

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

15 October 2019

7.30 - 8.40 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Bob Davis (Chair)
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Shannon Jezzard
Councillor Emma Toal
Councillor Chris Vince

Officers

Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive
Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing
Simon Hill, Head of Governance
Christine Howard, Youth and Citizenship Manager
Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer

Also Present

Jean Atkin, Leisure and the Environment
Paul Greateorex, Leisure and the Environment
Graham Jones, Leisure and the Environment

22. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Carter and Shona Johnson.

23. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

24. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2019 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the addition of Councillor Joel Charles to the list of those present.

25. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

26. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

27. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

28. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

29. **REVIEW OF PADDLING POOLS - PRESENTATION**

Jean Atkin, Paul Greateorex, and Graham Jones (all Leisure and the Environment) gave a presentation which gave an overview of the findings from the community consultation on Harlow's paddling pools. A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing, said that the final report was due at the meeting on 3 December. This would include costings for any options.

RESOLVED that the presentation was noted.

30. **REVIEW OF YOUTH CLUB PROVISION - SCOPING REPORT**

The Committee considered a scoping report on a review of youth club provision within Harlow. It was agreed that a comparison with neighbouring councils such as East Herts District Council would be included within the scope of the review.

RESOLVED that the scope of the review of youth club provision, as set out in the report, was agreed subject to the addition of a comparison with neighbouring councils.

31. **REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - INITIAL REPORT**

The Committee considered a report which recommended that a Working Party was established to conduct a review of the Council's overview and scrutiny functions. It also recommended that the process for adding items to the Committee's work plan was amended as an interim measure.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- A** Set up a Working Party (with the terms of reference attached as Appendix A to the report) to carry out a review of the Council's overview and scrutiny functions. The Working Party's

membership would be Councillors David Carter, Bob Davis and Tony Edwards.

- B** Amended its process for determining its work plan to take into account the suggestions in paragraphs 9 to 17 of this report, pending any alternative proposals from the review.
- C** Recommended to Cabinet that the Cabinet Overview Working Group's Work Plan is developed in line with paragraph 17 of the report.

32. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2019/20. The Committee agreed to remove the Review of Educational Provision from the Work Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- A** The Review of Educational Provision be removed from the work plan.
- B** The work plan be noted.

33. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

34. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE



Harlow Paddling Pools Review

Community Consultation – Overview of Findings

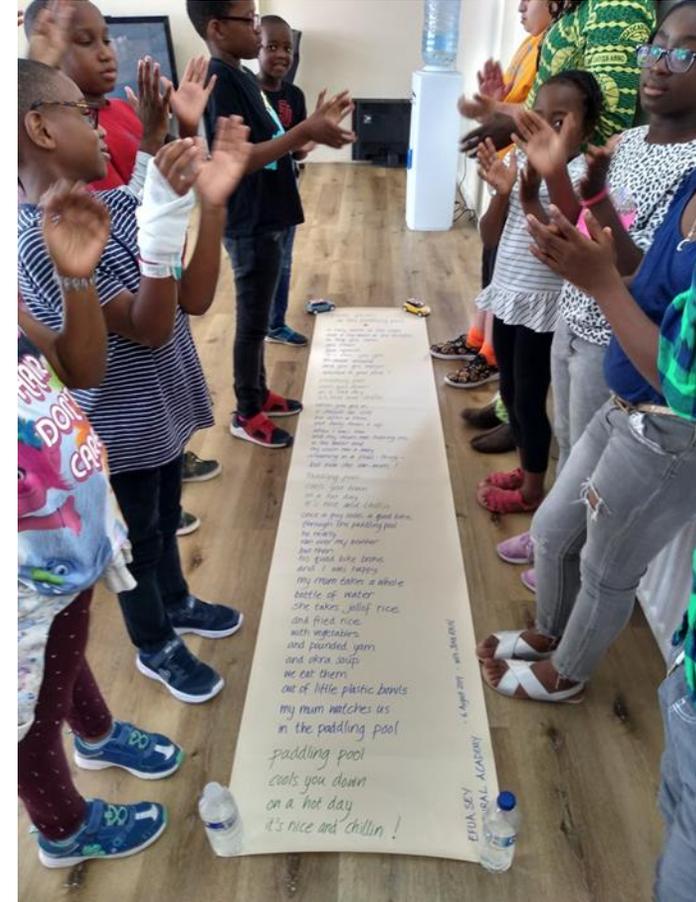


Introduction

- Our team and roles – Paul Greateorex, Jean Atkin, Graham Jones, Adrian Voce
- The wider review e.g. costs, maintenance, health and safety etc.
- Our work – community consultation and engagement; including children and young people
 - Questionnaire Surveys – residents household survey; children; and community groups
 - Direct consultation and engagement – community and children – face to face meetings

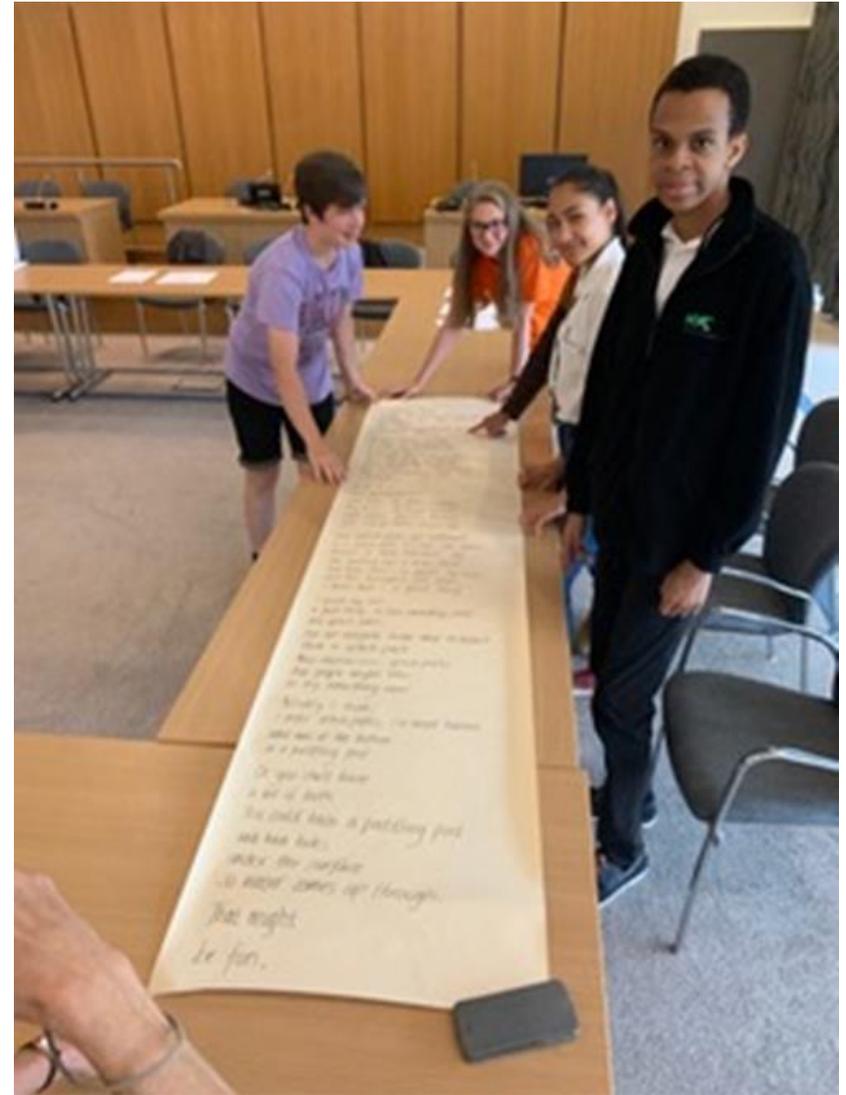
Overview of Presentation

- Children and young people – findings
- Community Consultation – findings
- Sub area analysis
- General Observations and Next Steps



