



REPORT TO CABINET

DATE OF MEETING	8 September 2026
REPORT TITLE	Future Swimming Provision for West Norfolk
LEAD MEMBER	Cllr Simon Ring – Deputy Leader of the Council
LEAD OFFICER	Honor Howell – Strategic Advisor to the Chief Exec and Leader
CONSULTEES	Cllr Simon Ring, Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, Section 151 Officer. Assistant Director Leisure, Leisure, Member Working Group
WARDS AFFECTED	North Lynn

KEY DECISION	YES
DECISION MAKER	Recommendations to Council
IS THE REPORT OPEN OR EXEMPT	Open

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	YES
HR IMPLICATIONS	NO
POLICY IMPLICATIONS	NO
STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS	YES
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	YES
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS	NO
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPLETED	CONFIRM PRE-SCREEN COMPLETED AND IF FULL EIA REQUIRED AND COMPLETED

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council has completed a feasibility assessment into the future provision of swimming facilities to replace the existing St James Swimming Pool, which has now reached the end of its economic life.

Whilst the current facility continues to operate, increasing maintenance requirements, ageing infrastructure and rising operation costs mean it no longer represents a sustainable long-term asset.

The feasibility work has concluded that a standalone swimming pool, located at Lynnsport on the land currently occupied by the model railway represents the preferred option. This approach offers greater design flexibility, reduced construction risk and less disruption to existing leisure services during delivery and



the opportunity to develop a modern, energy-efficient facility capable of meeting the needs of residents, schools, clubs and the wider community.

The report seeks Cabinet and Council approval to allocate **£845,609.17** to progress the project through RIBA Stages 2 and 3, enabling the detailed design, technical investigations, planning work and cost planning required to develop the full business case. The outcome of this work will provide Cabinet and Council with the information required to determine whether the project should proceed to construction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet resolves to:

1. Recommend to Council to approve the allocation of a maximum of **£845,609.17** to progress the project to build a standalone 8x25m swimming pool with learner pool and splash pad to RIBA Stages 2 and 3.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Strategic Advisor to the Chief Executive and Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Business to enter into a Leisure Access Agreement to progress the project to RIBA Stage 3.
3. Note that a future report will return with the full business case in March 2027 for a final decision on whether to proceed with the project.

Recommendation to Full Council:

1. Approve the allocation of a maximum of **£845,609.17** from reserves to fund the new Lynnsport Project through to RIBA Stage 3.
2. Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, to determine the appropriate reserve to fund the work.

REASON FOR DECISION

To progress the project to build a new standalone swimming pool at Lynnsport to RIBA Stage 3 to provide the Council with the final design, project cost-certainty and business case to provide members with the information required to determine whether to proceed to the construction of the new pool.

The timing of this decision reflects both the condition of the existing facility and the maturity of the work undertaken to date. St James Swimming Pool is continuing to



deteriorate, with increasing maintenance requirements, rising operating costs and a growing risk to the long-term continuity of swimming provision. Progressing to the next steps now will maintain project momentum and preserve the value of the work already undertaken.



CORPORATE STRATEGY

How does this proposal support our Corporate Priorities [Our priorities | Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk](#)

Promote growth and prosperity to benefit West Norfolk	Investing in high-quality leisure infrastructure that enhances the borough's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit, whilst supporting the local economy through construction and associated social value.
Protect our Environment	Enabling the design of a modern, energy-efficient facilities that incorporates low-carbon technologies, reduces operational energy consumption and improves environmental performance compared with the existing pool.
Efficient and effective delivery of our services	Replacing an ageing facility with one that is more reliable, cost-effective and resilient, reducing ongoing maintenance liabilities and improving the customer experience.
Support our communities	The project will safeguard access to swimming for residents of all ages, enabling schools to deliver curriculum swimming, providing opportunities for clubs and community groups and promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion across the borough.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Swimming is one of the Council's most important leisure services, supporting health and wellbeing, rehabilitation, school swimming, club development and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in physical activity.
- 1.2 The existing St James Swimming Pool in King's Lynn has served the borough for many years. However, the building has now reached the end of its economic life. The age and condition of the facility mean that increasingly significant investment is required simply to keep it operational. Maintenance costs continue to rise, the building is becoming less efficient to operate, and there is an increasing risk of unplanned failures affecting service delivery.
- 1.3 Whilst ongoing maintenance can prolong the life of the facility in the short term, it does not represent a sustainable long-term solution. The council therefore needs to consider a solution to replace the existing pool with a modern, efficient facility



capable of meeting the needs of residents and providing the water-space requirement as set out in the 2025 Sports Facilities Strategy.

