
Individual Cabinet Member Delegated Decision

Cabinet Member: Cllr Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council

Service: Leisure

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Reference: L-05-20

The opening of Wiltshire Leisure Centres during the COVID19 pandemic

Purpose of Report

1. To agree the way forward for the reopening of Leisure Centres in Wiltshire during the COVID19 pandemic, following the Government announcement and issue of guidance for reopening from 25 July 2020.
2. Agreement is sought for the following:
 - To reopen Centres to the following timeline:
 - Devizes, Nadder, Springfield, The Vale, Five Rivers, The Olympiad, The Activity Zone, Castle Place, Bradford Pool, Melksham Blue Pool, Warminster – August 2020
 - Marlborough, Lime Kiln, Westbury, Leighton – September 2020
 - Calne - November 2020
 - Trowbridge, Clarendon site – January 2021
 - To agree the reopening and management of Tidworth leisure with the MOD
 - That memberships at the in-house sites are managed so that:
 - All membership Direct Debits (DD) are reactivated from the date the members local facility reopens but members are given the option to request the continuation of a membership freeze until October 2020
 - Only DD members can access facilities for the first two weeks to test process, followed by non-direct debit memberships
 - Members that cancelled prior to the closure of facilities on 21 March are able to re-join within the first three months of centres opening without paying an administration fee.
 - Centres are managed on a cashless basis at this stage for the protection of staff and residents from the transmission of COVID19
 - Not to reopen creche facilities at Devizes, Marlborough and Five Rivers leisure sites at this stage.
 - Not to reopen cafe facilities at The Vale, Marlborough, Five Rivers, Nadder and Calne leisure sites at the stage.
 - Due to the restrictions on group swimming it is not possible to continue with the blanket under 16s free swimming at this stage.
 - A review of the in-house leisure team to meet the requirements of the reopened service.
 - To revise the Places Leisure's management fee to reflect the period leisure sites were closed, and to agree with Places leisure an open book accounting approach to agree the final payment for 2020/21.

- A variation to the Places Leisure contract is agreed to allow Places to revise pricing, programming and opening hours.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

3. Wiltshire Council operates 20 leisure centres across Wiltshire. 10 are managed by Places Leisure and 10 are managed by our in-house leisure team. The Leisure service seeks to support the residents of Wiltshire to live active and healthy lives, seeking to address issues such as childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes and to support aging well.
4. The proposals set out in this report seek to balance the need to reduce the financial impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the Council, while ensuring a COVID19 safe service is delivered. The proposals do this by reducing the service offer and offering innovative alternatives, building on the virtual offer developed during lockdown.

Background

5. Following Government direction on 20th March 2020 Wiltshire's 20 leisure facilities were closed until further notice because of COVID-19.
6. Over recent weeks Places Leisure and our in-house team have been preparing for the reopening of facilities following the government's announcement that leisure facilities can open from 25 July 2020.
7. In a recent survey conducted by the Wiltshire Council leisure team, 508 members responded, with 85% of those surveyed stating that they will use our facilities the same or more post-lockdown. In their own survey, Places Leisure have reported that 82% of their 30,000 customers that responded said they cannot wait to start using the centres again.
8. Reopening of the leisure facilities is complex due to the need to minimise the risk of infection of COVID19 and the financial constraints for both Places Leisure and the Council.
9. The reopening of leisure services must be considered within the whole context of Council services, ensuring we are taking an appropriate and where possible consistent approach to the reopening of services. Officers have sought to do this through the internal service mobilisation group, discussions at Gold, CLT and through CEO overview.
10. This context sets the following principles for the Council for leisure reopening:
 - **Ensuring the safety of all leisure users and staff.**
 - **Ensuring the income from leisure covers leisure operational costs and costs of reopening.**

Main Considerations for the Council

11. Within these principles we will not be able to open all leisure facilities at once nor all parts of all sites at once. Services will be introduced sequentially in line with government guidance. We anticipate this will be gym, group exercise, swimming, followed by racket sports, then swim school and gymnastics.
12. Opening times will be reduced, with bookable slots implemented to manage social distancing, cleaning regimes and staff costs. Sports halls and studios will be utilised for gym and group exercise classes, where appropriate. We are developing a business case for classes to be live streamed from Five Rivers and Springfield fitness studios to allow members to engage from

home.

