

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON
21ST JUNE, 2016**

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale,
B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, S Cudlip,
Mrs S Forster, R Meir, Miss S Morrison,
K Shaw, B Taylor, K Younger.

Apologies: Councillor B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, R Arthur,
Mrs M R Baird, Mrs H J Cahill, I Paul,

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Nigel Dodds, Strategic Manager for Culture and Sports at Durham County Council to update Members on the potential swimming pool for Seaham and how this may work in practice.

Mr Dodds began by saying that Steve Howell, Head of Culture and Sport sent his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting tonight. Mr Dodds stated that he was going to give an update on where we are at present and what the Council need to consider to be able to move forward and to answer any questions the Town Council may have.

Mr Dodds stated that a couple of years ago Durham County Council did an exercise with Sport England which is called a 'Facilities Planning Model' which looks at sports facilities across County Durham and takes into consideration sports facilities in neighbouring areas. The outcome of that was that across the County there is an oversupply of sports halls and an under supply of swimming pools. The greater shortage of pools is in the north east of the County so strategically there is a demand for a pool but the challenge is financially whether the pool can be afforded. Durham County Council asked Sport England to conduct further work on costings which were base line costings and these can change depending on what kind of approach you want to take, such as income whether you want to drive a commercial pool and not have an inclusive pricing policy or whether you want to operate it as a social asset which would cost more to run.

Mr Dodds gave Members an idea of the costings. The figures produced included a sports hall which Mr Dodds advised probably not to build as he would advise to go with an outdoor pitch. The new school will have a sports hall which he believes will be open for community use.

For a four lane swimming pool with a sports hall and a health and fitness suite capital expenditure would require around £5.8 million with estimated running costs of £393,000 per year.

For a six lane swimming pool with a sports hall and medium size health and fitness suite that would cost in the region of £7.25 million with estimated running costs of £415,000 per year.

For a six lane swimming pool with a learner pool, sports hall and medium health and fitness suite that would cost in the region of £7.897 million with running costs of £437,000.

Mr Dodds stated that there are a number of things that can influence the running costs as swimming pools are quite expensive to run from a utilities and staffing point of view which is where most of the expense comes from. More work would need to be done around how much the schools could use it with regards to programming or would it be purely for community or commercial use. Mr Dodds stated the real 'cash cow' is the Learn to Swim Programmes.

Mr Dodds stated that where Durham County Council stands is that it currently puts £200,000 per year into Seaham Leisure Centre, but would review this if a new facility was planned. The dilemma Durham has is that it forecasts the next four years as being as difficult as the last four years and they need to consider saving £5m over the next five years. He stated that Durham expect within the next 12 months they will be able to have a vision for the next four years but won't be able to answer what that means for Seaham at this moment in time. If the Town Council want to push ahead with this they will need to find within the region of a minimum of £200,000 which equates to an increase in the precept of £20-£40 per household. This is as far as Durham County Council have got and Seaham Town Council now needs to consider what they want to build. The Town Council need to consider whether building a 4 lane swimming pool would suffice for Seaham. Seaham is a visitor attraction but leisure pools will be more expensive.

Mr Dodds said that when Durham County Council look at Seaham they would love to have a pool here. Seaham and Bishop Auckland are both prime places which are high on Durham's list and are our two key areas. Bishop Auckland already has a facility but it is practically falling to pieces and won't last much longer. The element is purely the financial position of Durham County Council and it would be about what financial assistance the Town Council could provide.

At this point Members were invited to ask any questions and the following comments were made:

- (i) A Member said the Town Council would be criticised for not having a leisure pool. Has Sport England given an estimate on a leisure pool?

Mr Dodds said they won't on that type of facility as they focus on sports facilities. Ideally they would want a pool with lanes.

- (ii) A Member asked if Sport England would fund a leisure pool?

Mr Dodds responded by saying last year the answer would have been no if we had placed a bid for funding but moving forward there has been a huge shift about health, wellbeing and physical activity. It's about getting people who don't engage at all to get them to participate in physical activity and leisure pools are probably going to be more attractive to those people.

- (iii) A Member said they can understand a leisure pool bringing in money but about the health and obesity side of things you can't get a lot of power swimming done for the children who need it. Is there a price for a six lane pool with a learner pool with no sports hall?

Mr Dodds replied the sports hall won't change the running costs but it will alter the capital costs for the building which is probably less of an issue than the revenue cost. Mr Dodds advised that the money would be better invested in an outdoor pitch.

- (iv) A Member asked if Mr Dodds had seen a leisure pool that could incorporate an area where power swimming could be done?

Mr Dodds responded to say yes there are a number so you can have this it just depends how far you want to go. Consett have a traditional pool with a water slide running into a separate tank so that could be an option. There are all kinds of shapes and things you can do with a pool but what you need to understand is that the more water you have it increases the cost.

- (v) A Member asked if there was an example of where the Sports Council have funded such a hybrid pool anywhere in the country which we could use as a model?

Mr Dodds said he would ask that question when he next meets with them and went on to say he would be surprised if there wasn't. Durham have not but they did get some money from Sports England for Consett but it was low in proportion to the overall build.

- (vi) A Member stated he was trying to equate the £40 per household increase in precept which is going to be a major stumbling block if you look at the profile of the likely users and compare it against the household profiles. It is going to need a significant support from non-users who are going to subsidise it before it can go forward. Even if we can get the capital money it's going to be the running costs that are the issue.

The Town Clerk stated that by his calculations based on 9500 houses in Seaham it equates to roughly a minimum £21 per household increase to the precept.

- (vii) A Member informed the group of what he had seen in Jersey. They had built a wall and when the tide came in it filled the pool. The member asked if it would be possible to do something similar here?

Mr Dodds noted that the weather here is an issue. Some trials are taking place in the Marina which needs to be tightly supervised and also proper clothing is required due to the temperature of the water. It is always an option to build a tidal pool we would need to speak to an Engineer but it isn't really what people want.

- (viii) A Member reiterated that it is all down to finance and questioned Mr Dodds to see if Durham County Council had looked into the private aspect?

Mr Dodds replied to say that looking towards 2020 Durham County Council will have to redefine what they can afford and have a model for managing those facilities. In this area we have got a private contractor, in the Derwentside area north west of the County we have a Trust charitable organisation and the rest of the County are all in-house delivery. It won't be easy to pull all of those together in one model. Sometimes you can get a private organisation to put an investment in they tend to invest in fitness suites as they make more profit than pools. If we got to this point in three years or so we could put a tender out for the current facilities and put something in there to provide a new facility.

- (ix) A member asked if it would be three years before Durham County Council will look into this as we have been waiting 20 years for a pool?

Mr Dodds said that they were looking into this now but it would be a three to four year plan. We clearly need to do more forecasting to see what the budget will look like. We have already done some planning which is around the £5 million mark. We will need to go through a decision making process to agree what it is going to look like and decide which model we want to deliver it with. A procurement exercise for something that big would take 18 months to run. We are tied by European Laws on what we can and can't do.

At this point the Chair thanked Mr Dodds for his attendance, and he then left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED: the Council note the information now reported.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON, 29TH MARCH, 2016

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated from 6TH, 13TH, & 27TH April, 2016, 11th May 2016 and 8th & 15th June, 2016, and which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.