
Corby East Midland International Pool

SYNOPSIS

The report provides an update on the pool performance and actions taken regarding concerns raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2009.

1. Relevant Background Details

The Head of Special Projects and the Head of Culture and Leisure gave a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Members on the 4th November 2009 regarding the first three month's operation of the new Swimming Pool, focusing on the design and construction and key operational aspects covering areas and activities which had gone well, together with the problems that had arisen and the lessons to be learned.

Overall it was reported that the new pool was a tremendous success for the Borough, with the design and construction phase of the pool completed on time and within budget. Operationally, the pool was exceeding most of the attendance targets that had been set and is predicted to be within revenue budget at the end the financial year.

As with any project of such significance however, Members were informed of the technical and operational issues that were being initially experienced.

A list of key future actions was provided, including marketing and promotional activities, customer service improvements and preparing for the pre-Olympic/Paralympic training camps. It was reported that the lack of dedicated parking had not reduced usage. The completion of the new car park is now planned for May 2010 and it is proposed to introduce similar charges to those that Land Securities have in place.

The Corby Amateur Swimming Club issues were being addressed where possible but some requests such as starting blocks and turning boards for the 20m training pool have not been possible for safety reasons.

Work is presently continuing on Parklands Gateway in completing the Cube and Public realm areas around the new pool. Since the 4th November meeting, the Willows Arts Centre has been demolished and the Corby walk block work pavement is currently being installed. Council Officers are working closely with Galliford Try to ensure minimal disruption to the main entrance to the pool.

2. Report

An update action plan regarding the technical and operational issues that were highlighted at the 4th November meeting is provided in Appendix 1. Many of the issues have been addressed but there are still a few areas that are ongoing such as identifying and eradicating the problem with staining on the metal work in the pool hall and reducing the queues at reception.

In addition to the action plan in Appendix 1, Members' attention is drawn to the following activities and information.

Monthly health check/reviews are continuing to take place with the project management team, main contractors Willmott Dixon, key subcontractors and design team. These will continue until the end of the 12 month warranty. Other issues that are being addressed include exploring anti-glare screens/blinds to the fitness and reception windows and repairs to the fitness room floor. Willmott Dixon is continuing to finalise the technical development of the underwater detection system that is yet to be deployed.

Bi-monthly Pool Board meetings will also continue to support building operational matters.

Only one written complaint has been received since November and that was related to a loss of belongings from a locker.

The latest figures on usage show that, by the end of January, the total usage (excluding membership) has reached 135,070, compared to 2008/09 actual usage of 118,921 at the old pool. This far exceeds initial estimates.

Free-swimming take up has also exceeded all expectations. By the end of January 2010, 16's and under swimming totalled 35,324, the original target until March 31st 2010 was 22,141. Latest Government statistics on free-swimming performance shows Corby East Midlands International Pool as 10th out of the 256 authorities that have taken part when comparing usage against population. It should be noted that an even higher rating would have been achieved without the three months closure between May and July 2009.

End of January total free usage for over 60's is slightly less outstanding with usage reaching 8,503; therefore slightly under performing against the target of 10,958 up to March 31st 2010. This is still going to be much higher than the 2008/09 actual usage of 8,597 at the old pool and when taking the three month closure into account.

The Government free-swimming grant of £50,350 based on population will not be sufficient to cover the loss of income that requires an additional Council subsidy estimated at £30,000. The Leader of the Council has written again to the Secretary of State concerning the distribution formula, demonstrating how it penalises a small Borough like Corby, which punches well above its weight in terms of the range and quality of its facilities and urging the Government to revise the funding formula away from population head-count to swimmers recorded or even area of water provided. Alternatively, re-allocating funding from East Northamptonshire into Corby pro-rata to the number of households in the Corby and East Northamptonshire Parliamentary Constituency has also be suggested.

The Government has recently announced a underspend on the free-swimming pot of £1.6m and has distributed this to all Authorities that took part in both 16's and under and over 60's. Based on population Corby's share is a paltry £3,210.

The pool is actively involved in a number of promotions including the Evening Telegraph's 'Fit for Life' campaign, further support in targeting 300 residents to undertake a health assessment as part of the Health Splash scheme in order to reach the 1000 target.

The facility will play a key role in supporting the campaign for fittest County in the Country and the Olympic Open Weekend on the 24th and 25th July, which will also be used to celebrate the first year anniversary since the pool opened.

In partnership with the Amateur Swimming Association an audit has been undertaken to ascertain how maximum pool usage can be achieved. In particular they have looked at school lessons; Council provided swimming lessons and club usage. The report is being finalised and will be presented to the Pool Board in March.

3. Options to be considered

None

4. Issues to be taken into account:-

Policy Priorities

The report encompasses the policies at the new pool including pricing, programming and management arrangements

Financial

Capital: the design and construction phase of the pool completed on time and within budget. A retention is being held until all the snagging identified has been completed.

Revenue: The overall cost of running the facility is presently on target. A new electricity contract negotiated from November 2009 is expected to reduce costs by at least £5,000 per month.