13. Creches and Cafes will remain closed at this stage. Due to the restrictions on group swimming it is not possible to continue with the blanket under 16s free swimming at this stage. A review of the in-house leisure team will be undertaken to meet the requirements of the reopened service.
14. Whilst social distancing and COVID precautions are in place there is a need to minimise person to person contact and potential transmission contact points. To support this, it is recommended that the facilities are initially cashless on opening.
15. We will be delivering a very different leisure offer from our previous service, one that is safe, financially viable and seeks to continue to support Wiltshire residents to be active.
16. Within this framework Table 1 sets out our recommended programme for reopening.

Table 1: Recommended approach to leisure reopening

Mobilisation date	Sites
In house sites	
August 2020	Devizes Leisure Centre, Nadder Centre, Tisbury Springfield Community Campus, Corsham The Vale Community Campus, Pewsey Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre
Up to one month later	Marlborough Leisure Centre
On agreement with the MOD	Tidworth Leisure Centre – working with MOD and Aspire
Following review of early facility openings	Amesbury Sports Centre and Durrington Swimming Pool
November 2020	Calne Community Campus, on completion of capital works
Places Leisure sites	
August 2020	The Olympiad, Chippenham The Activity Zone, Malmesbury Bradford-on-Avon Swimming Pool Melksham Blue Pool Warminster Sports Centre Castle Place Leisure Centre, Trowbridge
September 2020	Leighton Recreation Centre, Westbury Westbury Swimming Pool Lime Kiln Leisure Centre
January 2021	Trowbridge Sports Centre – on completion of structural repairs. The sports hall will be made available to Clarendon School September

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

17. The report has been shared with the Chairman and Vice-chairman of Environment Select Committee

Safeguarding Implications

18. This proposal does not impact upon the safeguarding of children or adults at risk. Standard policies and procedures are already in place in respect of the safeguarding of children and adults within leisure facilities.

Public Health Implications

19. The re-opening of leisure centres and a thriving leisure service supports healthy communities and can provide opportunities to reduce social isolation and inequalities. Leisure facilities help people to take responsibility for their own health and there is a large body of evidence about the benefits of physical activity for both physical and mental health and wellbeing.
20. The options approach outlined in this report is in direct response to the COVID-19 situation and designed to ensure that leisure facilities are reopened in a safe way having regard to national guidance and only once Government guidelines have determined that it is safe to do so. Guidance will continue to be sought from the local Public Health team as these proposals are implemented.

Procurement Implications

21. Full support will be provided by the Procurement Team, who will work closely with the Service Area to ensure existing Contracts that support service delivery are reviewed and amended in line with Council Policy and our obligations under Public Contract Regulations 2015.
22. The Procurement Team will also provide support in the development of new innovative solutions that meet the changing needs of our customers.
23. PPE, Hygiene Products and other support products are currently being sourced by the Procurement Team aligned to Council wide efforts in support of our response to COVID.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

24. To understand and mitigate any impacts from these proposals a full Equality Impact Assessment is being carried out by officers. The EIA will be monitored and updated regularly as the implementation of the agreed proposal progresses.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

25. The continued closure of some leisure centres will result in a small reduction in carbon emissions for the council. Some residents may have to travel further to access a leisure centre which would result in a small increase in their transport-related emissions.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

26. There are financial and staffing risks around continuing to mothball leisure facilities.

These risks fall under the wider consideration of the Council's response to, and recovery from, the impact of Covid-19. If not mitigated by this plan than these risks would need mitigation in the medium-term by an alternative approach.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

27. There are clear Health and Safety risks around the opening of leisure services. These will be mitigated by following local and national guidance on the preparations required to ensure sites are Covid19 secure.
28. There are financial risks that the additional costs of ensuring sites are Covid19 secure and that providing services to fewer people makes these sites unviable. The careful preparation of this plan and the focus, rather than all leisure services, help to mitigate this risk.
29. There is a risk that income will not be achieved at sufficient levels to make the sites viable.
30. There is a risk that people will cancel their memberships when their direct debits are reinstated. Once members cancel we are no longer able to market to them. Providing members with the option to freeze memberships until October 2020 partially mitigates this risk.

