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Officers' Reports



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ITEM: {item-no}

**City Planning and Infrastructure
City and Asset Planning
Keri New**

Purpose of Report: To provide an update on the progress of the Doveton Pool in the Park Master Plan and endorse next steps.

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Recommendation

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That:

- 1. Council, informed by the Doveton Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment, Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis and Open Space Assessment, adopt the position that an aquatic facility (pool) is not required at the Doveton Pool in the Park site and this position be used as a base for the development of the Master Plan for public open space at the site.**
- 2. Community and stakeholder engagement commence to support the development of a Draft Master Plan for the site to identify future components of the public open space.**
- 3. A Draft Master Plan be presented to Council following the community engagement process for public exhibition.**

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Officer General or Material Interest

No Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have a general or material interest in matters for consideration.

Council Plan Reference

- 1. People Driven**
- 1.2 A council whose services and facilities are driven by community needs**

Executive Summary

The Casey Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2019-41 prioritised the development of a master plan for the Doveton Pool in the Park (DPIP) site. The development of the Master Plan is underway with the finalisation of key assessments to inform the scope of the Plan. These assessments recommend:

- That an aquatics facility is not required at the site due to the accessibility of surrounding facilities

- There is a need for a centrally located open space as well as a lack of district level open space within Doveton-Eumemmerring
- The DPIP site has local heritage significance.

These findings will be used to scope the next round of community and stakeholder engagement to support the development of the Master Plan.

Background

On 20 August 2019, Council adopted the Casey Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2019-41 (the Strategy) to guide the provision of aquatic facilities for Casey. One of the recommendations of the Strategy was the development of a master plan to understand the future use of the DPIP site.

DPIP is a local seasonal outdoor aquatics facility, located at 64 Tristania Street Doveton, adjacent to Doveton College. DPIP opened in 1968 and was established following the strong promotion of swimming in Victoria after the 1956 Melbourne Commonwealth Games investment package.

DPIP is open from 1 December to 31 March from 11:30am to 7:30pm when the temperature is 30 degrees or greater. The facility includes a 50-metre pool, splash park, two learner's pools, water slides, café, BBQ and picnic facilities.

Visitation for 2019/20 was 3,717 (casual attendance) and 15,190 (swimming carnival attendance). The site had an operational loss of \$190,000 from July 2019 to March 2020. In addition, a further \$90,000 was spent on periodic scheduled and reactive maintenance that occurred in 2019/20. With ageing assets requiring renewal over the next 10 years the asset management forecast indicates that by 2026 major capital investment of \$1,940,000 will be required for works to the 50m pool, roofing, learners pool, toddlers pool and other items. This is to maintain the existing facilities and does not include any upgrade.

The purpose of the DPIP Master Plan (the Master Plan) is to guide future use, investment and development of DPIP, responding to current and future demands and community expectations, with high quality, affordable, accessible and economically sustainable facilities.

The development of the Master Plan commenced in October 2019 with broad community engagement and the development of a governance group. The project is governed by internal and external working groups including stakeholders from Doveton College, Colman Foundation, Our Place, Hallam Secondary School, Doveton Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Doveton Eumemmerring Township Association, and the YMCA Victoria (current facility manager).

Several stages of the project have been completed including initial community engagement, and completion of several targeted assessments, including Doveton Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment, Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis, Heritage Assessment, Open Space Assessment and site feature survey. Findings of this work are summarised below.

Doveton Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment

The Doveton Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment aimed to provide an understanding of the current and future community services and infrastructure needs within Doveton and Eumemmerring.

Within Doveton there are 12 Council community facilities and 32 non-Council community facilities/service. The facilities provide a 'network' across Doveton and deliver a range of services to meet community needs. The Assessment notes that one of the strengths of this network is the variety, range, and location of community facilities across Doveton, recognising that Autumn Place and DPIP both play an important strategic role.

By 2041 Doveton-Eumemmerring will see an additional 1,588 people living within the area. The Assessment found that an additional integrated community centre in Doveton is not required. Instead utilisation of existing facilities should be reviewed, and Autumn Place Community Hub Stage 2 (library site) should be delivered. Autumn Place Stage 2 is a key advocacy priority for Council and is included in the 10-year capital program. Maintaining the library facility at Autumn Place is preferred, recognising the anchor role this has for the small activity centre, synergies with the children's centre and public transport accessibility.

The report also provides examples of elements that could be accommodated at DPIP including youth specific spaces, flexible spaces, café, and learn to swim. The suggested elements to be accommodated on the DPIP will be further tested through the DPIP community consultation and master planning process.

Refer to Attachment 1 Doveton Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment

Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis

The Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis looked at access to aquatic facilities as well as aquatic facility options for the site. This resulted in the following outcomes.

Access to aquatic facilities

Casey's Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2019-41 (the Strategy) states that the primary catchment of major aquatic and leisure facilities is 5-kilometres, with trends indicating that approximately 80 per cent of users will reside within a 5-kilometre catchment zone from a facility, with the remaining 20 per cent residing within a 10-kilometre zone, secondary catchment.

The Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis applied these catchments to Doveton-Eumemmerring which identified that there was adequate aquatic facility provision (public and private) from surrounding sites, including Regional Facilities, Dandenong Oasis and Casey ARC both within a 5-kilometer radius of Doveton and Eumemmerring residents, and outdoor aquatic facility provision from Noble Park Aquatic Centre (NPAC) within a 7-kilometer radius. The inclusion of Dandenong Oasis and NPAC recognise that users are not restricted by municipal boundaries. This is particularly important given that Dandenong Oasis is approximately 3 kilometres away from DPIP and provides a much greater offering than DPIP. It is also important to note that of the identified public and private aquatic facilities within the 5-kilometer catchment, there are several learn-to-swim programs offered. Initial consultation with other sites has also suggested school carnivals can be catered for at other locations, therefore not reliant on DPIP.

Key findings from the membership data from Casey and the City of Greater Dandenong Aquatic and Leisure Facilities indicate that Doveton-Eumemmerring residents are already accessing Dandenong Oasis services such as learn-to-swim and health and fitness. In addition, Oasis provides competitive concession rates which are available for residents in Doveton and Eumemmerring. The data also showed that while residents in Doveton and Eumemmerring have lower aquatic participation rates than other Casey residents with similar access to aquatic and leisure facilities, the level of use of Dandenong Oasis for swimming lessons suggests that geographic accessibility for Doveton and Eumemmerring residents is reasonable.

DPIP outdoor 50m pool cannot run a learn to swim program due to inappropriate infrastructure provision for aquatic education and inclement weather for year-round programs. Upon the reopening of Council's aquatic services in December, to assist with aquatic education whilst Casey Arc is undergoing renovation, a reduced cost 'learn to swim' program was held in the toddler pool at DPIP for the month of January. This had extremely low uptake.

Aquatic facility options for the site

The demand analysis report provided Council with three options to consider. These options have then been overlaid with other considerations including the intent of Casey's Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2019-2041, DPIP's current annual operating costs, management and maintenance costs, findings from targeted assessments, proximity and redevelopment of Dandenong Oasis which services the Doveton and Eumemmerring community, proximity and renewal of Noble Park Aquatic Facility for school carnival use, provision of aquatic services and facilities within a 5-kilometer radius of DPIP, and Council's long term financial sustainability. The options and recommendations are summarised below.

Option 1 – Outdoor Aquatics

This option would include the replacement and enhancement of existing aquatic infrastructure to create a unique outdoor aquatic experience. Improved customer experience and increased general usage through the heating of all aquatic spaces and provision of extensive water play. Outdoor pool redevelopments could range in cost in the order of \$2 million - \$10.6 million depending on scope and would have a local catchment population of 10,000-40,000.

This option is not recommended based upon the following considerations:

- DPIP would continue to operate at a loss similar to current conditions (e.g. with additional heating costs not offset by increased patronage, inability to provide year-round access and inability to increase revenue through learn to swim programs).
- DPIP would continue to create an over provision of aquatic facilities and services given the proximity of NPAC and potentially have an impact on the viability of that outdoor facility.
- It does not guarantee increased lap swimming usage.
- The significant capital costs of redevelopment.

Option 2 – Indoor and Outdoor Aquatics

This option would aim to complement the outdoor facilities with a range of indoor aquatic facilities that would enhance whole of community usage. Generally indoor and outdoor aquatics facilities are more viable than just outdoor pools because they can include programs like learn to swim. An indoor and outdoor aquatic redevelopment could cost in the order of \$40 million depending on scope and would have a municipal catchment population of 70,000-100,000.

This option is not recommended based upon the following considerations:

- Indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities are district level facilities that cater for up to 100,000 people. Doveton-Eumemmerring has a population of 12,347 therefore this is not suitable for the catchment.
- This facility would have an impact upon the viability of Dandenong Oasis and Casey ARC given the proximity of these facilities, particularly if learn-to-swim was introduced at DPIP.
- There are private learn to swim operators within the 5-kilometre catchment of Doveton-Eumemmerring. In addition, the City of Greater Dandenong offer a concession to key services including learn-to-swim.
- There is significant risk that large losses would continue to be incurred given the substantial capital investment of redevelopment and small catchment.

Option 3 – No Aquatics – Water Play

This option would remove formal aquatics from the site and provide free community access to water play equipment alongside a park and social gathering space. This will enhance a sense of community, social connection and provide socialisation to water. This redevelopment could cost in the order of \$4 million depending on scope and would have a local catchment population of 10,000-40,000.

Some of the identified shortfalls from a 'no-aquatics' option would include the removal of a long-standing community asset, the need to relocate school carnivals to other facilities and the perceived limit of water play equipment for youth cohorts. A new park could also be attractive to a larger catchment, open 24 hrs, leading to negative perceptions of safety, increased pressure on car parking and local traffic, as well as having an untested market for water play by local residents.

