

Appendix One – Summary of Consultation Victoria Leisure Centre

Report by: Steve Harrison – Neighbourhood Manager Area 6

Summary

The following information summarises consultation on the Victoria Leisure Centre to support the Area Committee and Executive Board in agreeing an option.

Background

As a result of the 'Tell Us Your Views' exercise in early 2008, combined with campaigning to save the Baths and lobbying of local councillors it was apparent that there was strong local support for the retention of a leisure centre with a swimming pool for the east of the City. The Executive Board made a commitment in March 2008 to provide a new pool and explore the regeneration possibilities of the site. As part of that decision, officers were required to work with the Area Committee to take this forward. In order to widen the stakeholders involved, the Chair of the Area Committee established a working group to take on some of the detailed work that this would involve. Membership of that group included local councillors including a councillor from Mapperley ward, residents from the Area Committee [one from Dales and one from St Ann's ward]. In addition to representation from the Primary Care Trust/City Health Partnership, Education Improvement Partnership and the Civic Society, there were places for the Save Victoria Baths Campaign that had opposed the original proposal to close the Centre.

The initial meetings of the Victoria Leisure Centre Working Group were productive and quickly reached a consensus on a number of issues:

1. The east of the City does not have adequate access to swimming if the VLC closes and is not replaced.
2. This is particularly important in areas such as St Ann's and Sneinton where lower income levels, greater reliance on public transport and other factors are inhibitors to travelling to pools in other parts of the City or in surrounding authorities.
3. The east of the City does have sufficient dry leisure facilities in other locations to meet local need.
4. There is great affection for the VLC, particularly among those who learnt to swim there.
5. If there is to be a new leisure centre in the area, the current site is the preferred option partly because it is in a good position to serve the communities of both Sneinton and St Ann's in particular, as well as Bakersfield and is also accessible to the City Centre.
6. Development of the current site should retain the Victorian clock-tower and associated structure as it is a well known and respected local landmark

Subsequent meetings saw divergent opinions on what shape the Victoria Leisure Centre, now rescued, should take with a section of the Working Group becoming increasingly convinced that an option retaining as much of the current fabric of the building was preferable. This report reviews the process of consultation and views taken over the last year to provide some context to debate about different options being proposed for the leisure centre.

An important point that will be reiterated below is that any decision about the Victoria Leisure Centre will have to consider a number of factors in addition to the outcome of consultation. This would include affordability, both for construction and ongoing costs, sustainability and whether they meet the needs of local people and the wider impact on the area.

Victoria Leisure Centre – Tell Us Your Views Public Feedback Analysis [NCC Sport and Leisure] - Executive Board Report 18 March 2008

There were 1,194 responses to this exercise covering a range of issues. This included some points such as the difficulties for residents of St Ann's and Dales in accessing other centres.

That report identified key responses and illustrated these with quotes and comments. A spectrum of views were expressed that stretched from;

- a) concern at the proposed loss of a landmark building ["a brand new centre would only make people feel uncomfortable, the answer is to work with what we have for a change"] and preserving the current centre to
- b) a view that a modern facility was required ["its quite simple, demolish the centre and build a new one"].

A similar range of responses was reflected in the consultation commissioned by Save Victoria Baths at the May Funday. For instance one response stated "A more modern building with some of the fantastic original features kept on the outside" whilst another asked for "replacement swimming pool in current building".

Levitate Draft Options – Levitate/ THINK TANC

The Levitate team met with the Working Group and held a stakeholder event in the autumn. This was followed in January 09 by a presentation to the Working Group on three draft options and a similar presentation to the public at Carlton Road library and for two days following this, display boards showing how the three options might look were made available. In addition to receiving comments on the proposals at the presentation, the stakeholders were also invited to express a preference for one of the draft options [47 first choices were made for Option A, 18 for Option B and 11 for Option C].

Responses included a number of comments about the desirability of providing a sports hall which as indicated earlier had been excluded from the brief. There were a number of very thoughtful comments again reflecting the choices that have to be made, for instance "After agonising! Would really like to keep the Turkish bath + Victorian iron work but ended up preferring the more open style of the new build. All ideas great".

