

## **Questions and written answers for Vale council on 11 May 2016**

### **A. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Charlotte Dickson, Cabinet member for leisure.**

Could the Cabinet member please explain the reasons for the delay in publication of the Village and Community Halls Survey, which was due in July 2015?

#### **Written answer**

The surveys of community and village halls formed part of the work that consultants carried out on the joint playing pitch strategy and associated work. We have received draft reports from the consultants and, as reported to Council in July 2015, we were on track to complete by the end of 2015. However, due to the demands of the Local Plan Examination, both in preparation and participation, during last autumn and winter/spring this year, a review of the work has been delayed. This work is now re-programmed for late spring/summer.

### **B. Question from Councillor Helen Pighills to Councillor Charlotte Dickson, Cabinet member for leisure.**

In the consultation on Abbey Meadows the public were overwhelmingly in support of Scenario A: 'A place to swim and play'

The consultation leaflet stated 'We would aim to carry out essential repairs to the swimming pool and changing rooms'.

Furthermore under 'Improvements we can make', the leaflet listed 'Repair the outdoor swimming pool' with 'refurbish the changing rooms' appearing in the 'Additional improvements we will consider'.

Why then does the recently issued cabinet decision include refurbishment of the changing rooms with no mention of essential repairs to and upgrading of the pool including its ageing pool tank and heating/filtration system?

#### **Written answer**

We listened to the consultation feedback and are working to deliver Scenario A – a place to swim and play. The outdoor pool is opening to the public on Saturday 28 May and officers worked with GLL over the winter to improve the heating system, undertake an industrial clean and paint the pool tanks. We have an ongoing maintenance budget to carry out any other essential works – as we committed to in the consultation leaflet.

The pool is clearly important to residents, which is why we are keeping it open. The changing rooms are an integral part of the pool complex and, therefore, need to meet health and safety standards. As the changing rooms are often the first area that people use and last area they leave, it is vital that they provide a pleasant environment. A refurbished changing facility will also provide a much more attractive approach to the complex, which in turn will enhance the whole area.

Refurbishing the changing rooms was ranked as the second most popular

improvement by people taking part in the consultation, so there is clearly public support for this to happen, which is why we've selected it as a priority.

As well as doing what we can to refurbish the pool over the past winter, officers are working to procure contractors for the play area and building work improvements in order for these works to take place next winter in an attempt to minimise the disruption caused to residents and visitors.

However, we are also aware that there are thousands of visitors to Abbey Meadow every year who do not use the pool, and we have taken them into account. One of the key aspirations of the project is to improve the wider Abbey Meadow area so that it attracts more visitors throughout the year. To completely refurbish the pool would cost in excess of £520,000, not including costs associated with survey work and professional design fees. This would not leave any funding for changes elsewhere in Abbey Meadow, which will be key to bringing more people to the area throughout the year. Given the available budget, we believe that it is fairer, along with keeping the pool open and refurbishing the changing rooms, to carry out as many of the other top ten improvements throughout Abbey Meadow as possible for the thousands of visitors who spend time in this area.

We are actively seeking additional funding so that we can achieve some of the other suggestions. We have already built into the budget some £45,000 of section 106 money from the Old Goal development earmarked for play equipment and this will allow the available budget to go further.

**D. Question from Councillor Emily Smith to Councillor Mike Murray,  
Cabinet member for planning policy**

The planning department's Statement of Community Involvement defines what the public can expect in term of communications and consultations from planning. It's so out of date it lists Dr Evan Harris as our MP to be consulted. Why hasn't this important policy document been kept up to date?

**Written answer**

The Vale Local Development Scheme which was published in January 2016 and has since that time been available to view on the Vale's website identifies the timetable for production of the updated Statement of Community Involvement.

**E. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Mike Murray,  
Cabinet member for planning policy**

The Cabinet has promised to take care of my interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency. I don't know what they mean by 'enterprise'. 'Energy' isn't enough if it doesn't produce a good result. Tonight I'm interested in 'efficiency'. Could the Cabinet member please report the total costs so far to create the emerging Local Plan? Please include all costs: officers, consultants, travel & food, phone calls, consultation, printing and distribution, and everything else that we have invested so far in producing our emerging Local Plan.

**Written answer**

The cost of production of the Local Plan consumes almost all of the Vale's diligent and hardworking planning policy team's financial budget, and for the last three years this has been £3,214,174 in total.