Children and Young People

- Children's Survey
- Direct Engagement
 - Harlow Youth Council
 - Efua Sey Cultural Academy
 - Play Day
 - Sam's Place
 - School Readiness Programme
 - Over 130 local children and young people were talked to





Summary of Findings – Children and young people

- Water-play is overwhelmingly valued by participants. In the survey - 76% responded 'Love it' for paddling pools and 51% said 'Love it' for splash parks.
- The paddling pools are used when empty by 55% of respondents for activities (in order of popularity): running, bike/BMX, 'other', rollerskating and skateboarding.
- 71% of respondents want to keep the paddling pools and improve them. 29% of children and young people would like to see them replaced with splash parks.
- The young people made various suggestions for additional ideas that might improve facilities including toilets and picnic benches
- Only a minority of the disabled children at Sam's Place had ever visited any of the pools, and no-one attended regularly. Staff identified the lack of toilets as a significant barrier

“It helps you to learn to swim. You float, you splash, you swim!”

“We use it in winter, for skateboarding”

“and now, we don’t paddle any more, we’d just splash each other, but it’s chillin’ just sitting there, socialising”

“splash parks are fun, but the paddling pool is more social”

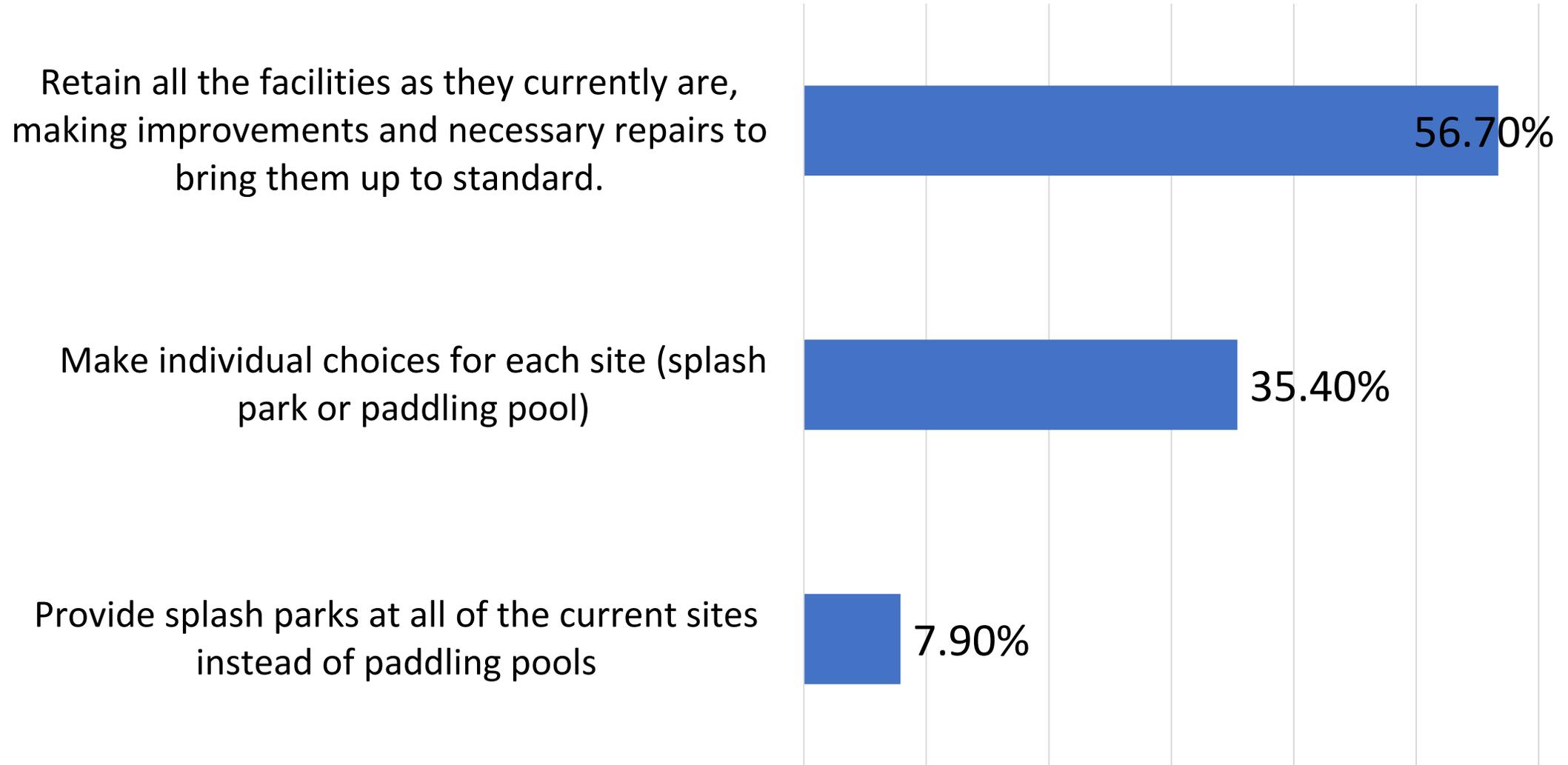
“not everyone knows what to expect from a splash park”