The outcome of this consultation, conducted by Think TANC for the Levitate led consultants group, was fed back to help support the further work on the options being proposed. The full Think Tanc report will be included as part of the Feasibility Study work being reported upon to committee by Levitate.

Additional Consultation

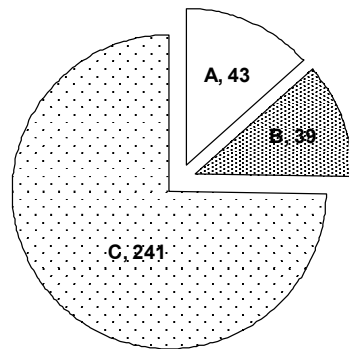
Preliminary feedback from the January consultation raised a concern that the consultation base had been too narrow and the diversity of views did not appear to be reflected, with the risk that sections of the community, especially those who may be hard to reach were not being captured. The Area Manager agreed with the Chair that a short consultation

exercise should take place in order to ensure a wider range of views were heard to assist members in decision making.

The information from the exercise came from both a short questionnaire and some focus groups run with classes in Bluebell Hill, Elliott Durham and William Booth schools. The focus groups were run by James Brown from the Education Improvement Partnership with the class teachers. The hour long lesson allowed the children to give their opinions on what the leisure centre should offer. Some of the answers related to management issues such as pool inflatables. The lack of access to gym equipment for children and young people emerged, especially at Elliott Durham and in particular, girls were interested in space for activities such as dance mats. The children were asked about their feelings about a modern and older building. The children consistently expressed preferences for a modern building but also, especially at Elliott Durham, had a sense that the clock-tower was an important local landmark.

Of the nearly 400 forms returned, 78% were in favour of Option C.

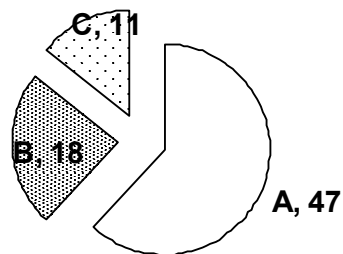
March Consultation [399 responses]



Source: Neighbourhood Management 2009

For comparison purposes, the January consultation broke down as follows:

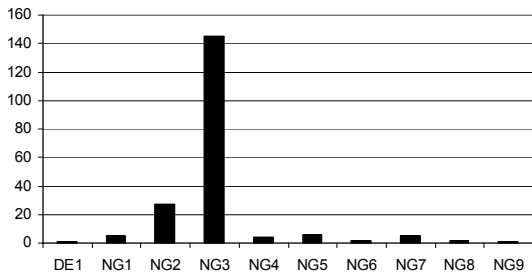
January Consultation



Source Think Tanc report 2009

Those completing forms were about 40% school children with almost all the rest from people living in NG2 or NG3 postcode sectors.

The following chart shows the postcodes of all respondents received in the area focussed work, but excludes 143 responses where just their School was given as the address.



Conclusion

The above information has been collated to support the St Ann's and Dales Area Committee and the Executive Board in coming to a decision about the options for the Victoria Leisure Centre. It is important to note the high degree of consensus on some key issues including retaining the current location and also retention of the Victorian clock-tower. There are clearly different views about the three options developed by Levitate, although Option B was clearly an 'also ran'. It is unsurprising that current users of the pool are more likely to wish to retain more of the Centre's current shape and feel but it was also clear from a number of responses, including but not exclusively from young people, that more substantial modernisation was required to provide a facility that residents thought the area deserved and which would signal a move away from the poor quality provision currently on offer.

Any decision to pursue Option A would also have to consider how it would deal with the disappointment that this would generate among those excited by the prospect of a modern family-orientated facility being developed, possibly trailblazing the regeneration of Sneinton Market.

Conversely, adoption of Option C should be followed by continued engagement with those passionate to preserve the heritage of the area as well as being enthusiastic about continuing to provide quality community swimming.