

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

7 October 2025

Richmond Swimming Pool Options Appraisal

Report of the Corporate Director Community Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To set out the findings and recommendations in relation to the future options for Richmond Pool.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report sets out the findings from the options appraisal undertaken in relation to Richmond Pool. It recommends that essential repairs are undertaken and that the pool be reopened.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 In March 2025 Richmond Pool was transferred to the Council's in house leisure service as part of the Active North Yorkshire service. In April sections of the wooden ceiling became loose and fell into the pool hall resulting in the closure of the pool on safety grounds. Given the potential costs of repairs to the ceiling and other essential repairs, a full options appraisal was carried out to assess fully the options for the future of the site.

4.0 ISSUES AND OPTIONS

4.1 This options appraisal has included consideration of usage trends, asset condition, financial sustainability and the impact of other nearby facilities, including the MOD owned leisure centre at Catterick. Community consultation has also been undertaken and the results of this are summarised in section 5 below.

4.2 Options assessed included:

- Option 1 – undertake essential works only and reopen the pool
- Option 2 – undertake essential works with refurbishment of changing rooms and accessibility improvements
- Option 3a – reconfigure the teaching pool to increase health and fitness offer
- Option 3b – reconfigure to remove both pools and increase health and fitness space and flexible space (rental/office etc)
- Option 4 – decommission and demolish
- Options 5 – disposal of the site for sale/long lease

Pool Usage and Trends

4.3 Overall there have been some increases in usage in recent years. However, the Richmond pool has much lower levels of usage than other council pools, in terms of both annual usage and learn to swim members. Membership and usage figures are shown below.

	2019/20 (pre- COVID- 19)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Casual swimming	22,767	14,760	9,131	13,222	21,686
Swimming lessons	9,805	13,842	6,672	8,640	11,303
School swimming	13,039	9,293	5,316	8,730	7,455
Aquafit	1,535	1,560	1,245	1,514	2,987
Other	5,617	15,098	10,074	14,696	15,521
Total throughput	52,763	54,553	32,438	47,032	58,952

4.4 The following trends have been identified:

- **Total throughput has fluctuated in recent years.** This is primarily due to the post-Covid closures. Despite these closures, usage of the pool recovered well in 2024/25, reaching the highest throughput across the five-year data period.
- **Swimming lesson throughput has recovered strongly from the impacts of pool closures in 2022/23 and 2023/24.** Swimming lesson throughput increased by 30.8% between 2023/24 and 2024/25, indicating positive signs of recovery following the closures in 2022/23 and 2023/24 prior to the most recent closure in April 2025.
- **The strategic importance of the site as a facility for the delivery of school swimming has diminished.** School swimming throughput was 42.8% lower than that recorded in 2019/20.
- **Casual swims have recovered well and there is further potential for growth.** Throughput for casual swims increased by 64.0% on the previous year to 21,686 in 2024/25. This is still below a peak of 22,767 casual swims achieved pre-COVID which suggests further potential for growth.
- Throughput for **aqua fit classes** increased significantly in 2024/25 in comparison to previous years.

4.5 A key factor influencing demand in Richmond is the presence of Catterick Leisure Centre, a modern facility including 3 pools, swimming lessons and school swimming programme. Catterick is 2.5 miles from Richmond Pool. It is owned by the MOD but has substantial community access, which has recently been increased since the closure of Richmond Pool, with opportunities to expand further. The two clubs that are based at Richmond pool have been using Catterick pool, although Richmond District ASC are also utilising pools space in Sunderland and Darlington. There is a significant learn to swim programme with capacity to expand this further.

Financial Position

- 4.6 A summary of the budget for the current year is shown below. This is based on previous operating costs although it should be noted these are not directly comparable to the 24/25 position as the pool was operated by Richmondshire Leisure Trust ("RLT") prior to March 2025. During 24/25 the Council paid RLT a grant of £362k, with remaining losses coming from reserves. The net service budget for the current year is £408k as below. The site requires ongoing financial subsidy

	Total
Income	£615,500
Expenditure	-£878,900
Net operating position surplus / (subsidy)	-£263,400
Central costs	-£145,200
Net surplus / (subsidy)	-£408,600

Options Considered

- 4.7 All options have been assessed and modelled over 15 years to enable like for like comparisons. Options assume funding via borrowing, with associated costs for capital repayments.
- 4.8 **Option 1** assessed the costs of undertaking essential works to the Richmond Pool. Under this option gym equipment would also be replaced as part of the wider Leisure Investment Strategy proposals which is due to be considered by the Executive in November. Works proposed include the following and would take up to 6 months to complete:
- Works identified as urgent or required in years 0-2 in the building fabric asset condition survey
 - Works identified as urgent or required in years 0-2 in the mechanical and electrical condition survey
 - Pool plant works identified in relation to the pool filtration systems.
- 4.9 Essential works would cost £1.2 million and the financial modelling for this option is shown below. Undertaking these works would enable the pool to reopen for customer use, although would not entail any widescale improvements or reconfiguration to the facility. Gym equipment would be replaced, however, the layout of Liberty Gym would remain sub optimal.