“you could have a bit of both, a paddling pool with holes under the surface so the water comes up through. That might be fun”

Community Consultation – Value, Heritage and Benefits – Residents Household Survey

- In total 1376 household surveys completed
- 76% strongly agree and an additional 16% agree that that the paddling pools are an important part of Harlow's heritage.
- Importance of water play facilities: On a scale of 1 to 10 the average rating was 9.6.
- Main benefits: over 85% note: free to use; a place for children and young people to meet friends; an opportunity for family outings, picnics etc; a chance for children to take fun informal exercise outdoors.

Options for future development



Preferences for individual sites

- Other than for Potter Street a majority of respondents noted that their preference was for a paddling pool facility, most notably for:
 - Harlow Town Park (70%)
 - Norman Booth (65%)
 - Sumners (61%)
- For Potter Street there is a clear preference to retain the Splash Park.
- For most individual sites (other than the Town Park) around 20% said that they had no opinion on how the sites should develop in the future.

Use of Water Play Facilities

- Over 92% of respondents visit or make use of at least one of Harlow's water play facilities during the summer.
- The sites that most respondents had visited were the Town Park (69%) and Norman Booth (44%).
- These sites were also the facilities that the greatest proportion reported visiting most often.

Need for additional Water Play Facilities?

- Just over 87% of respondents reported that distance and time is not a barrier to making visits - 13% reported that it is.
- Of the 13% who said it was a barrier 74% said that this did not mean there is a need for a paddling pool/splash park
- The most common areas where residents suggested there may be a need were Church Langley and Newhall.

Play and Community Groups Survey - Value, Heritage and Quality

- All ten of the local groups rated the water play facilities as being “very important” for Harlow’s children, young people, their families and the wider community.
- All of the groups “strongly agree” that the paddling pools are an important part of Harlow’s heritage.
- Norman Booth and the Town Park paddling pools were particularly highly rated in terms of quality

Community Groups - Future Development

- A majority of the local groups would like the Council to make individual choices for each site (splash park, paddling pool or a combination).
- Make choices for individual sites - following additional consultation with local communities
- All the paddling pools require renovating and facilities added such as toilets.
- Need to ensure there are adequate changing and toilet facilities for people with disabilities.
- It would be useful to have a special needs afternoon session available for families.

