

Report to: Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum

Date of Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



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## Cranbrook Leisure Centre

### Report summary:

At the request of the Leisure Delivery Forum in January 2025, an update on Cranbrook Leisure Centre project was requested.

A project team is now in place to put the council in the best possible position to progress with delivery, for a leisure centre in Cranbrook. This enabled work to begin to establish core project principles and matters such as an outline business case, 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:

That the Forum notes the progress being made by the Cranbrook Leisure Centre Project Team and highlight any areas that warrant further discussion.

### 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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- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy and Assets
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ 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

Previous update to the Forum –

[Agenda for Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum on Tuesday, 9th April, 2024, 10.00 am - East Devon](#)

Town Centre Masterplan-

[Agenda for Strategic Planning Committee on Tuesday, 29th October, 2024, 9.00 am - East Devon](#)

Final Masterplan document - [Cranbrook Town Centre Masterplan - East Devon](#)

## Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

## 1.0 Town Centre Masterplan

- 1.1 In October 2024 the council's Strategic Planning Committee endorsed a masterplan for the town centre. The masterplan sets out where the main uses will be located and high-level principles for the form and feel of the town centre. The location for these key uses is shown on figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Indicative masterplan layout for the town centre

- 1.2 As can be seen in figure 1, the chosen location for the leisure facility is at the southern end of the town centre, north of Badger Way. This site was chosen due to its relatively flat nature, unlike other town centre parcels of land. It is also part of the site that is already owned freehold by the council. The site is large enough to accommodate a leisure centre with swimming pool (but not include a sports hall).

- 1.3 The chosen site seeks to locate the health and wellbeing centre adjacent to the leisure facility. This campus-based approach rather than a fully integrated co-location approach is being taken forward to recognise the likely difference in delivery timescales of the two projects, together with the complication of asset management.
- 1.4 It should be noted that NHS Devon are currently progressing work on a business case for the health facility and council officers and members are involved in that project. In addition, Devon County Council wish to explore opportunities with both the council and the NHS regarding the integration of space within one or both of the buildings to operate library and youth services and a family hub. At the time of writing, these discussions have not yet begun.
- 1.5 In addition to the Cranbrook Plan DPD identifying a leisure centre as being a key facility in Cranbrook, the Council's Leisure and Built Facilities Strategy was approved in October 2022 and also contains within it, a recommendation for a leisure centre in the town, to include a 6 lane, 25m swimming pool, health and fitness studio, 4 court sports hall and 2 studios as a minimum. As already alluded to, with the proposed allocation of land in the new Local Plan for a second new community of up to 10,000 homes, it will be appropriate to ascertain if the facilities requirements change. It should also be noted that the final facilities mix is not expected to include a 4-court sports hall.

## **2.0 Project Team**

- 2.1 A project team has been established comprising officers from within the Place directorate and Cllr Olive as the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning. Terms of Reference have been established that include a clear focus on outcomes and drafting necessary project documentation such as a project plan and risk register.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Group is:
- To ensure that Cabinet can take a decision in relation to the development of a new Leisure Centre in Cranbrook that is informed by the best possible assessment of the available options and the associated benefits and costs.
- 2.3 The objectives of the Group are to:
- To identify and explore all options for a new Leisure Centre in Cranbrook
  - To identify the stages of work and reporting process to achieve the stated purpose
  - To complete an outline business plan that will inform the case for a new Leisure Facility.
  - To develop a clear funding strategy to cover the capital costs for a new facility.
  - To develop a clear operating model to inform the revenue position of providing the services.
  - To develop a clear approach to the delivery of the scheme including procurement of necessary consultancy services and contractors for each stage of the project including design and build elements.
  - To consider management arrangements to operate and maintain the facility that will also inform the options appraisal for the Leisure Management of the leisure facilities within East Devon.
  - To develop documentation to support EDDC's chosen way forward which contributes to the delivery of EDDC's adopted Leisure Strategy and outcomes of the Leisure Review.
  - Ensure that all relevant information is assessed to inform reporting to Members.
  - Develop a strategic approach to deliver the Members' chosen way forward.
- 2.4 The most immediate steps within multiple work streams include further work to develop an accommodation schedule to include consideration of the impact of the proposed second new community, high level cost estimates from a Quantity Surveyor, business planning and funding strategy and initial campus design work. These steps will contribute towards the longer term objectives set out above.

- 2.5 Given the very clear impetus from the NHS to progress work on the health facility, the leisure centre project is looking to develop an initial business case in a timeframe that is co-terminus with that of the NHS project – end June 2025. This timescale is ambitious and will not see the production of a fully completed business case, however it is important to try and progress alongside the health facility due to the proposed campus-based approach to delivery.
- 3.0 Funding**
- 3.1 To complete the workstreams set out in paragraph 2.4 within the timescale will necessitate the support of external consultants and expertise. The council has a One Public Estate programme aimed at bringing together public sector services as part of health and leisure facilities at Cranbrook.
- 3.2 Approximately £81,000 remains in that programme, which is intended as a revenue contribution towards reaching RIBA stage 3 for each project (planning application submission). Up to £39,500 (including £5,500 contingency) of this money has been committed toward the current NHS-led health facility project, leaving up to £46,000 toward the leisure project and commissioning of design work for a campus layout for the two facilities. In addition to these monies, there are existing funds available from the council's Enterprise Zone programme and that have been allocated to projects within Cranbrook Town Centre.
- 3.3 As set out in previous reports 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 £4.75m 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.
- 3.4 The first two outline planning applications for the expansion of Cranbrook have been approved and both secure some funding for the pooled category 4 contributions (the infrastructure category that both the leisure centre and health and wellbeing project fall under). There are resolutions to approve a further three outline planning applications and live applications for approximately 550 homes at the Grange expansion area. Together, these applications make up the vast majority of the allocated expansion area land.
- 3.5 In addition to the s106 monies, together with Exeter City Council, the council has Sport England Place Partnership status. Being part of this programme provides the opportunity for capital funding bids that are exclusive to Place Partners. Bids for external grant funding are often most likely to be successful if a project is 'shovel ready'; this further enhances the imperative nature of progressing the leisure centre project.

#### **4.0 Leisure Delivery Review**

- 4.1 On a parallel path, a Leisure Officer Working Group has also been established to help inform the Leisure Management options appraisal being carried out and explore the best possible arrangements for the future.
- 4.2 A soft market testing exercise as part of the Leisure Review included some questions specifically relating to Cranbrook. As well as providing real insight into the state of the Leisure Contract Market (particularly in the Southwest region), the findings showed real interest from operators from building through to managing the new leisure centre. A separate report on the Leisure Review is on the Agenda under Part B.

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#### **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:**

As this is an update report only, there are no substantive legal issues directly arising.