

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Town Hall, Assets and Services		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	16th September 2021	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Town Hall Manager – Mark Worthington		
AGENDA ITEM	10 Paddling Pool Update		
Background	<p>Due to Covid restrictions, the paddling pool was unable to open until 19th July 2021. In preparation for this date, existing pool staff received training in the Active IQ Level 3 Award in Operating Small Pools, and new pool attendants were recruited. During the Level 3 training, it became clear that a more robust Normal Operating Procedure for the daily water testing and maintenance would be required, along with an improved Emergency Action Plan and safety tests. The paddling pool received the annual pre-opening service which established that the existing circulation pump needed to be replaced. Due to a supply issue when purchasing the new circulation pump, the pump delivery date was longer than expected. This unavoidable delay led to the pool safety tests being delayed until the new circulation pump was installed and operational. The improved Normal Operating Procedure limited the number of people inside the pool area to 140, for this reason, a free, online booking system has been investigated to manage numbers attending the pool and to avoid the situation of needing to refuse access on the day due to capacity being reached.</p>		
Update	<p>The paddling pool opened on Monday 16th August 2021 with new Normal Operating Procedures and an online booking system. Opening hours have been split into two sessions, 10am – 1pm and 2pm – 6pm. This provides more people with the opportunity to book tickets and to enjoy the facility, as well as allowing a closed period between sessions to carry out water testing and pool maintenance. An online booking system has been implemented, provided by Omnify at a cost of £881 for a 12-month service plan. Other, free booking systems were considered, however, these were found to not offer the level of ticket management we required e.g. EventBrite does not limit how many tickets each person can register for, meaning the first person could book all 140 tickets. Omnify gives the option of limiting the number of tickets booked and how many sessions can be booked per week by an individual. The new ticket system and capacity of 140 people has been promoted through our social media and website. Feedback from users who have booked online and attended the paddling pool has been extremely positive. The table below features statistics gathered from the Omnify booking system as of 8th September 2021.</p>		

TOTAL REGISTRATIONS	TOTAL BOOKINGS	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	CW POSTCODE
4429	3742	1906	46%

Attendance at the paddling pool is dictated by the unpredictable weather, which is reflected in the difference between total bookings and total attendance. From the data we gathered using the Omnify booking system, 46% of bookings were made by residents in the Congleton postcode area. The appeal of the paddling pool attracted people from further afield, including Newcastle-under-Lyme, Longton and the Failsworth area of Manchester.

The reduced capacity and two sessions per day resulting from the introduction of the new Normal Operating Procedure (NOP) have already dramatically improved water quality, water test results and chemical management.

Upon closure of the paddling pool for this season, we'll generate a cost for the operation of the pool for 2022/23 based upon the new method of operation, these costs will include additional staff and training and capital costs for any upgrades to the existing pool. These costs will be reported back to the Town Hall, Assets and Services Committee on 4th November 2021.

As discussed at the Town Hall, Assets and Services Committee meeting on 1st July 2021, it was agreed to research options to improve/replace the paddling pool. Two Councils have been contacted to research the benefits of their decision to replace their ageing paddling pools with modern splashpads.

A splash pad or spray pool is a recreation area, often in a public park, for water play that has little or no standing water. This is said to eliminate the need for lifeguards or other supervision, as there is little risk of drowning.

Typically, these sites feature ground nozzles that spray water upwards out of the splash pad's rain deck. There may also be other water features such as a rainbow (semi-circular pipe shower), or mushroom- or tree-shaped showers. Some splash pads feature movable nozzles similar to those found on fire engines to allow users to spray others. The showers and ground nozzles are often controlled by a hand activated-motion sensor and will run for a limited time. The water used is either freshwater, or recycled and treated water, that is typically treated to at least the same level of quality as swimming pool water standards. These splash pads are often surfaced in textured non-slip concrete or non-slip rubber.

Amber Valley Borough Council in Derbyshire operate two Splashpads in Crossley Park and Heanor Memorial Park between May and September. The Crossley Park project was delivered in 2014 at a cost of £120k.

Following the success of the Crossley Park project it was decided to replace the seven-year-old Heanor Memorial Park paddling pool with a water play facility similar to the Crossley Park site.

The Heanor Memorial Park Splash Park opened in May 2019 and is situated in the footprint of the paddling pool it replaced and takes up an area of 80m². The paddling pool had reached the end of its economic life and had restricted use because of its design. The paddling pool had been very popular at Heanor Memorial Park for several generations. Amber Valley Borough Council embarked upon a procurement process to establish a new aquatic play facility for its community. Work started on site in October 2018 and the project was completed in February 2019, ready for opening in May 2019. The splashpad provides Heanor Memorial Park with an inclusive aquatic play facility for everyone to enjoy for decades to come. The paddling and splash concept provide Heanor with much more aquatic play value and an extended aquatic play season. The water management system is a flow through system that draws directly from the mains, with an additional tank to collect and recycle water for irrigation. Water from the mains supply flows through the water features only twice before being collected in a tank for recycling. The recycled water is then used for plant irrigation throughout the park also supplies water for the Council operated road sweepers. Effectively one supply of water feeds Heanor's aquatic play facility and Heanor's plants. The system requires no chemicals to be added to the water which offers a considerable financial saving as well as the positive environmental impact of being able to recycle the water for irrigation. As the splashpad features no pool of water, the risk is massively reduced which negates the need for a pool attendant to be on site throughout the day offering a further substantial saving. The site is checked every morning by Council staff who are based at Heanor Memorial Park, before automatically switching on using a timer system and then automatically turning off at night. Due to the simplicity of the system, it is easy to open the facility earlier in the year, if weather permits, or remain open for an extended period at the end of the season.

The Heanor Memorial Park splashpad was installed by Ustigate Waterplay of Dartford at a cost of £150,000 and opened in May 2019. The site features fewer water apparatus than the Crossley Park site as it was felt this would create a more inclusive user experience based on feedback gathered from users of the Crossley Park splashpad. Pictures below are of the Heanor Memorial Park Splashpad.

I have been in contact with the Building and Open Spaces Manager for Amber Valley Borough Council who managed the procurement process for both the Crossley Park and Heanor Memorial Park splashpad projects. Both sites have been a huge success for Amber Valley Borough Council, not only making a financial saving on the operations of the previous paddling pools but also creating a safer, more environmentally friendly aqua facility.



Great Yarmouth Borough Council have also been contacted as they have recently replaced their aging paddling pool with a modern Splash Pad which opened in May 2019.

The project included removal and disposal of the existing paddling pool and construction of a new Splash Pad with safety flooring and water features at a cost of £400,000. The contract for this project was won by Ustigate Water Play, Dartford <http://www.ustigatewaterplay.co.uk/> and involved major construction with underground tanks, pipework, and cables, plus a separate treatment plant with two storage tanks.

In addition, there are operational costs to consider, the site to be thoroughly cleaned down every morning, checking the water quality every two hours, adding chemicals as required and back-wash procedure in the evening. There is also a winter drain down and summer commissioning each year. The system is mostly automated but does require the two-hour manual checks. Unlike a paddling pool, there is no requirement for full time attendance as there is no standing water up to 150mm deep.





Decision Requested

1. To receive the report on new procedures and booking system at the paddling pool.
2. To request that officers undertake further feasibility work into the types, costs, and location options for a splashpad facility.