2. Background

- 2.1 In December 2024, Cabinet resolved to carry out initial feasibility and design work to investigate the potential relocation of St James Swimming Pool to an alternative town centre location or at Lynnsport.
- 2.2 The feasibility study concluded that there were no other potential town centre sites which would be suitable to accommodate the new pool and recommended that the swimming pool should be relocated to Lynnsport, together with a wider refurbishment project to accommodate the new pool. This recommendation was approved by Cabinet and Council in July 2025. Work to progress this option to RIBA Stage 3 took place between August and November 2025.
- 2.3 The RIBA Stage 3 work included highways impact, environmental assessments and mechanical/electrical (M&E) strategies together with a comprehensive consultation and engagement process. This included staff, clubs, including swimming, gymnastics, bowls, schools, national governing bodies, as well as engagement with members and users of the facilities. This feedback was analysed and the plans were adapted in response to the consultation.
- 2.4 Following a review of the capital programme by the Section 151 Officer in autumn 2025, it was determined that additional pressures from other capital projects would impact on the affordability of the new swimming pool at Lynnsport. The estimated cost of the project was circa £46m. These additions to the Capital Programme, along with the still high cost of borrowing would impact on the affordability of the swimming pool project. Financial modelling revealed a significant disparity between borrowing for a refurbishment project versus a new build. Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing must be repaid over the life of the asset, whilst a new build allows for a longer repayment period. As a refurbishment project, this carried a shorter maximum borrowing term. The project at that point relied heavily on refurbishing and co-locating within an existing building; the reduced repayment window resulted in higher annual revenue costs to repay in comparison to a standalone new build.
- 2.5 At the same time, the feedback received through the consultation and engagement process demonstrated that the proposed new facilities would not provide enhanced facilities at Lynnsport due to the space constraints. Whilst upgraded facilities were welcomed, it was clear that both the swimming and



gymnastics clubs would not be able to grow their clubs within the constraints of the new development.

- 2.6 Compounding this point was the major concern regarding the extensive disruption and impact on existing service users whilst the refurbishment took place. In terms of the business case, relocating the swimming pool into Lynnsport would provide the best return on investment, but the consultation responses demonstrated an unacceptable level of service disruption which contributed to the decision to pause the project.
- 2.7 Following consultation with the members of the working group, a decision was taken to utilise the budget remaining for the project to carry out a feasibility study for a standalone swimming pool at Lynnsport. This work has now concluded. A copy of the Feasibility Study is attached at **Appendix A**. Please note that the Feasibility Study is an *Exempt* item.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The feasibility study has investigated the option of a standalone swimming pool located on the Lynnsport site, on the land currently occupied by the model railway.
- 3.2 This option would provide a purpose-built leisure facility, designed specifically around modern swimming provision, whilst maintaining operational links with the existing Lynnsport site.
- 3.3 A standalone facility offers several strategic advantages, including:
- Significantly reduced disruption to existing leisure services during construction
 - Greater design flexibility to create a modern, energy-efficient building
 - Opportunities to incorporate future low-carbon technologies
 - A more efficient construction programme
 - Reduced construction risk
 - The ability to retain existing leisure provision throughout the build period
 - The opportunity to create a high-quality leisure destination capable of serving our communities for many decades
- 3.4 The proposed new facility incorporates:
- A 25m, 8 lane swimming pool



- A 17m, 4 lane teaching pool with moveable floor
- Children's water play / splash pad
- Associated changing provision
- Reception, vend and spectator areas
- Additional car parking
- Access road and service area

3.5 The strategic need for a replacement swimming pool is acknowledged due to the significant and ongoing issues with St James Swimming Pool. The pool continues to deteriorate despite ongoing maintenance. The Council faces increasing maintenance liabilities, growing operational risks and rising energy costs associated with an ageing building.

3.6 A replacement facility would:

- Safeguard the long-term provision of public swimming
- Ensure continued delivery of statutory school swimming
- Support public health and wellbeing priorities
- Improve accessibility and inclusivity
- Reduce carbon emissions and operating costs through modern building standards
- Create a more resilient and financially sustainable leisure offer; and
- Provide a modern facility capable of supporting community use, clubs and competitive swimming.

Without investment in a replacement facility, there is an increasing risk that the existing pool will become economically unsustainable to operate.

3.7 The estimated cost of the standalone swimming pool is **£22,930,233**.

4 Options Considered

4.1 **Do nothing (not recommended)**. Under this option, the Council would continue to operate the existing swimming pool with only essential maintenance and repairs.

