

**POOL IN THE PARK SITE VISIT REPORT**

**Executive Summary**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend a site visit to Pool in the Park on Thursday 3 October 2019, hosted by Woking Borough Council and Freedom Leisure to review the facilities and maintenance works. The invite was extended to all Councillors but was held during the day which proved difficult for some members. Freedom Leisure extended an invite to all sites should this be required.

**Background Papers:** None.

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The facilities in the Park are over 30 years old. The contract with Freedom Leisure (FL) commenced in 2011.
- 1.2 Woking Borough Council (WBC) is largely responsible for the structural areas of the buildings, whilst FL is responsible for the fittings and internal facilities. This is not a clear division of responsibilities and this distinction may be discussed at a later meeting.
- 1.3 It was very unfortunate that the original date of the visit was cancelled at short notice by FL. This meant that many members who had planned to attend were not able to make the rescheduled visit time. Four members attended the visit;  
Cllr Bond; Member of O&S  
Cllr Bridgeman  
Cllr Cundy  
Cllr Hughes; Chair of O&S
- 1.4 Also in attendance from WBC were Douglas Spinks, Deputy CEO and David Loveless who has just taken over responsibility for FL from Michelle Melia who left WBC at the end of September.
- 1.5 Freedom Leisure representatives were Steve May, Area Manager and Michelle Jackson Catering Manager.

### 2.0 Site Visit

- 2.1 We were made very welcome by the team from Freedom Leisure. They were open to any questions and all our numerous questions were answered.
- 2.2 We were invited to visit any areas including behind the scenes, the pump room, boiler areas etc
- 2.3 Extensive work is still going on the external structure of the Pool in the Park by Council staff. Painting at the front was in progress. New disabled bays were in use. The flumes are now operational.
- 2.4 It was very useful having David Loveless there to put the structural elements into perspective. There are multiple areas of roof leaks. One area impacted by this is the flat canopy which goes over the changing areas. This is said to be the reason why the changing areas haven't yet been renovated, until the leak was fixed etc. This is also the case for an area in the Leisure lagoon where the complicated roof structure is also leaking and going to require major work. Another area of planned refurbishment is the central area where the stairs are. The windows here are single paned. There are plans to replace the windows and lighten the area, also to upgrade the flooring across much of the building. The flooring will be anti-slip and should reduce the numbers of slips and falls in the area.
- 2.5 There had been a problem also with the roof over the café. The repair to this meant that the AC unit for the café was disabled over the summer; hence the complaints of sweltering heat in the cafe.
- 2.6 The inside of Pool in the Park is notably shabby and tired. The internal fixtures and fitting, including the tiles, toilets etc are the original from over 30 years ago! Complaints regarding the cleanliness of the area were strongly refuted by the staff, as being the stains of so many years of use. Apparently it would require acid to remove the marks on the tiles around the pool.

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- 2.7 The flumes were visited, at both ends, and the system for their use explained, also the reason for the delay in the fitting of the new flumes. The temperature of the pools was discussed and the rationale for the differences and why the present temperatures have been decided upon.
- 2.8 The system for the cleanliness of the water was described in detail, the circulating process and the UV/ chlorine mixture of killing any bugs etc
- 2.9 The main pool was in use when we visited, life guards were on duty and all seemed as one would expect. The small pool was not in use as not booked for a session. The leisure lagoon has a vibrant aqua aerobics class running. It is planned that there will be an improved division between the small pool and the main pool in the future which will enhance health and safety.

### **3.0 The Kiosk**

- 3.1 Discussion around the opening hours.
- 3.2 Michelle managed this area and so was able to inform us that it is open the hours as contracted. The food offer varies with the season and what has been shown to sell. The ice cream sales did suffer when Mr Carlos was allowed back into the Park. Future consideration of the ground by the table was indicated as looks scruffy and uninviting.

### **4.0 The User Panel**

- 4.1 I had been informed that the panel was no longer running. Apparently this is not the case. The user panel has changed how it functions. Rather than being a committee of fixed membership the forum is now a drop in type session open to anyone using the facilities. They are at various times in the day so that users can add this to a regular visit for example. As it happened there was one due the same evening and Cllr Bridgeman offered to attend. Feedback from the panel is given to the Council in the performance report monthly.
- 4.2 There is also a box just inside the entrance for user comments. Michelle informed us that she checks the complaints and that they are responded to within days. FL described a culture of learning from the feedback they received

### **5.0 Chair Comments**

This was a very useful visit. It is clear that there has been an under investment in the upkeep of the facility over the years. The facility is old and tired, the plans to revitalise this are in place. For example the changing areas will be completed by Easter next year. This will make a huge difference to the experience of users as this was a major area of complaint. A forward plan (year 2019/20) was given to the members upon arrival. This should also be sent out to committee members with the O&S papers to replace the version provided earlier which was out of date.

It is clear that a lot is being planned and much has been done, but the public are not aware of this. A communication plan needs developing to highlight the reasons why areas may be closed, the time frames for improvements and the vision for the future. Both WBC and FL are underselling what they are doing by not communicating this effectively.

- 5.1 An invitation was extended by Stephen May to all members to arrange a visit to the sites at any time, to just get in touch with him and it will be arranged.

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- 5.2 Members are reminded to submit their written questions for Steve and his colleague for the O&S meeting on the 21st by this Friday to Hanna please.

REPORT ENDS