, however this is compared to 94% for the play area and 95% for the bowling greens.
- 1.32 The water play provision within the park is a special offer which differs from the play equipment which can be found on a smaller scale locally. It provides an opportunity for water play in an imaginative and social way, as well as learning the early basics of water safety.
- 1.33 The facilities are available for park users free of charge. This is a significant benefit for families seeking a no-cost activity.
- 1.34 During the open season of summer of 2023, the paddling pool in Victoria Park and St Nicholas Park needed to be closed for repairs and led to criticism of the Council on social media platforms for the Councils management of the asset and the facilities not being available for families to use during the school holidays.

## 2 The Proposed Option.

2.1 To refurbish and upgrade both existing paddling pool provision and improve the paddling pool area.

2.2 This option renovates the paddling pools and the proposal includes a new pool shell, non-slip surfacing, installing a new pool surround, improving the pipework and filter vessel, and replacement of the control panel.

2.3 The option would also include further improvements to enhance the facility based on the feedback received. It is recommended that the area around both paddling pools are improved as well as the pool structure itself in a way that responds to the needs of families in the following ways as part of the ongoing improvements to parks and park facilities.

- Jets and fountains
- Benches around the external fenced area for parents
- Provision of shade with removable sails or free-standing shade structures
- Improvement in the surfacing around the exterior of the pool area

2.4 The estimated costs of these are set out in confidential Appendix 4.

2.5 Within the Victoria Park survey, a specific question was asked to gauge what kind of improvements would be supported. The results stated that jets and fountains added to the existing area to improve play value received 61% support, provision of shade (59% support) and more benches for parents to use whilst supervising children in the pool area (57% support).

2023 Victoria Park Survey Results	Yes	No	No opinion
More benches		5%	37%
Provision of shade	59%	5%	35%
Changing screen	33%	17%	50%
Adding other water play features - e.g., jets, fountains	61%	11%	28%
Change of design from a pool to a splash pad	23%	32%	45%

2.6 A changing screen was not well received (33% support). Comments regarding the roughness of the non-slip surfacing applied were raised in the feedback comments, with incidents of scrapes and the surface being abrasive to children. The proposal includes changing to a non-slip tiled surface.

2.7 Within the indicative quotations obtained an improvement in the surfacing around the pool area have been included with a stone resin or rubber resin quoted as an alternative to tarmac to improve the aesthetic value of the spaces. Initial indications advise that a cannon style water feature controlled independently of filtration and can be operated by a timing system (based on works to be completed in spring 2023).



- 2.8 This option will require planning permission to implement. Should this option be agreed a formal procurement process and planning process will need to be implemented.
- 2.9 A contract would still be required for water testing and quality as well as checks for any glass or trip hazards. The ongoing contract cost is estimated to be more equivalent to cost incurred in 2021 with reduced need to visit the site as frequently to top up water levels and equipment checks.
- Provision of staffing and income opportunities at the paddling Pool.
- 2.10 To supervise the paddling pools over the summer season (20th May -15th September between 10am and 6pm), an exercise has been undertaken to get an idea of the approximate cost for staffing. This is estimated at approximately £20,000.
- 2.11 The staff would undertake checks that children are wearing shoes to limit cuts and abrasions, water quality checks and hazard checks, further reducing the costs of the maintenance contract as well as monitoring capacity.
- 2.12 With staffing in place, there is potential for charging for paddling pool usage. The potential level of income from this is difficult to gauge as there is no clear usage data for the paddling pools. It is estimated that there are 140,000 users, a figure provided by Poolcare, additionally in the survey no data was collected on whether a pay per user scheme would be accepted.