	Option 1	
	15-Yr Total	15-Yr Average
Income		
Total income	£10,664,886	£710,992
Expenditure		
Total expenditure	(£14,565,436)	(£971,029)
Net operating position surplus / (subsidy)	(£3,900,549)	(£260,037)
Lifecycle costs	(£1,375,511)	(£91,701)
H&F equipment costs	(£833,041)	(£55,536)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs and FF&E	(£6,109,102)	(£407,273)
Capital repayments	(£1,821,603)	(£121,440)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs, FF&E and capital repayments	(£7,930,704)	(£528,714)

4.10 Options 2, 3a and 3b looked at various alternative configurations for the building and options for more significant capital investment. Given the capital costs and revenue implication none of these options were financially viable for the Council, nor proportionate given the levels of usage and the presence of a large alternative facility at Catterick.

4.11 **Option 2** includes essential work plus refurbishment of the changing rooms and accessibility improvements at a capital cost of c£4.35m. Financial modelling is shown below.

	Option 2	
	15-Yr Total	15-Yr Average
Income		
Total income	£11,073,785	£738,252
Expenditure		
Total expenditure	(£14,565,436)	(£971,029)
Net operating position surplus / (subsidy)	(£3,491,651)	(£232,777)
Lifecycle costs	(£1,269,762)	(£84,651)
H&F equipment costs	(£833,041)	(£55,536)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs and FF&E	(£5,594,454)	(£372,964)
Capital repayments	(£6,715,957)	(£447,730)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs, FF&E and capital repayments	(£12,310,412)	(£820,694)

4.12 Option 3a modelled the reconfiguration of the teaching pool to increase the health and fitness offer within the main building, which could have released the current Liberty building (which is leased). This was estimated at a capital cost of £7.24million and would have converted the pool space and created a two level mezzanine to include studio, spin and 34 station gym, alongside refurbishment of the changing and installation of a pool pod to improve accessibility.

4.13 Financial modelling for option 3a is shown below:-

Option 3A		
Income	15-Yr Total	15-Yr Average
Total income	£13,163,552	£877,570
Expenditure		
Total expenditure	(£12,915,055)	(£861,004)
Net operating position surplus / (subsidy)	£248,496	£16,566
Lifecycle costs	(£1,204,693)	(£80,313)
H&F equipment costs	(£864,112)	(£57,607)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs and FF&E	(£1,820,309)	(£121,354)
Capital repayments	(£11,173,025)	(£744,868)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs, FF&E and capital repayments	(£12,993,334)	(£866,222)

4.14 Option 3b modelled an option to reconfigure the whole site as health and fitness space plus flexible office/other space, without any pool space. This was estimated at c£11m, with a 32 person studio, spin studio, 75 station gym, refurbishment of changing and public areas and the creation of a mezzanine level to create 2 additional flexible space.

4.15 The financial modelling for option 3b is shown below.

Option 3B		
Income	15-Yr Total	15-Yr Average
Total income	£13,005,735	£867,049
Expenditure		
Total expenditure	(£9,972,651)	(£664,843)
Net operating position surplus / (subsidy)	£3,033,085	£202,206
Lifecycle costs	(£1,119,679)	(£74,645)
H&F equipment costs	(£855,536)	(£57,036)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs and FF&E	£1,057,870	£70,525
Capital repayments	(£16,902,192)	(£1,126,813)
Operating surplus / (subsidy) including lifecycle costs, FF&E and capital repayments	(£15,844,322)	(£1,056,288)

4.16 Option 4 would result in the permanent loss of the facility and the demolition of an attractive building. Under this option Liberty would be retained for the remaining lease period (2031) to be reviewed after that point. Demolition costs are estimated at c£400k.

4.17 Option 5 examined the market for an alternative use either as a long lease rental or sale. Whilst this could potentially provide a financial return for the Council and the productive reuse of the building, the market was uncertain, without a clear and viable alternative use. This has the potential for a long period of uncertainty around an empty building, with subsequent costs and negative impact of the surrounding environment.

4.18 A summary of the options, alongside an assessment of service benefits and impact on users is shown below:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3A	Option 3B	Option 4	Option 5
Capital cost	£1.18M	£4.35M	£7.24M	£10.96M	£396.5K	£0 (sale) c. £1M (rent)
Revenue implications	£7.9M – 15yr total £529K annual average	£12.3M – 15yr total £821K annual average	£13.0M – 15yr total £866K annual average	£15.8M – 15yr total £1.06M annual average	£481K – 15yr total £32K annual average*	n/a (sale) +£37.2K p.a. (rent)
Service / user / AWB benefits						
Displacement of users / unmet demand						
Assumed opening	Apr 2026	Apr 2026	Oct 2026	Dec 2026	n/a	n/a

4.19 Overall option 1 is preferred. Of the options that retain the asset for operational use (option 1 to 3B), option 1 has the lowest on-going annual cost to the Council. There is no financial return from investing in the pool beyond the essential repairs. Options 4 and 5 significantly reduce, or eliminate, the on-going financial commitment, however with a negative impact on the service users and come with a number of risks, as set out above.

