

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: Central Park Life Centre - Update
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 11 July 2006
Cabinet Member: The Leader
CMT Member: Director for Community Services
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Part: I

Executive Summary:

A report to Cabinet on the 15th March 2005 by the Head of Asset Management detailed the proposals to redevelop the sports and leisure facilities at Central Park. Approval was given by Cabinet to work with partners to deliver the Life Centre vision, to convene a steering group, and to develop a business case. Significant progress has been made and the project is now the subject of a 2-stage, £25 million lottery bid. Resources are now required to progress the design and to prepare for the second stage of the bid. This report provides an update on progress and requests that some capital provision is made to enable the project to move to the next stage. The report suggests a way forward for the project that will satisfy both the lottery requirements and allow time to explore options for future management.

Corporate Plan 2006-2009:

<p>Strategic Objective 1: Improving Health and Well-Being <i>To improve the health, well-being and social care of the people, reduce inequalities and help people at all stages in their life to enjoy the best possible health</i></p> <p>Strategic Objective 8: Stimulating Culture and Leisure Activities <i>To Stimulate participation in cultural pursuits, promoting creativity and extending opportunities for people to experience high quality recreational and leisure activities.</i></p>
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The Life Centre project is the main component of objective 8.1 in the Corporate Plan. "Replace and regenerate cultural and leisure facilities" which has an action "Approval for Central Park Life Centre Project" by May 2006. The project can also be demonstrated to address all of the other Strategic Objectives

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

The addition of a further capital scheme to be funded by capital receipts of £250,000 is likely to result in other schemes funded by capital receipts being delayed, reduced or stopped. This will need to be addressed as part of the ongoing review of the capital programme. In the event the project does not proceed beyond the initial stage these costs of £250,000 would need to be recharged to revenue. No staff are directly affected by this decision. There are no IT implications at this stage. There are no land implications directly arising from this decision. There could be significant resource implications in all areas if the project progresses beyond this stage and a decision to proceed further will be the subject of a future report.

Other Implications: e.g. Section 17 Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management, etc.

There are no other implications directly arising from this decision.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Accept the contents of this report as an update on the project and to consider adopting the Key Principles, Vision, and Objectives of the Life Centre. This decision is needed to demonstrate that the Council is satisfied with the work done so far, and to set the parameters under which the project will move forward.
 2. Make provision in the 2006 / 07 capital programme for £250,000, which together with £250,000 from the Big Lottery Fund will provide £500,000 to fund the design development required by the lottery process and give delegated authority to officers to procure the appropriate consultancy services in accordance with our contract standing orders.
 3. Authorise Officers to seek further grant funding in support of the project.
 4. Note that a further report will be provided to Cabinet once the outcome of the Lottery Bid is known in August recommending a way forward.
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Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

Do nothing

- Facilities would continue to deteriorate.
- The lottery bid would fail with the potential loss of up to £25 million of grant funding.
- Central Park would not achieve its potential to improve the lives of the City's residents.
- The park would remain as a series of fragmented spaces, uses and unrelated buildings, failing to provide the city with a high quality corporate recreational, leisure and sporting focus.

Repair and upgrade existing facilities

- Significant expenditure would be required to repair and upgrade the existing facilities.
- Facilities and structures would not meet the same standards as a new build.
- Management issues of housing facilities in separate buildings would remain.
- Little or no revenue savings could be achieved
- The facilities would be less sustainable in terms of energy consumption.
- The lottery bid could not progress.
- There would be less civic pride in the development.
- Fewer facilities would be offered.
- It would appeal to a much narrower audience than the Life Centre proposal.
- Health improvements and the reduction of health inequalities may not be achieved.
- Central Park would not realise its potential or original intention as a valued and vibrant centre of activity.
- The poor relationships between park spaces and buildings would not be addressed

Background papers:

- Report C 126 04/05 Central Park Strategic Brief
- Life Centre Space Schedule and Costs
- Outline Business Case and May 2006 update
- Living Landmarks lottery bid documentation
- Living Landmarks assessment documentation

Sign off:

Head of Fin	CS F67 001 0c	Head of Leg	SO	Head of HR	N/a	Head of AM	NTS /068 /190 606	Head of IT	N/a	Head of Strat Proc	JFC 117
Originating CMF Member											

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1. Background

1.1 Central Park

Central Park currently exhibits a number of significant weaknesses that undermine its position and the enormous potential it has to contribute to regeneration in the city. This negative image is a result of the poor relationships between park buildings and spaces, where meaningful activity is hidden behind solid walls and planting, where buildings turn their back to one another and surrounding spaces are too large, and featureless to form an exciting and memorable environment. This image is further exasperated by the poor physical condition of many of the park's buildings, particularly the sports facilities located in the park, but also the ancillary buildings such as, changing rooms, public toilets and park entrances. Within the park an underdeveloped footpath system, exclusive uses of land, challenging topography and strong planting have made parts of the park difficult to access and understand. Furthermore the busy highway system that rings the park and strong boundary treatment has made it difficult for the surrounding neighbourhoods to be readily connected.