### **3 Legal Implications**

- 3.1 The Council will ensure legal advice is obtained throughout the delivery of the plan including anything applicable to procurement laws, planning, legal agreements, and consents.
- 3.2 The information contained within the confidential appendices to the report falls within the scope of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 within paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, by virtue of the information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). In disclosing this information in the public domain it will put the Council at a potential disadvantage when seeking to procure works and achieving best value in the wider public interest. The information also contains confidential information from

### **4 Financial Services**

- 4.1 The total cost of the proposal is not finalised as the Council must undertake a procurement process to identify a contractor to the selected option to be delivered. All costs given are indicative; however, it cannot be met out of the existing Green Space budget and would require a one-off capital expenditure to invest in the improvement of the paddling pools. Access to S106 funding and grant opportunities have been considered for both sites.

Existing S106 funds

- 4.2 In line with the Public Open Space SPD, off site contributions must identify specific local existing or planned off site spaces. For St Nicholas Park the available S106 monies totals £106,000 for the area including the park, however these monies have been earmarked already for significant projects such as a new play area in St Nicholas Park which is identified in the play area improvement program as requiring replacement, providing a BMX/ Skate Park and riverside improvements on Myton Fields riverbank.
- 4.3 In Victoria Park, the previously available S106 monies within the ward and area were utilised in the new play area and other improvements in the park for the Commonwealth Games.
- 4.4 For Victoria Park there is one available S106 contribution at £34,902 however this is resource already dedicated elsewhere.

#### Future S106 funds

- 4.5 Green Spaces is set to include St Nicholas Park is due to receive significant funds (£660,000) in the next couple of years through Section 106 agreements relating to Green Space contributions as set out in the local development framework. This would come from large development at Montague Road which could be used to meet these costs. However, this would be to the detriment of several sites that it has also been allocated to (Priory Park Riverside Walk, Railway allotments or Millbank allotments). This payment is due at the time of occupation of the 60th dwelling.
- 4.6 The construction of the development is nearing a point at which payment would be made; however, sales are slowing due to the housing market and the point at which payment is due has not been reached and is anticipated to be likely later in the year. An option could be to forward fund the paddling pools as the receipt of the S106 monies has not yet been received.
- 4.7 There are no identified future S106 funds that relate to Victoria Park currently.
- 4.8 The cost of the recommended option for Victoria Park will be funded from the Corporate Assets Reserve, which has as apart of the Core Finance Settlement been allocated the amount in 2024/25 to support this request.

## **5 Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.

### **Delivering valued, sustainable services**

- 5.2 In order that the Council can continue to focus its efforts and activities on the needs of its residents, communities and businesses, this priority will be underpinned by ensuring continued demonstration of financial sustainability through the medium term. The existing programme of annual repair does not represent good value for money in either the short or medium term and is becoming an expensive way of maintaining the asset. To replace and make good the asset would ensure longevity and reduced maintenance costs.
- 5.3 The paddling pools are key contributors in the success and vibrancy of the parks and meeting the public needs and aspirations within the park setting. Currently the paddling pools are well supported but the survey shows that there is a desire to improve the paddling pool to meet customer needs. The paddling pools form a key part of the offer for families as reflected in the Victoria Park survey and contribute toward ensuring all communities have access to decent

open space and the area has well looked after public spaces with additional elements to ensure improvement.

### **Low cost, low carbon energy across the district**

- 5.4 The Council is committed to find ways to reduce energy consumption and bills for Council assets. The plant equipment in the pools is not working effectively at either site is needed to be used extensively to manage the deficiencies in the pool design. The plant equipment on both sites is not fit for purpose and is in use for more than should be designed for.
- 5.5 Part of ensuring low cost and low energy use is ensuring that the functionality of the equipment installed meets the requirements of the purpose. The proposed replacement would be designed to meet the requirements of the site which would improve functionality.