Memberships for fitness and swimming have continued to increase and the February statistics show memberships for the Pool and Lodge Park Sports Centre reaching 2073. This is higher than predicted with 2010/11-fitness/membership income £573,580 this is £30,000 above the target of £543,580. 2008/09 income from fitness was £248,080.

Legal

There are no legal matters outstanding.

Performance Information

Performance is being closely monitored. Latest details regarding expenditure, income and usage are contained within the report.

Human Rights

No relevant information at this time

Equalities

All facility leaflets and information is provided in various languages

Community Safety

None

5. Recommendations

That Members note the progress made on rectifying the initial problems with the new pool.

Background Papers

4th November 2009 Overview and Scrutiny Panel minutes

Heath check/review meeting minutes

Pool Board minutes

External Consultations

Willmott Dixon PLC

Amateur Swimming Association

Corby Amateur Swimming Club

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Action Plan

Wards

All

Officers to Contact

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Actions – from 4th November Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Area of concern	Update
Repairs service had been slower than was desirable in some instances.	Willmott Dixon PLC has made good progress on this issue. Few of the more difficult issues outstanding.
The high water temperature was still being investigated, as it was not related to energy consumption.	This issue is now resolved. Pool water was being heated by the ventilation heat recovery system. This system is intended to minimise heat loss arising from ventilation and is not normally the primary source of water heating. The efficiency of the rest of the system has, however, meant that this source alone is more than sufficient to maintain pool water temperature. Given this understanding, water temperature is now controlled by manually turning the ventilation heat exchangers on and off. Willmott Dixon are exploring ways to fully automate the process.
Proper use of the lockers	Video showing how to use the lockers on display in reception. Software linked to company that installed shows daily usage and any abuse of lockers. More notices being displayed.
The arrangements for queuing were being considered. Changes had also been made to relieve pressures, including restricting free swimming times, introducing automated telephone information and refining the programming.	Automated telephone system implementation has gone well – minor adjustments made. A callout 'Session Manager' system is being purchased which will enable continual swimming through a colour band call out system. Testing of system should be available for Easter holidays. A new swimming programme will be implemented in April. Quick access for memberships still being explored.
Health suite issues	Contractor has made improvements to Spa, but further issues with ventilation and heating of cabins are being resolved as part of on going snagging.
Customer care - reception staff	Additional training for staff – Alliance leisure delivering customer care training on 10 th February. Work has also been done with Customer First Team. Additional reception staff trained and more cover during busy periods.
The number of adult only sessions	Number of Adult Only sessions increased with the new programme. Now available Monday – Friday (not Wednesday) evenings. 50+ session introduced

Atmospheric controls in relation to both air and water temperature	For water temperature see above.
Grade of the steel used was being checked	Willmott Dixon have sent samples for external analysis which has indicated the presence of copper and suggested that 'air born copper' might be responsible for the rust like deposits found on stainless steel. Exposed copper is now being removed from showers etc. CBC has expressed doubts that this is the complete picture and has requested that the Building Research Establishment is requested to investigate as independent experts. Willmott Dixon is arranging this currently.
Humidity checks	Complete
Turnstyle systems	Staff have been advised to keep the gate nearest reception open (if any) as it is better to monitor customers or unauthorised entry. Swim bands that include a microchip that sounds an alarm that hopefully will encourage users to return the bands before leaving. Ongoing monitoring in place as part of health/check reviews.
Problems with the automatic timing equipment	Instruction guide for set ups completed. Further training for staff planned in March 2010.
Methods of fast tracking members were being looked at.	Growth bid submitted for Gladstone MRM Kiosk was rejected.
Free swimming scheme was allocated retrospectively, based on usage. It was important to lobby and influence government policy in these areas.	The Leader of the Council has written again to the Secretary of State concerning the distribution formula, demonstrating it penalises a small Borough like Corby, which punches well above its weight in terms of the range and quality of its facilities
<p>The Swimming Club problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • automatic timing equipment, • temperatures had been really bad with swimmers, • The booms were slippery and also had sharp edges, • The 20m no provision for blocks, 	<p>As above</p> <p>Resolved with heat reclaim pumps as above</p> <p>Any rough surfaces have been removed. This will be checked and monitored regularly by staff.</p>

<p>backstroke flags or turning boards. It was not ideal for teaching competition level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming, judges room which was virtually useless • There were also no turning Ts in the 25m short • issues in respect of sharing the pool with the public during training sessions, incidents of hassle and abuse which had not been handled well by pool staff • Club Membership numbers were down, mainly because of child protection issues and lack of parking. • Noise in the facility generally was also an issue 	<p>ASA advised that the pool should not be fitted with starting blocks due to the pool depth. CASC aware.</p> <p>No further action proposed at this time.</p> <p>Turning T's being fitted on 10th February</p> <p>Staff concerned spoken to – DM to be more proactive if incidents occur. No further incidents have been brought to our attention.</p> <p>Car park due to be completed by May.</p> <p>A White board fitted to poolside to enable training schedule to be listed for swimmers. Also use flip chart.</p>
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