1.2 Corporate Decisions and Objectives

This regeneration initiative for the park offers a unique opportunity to bring formal and informal leisure and recreation activities, arts, education and environmental activities together on one site. This lottery opportunity has merit in respect of its importance and scale to the city, its prominence as a well connected central venue and the comprehensive nature of the facilities it offers the community from both a citywide perspective and regionally.

This project has been a longstanding priority for the Council and was the subject of Report C 126 04/05 by the Head of Asset Management. This report gained Cabinet approval to work with partners to deliver the Life Centre vision, to convene a steering group and to develop a business case. These tasks have been completed and a new mandate is now sought to move the project to the next stage. This report responds specifically to an action point in the Corporate Plan under Objective 8.1 "Approval for Central Park Life Centre Project". The Life Centre project can be shown to have a direct impact on all eight Strategic Objectives in the Corporate Plan.

1.3 The Life Centre

This will involve regenerating the existing built core of the park to form an assembly of interrelated buildings, spaces and facilities which will become a venue for sporting, active recreational and leisure excellence. The Life Centre will have both citywide and regional significance; it would support wider city objectives to improve the health and well being providing opportunities for art, education and culture.

2. The Life Centre Proposals

2.1 Active Leisure

The existing facilities at the Mayflower Centre and Central Park Pools are outdated and in poor repair. It was estimated in 2003 that basic repairs to the Mayflower Centre would cost £2m and a refurbishment to bring it up to contemporary standards, a further £6m. It would cost almost as much to bring the Mayflower Centre up to a reasonable standard as it would to develop a new dry sport facility. To refurbish the Central Park Pool would cost another £3m. Despite the limitations of the facilities, the City manages to produce some outstanding swimmers and divers. It is considered important to improve on these amenities and, in particular, the diving provision that is the only high board, and by far the best example in the South West region (the nearest comparable facility is Southampton). Plymouth is acknowledged as one of only six world-class training centres in the country. The ice rink at the Pavilions is too small and has an irregular shape making it unsuitable for ice hockey or serious skating. Overall, the current sports facilities do not meet the needs of the community of Plymouth and they will become less relevant and attractive to users in the future. They are now beyond their useful economic life and the financial cost of operating and maintaining them is ultimately unsustainable.

The Life Centre project would provide modern state-of-the-art active leisure facilities in a single complex, delivering economies of scale and a strong synergy with health, arts, education and culture, and the environment. It will also provide a base and much-needed facilities to help the community enjoy the wider park. Active Leisure facilities proposed within the Life Centre include:

- 12-Court sports hall
- 50-metre Olympic standard swimming pool
- Children's pool
- Olympic standard diving pool and dry training accommodation
- Full-sized ice rink
- Fitness suite
- 8-rink indoor bowls
- Aerobics studio
- Sport Injury treatment areas
- Martial arts dojo

2.2 Health

The link between health and active leisure is well established and understood. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) has been involved with the Life Centre project from the outset to maximise the community health benefits. The City suffers from some significant health problems including high levels of childhood obesity and major inequalities between wards. The project will contribute towards improvements to the mental and physical well being of residents and the wider community. The project partnership represents a wide range of interest groups and a diverse audience for the health message. The opportunities for formal and informal activity at Central Park and the Life Centre will provide space for the provision of the following health and wellbeing activities:

- Healthy eating advice
- Exercise referral
- Cardiac rehabilitation
- Health education / well man clinics
- Health checks
- Physical activity
- Sexual health

Overall, the key improvements in health will occur due to increased access to a wider range of attractive opportunities and services. Many of the health benefits will focus on intervention and prevention of health problems. The benefits of regular physical activity are well documented and have been a focus for national government in recent years. This project will make a significant contribution in providing opportunities to raising the health and well being of all users.