### **Creating vibrant, safe, and healthy communities of the future**

- 5.6 The paddling pools are a key factor in the experience of families using parks in the district. They afford the opportunity for water play in a safe controlled environment, they allow for social interaction within the district as well as opportunity to become stronger, fitter, and healthier community through play.
- 5.7 There is evidence that the social value of swimming in the UK is £2.4 billion. However only 1 in 2 persons from a low socio-economic group or are from ethnically diverse communities know how to swim.
- 5.8 The link from water confidence, water safety and swimming are a critical area where the paddling pools provide a link from water play to water safety. Research in water safety shows that and early understanding of the risks are key.
- 5.9 To understand the risks associated with water and to be able to play in a safe environment allows children to have confidence regarding water and become versed in water safety from an early age.
- 5.10 That the pools are a free to use facility allows an equity to this approach which given the cost barriers to swimming with entry fees and the cost of lessons can be a barrier.

## **6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 The only climate change implication has been the inclusion of shade within the pool area to allow parents and children shade whilst using the pool area. Feedback from the survey demonstrates that this is an area that the public felt was more of a priority within the park in general, but particularly in play area feedback.
- 6.2 On both sites, the existing equipment is not fit for purpose which leads to inefficiencies. Currently the pumps and filters are working at capacity in St Nicholas and being overworked in busy times. The new equipment associated with the recommended improvements will lead to greater efficiencies and energy savings.
- 6.3 In Victoria Park, the level of water usage is significantly higher than it ought to be for the volume capacity of the pool and the water top up is significant in times of use as the water is not being retained in the pool due to structural defects. The recommended option (along with option 1 and 2 would result in significant reduction of water usage at the paddling pool).

6.4

## **7 Analysis of the effects on Equality**

- 7.1 The paddling pools provide an opportunity for all families to use a free facility with no barrier to entry in a public place. This is important in times of financial hardship to provide an activity free to access in an equitable way.

## **8 Data Protection**

- 8.1 There are no data protection implications of the plan.

## **9 Health and Wellbeing**

- 9.1 Parks and green spaces are supported by Warwick District Council as being a key contributor in ensuring health and wellbeing for their residents. The facilities in the park impact the frequency and duration of visit to the open space. There are wider benefits in terms of children learning and enhancing key skills including social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills within play settings.
- 9.2 There are links between the quality of open space and active lifestyles and sports participation which link to the core tenets of wellbeing and living a healthy life which underpin the value in the variety and quality of the facilities in the park.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 The parks, and in turn the facilities within the park including the paddling pools represent WDC supporting the wellbeing and quality of life for residents. The loss of paddling pools from under investment could spread a perception that there is a lack of support for public facilities despite recent investment in sport and activities in the district. The paddling pools offer of play is different to swimming pools and other leisure facilities given the lack of user cost and it therefore provides a different type of provision in the district for leisure.
- 10.2 There is a considerable resource implication by not just replacing as is but improvement, however, there is a general drive to improve parks and invest in the health and wellbeing of communities, the replacement only option could be viewed as missing an opportunity to improve local facilities in the park.
- 10.3 Continuing with both pools open would be a considerable risk given the clear advice from the contractor that the substructure of the pools and the pipework is failing due to age, and they require investment to continue. If this is not resolved, then it is highly likely that the pools will fail and remain unopened. This could be mitigated in the short term by undertaking repairs but will not resolve the issue in the medium to longer term.
- 10.4 There is a considerable risk that the Council would incur considerable criticism if the timing of the repair's mis-aligned with the most active use of the paddling pools. Whilst this is partly out of control of the authority with weather being a key driver in the use of the paddling pools, there is a clear expectation from the public in terms of the opening/availability of the paddling pools and there can be criticism if not met as experienced in 2023, and each time the pool is closed.