Financial Implications

20/21 Financial Projections of the Facilities

31. The in-house leisure facilities were forecast to generate £7.770 million income with a targeted expenditure budget of £6.929 million for the financial year 2020/21. Facilities maintenance and utility costs for these sites were forecast to be £2.960 million (includes maintenance, utilities, water, NNDR and soft FM).
32. For Places Leisure sites, forecasts for 2020/21 were similar to those of Wiltshire Council. Facilities maintenance and utility costs for the Places Leisure sites are met by Wiltshire Council.
33. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on net position across all sites. As soon as the decision was made to close facilities, all memberships were frozen and bookings paused, effectively stopping all income generation. All indirect expenditure was ceased as far as practicable and furloughing of staff across Wiltshire Council and Places Leisure was implemented, leaving a skeleton of staff to manage building checks, communications with customers and planning for mobilisation.
34. If Leisure centres are not mobilised and remain closed for the whole financial year with no decision on redundancy, then the forecast year end position is £6.6 million. This is the complete loss of income of £7.770 million, non-delivery of the VAT saving £0.528 million, offset by Furlough Grant of £1.799 million (max grant April to Oct) and savings from sites being closed. In addition, there would be a £0.583 million saving on the Facilities Management budget from sites being closed.

35. Table 2 shows the forecast position of adopting the mobilisation plan outlined in this paper. The forecast shows an overspend on the Leisure Budget of £4.979 million and an underspend on Facilities Management as a result of sites being closed of £0.364 million.

Table 2: Forecast Position for Mobilisation Plan -

	Full Year Leisure Budget	Forecast	Variance	Furlough Grant	Variance	Full Year Facilities Management Budget	Forecast	Variance
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Leisure Management	0.049	0.419	0.370					
Transformation	0.000	0.020	0.020					
Leisure Management Total	0.049	0.439	0.390		0.390			
Pewsey Leisure Centre	0.011	0.342	0.332			0.301	0.278	-0.022
The Vale Café	0.015	0.007	-0.009					
Devizes Leisure Centre	-0.126	0.540	0.666			0.332	0.304	-0.028
Marlborough Leisure Centre	0.033	0.542	0.509			0.272	0.245	-0.027
Marlborough LC Café	0.022	0.040	0.018					
Tidworth Leisure Centre	-0.019	0.415	0.434			0.101	0.000	-0.101
Five Rivers Leisure Centre	-0.616	0.970	1.586			0.840	0.801	-0.039
Five Rivers LC Café	-0.009	0.088	0.097					
Tisbury Sports Centre	0.039	0.187	0.148			0.171	0.154	-0.017
Tisbury Outdoor Pool	0.007	0.016	0.010			0.024	0.020	-0.004
Amesbury Leisure Centre	-0.012	0.172	0.184			0.088	0.061	-0.027
Nadder LC Café	0.005	0.011	0.006					
Durrington Swimming Pool	-0.026	0.408	0.435			0.174	0.123	-0.051
Springfield Leisure Centre	-0.343	0.489	0.832			0.408	0.385	-0.022
Calne Leisure Centre	0.175	0.484	0.309			0.250	0.224	-0.026
Calne Leisure Centre Café	0.003	0.000	-0.003					
Leisure Centres Total	-0.841	4.713	5.554	-1.493	4.061	2.960	2.596	-0.364
Sports & Physical Activity	0.433	0.417	-0.016					
Sports & Physical Activity Grants	0.000	-0.050	-0.050					
Sports England funding	0.000	0.000	0.000					
Sport & Physical Activity Total	0.433	0.367	-0.066		-0.066			
Community Leisure Centres	0.078	0.090	0.012					
Leisure Centres (West)	-0.069	0.513	0.582					
Partnership Manager Total	0.009	0.603	0.594		0.594			
Total Budget	-0.350	6.122	6.473	-1.493	4.979	2.960	2.596	-0.364