5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

5.1 Consultation was also undertaken in relation to the options appraisal for Richmond Pool, with over 2200 responses received. A petition was also received by the Richmond Area Committee in September. These show strong feelings about the potential closure of the pool and widespread support for reopening the pool with essential repairs. Key headlines from the survey are summarised below:

- 53% (1208) used the facility at least once a week
 - 46% for general swimming / 9% swimming lessons / 7% aquafit
 - 7% sauna / 8% spectator / 5% club user / 18% gym/class
- 74% very important, 17% moderately important
- 60% drove to the facility / 32% walked
- 79% stated their activity levels were slightly lower (31%) or a lot lower (48%) since closure
- Over half had used an alternative facility (47% had not)
 - 28% Catterick / 10% Dolphin Centre / 6% Northallerton / 4% Active Life (Scotch Corner) / 3% Bedale / 2% Teesdale / 1% Thirsk
- What stopped people from using alternatives was too far (38%) / too difficult to get to (26%) / times of classes (13%) / offer not what was wanted (10%) / too expensive (9%) / didn't know about alternatives (3%)

5.2 Richmond (Yorks) Area Committee received a petition opposing the threatened closure of Richmond Pool on 15 September 2025. The Committee unanimously agreed that they wished for the pool to remain open and supported the recommended option 1 to undertaken essential repairs and reopen the pool.

5.3 The options appraisal is also scheduled to be considered by the Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2025 and a verbal update of their recommendations can be provided at the Executive meeting.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

6.1 The provision of inclusive and accessible active well-being facilities contributes to Council ambitions to support thriving places and ensure people are safe, healthy and living well.

7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 A range of alternative options have been considered as outlined in section 4 above.

8.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

8.1 The proposals in this report have been developed as part of the wider Strategic Leisure Programme, supported by the Council's Project Management Team and in partnership with key Council services including Finance and Property/Estates.

8.2 The Property team will take the lead in developing and implementing a programme of works to undertake the required works as quickly as possible.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial modelling has been undertaken in respect of each of the options set out above. This was undertaken over a 15-year period, taking into account potential capital costs and revenue implications including capital repayments.

9.2 From a financial perspective, of the options that invest in the operational asset (Options 1 to 3B), the option that has the lowest on-going annual cost to the Council is Option 1, at an average of £529k per annum. There is no financial return from investing in the pool beyond the essential repairs that are set out in paragraph 4.8. Options 4 and 5 significantly reduce, or eliminate, the on-going financial commitment, however with a negative impact on the service users and come with a number of risks, as set out earlier in the report. Taking non-financial factors into consideration, Option 1 has been identified as the preferred option, as set out in paragraph 4.19, and this option involves undertaking essential repairs at a cost of £1.2m. The proposal is to fund this from the Council's Strategic Capacity Unallocated reserve.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Any expenditure in relation to the works and repairs will be spent in accordance with the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules and, to the extent applicable, the Procurement Act 2023 or the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 An EIA screening has been completed. There are no significant implications as the proposed option maintains an existing facility, however, the reopening of the pool will enable access to the facilities to be maintained. See Appendix A.

12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 A climate change impact screening assessment has been completed. There are no significant implications as the proposed option reopens an existing pool facility. See Appendix B.

13.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 13.1 The Richmond Pool facility has been considered within the context of a large more modern leisure centre within a couple of miles of the site. This clearly impacts demand and given the capacity of Catterick this facility is likely to meet the core leisure needs of the local population. Although Richmond Pool is expected to operate more efficiently and benefit from the economies of scale from being part of the larger Active North Yorkshire service, it will still require considerable ongoing subsidy.
- 13.2 However, Richmond Pool does serve an important local population and the results from the consultation show the value placed on the facility. The site also plays an important role for local swimming clubs. It is also the case that there is not a clear alternative use for the site, market conditions and alternative uses are uncertain and could result in a lengthy period with an empty building and associated costs and community concern. Having considered carefully all of the options the recommendation is that **option one is preferred** and that essential works are undertaken to the pool to enable it to reopen as quickly as possible.

14.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 14.1 To enable works to be undertaken to Richmond Pool and for it to fully reopen for community use.

15.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 15.1 That essential repairs are undertaken to a value of approximately £1.2m, funded from the Strategic Capacity Unallocated reserve, to enable Richmond Pool to reopen to the public.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A : Equalities Impact Assessment Screening
Appendix B : Climate Change Screening

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

- Asset conditions surveys
- Richmond Leisure and WellBeing Hub Summary Findings (consultation)
- Options Appraisal: Richmond Swimming Pool

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.