Community Groups – Face to Face meetings

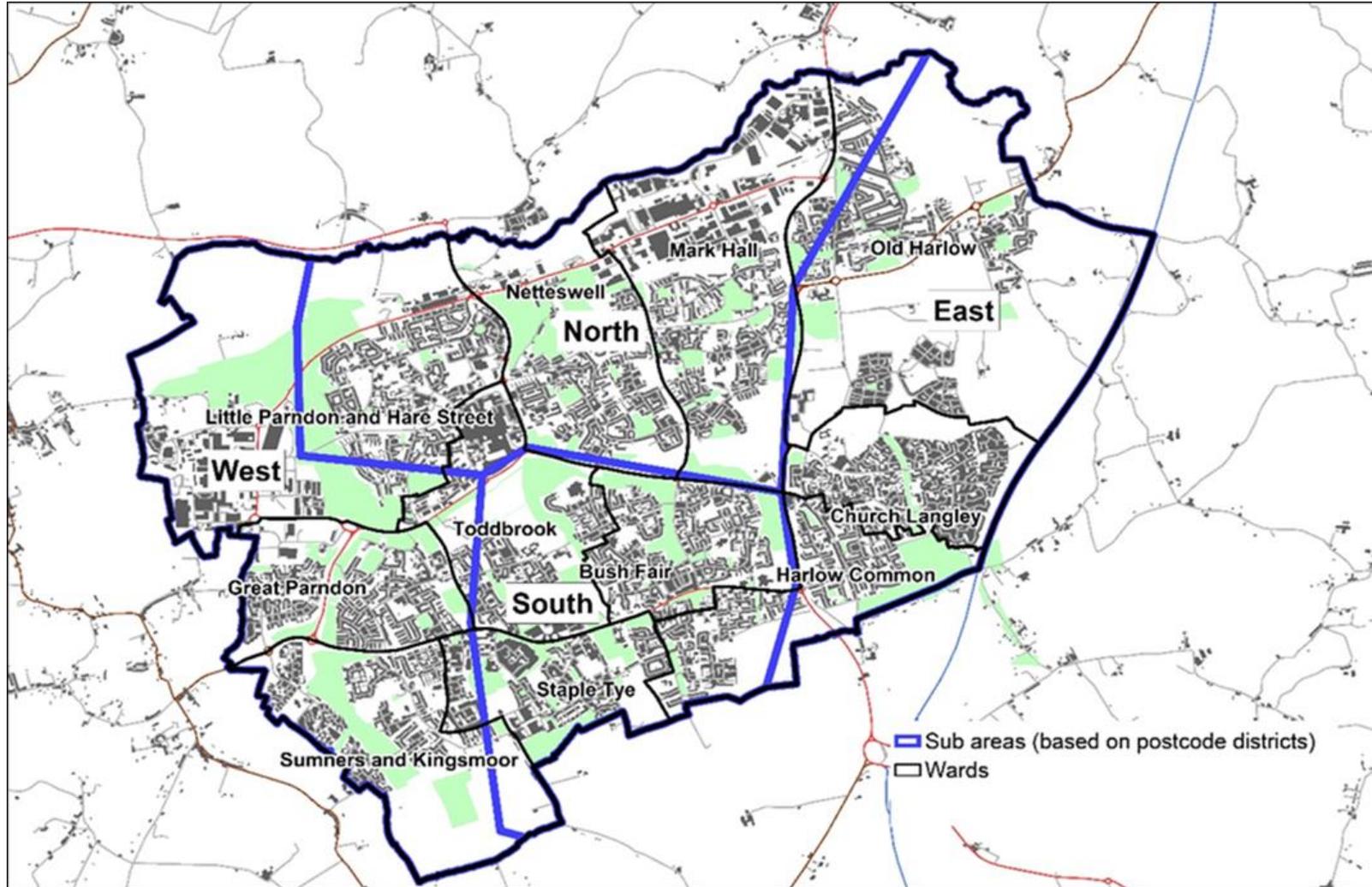
In the main the meetings reinforced the views already expressed in earlier sections.

- The Town Park Users Group (TPUG): the Town Park paddling pool should remain, but with improved facilities e.g. an additional adjoining splash park. Toilets nearby are the priority.
- TPUG: many people may not know what a splash park is: pilot one in the Town Park before changes to other sites.

