

Cabinet Meeting on 7 July 2014

Draft Minute

37. TRANSFORMATION OF LEISURE SERVICES SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES PRICING STRUCTURE

Councillor Chris Meaden introduced a report by the Strategic Director Families and Wellbeing which stated that, in September 2013, Cabinet approved the outline of the Leisure Transformation Plan, which required savings in excess of £2m to be delivered by the end of financial year 2015/16. Considerable progress had been achieved including the development of a £2m capital improvement scheme which would see major improvements to Leisure Centres in the upcoming year.

Current prices for activities at the leisure facilities were very competitive when compared to other local authorities in the area and the discounts provided by the Council in the form of concessions were amongst the most generous in the region. At present, all of the discounts were available to everyone, whether or not they lived in Wirral. Even after the proposed changes, the Council would still be offering generous concessions when compared to other local authorities in the region.

The Council was determined to make all leisure facilities accessible and affordable and to continue to protect the most vulnerable people in the area. The challenge was how to maximise income (especially at peak times), without making the facilities unaffordable to those for who price is a genuine barrier to access.

The current pricing policy had evolved over many years, and was quite complex and needed to be simplified. Prices needed to be standardised across all Leisure Centres and the Council needed to be able to promote a very competitive and fair membership offer, which also allowed the Leisure Centres to maximise income from those who could afford to pay a fair market price.

At present, anyone over 60 or under 18 receives a discount (currently up to 50%), irrespective of where they live. Almost all local authorities now only offered major concessionary discounts to local residents.

The report identified a range of proposals which would increase the income generated at the Leisure Centres whilst achieving the Council's commitment to protect the most vulnerable and continue to offer some of the most generous special discounts to targeted groups of local people at specified times. If accepted, the new pricing policy would help to reduce the leisure subsidy further, but would also provide excellent value for money in facilities which will see over £2m of major investment from the Council within the next twelve months.

Price was not the main consideration when promoting the use of Leisure Centres for sport and physical activity to inactive people. The service needed to maximise revenue to ensure that the Council can continue to improve quality and afford to deliver the £2m investment programme and have sufficient funding to provide a

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range of highly targeted promotions and other activities which will encourage more local people to improve their health and wellbeing.

If implemented, the changes were anticipated to deliver an additional £500,000 worth of income between implementation and the end of the financial year 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the general approach and key principles, as set out below be approved as follows;

- **Identify and deliver changes to the pricing and concessions policy that can deliver additional income of £500,000 by the end of 2016/17 as part of the Leisure Transformation Programme and savings requirement of £2m.**
- **Maximise the revenue that can be generated from the increase in quality and capacity that will be delivered by the £2m investment programme.**
- **Preserve the Council's commitment to providing high quality facilities and services which are affordable and accessible.**
- **Target concessions at people who live in Wirral.**
- **Target concessions at those for whom price is a genuine barrier to access.**
- **Simplify and standardise prices for all casual pay and play activities so that the pricing policy can be communicated and marketed far more effectively.**
- **Provide a discount of at least 25% on pay and play activities for Older People (aged 65 + years), Young People aged under 18 and students in full time education, the registered disabled and people on benefits and all former armed service personnel.**
- **Change the Invigor8 membership benefits package to introduce new products to launch from September 2014, that introduces peak/off peak memberships, with the effect that Passport holders have their access restricted to off peak times unless they chose to pay an additional "peak time" supplement of £2 per session.**
- **Protecting the free / reduced price access for Passport holders for all activities at all facilities for off peak usage.**
- **Retain free swimming during school holidays for Young People aged under 18 who live in the Wirral.**
- **Retain free swimming during morning times (Monday to Friday 7am – 12noon) for Older persons who live in Wirral.**

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- **Target free use for currently serving and members of the Armed Forces (including the territorial army and reservists) who are from Wirral and former service personnel who have suffered a disabling injury when in the services and are in receipt of disability benefit. Retain present Armed Forces discounts until September 2014. Those who will no longer meet the criteria after this date convert to Corporate Invigor8 Membership, with the benefit of a discount of at least 25%.**
 - **Introduce a new programme of one to one support for all qualifying service personnel and work more closely with other agencies to produce a newsletter offering advice and support and promoting other benefits.**
 - **Protect all concessions and discounts for Looked After Children, their siblings and carers.**
 - **Protect free swimming for all children under 5, as at present.**
 - **Protect the benefit of unlimited swimming as part of the relevant Invigor8 packages.**
- (2) Officers in consultation the Portfolio Holder for Leisure , Culture and Tourism and the Leisure Transformation Board be delegated to complete the details of the of the new pricing and Invigor8 scheme and to implement agreed changes.**