

Report

Cabinet



Part 1

Date: 15 November 2023

Subject: Leisure and Well-being Project Update

Purpose To update Cabinet on progress in the development of a new Leisure and Well-being Centre.

Author Head of Regeneration & Economic Development

Ward All

Summary Cabinet approved the delivery of a new Leisure and Well-being facility on land adjacent to the USW campus in February 2021. This decision followed a public consultation exercise which showed significant support for the development of a modern and sustainable facility in the city centre. Welsh Government approved grant funding as part of their Transforming Towns programme. A condition of this funding was that the Newport Centre be demolished in order to facilitate the delivery of a new Coleg Gwent Campus and these demolition works are nearing completion.

Work on the detailed design of the proposed facility is continuing with the intention to build an exemplar, sustainable and energy efficient leisure and well-being centre.

Proposal Cabinet is requested to:

- Note the progress being made on delivering the new facility.

Action by Head of Regeneration & Economic Development, Head of Law and Standards and Strategic Director – Environment & Sustainability.

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director – Environment & Sustainability
- Strategic Director – Transformation & Corporate Centre
- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of Finance
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation

Signed

Background

Regeneration of the City Core

The adoption of the city centre Masterplan in 2019 kick started a significant period of regeneration and an aspiration to deliver a number of strategic regeneration projects in the city. This included the development of a new hotel and commercial space aimed at bringing economic resilience, creating new opportunities and raising the profile of the city to those wishing to visit or invest. New mixed tenure housing has been created to enable more people to live in a city centre location together with the refurbishment of the Newport Indoor Market. The council has committed to ongoing growth and regeneration of the city centre as highlighted in the Corporate Plan.

The proposed new leisure and wellbeing facility replaces the Newport Centre, providing brand new, sustainable, energy efficient facilities within the city centre for local communities and visitors. As outlined in a previous report to Cabinet, the former Newport Centre was the oldest facility within the Newport City Council leisure estate and was in need of significant investment. It was also the most expensive NCC owned leisure facility to operate, with complex and outdated plant systems in place. Achieving carbon net zero, modern accessibility standards and reducing operating costs would not have been achievable without further significant, direct capital investment from the Council and it remains the case that proceeding with the new facility is the most appropriate option.

Newport Knowledge Quarter

Within the city core 'area of focus', the city centre Master Plan identifies the opportunity to create a Newport Knowledge Quarter in the area around Friar's Walk and the USW campus. The current Nash campus needs significant investment and the redevelopment of the new leisure and wellbeing facility on land opposite the Newport Centre presented the council with an opportunity to release the existing site to Coleg Gwent for their new city centre campus. This new campus will provide a new, modern and fit for purpose facility in a more accessible location, as well as enabling the Council to deliver upon the Council's vision of delivering a Newport Knowledge Quarter in the heart of the city centre.

The Cabinet decision of February 2021 in relation to disposing of the Newport Centre site to Coleg Gwent is not impacted by this update report and progress is being made with the College in this regard, including the granting of outline planning permission. As a reminder, the Newport Knowledge Quarter offers very significant benefits. It will positively:

- **Boost the economy of Newport and the wider region** – increasing footfall and associated spend on local goods and services in Newport city centre – approximately 2,000 learners and 200 staff daily. At an estimated cost of £90m, the new facility will result in significant economic benefits for local suppliers and contractors, both during construction and operation.
- **Improve educational outcomes** - grouping curriculum elements in a landmark building, providing modern training facilities and equipment and establishing seamless 'learning pathways' to Higher Education.
- **Improve community cohesion** – supporting those dependent on locally provided FE and HE for cultural, social and economic reasons and providing new opportunities for those returning to study as mature students.
- **Improving community resources** – providing new and modern facilities and access to learning and enrichment for all ages; and as a centre for the local community for part-time, adult education, employability skills and English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL)
- **Improve the physical infrastructure of Newport city centre** – through continued transformation, supporting the development of Newport as a focus for growth as identified in Welsh Government's 'Future Wales: the national plan 2040', and building on the momentum and impact of regeneration projects which have been delivered in other areas of the city centre to date.

Public Consultation

Between 17 December 2020 and 29 January 2021 a public consultation was undertaken and received over 1000 responses. This was considered a high response and gave Cabinet confidence that the views expressed were indicative of the wider Newport population. In summary the consultation confirmed:

- 94% of people who responded indicated that they would like to see new leisure and wellbeing facilities in Newport
- 85% of respondents indicated that they supported the reuse of the Newport Centre for the provision of a new college campus
- 74% said that they would use new facilities more often
- The most important facilities were considered to be a modern swimming pool which incorporated swimming for fitness and learning as well as fun.