This option is recommended based upon the following considerations:

- The ability to address the identified shortfalls through adequate aquatic provision for Doveton and Eumemmerring residents and effective design and consultation with the community on how the site is redeveloped.
- It presents a unique offering for the local community through provision of aquatic elements (water play) and other recreational and social opportunities.
- It would provide a space that all community members can enjoy with no entry cost reducing barriers to access.
- Relatively low capital costs to redevelop and minimal operating costs makes it a cost-effective option for ratepayers.

Refer to Attachment 2 Aquatic Facility Demand Analysis Report

Doveton and Eumemmerring Open Space Assessment

The Doveton and Eumemmerring Open Space Assessment identified two gap areas in walkability where residents do not have access to a park within 400m. The assessment also identified an undersupply of district level passive open space. District level parks generally service a larger catchment and are destination places that offer a range of recreational opportunities for all ages.

In order to close the centrally located open space gap and the lack of district level passive open space within Doveton-Eumemmerring, the Open Space Assessment recommends the DPIIP site be redeveloped into a district level open space. As per Council's Open Space Strategy a district level open space could encompass elements such as a play space, open grassed space, seating, paths, dog-off leash areas (subject to Council's Dog Friendly Spaces Policy), vegetation and may include infrastructure such as toilets, barbeques and car parking.

Refer to Attachment 3 Doveton and Eumemmerring Open Space Assessment

Heritage Assessment

Council engaged a heritage consultant to undertake a detailed heritage assessment of the site, including site history and a comparative analysis of the site to similar typologies within the municipality and more broadly throughout Victoria. The assessment identified that the site has local significance for historical and representativeness and recommends that Council include the site as an individually significant place in the Planning Scheme and Schedule to the Heritage Overlay.

Throughout the development of the concept and draft Master Plan for DPIP expert heritage advice will be sought to ensure the proposed redevelopment is respectful of the findings of the Heritage Assessment. This can be used to inform the heritage elements which could be included in a Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the future.

Refer to Attachment 4 – Heritage Assessment

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Council undertook broad community engagement in relation to what the community would like to see on the DPIP site in October 2019. This engagement has been considered when undertaking subsequent assessments. Further consultation will be undertaken to seek feedback as part of the Master Plan, with engagement to focus on the site amenities that the community would like to have.

Through the master planning process Council has engaged with key stakeholders such as Our Place, Doveton Eumemmerring Township Association, Doveton Neighbourhood Learning Centre and Doveton College, Hallam Secondary School and YMCA Victoria through regular governance stakeholder meetings. Through engagement in September 2019 Our Place and Doveton College expressed an interest in enhancing the range of services available at Doveton College and DPIP to create a new central hub for the Doveton community. To achieve this, they proposed relocating the Doveton Library from Autumn Place to DPIP, a new 25m 'indoor outdoor' pool, small infant pool and water play area, a fitness centre, canteen/commercial kitchen, medical and allied health offices and community meeting rooms spaces.

As indicated, Council has now finalised the additional background assessments required to scope the Master Plan with the findings confirming:

- Additional Council community facilities are not required within Doveton
- The library facility is to remain at Autumn Place
- No aquatics facility is required at DPIP due to adequate provision of aquatic services and facilities within a 5 and 10-kilometer radius of the site
- DPIP should be redeveloped as a district level park to address network and access issues within Doveton and Eumemmerring
- Heritage of the site needs to be considered within the redevelopment of the park

It is proposed that these findings and updated scope of the Master Plan will be used to engage and consult with the community and stakeholders across March and April 2021. The engagement will include a draft concept plan and a mixture of face-to-face and online activities, targeting existing users of the facility and underrepresented members of the community such as younger residents, CALD groups, older residents, neighbouring property owners and other key stakeholders.

It is expected that there will be considerable community and stakeholder interest in the project, and some may have concerns regarding the proposal to remove the pool. It is proposed that Council actively engage with all community members to ensure their voices are heard and seek to develop a draft Master Plan that incorporates elements that will best serve the Doveton community.

Once developed, the draft Master Plan will be presented Council before public exhibition that will allow for additional community feedback prior to adoption.

Refer to Attachment 5 – Community Engagement Report – October 2019

Financial Implications

Development of the DPIP Master Plan has been funded through Council's Public Open Space Reserve (Reserve) of \$2,171,400 set aside for future improvements to the site. The Master Plan is anticipated to cost \$240,000 (excluding GST).

Remaining funds in the Reserve account will be available to be allocated to implement the Master Plan which could cost in the order of \$4 million, subject to the outcomes of the concept plan. Ongoing maintenance and asset renewal requirements will need to be considered through the detailed design to ensure the site is financially sustainable over the long term.

Funding options such as grants and partnerships will also be considered during the development of the Master Plan as well as timeframes for delivery, including timing around decommissioning of the pool.

Conclusion

A range of reports have been finalised to guide the scope of the DPIP Master Plan. Findings from these reports indicate that there is not a need for an aquatics facility at the site, there is a need for increased district open space within Doveton Eumemmerring which the DPIP site could cater for, and heritage elements across the site will need to be incorporated in any redevelopment.

The next stage in the development of the Master Plan is to engage with the community and key stakeholders to test this scope and seek input into the redevelopment of the site.

Attachments

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