- 10.5 On agreeing the procurement route and programme delivery, the Green Space Team would need to be clear in terms of delivery. If there were issues, officers would need to communicate this effectively to members of the public to avoid or mitigate criticism.
- 10.6 There is a significant risk of increased insurance claims and health and safety risks resulting from opening the paddling pools following temporary repairs. Whilst the wearing of shoes will mitigate this risk, officers propose that there is a full health and safety evaluation of risks prior to opening to ensure that all risks are mitigated.
- 10.7 The enforcement of the wearing of water shoes also brings a risk of criticism to the council as there is a clear expectation of a free to use facility. Officers would try to mitigate this risk through a planned communication programmes.
- 10.8 There is the likely risk of the displacement of paddling pool users to St Nicholas Park which will exceed the already oversubscribed usage of the facility as earlier explained. The increase in usage could lead to more regular closures due to poor water quality from the increased demand. This will be mitigated by the onsite supervision.
- 10.9 Given these concerns we will need to undertake recruitment to fill this role for the summer. Failure to do so will necessitate in the closure of St Nicholas Park given the implications of failure to do so. Subject to agreement of this report, officers will begin this process immediately.

## **11 Consultation**

There has not been any consultation, however the Victoria Park questionnaire is a recent expression of opinion. The consultation period for this was through July 2023 and the results recently given to the Friends of Victoria Park.

### **Background papers:**

The results and feedback on the Victoria Pak survey can be found at:

[Feedback report on results of the 2023 user survey for Victoria Park - Download - Warwick District Council \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](#)

## Appendix 1. List of costs from 2021- 2023

Year	Description	Cost
2021	Annual Maintenance	£ 48,016
	Chlorine Probe (SNP)	£ 541
	New Pump (SNP)	£ 615
	Surface Repairs (SNP)	£ 1,685
	Surface Repairs (VP)	£ 1,785
	Replacement Pump (SNP)	£ 615
	<b>Total cost for 2021</b>	<b>£ 53,257</b>
2022	Annual Maintenance	£ 49,860
	Dosing Pump (SNP)	£ 740
	Surface Repairs (SNP)	£ 1,800
	Surface Repairs (VP)	£ 950
	Replacement Probes (VP)	£ 571
	<b>Total cost for 2022</b>	<b>£ 53,921</b>
2023	Annual Maintenance	£ 55,993
	Surface Repairs (VP & SNP) plus pressure testing	£ 20,725
	Pool Cleaning Equipment	£ 725
	New Pipework and renovations to fountains (SNP)	£ 10,842
	Replacement Pump (SNP)	£ 650
	Replacement Pump & Starter (VP)	£ 1,882
	<b>Total cost for 2023</b>	<b>£ 90,817</b>



## Appendix 2: Report from Poolcare on the current condition of the paddling pools and advice on future action.



22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023

### St Nicholas Park and Victoria Park paddling pools Report 2023

We have had involvement with both paddling pools for many years now, but for the most recent 5/6yrs we have been responsible for the daily operation of these facilities.

Over the last 2-3 years, even just keeping the pools open has become increasingly difficult and in our professional opinion, both of these facilities have reached the end of their usable life. The last couple of seasons, many additional visits have been required during busy times at additional cost, obviously increasing the running costs.

Please see below a list of the current issues on each location.

#### St Nicholas Park

##### **Pool Design**

Fundamentally, the volume of water is too little. This is mainly due to the sloped sides which significantly reduces the amount of water in the pool, therefore it is very different to keep a safe residual level of Chlorine especially due to the extremely high bather loads that can often occur.

##### **Pool Filtration system**

Overall the filtration system is much too small for both the pool and the application. Pipework between the pool and plant is small and limited, and the equipment itself is undersized meaning the filter and strainers clog up very quickly, cutting off the filtration; this of course compounds the issue. The only pipes which return water to the pool, is via the high level cannons which means when Chlorine is dosed into the return water, it comes out of the outlets via these fittings. This means the Chlorine level in this water is higher than the rest of the pool. This type of feature should be on a separate loop.

Due to high bather loads and poor filtration the chemical levels and clarity are significantly impacted very quickly.

##### **Pool Filling**

There is no automatic top up feature on this pool, therefore topping up or re-filling the pool after a drain or even just a backwash, must be done manually. This requires attendance on site during this process.