2.3 Arts

Dance is another form of active leisure and has recognised health benefits. It therefore has strong links with both sport and health. It is proposed that the Life Centre will provide facilities to form a Regional Centre of Excellence for dance and music. These will include practice studios and a multi-purpose performance venue of around 300 – 500 seats. Discussions have also indicated an opportunity to reinforce this by providing space for a commercial sound recording studio. In addition to the indoor facilities, outdoor performance areas will be provided around the Life Centre to bring activity and life to the park. Planned performing arts spaces include:

- 400 - 600 seat “black box” flexible performance venue
- Two large dance rehearsal studios
- Six music practice rooms
- Recording studio
- One large, and a number of small, outdoor performance venues

Communal social areas within the Life Centre and a sculpture trail in the park will provide opportunities for local visual artists to showcase their work.

2.4 Education & Culture

The Arts provision within the Life Centre provides the bridge between Sport and Education and Culture. It is proposed to replace the rented Peverell Corner Library with a purpose-built space in the Life Centre. This will be approximately twice the floor area of the existing library and provide space for:

- Main lending area
- Homework centre
- Children’s library
- Teen Library

The library also provides an opportunity to provide local access to Council services. Although this library is much larger, the running costs are forecast to be similar through good design and because the Council would no longer pay rent.

2.5 Environment

The Life Centre will be a sustainable building in every sense. It will provide an example of best practice in the selection of materials and energy utilisation. It will also be designed to provide top class facilities at a cost the Council and community can sustain. The proposals for the Life Centre also include enhancements to the wider park. These will include better links to the surrounding communities, enhanced entrances, new and improved paths, improved lighting on existing paths and better signage including environmental interpretation. It is suggested that the Parks service might establish an “operations centre” in the Life Centre to enable it to assist visitors, organise volunteer helpers, stage environmental exhibitions, provide cycle hire etc. Provision has also been made to improve the road junctions, provide a new high quality public transport interchange, and to enhance the existing car park provision. Whilst the overall project would result in no loss of allotment space, the reorganisation of some plots will be necessary to bring about improved access and facilities in Peverell and alternative vehicular access and a new location for the trading hut at the Swarthmore allotment to the south of Central Park.

2.6 Commercial Leisure

Proposals under this category should be seen to compliment and enhance the Life Centre offer. Such developments might include a hotel, multiplex cinema, ten-pin bowling, leisure related retail and healthy A3 (refreshment) retailing.

2.7 Planning - Area Action Plan and the Local Development Framework

Officers from the Planning Department are working closely with the Life Centre team. All development proposals will go into, and be tested through, the Area Action Plan for Central park as part of the Local Development Framework process.

3. Project Update

3.1 Structure

The project has a project Steering Group, consisting of senior personnel from all of the principal partners and is Chaired by the Leader of the Council. The current partner organisations are: PCC, the University, PAFC, the PCT, Marjon, Plymouth Sports Forum and Sport England. It has a Project Manager and the Steering Group receives monthly progress reports, which include an updated programme, contact details, building schedule and a risk log.

3.2 Key Principles

Early in the project a number of key principles were established. These are listed below:

- Exciting, vibrant destination, wow factor

- Diverse customer base
- Complementary uses
- Meet Government agendas
- Meet Agency agendas
- Meet PCC corporate agendas
- Meet Partners' agendas
- Satisfy lottery funders
- Start from what we want and need - not budget driven

3.3 Vision

Following further development of the project and consultation with stakeholders and partners the following vision was agreed:

‘To create an outstanding venue of regional and national significance for active recreation, health, art, education culture and the environment, which will provide state of the art facilities for the people of Plymouth and the sub region of Devon and Cornwall’.

3.4 Objectives

The vision is broken down into the following objectives:

- Create an outstanding venue of regional and national significance for sport, active recreation, health, art, education and culture, and the environment
- Create a destination attraction that is accessible, affordable, innovative and of high quality
- Make a major contribution to the health and wellbeing of the city
- Provide active recreation, educational and cultural facilities and venues of regional significance that create vitality and enrich the environment and surrounding communities
- Create an innovative and inspirational design to provide positive and valued facilities
- Develop the parks natural and designed assets to enrich the experience and understanding of the park for the community
- Strengthen partnerships with stakeholders and the community.

This vision and objectives have informed the development of the project and its outcomes so far.

RECOMMENDATION 1: It is recommended that Cabinet approve the outline proposals for the Life Centre and adopt the Key Principles, Vision and Objectives shown above.

This decision is needed to demonstrate that the Council is satisfied with the project so far, and provides parameters for further development.

3.5 Building Costs

The costs of development, including building all the facilities, the park, infrastructure and transport enhancements, professional fees, a 15% contingency, and inflation to mid point in the build, are estimated at £54 million. Construction could potentially start in 2008/9 and be completed by 2010/11. Options for funding the project are being considered as part of the ongoing planning for the scheme.

