

# East Herts Council Report

## Executive

**Date of meeting:** Tuesday 28 November 2023

**Report by:** Councillor Sarah Hopewell – Executive Member for Wellbeing

**Report title:** Health and Safety – Ward Freman Pool

**Ward(s) affected:** Buntingford;

**Summary** – East Herts Council has recently been made aware of health and safety issues at Ward Freman Pool in Buntingford. As a result of these, the pool will need to close at the end of the school term in December 2023 while potential solutions to the concerns can be further investigated.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:**

- a) To close the pool at the end of the school term in December while further investigations can be undertaken as to potential solutions to remedy the health and safety concerns.**

### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

- 1.1 To close the Ward Freman pool at the end of the school term in December and continue discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), and the community, as to a suitable way forward for the pool.

- 1.2 Officers will continue to work with HCC, and the community, and bring a report back to the Executive in Spring 2024 with detailed information as to the options available for the future of the Ward Freman pool before the end of March 24.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 HCC currently leases the building from Ward Freman College while East Herts Council (EHC) have responsibility for the provision of services. EHC currently contracts these out to Everyone Active
- 2.2 It has been established that the facilities require significant modernising and repair. Recently, this has resulted in operators, Everyone Active, formally raising their concerns as to the health and safety of the pool. Everyone Active have stated that they do not believe the pool is safe to run beyond the end of the school term in December 2023.
- 2.3 Everyone Active are currently implementing a short-term solution to mitigate the known health and safety risks. These include regular microbiological testing due to the risk of cryptosporidium and placing coverings on raised tiles that have the potential to injure swimmers.
- 2.4 The minimum improvement works that have been identified to bring the pool up to a safe standard include pool filtration and pool tank works. It is estimated these works will take approximately 20-22 weeks to complete, costing in the region of £543,550

- 2.5 HCC has been informed of the concerns and need to close the pool in December 2023.
- 2.6 Freman College have advised that Ward Freman Pool has nothing to do with the College. When the college changed to Foundation status in 2009 the pool remained in the ownership of the Local Authority (HCC) and is only used on occasions by the College
- 2.7 An EHC Officer will remain in discussion with the schools using the pool and HCC to establish options available in relation to the future of Ward Freman pool.
- 2.8 EHC will work with the community to establish if there any community-led, sustainable options for the future operation of the Ward Freman pool that could be implemented. This could include an existing organisation or one formed specifically to support the pool (such as a "Friends Of" group) taking responsibility for the facility.
- 2.9 Once a full evaluation of options has been undertaken and discussed, EHC Officers will report to the Executive outlining options available. This report is expected to be completed in Spring 2024.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 The Ward Freman pool requires significant repair works to be undertaken to ensure it remains safe to use. Operators, Everyone Active, have informed EHC that the pool will need to close at the end of the school term in December 23 until the works can be completed for health and safety reasons.

3.2 Further time is required to establish potential options with regards to the future of the Ward Freman pool. EHC will continue to explore options and present a full report to the Executive in Spring 2024.

#### **4.0 Options**

4.1 Temporarily close Ward Freman pool at the end of the school term in December 2023 and continue to work to establish future options for the facility. EHC Officers will present a full report of options identified to the Executive in Spring 2024.

#### **5.0 Risks**

##### **Do Nothing**

5.1 The pool will be forced to close indefinitely on health and safety grounds. Due to the reactive nature of this approach, EHC may be seen as being unwilling to support the local community or address the ongoing concerns around health and safety of the users of the facility. It can be expected that this would draw criticism from pool users and the local community, particularly given the impact on site users and children learning to swim.

##### **Close the pool temporarily**

5.2 EHC may draw criticism from the public who may see the Council as responsible for having allowed the facility to reach a point where it is having to close on health and safety grounds. Taking the decision to close the pool while further options can be explored, however, demonstrates the Council's commitment to exploring all options for the future operation of the Ward Freman pool.

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

6.1 – officers have discussed options with HCC Officers

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

No

### **Environmental Sustainability**

No

### **Financial**

Yes – EHC responsible for 60% of costs at Ward Freman pool with HCC responsible for the remaining 40%

### **Health and Safety**

Yes – Operators, Everyone Active, have formally raised their concerns as to the future health and safety of the Ward Freman pool. Short-term health and safety solutions are currently in place but the facility is not considered safe to continue operating beyond the end of the school term in December 2023, until the minimum improvement works have be carried out

### **Human Resources**

No

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

Yes – Current joint use agreement between EHC and HCC in place until 2037

## **Specific Wards**

Yes - Buntingford

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

N/A

### **Contact Member**

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