Community Groups – Face to Face meetings

- PACT: no uniform solution - provision should be varied to take account of local circumstances - offer variety across Harlow. Need for toilets, changing rooms & car parking.
- Tye Green Community Centre: toilets are essential, and a kiosk useful.; have further local input into any specific proposals.
- The Petition Organiser group emphasised that the paddling pool sites had all year round use as the empty pools are used for play; early introduction to water for young children

Sub Area Profile



Preferred Options for Development

- Clear preference across the local authority to *retain the Town Park and Norman Booth Paddling Pools* as paddling pools.
- 3 out of 4 areas wanted to *retain the Bush Fair Paddling Pool*. Clear preference across the local authority to *retain the Potter Street Splash Park* as such a facility.
- 3 out of 4 sub areas expressed a strong preference to *retain the Staple Tye Paddling Pool*. Exception was for residents from the East area, the majority of which had no opinion.
- 3 out of 4 sub areas strongly prefer to *retain the Sumners Paddling Pool*. Exception was for residents from the East sub area, where there was a shared majority between 'no opinion' and 'paddling pool'.

Access to facilities (1)

- **Bush Fair (South sub area):** Those living locally, in the South area largely walk. Pool is also well-used by respondents from North area, but the majority of whom will drive/be driven. Up to 10 minutes is the travel time for most local users.
- **Town Park (North sub area):** Those living locally in the North sub area largely walk. Those from other sub areas largely drive/are driven. Journey times often longer than 10 minutes longer (indicating popularity?)
- **Norman Booth (East sub area):** Respondents from all sub areas rely heavily on driving/being driven. Journey times are often longer than 10 minutes (indicating popularity?) Most locals will take between 1 - 15 minutes to get to the venue.

Access to facilities (2)

- **Potter Street (East sub area):** Respondents from all of the sub areas rely heavily on driving/being driven here. Journey times are often longer than 10 minutes. Most locals will take between 1 -15 minutes to get to the venue.
- **Staple Tye (West sub area):** On the border between West and East sub areas. Large numbers of respondents from these two areas walk to the facility. Most respondents from other sub areas drive/are driven. Most locals will take between 1 -15 minutes to get to the venue.
- **Sumners (West sub area):** Most respondents from the South area state walk here - indicating ease of access. Users from host sub area also largely walk. Journey times are often longer than 10 minutes longer. Most locals will take between 1 -15 minutes to get to the venue.

General Observations

- Residents overwhelmingly welcomed being asked about their views of the water play facilities and will be interested in consultation findings and future developments.
- They clearly value the water play facilities as important local play/recreation facilities, recognise the benefits they provide and see the paddling pools as part of the heritage of the town.
- The Town Park site is seen as an iconic community hub - important destination for families and the wider community - part of the character of the town.

General Observations 2

- Options: residents tend to opt for what they know i.e. people want paddling pools where they use them and a splash park where they use it.
- Replacing any of the existing paddling pools with splash parks without further community engagement at the local level may well be unpopular with a large number of residents.
- Inaccessibility of the sites to disabled children - provision of toilets and changing facilities would considerably mitigate this.
- Future provision in areas of growth should be kept under review. i.e. parts of Harlow where there has been recent growth are not as well served in terms of access to either paddling pools or splash pads.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Consultation Plan

Appendix 2 – Copies of Surveys

Appendix 3 – Full Findings from Surveys (spreadsheet)

Appendix 4 – Sub Area Profile

Appendix 5 – Online and Hard Copy surveys (assessed separately)

Appendix 6 – Qualitative comments from surveys (spreadsheet)

Next Steps

- The draft Consultation Report and its appendices will be considered and analysed by the Paddling Pool Review Project
- The consultation findings will feed into the wider review process, alongside other work being completed such as costs, maintenance considerations, health and safety etc.
- The full Paddling Pool Review Report will be considered at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3rd December

“With the cost of living rising and parents struggling to get through the holidays all of these facilities are a fabulous way to get children outside and active without costing money. With childhood obesity being an issue I think this is very important”.

Replacing the pools with splash parks will reduce the fun for children and less people would visit them. When the pools are closed the kids who hang out and use them for wheeled sports would make a nuisance of themselves elsewhere and could end up in a rise of unsociable behaviour.

Mix of splash parks and paddling pools. If splash parks are easier to control opening then have these to ensure that facilities can be used for longer. Also think about the young ones that can't use paddling pools because of disability but can enjoy splash parks as wheelchairs can move around them with ease.

I do not mind any of the options, however, all need to include toilets close to hand.