

Motion:

To initiate a consultation process with local schools to gather their feedback on the options for the changing rooms in the proposed refurbishment of Ware Lido.

Proposed by: Cllr Kirsty Taylor-Moran

Date of Council Meeting: 17th June 2024

Rationale:

- 1. Involvement of Schools:** Local schools are users of the Lido facilities. At present, two schools book pupil swimming lessons at the Lido. Their input is essential to ensure that the refurbishment meets the needs and expectations of students and staff who regularly use the pool for educational and recreational purposes. It is hoped that in future, more of Ware's school children will use the facilities and we ought to encourage use of this wonderful community asset. It would be very unfortunate if, through inadequate consultation, the council made design choices in the planning of the project that would exclude schools from using the Lido in future.
- 2. Safeguarding Concerns:** Ensuring the safety and well-being of children is a top priority. Consulting with schools will help us address any safeguarding concerns related to the design and functionality of the changing rooms. This step will ensure that the refurbished facilities provide a safe and secure environment for all users. Having sought guidance from the Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding, correspondence has been received from the interim Director for Children's Services. We must have due regard for this advice, which states the "ideal" set up would be sole use of Lido facilities with single-sex changing rooms, and it is noted that the decision on safeguarding risk assessment lies with the individual schools. Consulting with schools will give the Headteachers the opportunity to offer input into the design so that it will meet any safeguarding requirements. Currently, one school has insisted on the children using the single-sex changing rooms, rather than the family changing room available, citing safeguarding reasons. The Lido is not presently open to the general public when school lessons are taking place.
- 3. Responsible Governance:** Engaging with schools directly in this consultation process demonstrates the Council's commitment to acting transparently and responsibly. It highlights our dedication to considering the views and needs of key stakeholders in our community and to making informed decisions based on comprehensive feedback. Whilst the number of responses we received through the formal public consultation was encouraging, it was a very small proportion of our town's population that responded and only individuals were able to put forward personal views in this process. Schools have not yet had the opportunity to present their views as a body. If we cannot demonstrate we have followed a transparent and

democratic process, namely in seeking sufficient feedback from our community, we are at risk of imminent judicial review.

Proposed Actions:

4. The Council will distribute a detailed school-specific, neutrally-worded and appropriately detailed, questionnaire to all local schools, seeking feedback on the various design options and specific requirements for the changing rooms in the proposed Lido refurbishment.
5. A consultation meeting will be organised with representatives from local schools, including headteachers, safeguarding leads, physical education staff, and student representatives, to discuss their feedback and any concerns in detail.
6. The Council will compile the feedback received from the schools for consideration by the Lido Working Group. The report summarising the consultation findings and how they might be addressed in the refurbishment plans will be presented at a future Council meeting and made publicly available to ensure transparency.