



Report to: Cabinet, 17th January 2017

Report of: Councillor Joy Squires, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Subject: SANSOME WALK SWIMMING POOL AND LEISURE CENTRE – KEY DECISION

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 To approve the demolition of Sansome Walk Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre;**
- 1.2 To delegate to the S.151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources authority to approve financing for the demolition works, to include site security, ground condition surveys and applications for all relevant planning and environmental consents; and**
- 1.3 To ask officers to prepare an options appraisal for the development of the site, particularly housing, for which the site is allocated in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), and to report back their findings to a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre site at Sansome Walk (see appendix 1) is owned by Worcester City Council and comprises approx. 2.1 acres (0.85 hcts). The centre comprises 3 swimming pools, a running and weights gym, 3 exercise areas and some 85 car parking spaces. The site is currently the subject of a lease to the leisure centre operator, Freedom Leisure.
- 2.2 The site is and will become surplus to the Council's requirements following construction of a replacement swimming pool at Perdiswell. The new swimming pool is due to open in early 2017. The lease to Freedom Leisure will be surrendered following the opening of the new swimming pool at Perdiswell.
- 2.3 It is necessary for the Council to consider the long-term use of Sansome Walk, however, the Council also needs to ensure that the site is safe and secure in the short to medium term.

3. Demolition of building on health and safety grounds

- 3.1 The Council needs to demolish the swimming pool and leisure centre as there is a significant health and safety risk to the Council once this site becomes vacant.
- 3.2 A vacant site at Sansome Walk is a likely to target for a number of issues that pose a high health and safety risk to the Council, including, vandalism, theft and fire. The site will also present a significant health and safety risk to anyone who enters on the

site and the Council has a duty of care as the owner of the building to ensure that the site does not present a risk to anyone entering the site, including trespassers. In particular a vacant building will present risks of falls from height, and slip and trip hazards.

- 3.3 Site security, involving physical works and patrols which will incur significant cost, can mitigate but not satisfactorily reduce these risks.
- 3.4 Further work is required by officers to obtain the relevant environmental and planning consents to demolish the buildings on the site. There will need to be ground investigation works carried out to determine the extent of any land contamination. Asbestos investigations and removal works may be required as part of the demolition process.
- 3.5 Given the range of potential works that need to be undertaken and the significant likelihood of the building being the subject of targeted vandalism, the Council needs to demolish the buildings in the short-term on health and safety grounds.

4. Options Appraisal

- 4.1 The site is allocated in the SWDP for housing, a use which is also support by the new City Plan.
- 4.2 As part of an appraisal of future delivery options, the Council will need to consider whether to realise a capital receipt from the disposal of the site or whether there is also the potential to generate a revenue stream.
- 4.3 A "Void Management Plan" is being put in place to ensure the empty site is secure and safe when vacated by Freedom Leisure. This will be in place until either preliminary demolition by the Council or redevelopment after an options appraisal.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 As noted above, the site presents a significant health and safety risk and therefore it is not considered viable to simply erect a hoarding around the site and allow the building to remain in situ until such time that the site is developed.
- 5.2 A straight disposal of the site at this stage was rejected as the Council will wish to maximise the amenity value of the site including the level of affordable housing.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

The financing of the demolition and short term security and management of the site will be made through the use of reserves or through prudential short-term borrowing. Initial appraisal work indicates that any sum spent on demolition and security is likely to be recovered from a capital receipt for the sale of the site and/or from a future revenue income stream. There is an assumption in the City's financial plan that £500k from this site would be generated for future capital programmes.

6.2 Legal and Governance Implications

None directly arising from this report.

6.3 Risk Implications

As outlined in section 3 of this report.

6.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The future options for the site will take into consideration the objectives of the City plan, in particular Theme 1 Connected - Communities and Theme 5 – Sustaining and Improving our Assets.

6.5 Equality Implications

None directly arising from this report

6.6 Human Resources Implications

None directly arising from this report.

6.7 Health and Safety Implications

The demolition of the site will significantly reduce any health and safety risks to the Council from the vacant site in the short term.

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Background Papers: None