

Cabinet

5 March 2009



Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools Bank Holiday Opening Times Key Decision SHSC/LGR/02/08

Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services Cabinet Portfolio Member for Environment – Councillor Bob Young

Purpose of the Report

- 1 An outcome of the Bid refers to 'Consistent service levels across County Durham, driven up through common standards, more effective management and greater local influence over service provision'.
- 2 It is recognised that, due to the urban/rural mixed economy across County Durham, local flexibility in service provision will be required to meet differing requirements. Indeed already within the County Council there are examples of varying service provision in certain areas.
- 3 It should also be noted that there may not be a customer requirement to provide an equality of service across the county in certain areas. For example, there may be little or no demand for early opening hours for leisure centres in certain parts of the county but a great demand for it in say, the city centre. Another consideration to bear in mind is that there is a mixed economy in terms of providers for many services. Contractual constraints may prevent harmonisation across the county e.g. leisure trusts.
- 4 This report considers whether there is a need for a harmonised approach to bank holiday opening hours for equality of service provision at vesting day as an interim measure. There is more detailed work required to establish a longer term vision for access to leisure services during public holidays which will be programmed during 2009/2010.

Background

- 5 As the management and operation of the leisure centres and swimming pools across the county has developed over time, an analysis of the relationship between customer demand, opening times and cost has been undertaken.

- 6 Given the premium costs to existing District Councils of making leisure centres and swimming pools available to the public on public/bank holidays, all facilities, with the exception of Teesdale Leisure Centre in Barnard Castle, are currently closed on these days.
- 7 During 2008 an assessment of customer numbers at the leisure centre in Teesdale has been undertaken. The approximate amount of income gained on each Bank Holiday was £400 from an average of 220 customers. The costs associated with staffing the building is £770 when compared with other Mondays in the year income within the leisure centre averages £1100 and staffing costs are around £500.

Options

- 8 There is a requirement to undertake a value for money review of leisure centre opening hours. This will need to be part of a bigger exercise within the approach for the Durham County Council Leisure Services strategy and facilities audit. In the meantime, to standardise service provision, there are two options available for consideration:
 - The new authority can trial leisure centre opening on public holidays but the risk associated with potential increased annual operating costs would be relatively high with customer demand and take-up unquantifiable to offset the overheads. This could create an unacceptable financial burden on services when savings are being sought.
 - The other alternative is to close Teesdale Leisure Centre as an interim solution until a wholesale service review is undertaken.
- 9 The final option is to retain the status quo and to perpetuate the current public holiday opening practise within Teesdale Leisure Centre until a wholesale review of leisure services within County Durham is undertaken. This will mean that there will be differing standards of service provision for access to leisure centres and sporting facilities beyond vesting day. However this approach is in line with ensuring that service provision is not compromised or reduced during transition to the new service configurations. It is also recognised that a sporting facility within the rural locality of Teesdale offers an attractive and healthy activity for customers within the locality during public holidays.
- 10 There has been a risk assessment undertaken but given that this is perpetuating current practise and there is a commitment to undertake a value for money review in the forthcoming year, the potential consequences are deemed to be minimal.

Recommendations and Reasons

- 11 It is recommended that Members approve the retention of a different level of service standards in this instance.
- 12 It is recommended that Members sanction the ongoing opening of Teesdale Leisure Centre on Public/Bank Holidays until further notice.
- 13 It is recommended that Members endorse a review of the harmonisation of service standards for Sports and Leisure Services during 2009/2010.

Background Papers

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Local Government Reorganisation (Does the decision impact upon a future Unitary Council)

It is recognised that different service standards may be morally and socially acceptable given the diverse nature of rural/urban and mixed economy across the County.

Finance

Retaining the status quo will maintain low levels of profit loss.

Risk

There is a potential for a reputation risk and adverse publicity by offering different service standards.

Staffing

A small number of staff will be affected by the proposals but no major problems are anticipated.

Equality and Diversity

None

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Sustainability

None

Human Rights

None

Localities and Rurality

None

Young People

None

Consultation

None

Health

None