New Leisure and Wellbeing Facility

The location of the proposed facility is at Mariners Wharf, next to the USW campus, and close to the former Newport Centre, as indicated on the plan below:



Reflecting the results of the public consultation, the facility is being designed to include:

- A modern leisure pool with a range of exciting and fun equipment.
- Flexible teaching pool facilities.
- Family friendly wet changing facilities.
- On site café.
- Fitness Suite with dry changing facilities.
- Active space for wellbeing and group activities.

On site disabled parking and bike storage will be integral to the proposed scheme and the overall footprint of the project has been amended to ensure that all development is contained on land within the Council's ownership. Initial plans had required the acquisition of land under the ownership of USW, which was not agreed. General parking will not be provided on site but will be available from nearby public car parks. The site is accessible by public transport and active travel connectivity is a positive feature of the location with easy access to the riverside walkway and surrounding active travel routes.

The new facility is intended to be built to high standards, carbon neutral in operation, with sustainability and the circular economy future proofing at its core. The centre will be accessible for all members of the community. We are not seeking to duplicate the wider sporting offer available across the City, instead

focussing on the leisure and well-being offer and seeking to maximise the opportunity for group activities. Officers are working closely with Newport Live and other partners to ensure that facilities provided meet the needs of the target user groups and provides the operator with a facility which is commercially viable to operate. Planning permission is in place for the new facility.

Overall the new leisure and wellbeing facility will:

- Enable the regeneration of a long-standing vacant brownfield site in the city centre.
- Create a fit for purpose, modern leisure and wellbeing facility for the people of Newport.
- Provide a new attraction and reason for people to visit Newport.
- Promote health and wellbeing, encouraging people and groups to engage and become more active.
- Promote an increased footfall in the city, creating vibrancy and wider economic benefits for city centre businesses.
- Generate confidence in the future of Newport through public sector-led investment.
- Support the sustainability of the Council's operating model for leisure and wellbeing.

Carbon Reduction and Energy Efficiency

As mentioned, delivering a facility which is energy efficient and embodies our climate change commitments continues to be a driver during the detailed design process. Officers have worked closely with the Welsh Government Energy Service to deliver a scheme which meets net zero in operation standards. The proposed solution involves the use of air source heat pumps and investment in the materials used within the built fabric of the building to drive energy efficiency. Importantly there will be no requirement for gas in the new facility. Cabinet is advised that the proposed new facility has the potential to be the first Net Zero Carbon Leisure Centre in the UK and the first all-electric facility of its type in the UK.

Circular Economy principles are also reflected in the new facility and as part of the demolition of the Newport Centre, materials were salvaged for re-use in the new facility. These included light fittings, timber from the stage area and glass from the balcony areas. These materials will be reused in the new centre or repurposed to create items such as tables, counters and tiling.

Current Position

With the significant changes in energy costs, the design of the new facility has been developed to ensure that it maximises the potential for energy efficiency and enables the operator to maximise spatial usage from a sustainability and commercial perspective. It is important to note, that whilst the challenges of making swimming pools energy efficient are considerable, the final design will also fully reflect the public consultation responses that highlighted the priority for a modern, fun, family leisure pool.



The detailed design of the scheme is currently at RIBA Stage 4 and planning permission is in place. A tender for the main construction phase is planned to be issued in February 2024. Tender prices would be confirmed in May 2024 and it is anticipated that construction works would commence in June 2024. The construction phase is expected to be approximately 18 months. Further enabling works are planned to commence on the site in February 2024 in order to prepare the site for the main construction phase.

Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Not enough demand in the future for the facilities provided in the build	H	L	The facilities are being designed to be flexible enough to meet any changing future demand. The project team have been consulting with the leisure operator whom has the relevant expertise to operate the facility and ensure that future trends are identified and needs met.	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Reputational risk	L	L	The proposed facility has been developed following feedback from the public consultation and is considered to reflect the priorities of residents. The Newport Centre has been demolished and it is important that a modern and energy efficient leisure facility is provided in the city centre to ensure that residents have access to modern and accessible facilities.	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development
Delays in starting the build and any other ongoing delays due to external factors which result in escalating costs	H	M	A start on site in February 2024 for the main enabling works is proposed and the project team are confident that the tender exercise for the main construction works can be completed in May 2024. Minimising delays between receiving tender prices and awarding the contract will mitigate the risk of escalating costs.	Head of Regeneration & Economic Development

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

This development would be in keeping with the adopted Local Development Plan, Economic Growth Strategy, City Centre Master Plan and the Corporate Plan 2022-2027 'An Ambitious, Fairer, Greener Newport for everyone'.