##### **Pool Shell**

The integrity of the pool itself is extremely poor; every year remedial works are carried out pre-season which involve patching of render, and re-painting, however, due to the deterioration of the sub-base, further repairs are



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always required throughout the season, sometimes within a matter of weeks of re-opening, as occurred this year. It is then necessary to close the facility for a number of days whilst the necessary repairs are made.

The pool is of a painted finish which can be extremely slippery especially on the sloped sides. An aggregate can be added to the paint during the application, however, this can leave an abrasive finish which in the past, has also resulted in complaints (it appears we can't win).

#### **Pool Surround**

The pool surround is finished with Tarmac which is now very old and broken down. It is not ideal for users with bare feet and also, results in much contamination to the pool.

#### **Victoria Park**

##### **Pool Design**

The design of this pool is better; there is a larger volume of water which makes it easier to maintain adequate sanitation levels.

##### **Pool Filtration system**

The filtration system is much larger and more suitable for a pool of this type.

The electrical control equipment needs upgrading, however, on the whole the plant equipment is adequate.

##### **Pool Filling**

There is no automatic top up feature on this pool, although there is a feature where water can be added to the running filtration system, although this does not automatically isolate.

##### **Pool Shell**

The pool shell is in extremely poor condition, again, minor refurbishment is carried out at the start of every season, and due to the poor condition of the shell, further repairs are always required throughout the season. The damage always looks unsightly and the sharp edges prove a Health and Safety issue.

##### **Pool Surround**

As per St Nicholas Park, this is degraded tarmac which needs to be renewed for the same reasons.

##### **Water Loss**

For the last couple of years, the pool has been losing a considerable amount of water. This has become gradually worse and for most of the time, this season, fresh water has been running in to the pool constantly (day and night), in order to maintain any form of water level which would allow the pool to operate. Associated with a leak of this size, is of course the cost and amount of chemical being dosed and also, consideration as to where the chlorinated water is going.

Pressure testing of the pipework has been carried out which has shown failures; additionally some water is being lost through the shell itself.

##### **Conclusion**

To conclude, both pools are in need of an urgent overhaul; we would recommend both be excavated and re-built. With St Nicholas Park being constructed in a similar way currently as Victoria Park.

New pipework installed to both with any additional features being installed on a separate pipework loop and perhaps timer or button operated.

Plant equipment at St Nicholas Park be completely replaced (there are some issues regarding access).

Poolside's to be re-surfaced with a suitable finish.



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### **Appendix 3: Exploration of Alternative Options.**

There are four alternative routes to the preferred recommend option to refurbish and upgrade the existing paddling pools which have been explored by officers.

Given the extended time frame and contingency and additional 15% has been added to allow for these factors for all options within the report.

#### **Alternative option 1: Refurbishment of the existing paddling pool provision only**

As the recommended option, this option, would include a new pool shell, non-slip surfacing, installing a new pool surround, improve pipework and filter vessel, and replace control panel.

This would not include improvements to the area around the pool and would replace the pools like for like. This would be a lost opportunity to enhance the pool area and functionality of the pool area in terms of the sustained improvement in the quality of the park environment. Therefore, this option has not been put forward as the recommended option.

Confidential Appendix 4 outlines the cost associated with this option.

A contract would still be required for water testing and quality as well as checks for any glass or trip hazards. The ongoing contract cost is estimated to be more equivalent to cost incurred in 2021.

#### **Alternative option 2: To remove the existing paddling pool and replace.**

A splash pad is also known as interactive fountains, spray pads, spray parks, or wet decks, are aquatic venues that spray or jet water on users. Splash pads are designed so that standing water does not collect in the water play area.