3.6 The Lottery Bid

3.6.1 Opportunity

In December 2005, an opportunity arose to submit a bid of up to £25 million to the Big Lottery Fund's "Living Landmarks" programme. A delegated decision was taken to proceed, and a bid successfully submitted by the deadline. Sport England has since commented that the project is an exemplar of the concept of a Regional Hub Centre for Sport and the Arts and for the promotion of inter-agency working. Expectations are high that it will meet a number of Government agendas and priorities.

3.6.2 Timetable

The timetable for project development is at present wholly dictated by the lottery bidding process. This is in two stages and the result of the stage one assessments will be announced in mid-August 2006. If the Life Centre is successful it will be eligible for a non-returnable grant of up to £250,000 to help with development funding. The deadline for stage two submissions is May 2007 and the project will be expected to have submitted a planning application by this time. These deadlines are tight, and due to the size of the project, the design costs are likely to be much higher than the grant.

3.6.3 Design Development Costs

A great deal of work has to be completed to submit the stage 2 bid including an environmental impact assessment, a detailed business case, a project execution plan, a feasibility study, a risk register and management plan, seeking planning approval, a procurement strategy, a stakeholder management plan, a detailed cost plan, a funding schedule and a project programme. To keep costs down, officers will complete as many of these tasks as possible in-house but the Council does not have the resources or the expertise to complete all of the works within the time allowed. External consultants will need to be engaged to help complete much of the work.

RECOMMENDATION 2: It is recommended that a decision be taken to make provision in the 2006 / 07 capital programme for £250,000, which together with £250,000 from the Big Lottery Fund will provide £500,000 to fund the design development required by the lottery process and give delegated authority to officers to procure the appropriate consultancy services in accordance with our contract standing orders.

This decision is needed to cover the costs of moving the project forward, and to submit a stage two Lottery bid. This budget will cover design and all other works.

RECOMMENDATION 3: It is recommended that a decision be taken to authorise Officers to seek further grant funding in support of the project.

This decision is needed to help to secure funding to support the project.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Note that a further report will be provided to Cabinet once the outcome of the Lottery Bid is known in August recommending a way forward.

4. Next Steps

An OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) Notice will be placed as soon as possible following Cabinet, to procure the services of an Architect and other design consultants. This will be required to progress the design and provide other services required to submit the Big Lottery Fund Stage Two application by May 2007. The Audit Commission has issued guidance in June 2006 regarding the management of sport and recreation facilities. In the light of this, the Head of Community Leisure will be preparing a report setting out options for the future operation of leisure services in the City and the outcome of this will inform the eventual procurement strategy for the Life Centre. A twin-track approach enables the design work to be progressed sufficiently to satisfy the BLF, while at the same time providing time to consider development and operating options. Once a contractor is procured, the design team can be then novated across under a “Design and Build” contract. It will also provide time to review the scope of the whole project and to develop options and alternatives, should the bid prove unsuccessful.

A representative timeline for this is indicated below:

	2006						2007											
	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
TRACK ONE	Issue OJEU	BLF Stage One Result - £250K Devt Funding	Shortlist and Select Consultants		Progress Design and Prepare BLF Stage Two Lottery Bid				BLF Stage Two Deadline	Refine Project Documentation				BLF Stage Two Result - £25M Award	Develop Scheme Depending on Award Result >>>>>			
TRACK TWO	Prepare Options Paper for Leisure Operations		Cabinet Decision		Prepare and Issue OJEU	Shortlist and Select Contractor				Novate Design team	Develop Design Options							

5. Summary

Most cities redevelop their libraries and leisure, sports and arts facilities in a piecemeal way and very few have a chance to join these together in a meaningful way. Even less have a location like Central Park at its heart. Plymouth has a unique opportunity to replace a whole range of its ageing and inadequate facilities in a single complex and, together with the renaissance of the park, create something very special.

With the approach of the Olympics, this lottery bid presents possibly the last opportunity to secure significant grant funding for many years. Early indications are that the project is a strong contender and has been described as an “exemplar”. The Central Park Life Centre is only remaining Plymouth bid in the “Living Landmarks” programme.

The Life Centre will change the lives of the people of Plymouth for the better for many years to come. It will put Plymouth on the world sports map and attract new businesses and tourism to the City. The current project programme indicates that the Life Centre could be completed by 2010, just in time to attract Olympic training camps to the City.

Significant progress has been made since Cabinet last considered this project. It is now at a stage where important decisions have to be made and where further development will require funding. It has been demonstrated that the project is needed, has wide support, is sustainable, and is both deliverable and can be shown to be affordable.

Cabinet is asked to support the recommendations in this report.

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