Places Leisure Financial Modelling

36. Places Leisure have taken an initial corporate approach to modelling their July 2020 – March 2021 projections based on high level assumptions. This has considered the social distancing restrictions that will apply and using best judgment to predict increased participation, increased confidence and the necessary loosening of restrictive operational practices over the remainder of the year. Places Leisure have factored in their corporate opening schedule, with appropriate mitigations applied for contractual differences such as energy, maintenance, instructor costs.

37. More recently, Places Leisure have undertaken further detailed modelling that is specific to the Wiltshire contracts and which incorporates the following aspects:

- Projections on losses and potential participation data
- Continued furlough of appropriate staff until end of Oct where feasible

- Management of air circulation issues across sites, including partial opening of sites/ additional sites and movement of some gyms to sports halls/studios/squash courts
- Consideration to the Places Leisure survey responses

38. Places Leisure have concluded that it is more viable for them to re-open all sites on a phased approach as shown in table 1. Their modelling is also based on a corporate opening schedule for core business areas:

Phase 1: Gym and Group Ex

Phase 2: Swimming Pools (Lane Swimming, Aqua Classes and selected Swimming Clubs)

Phase 3: Racket Sports

Phase 4: Swim School

39. Health suites will remain closed at this stage. All other areas will open following advice from Government, UK Active and NGB advice. A variation to the Places Leisure contract is recommended to allow Places to revise pricing, programming and opening hours.

Legal Implications

40. As a result of Government guidance in respect of the Country dealing with the Covid19 pandemic leisure facilities within Wiltshire were required to be closed.

41. As the Country emerges from the pandemic the Government is relaxing its guidance and will authorise the re-opening of leisure facilities from 25th July. This proposed phased re-opening is designed to ensure that leisure facilities within Wiltshire are operated in accordance with government guidance and in a manner, which ensures that the health and safety of staff and attendees to the facility is maintained.

42. As the phased re-opening may adversely affect some residents it is appropriate that a full EIA is developed and monitored and regularly updated and full consideration is given to the Council's public sector equality duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

43. As some of the financial considerations involve commercially sensitive information in respect of both the Council and a supplier to the Council there is a legal basis for the cabinet member to determine that this financial information is information which is exempt from disclosure under paragraph 14.4.3 of Part 5 of Wiltshire Council's Constitution.

Workforce Implications

44. Throughout the covid-19 pandemic Wiltshire Council has followed national guidance regarding staff employment with the majority of staff working from home where possible. Where services have closed or staff have been unable to undertake their normal duties wherever possible they have been redeployed to other critical roles. However, within the leisure operations service the majority of staff have been

unable to be redeployed and have been furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

45. Reopening of the service will be complex as various locations/classes/services will be opening on a phased basis. Not all staff will return at the same time and some will remain furloughed or partially furloughed. As part of staff returning to workplaces the council will ensure that workplace assessments are conducted to ensure buildings are COVID-secure, together with risk assessments of work duties. Staff will only return to workplaces when all reasonable steps to mitigate risk have been put in place, in line with national guidance in relation to social distancing.
46. Where decisions are taken which will result in some elements of the service changing or not re-opening (e.g. creches) the relevant HR&OD procedures will apply and formal consultation will commence with affected staff.
47. There may be TUPE implications for catering staff if an alternative provider is sought. This will be managed through compliant TUPE processes.

Proposal

48. To undertake a programme of reopening Wiltshire Council indoor leisure facilities from early August in line with Government and public health guidance.

Reason for Proposal

- Mobilise the leisure service
- Mobilise safely
- Mobile sustainably

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Date of report: 20/07/20

Appendices

No appendices

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

No background papers