



## NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Cabinet**  
**8 May 2024**

### **Report of Director of Education, Leisure & Lifelong learning**

#### **Matter For Decision.**

#### **Wards Affected:**

Pontardawe, Trebanos, Alltwen, Rhos, Godre'r Graig, Cwmllynfell & Ystalyfera, Gwaen-Cae-Gurwen

#### **Report Title**

Pontardawe Swimming Pool

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

To provide an overview to members on the current condition of Pontardawe Swimming Pool and to agree the planned closure of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool facility at the end of August 2024.

To agree next steps, in terms of a feasibility report into a future facility mix, location and external funding options for a replacement pool.

#### **Executive summary:**

Pontardawe Swimming Pool is in a very poor state of repair and having had the life extended by emergency propping up works in 2022/23, further deterioration has taken place, and the building is now life expired.

To ensure public and staff safety a planned closure at the end of August 2024 is proposed, giving as much time as possible to complete the school year and summer programming and for changes to the Neath Leisure Centre programme to be made to accommodate displaced users at Pontardawe Swimming Pool.

It is recommended that funding be allocated for a feasibility study into the future mix of facilities, an appropriate location and potential external funding options, and that such a study is undertaken so the Council is well prepared to respond quickly to future grant funding opportunities.

## **Background:**

Pontardawe Swimming Pool is a standalone pool first opened in 1974. It is of single storey reinforced concrete construction and houses two reinforced concrete swimming pools, changing rooms, and a reception area. The basement area houses the pool plant equipment. The building envelope is a mix of metal sheet steel cladding, glazing and brick construction. The facility has a 6 lane, 25m main pool and a 12m x 7m learner pool. The main pool is built to competition specification and has spectator seating.

The Council has freehold ownership of Pontardawe Swimming Pool with Celtic Leisure operating the facility pursuant to a contract and lease, along with three other public pools at Aberavon Leisure Centre, Neath Leisure Centre and Vale of Neath Leisure Centre.

In August 2022, the Council appointed ARUP to undertake a review of Pontardawe Swimming Pool and advise on the future longevity of the structural frame. The final report was issued in November 2022 and was very clear that even with urgent remedial works and the propping scheme, the building life would only be extended by a period of up to two years.

In 2022/23 a significant propping up scheme was implemented in the basement areas to bring the building back into safe public use for a temporary period. Regular inspections continue to monitor the condition very closely.

However, in January 2024 further spoiling of the reinforced concrete was noted and precautionary measures were implemented to ensure the safety of the staff entering the basement area.

With the building condition continuing to decline and a two-year timescale advised by ARUP in November 2022, a full closure at the end of August 2024 is recommended. A planned closure at the end of August 2024 will allow enough time to redeploy staff and communicate with the various user groups, making alternative arrangements wherever possible. However, with ongoing regular inspections, it is still possible there will need to be an urgent closure and this will be kept under close review during the next few months.

Repairing the existing building will be economically unviable, because of depth of the chloride contamination in the concrete. Additionally, the propping works that took place to extend the building life in 22/23 cannot be removed safely to enable access and therefore there is no other viable option than to demolish the building. The mechanical and electrical services throughout the facility have also reached end of life.

## **Replacement Facility**

The next steps would be to agree a feasibility study on a future site and potential funding for a replacement facility. The feasibility study would look at all potential options with

technical and architectural input, financial modelling, and a business plan. It would also seek to identify funding options and would cost in the region of £30k. At this early stage it is estimated the cost of a new facility would be in the region of £10-12m, but no funding is currently identified. The feasibility study will investigate funding options.

### Demolition

Given the building is life expired, once the pool is closed it will be necessary to secure the property and then demolish it. Clearly by demolishing the building as soon as possible after the facility closure the risk to the public and staff is removed, and ongoing management costs would be avoided. Demolition is estimated to be circa £500k and a further £50k for boarding up and preventing access. Ongoing costs of managing the site will be in the region of £25k per year if demolition is not commenced.

### Programming

The pool currently caters for the following on a weekly basis:

- Swimming lessons for ten local schools,
- Circa 715 children attending public swimming lessons,
- 15.5 hours weekly for the swimming club,
- 4 hours per week of Hydrotherapy,
- Aqua aerobics classes,
- Approx. 43 hours per week of casual / lane swimming,
- Private club & party bookings.

The majority of swimming lessons, and club use can be accommodated at Neath Leisure centre, albeit at different times to the current arrangements.

Some of the current Pontardawe Swimming Pool school usage can be accommodated at Neath Leisure Centre, but not all and alternative provision would need to be negotiated with the nearest out of area facility to enable continued operation. It should also be noted that by Neath Leisure Centre accommodating more displaced swimming from Pontardawe Swimming Pool the public swimming time will be reduced.

It is anticipated some of the users will move to alternative leisure sites at Ystradgynlais and Morriston and discussions will commence with neighbouring authorities as part of the planning arrangements.

### Further Discussions

Subject to approval of this report, officers will commence discussions with the clubs and other users to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Further dialogue will also take place with Pontardawe Town Council and communications will be prepared to ensure local residents are clear about the reasons for closure.

Communications

A detailed communications plan is in place to ensure facility users and local stakeholders are kept up to date with the proposed changes and the options they will have.

