

FULL COUNCIL

8 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, TOURSIM AND SPORT

1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING LEISURE, TOURISM AND SPORT

1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1.1 To advise Members that since the last Full Council meeting on the 6 October 2020, my latest decision making sessions of this portfolio was held on Monday 2 November 2020.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report is a list of decisions made.

1.3 Monday 2 November 20220

1.3.1 Leisure Centre Fees and Charges 2021

1.3.2 I received a report considering the charges for Tudor Grange Leisure Centre and North Solihull Sports Centre from the 1 January 2021. I reminded Members that it was only the previous evening that the Prime Minister had formally announced the second national lockdown and that we were considering a report prepared before that. All the plans that we were exploring prior to even the first lockdown to encourage even more people from across the Borough to utilise our leisure centres, had been de-railed by the pandemic.

1.3.3 The admission charges for key activities and facilities within the Council's Sports Centres are reviewed each year. With the transfer of the day-to-day management of the service to Everyone Active, this process continues with proposals being sought from Everyone Active for the core charges. The August 2020 RPI(x) was 0.5%. Under the Council's policy these charges represent the maximum charges that may be applied.

1.3.4 With such a low percentage increase in prices and in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Officers are proposing, after a dialogue with the Contractor, that prices should not increase in January 2021. In view of the current national situation such an increase could be considered inappropriate and detrimental in the current circumstances and could ultimately lead to a reduction in use at both facilities, with a corresponding loss of income. Accordingly Officers along with Everyone Active are recommending that the situation is assessed in the new calendar year.

1.3.5 The Income risk is held by Everyone Active under normal circumstances. Given the limitations to opening the centres to meet the requirements to provide a Covid-19 secure offer, the net loss of income for the service is being borne by the Council. This net loss of income forms part of a loss of income claim the Council has submitted to Government under Government support to Local Authorities.

1.3.6 Members then asked a series of questions including; what is the total loss of income the Council might lose; are Everyone Active in a financial position to weather this storm and a general swimming related enquiry. Members were re-assured to be informed that the successful operation of our two leisure centres remains an absolute priority for the Council. There was agreement across the political parties that the correct course of action was to accept the proposal by Officers and delay any potential increase in charges until the New Year at the earliest.

1.3.7 I then formally made the decisions as set out in full in the Appendix and made it very clear that we would re-assess the pricing schedule in the new calendar year, without tying Officers down to a specific date in light of the second lockdown.

1.3.8 Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2020/21 as at 31 July 2020

1.3.9 I received a report outlining the Portfolio's latest forecast financial position and noted the latest approved revenue budget is £481,000. The forecast outturn expenditure for this year is £1,152million giving an adverse variance of £658,000. This includes an adverse variance of £612,000 due to Covid-19 after funding from the Governments income recovery scheme has been applied.

1.3.10 The Officer presenting the report was at pains to stress that the Council's financial position continues to evolve each month as government guidance changes, more accurate information on pressures emerge and new funding announcements are made. The estimates of the financial impact of Covid-19 included within the report are indicative, based on current assumptions and are likely to change over the course of the coming months.

1.3.11 Members asked a series of questions around the report including, have the Council been successful in obtaining any part of the £1.56 billion awarded to Arts and Culture; had the financial situation in respect of the Core Theatre and the Library Café improved prior to the first lockdown and asked for an explanation in respect of the favourable variance of £24,000 on the Solihull Active programme, Eat Well, Move More.

1.3.12 I then formally made the decisions as set out in full in the Appendix.

1.4 Good News and Items of Interest

1.4.1 Commonwealth Games

1.4.2 The news that Birmingham will not be able to provide a brand new Athletes village in time for the Games in 2022 has brought Solihull a further opportunity to showcase all that our Borough can offer. The news that a large number of the athletes, coaches and visiting dignitaries will now be housed in Hotels, within and around the NEC is both a logistical and security challenge. The Project Board is already examining in detail precisely what this means for us all in Solihull.

1.4.3 The Council have formally submitted a briefing document, putting forward our two leisure centres as potential pre-games training venues for the Commonwealth Games. They will now go forward for consideration to the Organising Committee but we believe this is a wonderful opportunity to showcase to the whole of the Commonwealth the huge range of sporting, culture and leisure facilities that Solihull can offer the world. The submission was headed by an endorsement from the Leader of the Council.

1.4.4 Work on the cultural programme for the Commonwealth Games has begun in earnest and we host a (virtual) roundtable event on the 7 December for cultural organisations and artists to think about Solihull's contribution.

1.4.5 Solihull Moors FC

1.4.6 As I write this report Solihull Moors FC from the National League have just defeated League 2 Scunthorpe in the First round of the FA Cup. The Moors are quickly establishing a reputation as FA Cup giant killers and they have drawn another League 2 side, Morecambe in the next round. That game is actually due to be played on Saturday 28 November so we will know the outcome of the tie prior to the Council meeting. I am sure I speak for us all when I wish the Moors every success and we really do believe that this is the year they can finally make it to the promised land of the Football League! It is just the sort of fillip that the whole of the Borough could get behind.

1.4.7 Tourism

1.4.8 The new and fully revised VisitSolihull.com website is now completed and ready to be launched as soon as appropriate. Due to its dynamic construction and content management system it allows for regular content refreshes. The revised design has been shared with partners from the visitor economy and warmly received.

1.4.9 On the 4 November the Solihull Tourism Forum met for the first time since restrictions were put in place in the spring. It has resolved to develop with the Council a new visitor economy strategy and action plan to support recovery and growth. An expression of interest has been submitted to the GBSLEP to support the funding of the development of this strategy, to ensure it will be borough wide and will explore opportunities provided by the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

1.4.10 Arts and Culture

1.4.11 Despite the restricted activity and lockdown, the arts team has been hard at work to prepare the theatre for re-opening in 2021. The rare opportunity to undertake important maintenance has included refurbishing the dressing rooms, overhauling the lighting and sound systems and installing cinema equipment.

1.5 Future Items

- Financial implications of coronavirus on the portfolio.
- Continuing support to the local Leisure, Culture and Tourism industry following the coronavirus.