When the Victoria Park users were asked their thoughts on changing from a pool to a splashpad provision, there was limited enthusiasm for the proposal with 32% of respondents stating they didn't want this change, and 23% saying yes and 45% having no opinion showing a high level of ambivalence, especially in comparison to adding other water features to the existing pool which was more warmly received.

The costs relating to a water play/ splashpad have been difficult to directly compare as they significantly relate to the number of water play features within the splashpad area. The area would not be a conversion of the existing pool area but require the existing pool area and equipment to be removed and the installation of a closed water system including below ground tanks and pumps. There are schemes of similar scale that are £750,000 through to £150,000. Research supports a reasonable estimate would be £300,000 to £400,000 per site given their size and level of usage to include the water features, surfacing etc.

A contract would still be required for water testing and quality as well as checks for any glass or trip hazards. This is difficult to estimate at this time as it would depend on the features. There are significant anecdotal discussions on the inherent difficulties with splash pads and the ongoing maintenance issues they present and the additional cost burden they can represent when compared with paddling pools.

There are significant anecdotal discussions on the inherent difficulties with splash pads and the ongoing maintenance issues they present and the additional cost burden they

can represent when compared with paddling pools.

When the officers have attended regional meetings and training, park facilities have been discussed. Given the high cost of water play and the prominence in any parks team budget, the issue of water play provision and the inherent costs are often raised.

For this reason, along with no significantly expressed desire by the park user in Victoria Park to have this type of facility, it is not being recommended as a preferred option.

### **Alternative option 3: No paddling pool provision with the park settings**

This option involves is the complete removal of the paddling pools which would remove this type of play provision within the district. This option would require the removal of the substructure and concrete, removal of the pump house and making good. These costs are not insignificant.

Given that the areas are located at the centre of the park it is considered necessary to ensure the area vacated by the existing paddling pools would need to be addressed rather than purely grassed over.

For Victoria Park, the area is extensive (114m<sup>2</sup>) and is within the play and fitness area of the park. Due consideration would need to be given to the best uses of this space. E.g., a sensory wildlife area.

An initial estimate cost (set out in confidential Appendix 6) for a proposal like that in Jephson Gardens (including a fenced area, a looping sensory path, trees, bee friendly planting and wildflowers, possibly with musical equipment and a swing to help those in need of a quiet space. Part of the area could also be used for shading with some sail shades and some benches to allow families to picnic in the park and near the play area. There would be scope to add a water fountain using the mains water from the existing pipework to serve the paddling pool and signage). These are all ideas identified within the Victoria Park survey as lacking in the park and could be included in a reimagined area.

Within St Nicholas Park, the area (110m<sup>2</sup>) is directly adjacent to the play area which needs improvement as the play equipment is approximately 20 years old and at the end of the life cycle of the equipment. The replacement of St Nicholas Park play equipment is part of the medium-term work forecasting in the park.

The area of the existing paddling pool could be utilised as part of the play area and the area integrated into the play provision on the site.

The approximate cost to turn it into a toddler area play area, with new play equipment and surfacing after the cost of removing the existing pool is set out in confidential Appendix 4.

This option would allow for an enhancement of the existing spaces, however the enduring popularity of the paddling pools and the social value in providing free water play in the park setting is a significant factor in this not being the preferred option.

### **Alternative option 4: Ongoing repair of the existing pools**

The final option considered is the continuation of patch up repairs to the existing pools. However as detailed above, they are leaking water into the ground and the substructure is known to be failing.

This year the cost was an additional £37,231 which indicates that this is not a sustainable approach to take and our contractors have advised that the high annual

total costs are likely to continue to grow exponentially unless the foundations of the pools are remedied. This is not considered a viable option in the longer term and is not a prudent use of resources.

As outlined in the reasons for recommendations an estimated repair cost of £10,000 on top of the high annual costs of running and maintaining the pool for the summer is required to ensure that it is possible to open the pool for summer 2024. However, even with this repair children will need to wear shoes into the pool area. This would be difficult to monitor or enforce without supervision.