

Council to make final decision on Monday Pool in Stanley Street

By DI THOMAS

WODONGA Council is expected to decide on Monday to build the city's new multi-million-dollar aquatic centre on the site of the existing outdoor pool in Stanley Street.

However, the decision is likely to come down to a final debate among councillors leading up to Monday night's council meeting.

A recommendation to the meeting will favour Elgin Boulevard-Stanley Street over the other short-listed option at the White Box Rise estate to the south-east of the city.

The opportunities and benefits of developing the \$11 million first stage of the aquatic centre at Elgin Boulevard-Stanley Street are considered greater because of the option's social and community merit in building on the existing outdoor facility's historic connections and its links to the central business district.

The two options were short-listed three months ago by the council, pending the preparation of detailed investigations, schematic designs and full costings prior to Monday's meeting.

Already it seems most of the 250 members surveyed by the Wodonga Chamber of Commerce have selected the Elgin Boulevard-Stanley Street option ahead of the alternative.

Executive officer Mark Rosevear said full results of the chamber's survey would be made public today.

Monday's meeting will end an 11-month debate after the council decided to develop a \$26 million indoor pool centre at Willow Park last August, on advice from consultants SGL.

At Monday night's Wodonga budget forum Cr Brian Wicks alluded to the difficulty councillors faced in making a final decision, given the extent of the public debate.

"We'll never get it 100 per cent right as far as some people are concerned," he said.

Cr Wicks defended the council's use of consultants for projects including the aquatic centre.

"The city is preparing for the future and to do so one has to look both nationally and internationally," he said.

In April the council unanimously carried a recommendation that it permanently set aside its decision to place the centre at Willow Park.

However, five of the seven councillors sought further investigations for the two short-listed sites, even when a council report said the likely outcome would favour the Elgin Boulevard-Stanley Street site, which had been backed by Crs Jenny Hanuska and Anna Speedie.

The April meeting unanimously supported stage 1 as an outdoor facility with a 50m pool.

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