

8C REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 13 SEPTEMBER 2022 – SOFT PLAY INVESTMENT AT NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE

RESOLVED: That Cabinet considered and agreed the soft play investment proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council make the addition of £150k to the Capital programme in 2022/23.
- (2) That Council move the existing capital allocation of £100k in 2023/24 for refurbishment of the dry-side changing rooms to 2022/ 23 and reallocate it to the soft play project.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Introducing a soft play facility at North Herts Leisure Centre will enhance the range of leisure facilities on offer and provide a dedicated play space for families with toddlers and young children within the local area.
- (2) The new facility will generate additional revenue for the site, aiding the financial recovery of leisure post covid and providing an attractive additional facility for bidders when the new leisure contract is procured in 2024.

Audio recording – 115 minutes 35 seconds

Councillor Steve Jarvis presented the report entitled 'North Herts Leisure Centre Soft Play Investment' and advised Members of the following:

- Over the years several changes have been made to North Herts Leisure Centre to make it more suitable for users.
- This proposal is to repurpose two squash courts and changing rooms to be converted into a soft play area.
- There are currently four squash courts on site and these are significantly underused, with around 18% of capacity used throughout the week, with occasional peaks. Under this proposal two squash courts would remain.
- There was some previous concern about keeping the poolside changing rooms clean for dry-side users, and it is expected that cleaning will be doubled on site. There would still be one dry-side changing room.
- There has been an extensive consultation, with responses overwhelmingly in support of the proposal.
- Income is predicted of £50k in first year, and £60k in subsequent years.
- There was capital allocation for renovation of the changing rooms and this money will now be moved to this soft play scheme.
- These proposals will benefit users and allow more people to use the leisure centre.

In response to a question from Councillor Ruth Brown, Councillor Jarvis advised that the amount in total was £250,000.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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[The reports and papers associated with this item can be viewed here.](#)