**Financial Impacts:**

The current subsidy for the Pontardawe Pool is £389k per year and is broken down as follows:

<b>Pontardawe Swimming Pool 23/24 Forecast</b>	
	£000
Income	384
Total Employee Costs	-451
Total Premises Costs	-299
Total Supplies & Services	-11
Total Support Services	-12
Period Surplus/(Deficit)	-389

It is anticipated some of the income and employee costs will be transferred to other sites while the premises, support and supplies costs will largely be saved.

However, whilst capacity can be provided at Neath Leisure Centre to accommodate much of the current programme we would anticipate a reduced demand, mainly because of the travel time and therefore a sensitivity allowance will need to be factored into the income models. A detailed financial model now needs to be completed to identify the costs and savings for the closure and whether this will result in a reduced subsidy being provided by the Council.

Demolition is estimated to be in the region of circa £500k and boarding up and making safe in region of £50k. These costs will need to be funded over two financial years from the premises costs savings arising as a result of the closure of the facility. Should the building not be demolished the ongoing management costs of security, insurance and utilities would be in the region of £25k per year which would need to be funded from ongoing revenue.

The feasibility costs of approximately £30k would be incorporated into the revenue budget model being prepared to identify the costs and savings for the closure. It is anticipated a new swimming pool facility of similar size to the current facility would cost between £10m & £12m.

There is no allowance within the medium-term financial plan, or any identified third-party funding or grants. Preliminary discussions have taken place with representatives from Welsh Government about a potential grant funding contribution and these will be taken forward when the 'Place Plan' for Pontardawe town centre is brought forward later this year. The feasibility study will enable any future scheme to be developed in order to respond quickly to any future funding streams from either Welsh or UK Governments. In the meantime, officers will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to identify appropriate capital funding as and when opportunities arise.

Celtic Leisure are currently contracted to manage the Pontardawe Swimming Pool and it is anticipated the management of the building will remain with them for the short term prior to demolition, to ensure the benefit of business rate relief is maximised.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

An integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (no1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. This is attached as Appendix A to this report.

The IIA concludes that the proposal to close Pontardawe Swimming pool could adversely affect the long-term health opportunities for local residents in the Swansea Valley.

The IIA has also identified negative impacts on age and sex with older users more prevalent and a ratio of approximately 2:1 female to male users across most age ranges.

Alternative arrangements will be made for the majority of the users at Neath Leisure Centre but this will create extra travel time for some and may be less attractive. However over 30% of users are travelling past other pools to access Pontardawe currently so it may actually result in a reduction in travelling for some.

There is the opportunity to seek a new facility that meets modern user needs, be energy efficient and incorporate health and wellbeing / community needs.

### **Valleys Communities Impacts:**

The closure of the pool will negatively impact the local population, particularly in terms of health and wellbeing. Whilst alternative arrangements will be made at other pools to accommodate the users it will be further to travel and therefore harder to access for some local residents.

### **Workforce Impacts:**

Celtic Leisure are carrying a number of vacancies across all their sites, and it is anticipated that staff will be redeployed, avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

### **Legal Impacts:**

The responsibility for maintenance of the pool structures is set out in the lease between the Council and Celtic Leisure dated 14<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and the decision to address the health and safety matters analysed in the ARUP report is a matter for determination between the Council and Celtic Leisure jointly in order that statutory duties under the Health and Safety Act 1974 may be fulfilled.

Responsibility for meeting the costs of any maintenance works that have been undertaken fall to the Council under the terms of the aforesaid lease.

### **Risk Management Impacts:**

There are several risks relating to this decision, most notable public safety and ensuring health and safety legal obligations are met. A planned closure is only possible if the structure does not deteriorate further in the meantime. If that happens officers will have no other option but to close the site immediately. Beyond the public safety concerns there are a number of risks including public health outcomes for local residents and financial pressure for the Council. These are all outlined elsewhere in this report and in the integrated impact assessment.

### **Consultation:**

This decision must be taken on the grounds of public safety. Extended engagement with existing service users will take place as part of the process to accommodate as much as possible at other NPT sites. Celtic Leisure are aware of the potential closure and will be instrumental in managing the staff communications and programming changes at Neath Leisure Centre.

## **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that having due regard to the integrated impact assessment that members:

- Note the current status of Pontardawe Swimming Pool and the reasoning for action to be taken on the grounds of health and safety obligations on the part of the Council;
- Approve a planned closure of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool by the end of August 2024 subject to any closure that is required in the shorter term to meet health and safety obligations;
- Grant delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Wellbeing to embark on a programme of engagement with service users and neighbouring authorities to explore avenues of supporting ongoing access to swimming facilities;
- Grant delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Tourism, Heritage and Culture in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Wellbeing to commission a feasibility study to investigate options for a future site and potential funding for a replacement facility;
- Grant delegated authority to the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism & Wellbeing to undertake the demolition of the Pontardawe Swimming Pool;
- Utilise the projected savings arising from the closure of the facility, over a two year period, to fund the recommendations included within this proposal.

## **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To ensure compliance with health and safety obligations associated with the users and staff at Pontardawe Swimming Pool, to agree arrangements for the commissioning of a feasibility study for a replacement facility and to seek approval for the demolition of Pontardawe Swimming Pool.

## **Implementation of Decision:**

This decision will be implemented following the conclusion of the three-day call in.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - IIA

**List of Background Papers:**

Report and associated documents from Cabinet meeting on 30 November 2022

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 30th November, 2022, 2.01 pm: NPT CBC](#)

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