

Date of Meeting 9th April 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Cranbrook Leisure Centre

Report summary:

A community consultation carried out in late 2023 identified that the community of Cranbrook views the delivery of a leisure centre with swimming pool as its top priority for the delivery of community facilities. The council is progressing with production of a masterplan for the town centre, which will include identifying locations for key facilities, including a leisure centre.

To keep momentum and put the council in the best possible position to progress with delivery of a leisure centre and to seek external funding toward it, it is recommended that a project and project team is established for a leisure centre in Cranbrook. This will enable work to be done to establish matters such as a specification, input into a location in the town centre and look at costs and avenues for external funding.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That the Forum notes the outcome of the Cranbrook town centre community consultation and the progression of the Cranbrook town centre masterplan.
2. That the Forum notes the establishment of a project for a Cranbrook Leisure Centre.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable progress to be made on the delivery of a leisure centre for Cranbrook in order to provide the services and facilities necessary to support the growing town and its community.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Any new Leisure Centre needs to be designed to be accessible for all people and groups, careful consideration of accessibility and the scope and range of services and facilities provided will need to be made. A full equalities impact assessment will be completed as part of the Leisure Centre project initiation.

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Low Risk; At this stage the overall risk is considered to be low as there is no commitment to capital expenditure.

Links to background information [Agenda for Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum \(formerly LED Monitoring Forum\) on Tuesday, 19th September, 2023, 10.00 am - East Devon](#)
[Agenda for Strategic Planning Committee on Tuesday, 13th February, 2024, 10.00 am - East Devon](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Public Consultation

- In October and November 2023, the council undertook a public consultation in respect of the land in Cranbrook town centre that is or will end up in public sector ownership (Cranbrook Town Council, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council) on parcels TC2, TC4b, c, d and e as shown on the plan below.



2. The consultation comprised of surveys hosted on Commonplace, drop-in sessions for the public, interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups and workshop sessions. In order to publicise the consultation, a leaflet was delivered to all properties and social media was used to engage with people.
3. Testament to the strong community desire to see the town have extra services and facilities, engagement in the consultation was exceptionally good and residents were enthusiastic and want to be involved. Three surveys were available for completion, the first short survey saw 1,397 responses, with 292 to the more detailed survey and 50 responses to a business survey. A copy of the final report from Ash Futures is included as Appendix 1.
4. Within the first survey, residents were asked to rank the importance of the delivery of a number of public sector facilities. The chart below shows the number of respondents who ranked each facility either first or second. As can be seen, a leisure centre with pool came out as the top priority, followed closely by a health and wellbeing centre. In discussions at the face-to-face consultation events, most people understood that a swimming pool will be expensive to deliver but a leisure centre was considered a must have.

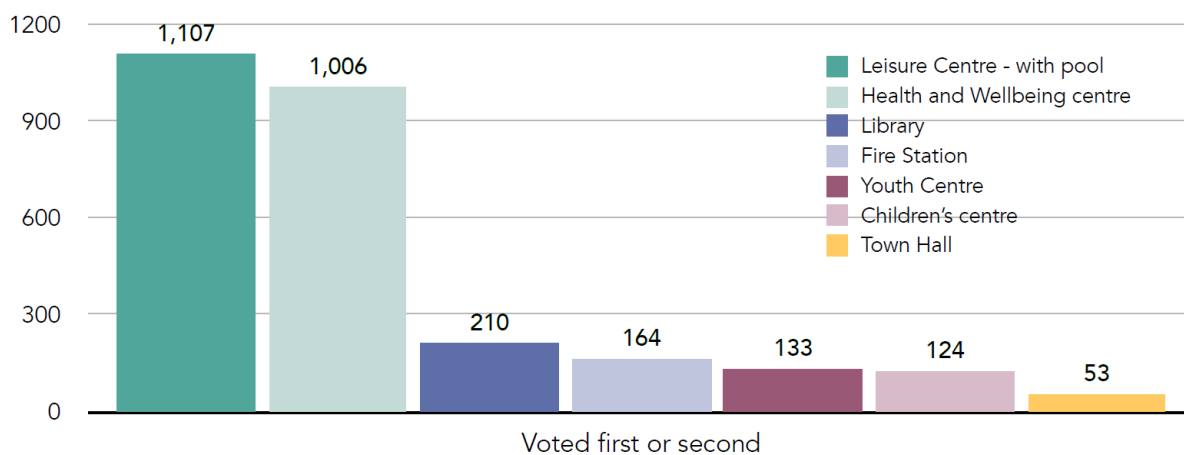


Figure 2 – Bar chart showing how important respondents viewed the delivery of specific facilities.