Whilst this option would avoid significant capital expenditure in the short term, it would not address the fundamental issue that the existing facility has reached the end of its economic life. Maintenance costs are expected to continue to increase, the risk of mechanical or structural failure will grow, and there is an increasing likelihood of unplanned closures affecting customers, schools and clubs. The building is also increasingly inefficient to operate, resulting in higher



energy consumption and greater revenue pressures. Ultimately, this option is likely to lead to an unplanned closure of the facility and the loss of swimming provision within the borough.

4.2 Continue with an integrated pool within Lynnsport (not recommended).

This option would continue with the previously developed proposal to incorporate a new swimming pool within the existing Lynnsport Leisure Centre. Detailed feasibility work has shown this option is technically possible but presents significant challenges, including extensive disruption to existing services during construction, higher construction risks, constraints imposed by the existing building footprint, along with affordability concerns.

4.3 Develop a Standalone Swimming Pool Adjacent to Lynnsport (Recommended).

This option would deliver a purpose-built, swimming pool within the existing Lynnsport complex, therefore maintain strong operational links with the existing leisure centre. This approach provides the greatest opportunity to develop a modern, energy efficient facility with reduced construction risk and minimal disruption to existing leisure services.

4.4 Cease Providing Swimming Facilities (not recommended). The Council could decide to withdraw from the provision of swimming facilities once the existing pool reaches the end of its operational life.

Whilst this would remove future capital and operational costs associated with swimming, it would have significant consequences for residents, schools, swimming clubs and public health. It would also represent a major reduction in the Council's leisure offer and would negatively impact participation in physical activity across the borough.

4.5 The request for funding to progress the project for a new swimming pool is not simply a decision about replacing an ageing building. Swimming is a vital public health, wellbeing and community service. It will provide accessible opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to be active, supports physical and mental wellbeing and offers a safe and inclusive space for families, schools, clubs and community groups. Crucially, a local pool enables children and adults to learn to swim and develop water safety skills that can save lives. Without sustained investment, there is a real risk that the borough will lose both swimming capacity and the ability to provide these essential opportunities locally.

4.6 Whilst the council does not have a statutory obligation to provide a swimming pool, the availability of local swimming facilities is essential in enabling schools to fulfil their statutory duty to deliver Key Stage 2 curriculum swimming. The Council's leisure facilities play a significant role in supporting schools to meet these requirements, while also delivering wider benefits for public health, wellbeing, community participation and water safety.



5 Financial Implications

5.1 Overview of project costs and funding

The feasibility study has concluded the estimated cost of the project to be circa **£22,930,233**, inclusive of construction, fees and contingency. This would be funded through capital borrowing.

- 5.2 Cabinet and Council are not being asked to approve the construction of a new swimming pool, nor to commit to the full capital cost of the project at this stage. Instead, approval is being sought for £845,609.17 to enable the project to progress through RIBA Stages 2 and 3. This funding will support the development of the detailed design and provide for the technical investigations, site surveys, planning activities, cost planning and specialist professional services required to develop a robust and evidence-based business case. **Importantly, the £845,609.17 forms part of the current estimated project cost of £23 million and is not additional to that figure.** The expenditure represents the next phase of project development and will contribute towards the overall project budget should the scheme ultimately proceed. Completion of these stages will ensure that Cabinet and Council are able to make a fully informed decision on the future of the project, supported by detailed design, greater cost certainty and a clear understanding of project risks and opportunities.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the £845,609.17 required to undertake this work is funded from the Council's earmarked capital project reserve. The reserve has been established to support the development and delivery of capital projects, and its use for this purpose will enable the Council to further develop the scheme and obtain greater certainty regarding scope, costs, risks and deliverability before any decision is taken on construction.
- 5.4 The funding requested through this report relates solely to the development phase of the project and does not commit the Council to proceeding with the construction of a new swimming pool. Should Council approve the funding, the outcome of the RIBA Stage 2 and 3 works will be used to prepare a detailed business case, including updated capital cost estimates, revenue implications, project risks and affordability assessments.
- 5.5 A further report will be presented to Cabinet and Council on completion of RIBA Stages 2 and 3. That report will set out the detailed scheme design, confirmed project costs and a recommended funding strategy for the construction phase, including consideration of the appropriate balance of borrowing, reserves, capital receipts, external funding and any other available funding sources. A



decision on whether to proceed with the construction will be subject to separate approval.

- 5.6 Approval of the development funding will ensure that any future decision regarding the construction of a replacement swimming pool is supported by a fully developed scheme and a comprehensive assessment of costs, risks, affordability and funding options, thereby enabling Council to make an informed investment decision.

6 HR Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

7 Policy Implications

- 7.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

8 Climate Change and Environmental Implications and considerations

- 8.1 There are no Climate Change or Environmental plication arising from this report.