Council Commitments / Priorities

This proposal supports the primary objective of the Corporate Plan 2022 -2027 to work to deliver an 'Ambitious, Fairer, Greener Newport for everyone.'

To achieve this goal, Newport City Council has four well-being objectives that are the focus until 2027 and create the foundations for our longer-term vision for Newport over the next 20 years:

1. Economy, education and skills. Newport is a thriving and growing city that offers excellent education and aspires to provide opportunities for all.

The proposed new facility will increase footfall within the city centre and support local businesses. The release of the Newport Centre site to Coleg Gwent will facilitate the development of a new City centre Campus in a more accessible location, close to public transport links.

2. Environment and infrastructure. A city that seeks to protect and enhance our environment whilst reducing our carbon footprint and preparing for a sustainable and digital future.

The new facility is designed to be carbon net zero in operation and reflects circular economy principles.

3. Quality social care and community services. Newport is a supportive city where communities and care are at the heart of what we do.

Providing a modern and accessible community facility reflects the priorities of our residents, as evidenced through the public consultation exercise.

4. An inclusive, fair and sustainable council. Newport City Council is an inclusive organisation that places social value, fairness and sustainability at its core.

The tendering exercise for the construction contractor will reflect social value commitments and the adopted TOMs framework.

Options Available and considered:-

This report is for information purposes only.

Preferred Option and Why

Not applicable.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

This report updates Cabinet on the proposed new development of a city centre leisure and well-being centre. This project is already included in the Council's capital programme and is funded by a mixture of Council borrowing and WG grant. Final certainty on costs will be confirmed when tender processes have been completed.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

This report is for information only and there are therefore no legal implications arising at this time. Further advice will be provided as necessary as the project progresses.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

The ongoing development of the leisure and wellbeing facility supports the sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and follows public consultation and ongoing engagement with stakeholders. There are no HR implications associated with this update report.

Scrutiny Committees

None

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

A statement on potential equality impact and considerations was completed when the proposed development was first presented to Cabinet and the delivery of the new facility approved. The council has a number of legislative responsibilities to assess the impact of any strategic decision, proposal or policy on people that may experience disadvantage or inequality.

- Public consultation has taken place and the design of the proposed facilities reflects the views and priorities of respondents.
- There will be a positive impact in respect of both age and disability in particular as the new facility is being designed to be accessible to all.
- The new leisure and well-being facility is expected to have a catalytic effect, facilitating the development of a new city centre college campus and increasing footfall and visitor numbers to the city centre. The combined development will give the community and groups access to health and leisure services as well as new and modern further education facilities, giving learners the right skills and qualifications to enable them to prosper.

The proposal supports the sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015). Public bodies should ensure that decisions take into account the impact they could have on people living in Wales, in the future. The Council has always sought to engage with residents before taking any decision which may impact upon the delivery of any public service, in accordance with the principles of fairness and legitimate expectation.

The 5 main considerations in respect of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are set out below with an explanation of how this project meets these objectives:

- **Long term:** An investment in modern leisure and wellbeing facilities and the Knowledge Quarter will contribute to the ongoing regeneration of the city centre, the promotion of the health and wellbeing agenda, and the provision of environmentally sustainable and accessible facilities which are well integrated with public transport provision.
- **Prevention:** The Newport Centre was declared commercially unviable and the facilities were at the end of their life. The new facility will be built to carbon net zero in operation standards, with sustainability and future proofing at its core. Together with the new Coleg Gwent building, and the connection to active travel networks, this will create a high quality and sustainable place, right at the heart of the city centre which will contribute to the ongoing wellbeing of residents.
- **Integration:** The redevelopment plans are intended to secure integrated wellbeing gains, particularly through the selection of a city centre location and the potential to include a new college campus. This aligns with the ambitions set out in the Corporate Plan and city centre Master Plan.
- **Collaboration:** Working alongside partners including Coleg Gwent and Newport Live will help ensure that wellbeing gains are achieved through the redevelopment proposals.
- **Involvement:** Engagement and consultation with stakeholders has informed the development proposal and ensured that wellbeing gains are maximised.

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 imposes a duty on the Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable increase in crime and disorder as a result of the development of a new leisure and well-being facility.

Consultation

Referred to within the report.

Background Papers

Referred to within the report.

Dated: 08 November 2023