Town Centre Masterplan

5. In February 2024 the council's Strategic Planning Committee endorsed the production of a masterplan for the town centre. This work has now begun, with a timetable that looks to have a completed masterplan produced by the end of August 2024. The project is being led by the council as Local Planning Authority rather than as land owner.
6. The masterplan will seek to set out where the main uses will be located and high-level principles for the form and feel of the town centre. A key element of this exercise will be to establish if any of the facilities can be co-located or perhaps be developed in a campus type approach. Officers have begun to explore this with stakeholders.
7. Of particular relevance to a leisure centre is the relationship with the delivery of a health and wellbeing centre as co-location could bring about tangible health benefits for resident as well as capital construction cost savings. However, as explained in the previous report to this Forum, co-location also brings about challenges particularly with timing of delivery as neither facility is yet fully funded and also with governance and management once operational as there will be multiple users. It may be better to look at a campus approach, where the two are sited close to one another, in order to realise as many benefits as possible.
8. Bringing forward the development of a leisure centre will drive increased footfall in the town centre and create the potential for linked trips. As such it is likely to act as a catalyst to accelerate the delivery of further facilities in the town centre. This aligns with the objectives of the Enterprise Zone designation.

Leisure Centre

9. The Council's Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy identifies the delivery of a Leisure Centre at Cranbrook as being a priority one action, with an indicative specification given as:
 - a. 6 lane 25m swimming pool
 - b. Health and fitness suite
 - c. 4 court sports hall
 - d. 2 studios
10. Establishing a final specification will require consideration to be given not only to the viability of delivering a swimming pool but in particular to if a sports hall is included as it a large space with a high ceiling and no windows. To include a sports hall will be challenging to incorporate into the town centre without detrimentally impacting upon the public realm unless it is explored early on in the masterplan exercise. There is also the scope for a swimming pool to be heated utilising a supply of low carbon heat from the town's district heating network.
11. It is important that the council maintains an active role in the production of the town centre masterplan from the perspective of the future development of a leisure centre. We must therefore ensure that there is appropriate representation in any stakeholder discussions to explore co-location of facilities and consideration of constraints and opportunities.
12. As set out in the previous report to the Forum the expansion of Cranbrook is expected to provide a capital contribution toward the delivery of a leisure centre, although at a total of around £4.5m in today's money there will be a substantial funding gap. These monies will also be paid in phases unless the council is able to work with the developers to secure forward funding. At the time of writing none of the expansion area planning applications have yet been determined, although resolutions to approve exist for the majority of the allocated land.
13. Having regard to the high priority that residents give to the delivery of a leisure centre and the ongoing masterplan production, it is considered imperative for progress to be made on a leisure centre proposal sooner rather than later. To progress the project will also leave us in a better position to bid for external grant funding as 'shovel ready' schemes are often viewed more favourably for funding awards.
14. For these reasons officers are therefore looking to establish a project and project team for the Leisure Centre. At this stage there is no separate request for revenue funding made as the project team will initially be taken forward with existing staff resources and budget, including additional resources that were considered at the meeting of the Cabinet on 27 March 2024 in respect of the options appraisal of the Leisure & Built Facilities Strategy.

Financial implications:

The recommendations in the report at this stage have no direct financial implications although the report highlights a future funding gap that needs to be addressed if a leisure centre is to be provided in Cranbrook.

Legal implications:

There is no direct comment to be made in relation to this report, any individual issues will need to be considered as they arise in the future.