9 Statutory and Legal Implications

- 9.1 None

10 Local Government Reorganisation Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report as Council is being asked to approve the funding to progress the project through RIBA Stages 2 and 3. This work will further develop the proposed scheme and provide the information necessary to inform a future investment decision.
- 10.2 Cabinet and Council should also note the changed strategic context arising from the pause in Local Government Reorganisation announced on 7th September 2026. As a result, responsibility for determining whether and how this project proceeds will now likely rest with this council alone. Cabinet and Council will therefore consider the future of swimming provision in West Norfolk



on its own merits and in light of this own Council's responsibilities, priorities and financial position, reflecting the needs of our residents and communities.

11 Health and Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no Health and Safety implications arising from this report.

12 Consultees

- 12.1 Cllr Simon Ring, Kate Blakemore, Emma Kavanagh, Michelle Drewery. Siobhan Cleeve. Member Working Group.

13 Equality Impact Assessment

- 13.1 Pre-screening attached.

14 Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 The principal strategic risk of not progressing this project is that the Council could ultimately be unable to provide local public swimming provision. The existing swimming pool has reached the end of its economic life and delaying the development of a replacement increases the risk of unplanned failure, escalating maintenance costs and potential disruption to swimming provision for residents, schools and clubs.

15 Conclusion

- 15.1 The existing swimming pool has served the borough well for many years but has now reached the end of its economic life. Whilst ongoing maintenance has enabled the facility to remain operational, it does not provide a sustainable long-term solution. The Council therefore has a clear strategic decision to plan provision of swimming facilities to ensure that residents, schools, clubs and community organisation continue to have access to a modern, high-quality facility.
- 15.2 The feasibility work carried out to date has enabled the Council to review the available options and has identified that a standalone swimming pool located at Lynnsport as the preferred approach. This option offers the best opportunity to deliver a modern, energy efficient and operationally resilient facility whilst minimising disruption to existing leisure services during construction.



- 15.3 The recommendation to Council is limited to approving £845,609.17 to progress the project through RIBA Stages 2 and 3. This will allow the council to undertake the detailed design, technical investigations and cost planning required to inform the full business case and assessment of affordability, risks and delivery options. It does not, at this stage, commit the council to constructing a new swimming pool.
- 15.4 Approval of the funding will ensure the council is well placed to make an informed decision on the future of swimming provision, while recognising that any subsequent decision to proceed to construction will need to take account of the prevailing governance arrangements associated with Local Government Reorganisation and the Council's overall financial position.

Background Papers

[Cabinet Report December 2024](#)

[Cabinet/Council Report July 2025](#)

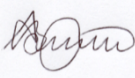
Appendix A – Standalone Swimming Pool at Lynnsport Feasibility Study

PRE SCREENING EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT				
For equalities profile information please visit Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory				
Name of policy/service/function	New Standalone Swimming Pool at Lynnsport to RIBA Stages 2 and 3			
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	New	X	Existing	
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	The Cabinet report outlines a project to replace St James Swimming Pool with a new, standalone 8 lane, 25m swimming pool with a 17m learner pool with moveable floor and a splash pad at Lynnsport at the location of the model railway. Whilst the council does not have a statutory obligation to provide a swimming pool, the availability of local swimming facilities is essential in enabling schools to fulfil their statutory duty to deliver Key Stage 2			



	curriculum swimming. The Council's leisure facilities play a significant role in supporting schools to meet these requirements, while also delivering wider benefits for public health, wellbeing, community participation and water safety				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only <i>(identify stakeholders consulted with)</i>	Extensive consultation with users, swimming club, Alive West Norfolk members, councillors, Member working group, Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team.				
Question	Answer				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group. <i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i> <i>*For more information on health inequalities please visit The King's Fund</i>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age	Y			
	Disability	Y			
	Sex			Y	
	Gender Re-assignment			Y	
	Marriage/civil partnership			Y	
	Pregnancy & maternity			Y	
	Race			Y	
	Religion or belief			Y	
	Sexual orientation			Y	
	Armed forces community			Y	
	Care leavers			Y	
	Health inequalities*	Y			
Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)	Y				
Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above: The new pool will have improved accessibility for disabled users. The Splash Pad can be used by wheelchair users giving greater accessibility.					



Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	NO	
If 'yes' to questions 2 - 3 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary: Decision agreed by EWG member: Amy Pearce.....		
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	No	Actions:
		Actions agreed by EWG member: Allison Bingham
5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	NO	Please provide brief summary
Assessment completed by:		
Name	Honor Howell	
Job title	Strategic Advisor to the Chief Exec and Leader	
Date completed	22.07.26	
Reviewed by EWG member		Date 24 th July 2026
✓ Please tick to confirm completed EIA Pre-screening Form has been shared with Corporate Policy (corporate.policy@west-norfolk.gov.uk)		



--	--